

**TOWN OF ROCKY MOUNT
PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES
JULY 6, 2010
6:00 P.M.**

The Planning Commission of the Town of Rocky Mount, Virginia, met at the Rocky Mount Municipal Building on Tuesday, July 6, 2010 at 6:00 p.m., with Madame Chair Janet Stockton presiding.

The following members of Planning Commission were present when the meeting was called to order: Madame Chair Janet Stockton; Planning Commission Members Ina Clements, Derwin Hall, and John Tiggle. Let the record show Planning Commission Member Jerry Greer arrived at the meeting at 6:04 p.m., and Vice Chair John Speidel was absent from the meeting.

The following staff members were present when the meeting was called to order: Assistant Town Manager Matthew C. Hankins, and Deputy Clerk Stacey B. Sink.

The Assistant Town Manager noted that the Planning Commission is short one member due to the resignation of Planning Commission Member Cundiff following his election to Town Council. He added that Town Council will take up the appointment of a new member, possibly this month; however, Planning Commission's bylaws calls for the Planning Commission to elect officers on the first meeting of each fiscal year, so this is why it is on the agenda for the evening.

ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING

The Assistant Town Manager opened the floor for nominations for the office of Chairman.

Planning Commission Member Tiggle nominated Janet Stockton for the office of Chairman, with Planning Commission Member Clements seconding the nomination. There being no additional nominations, the nominations were closed. Let the record show that the nomination of Janet Stockton as Chairman of the Planning Commission from July 1, 2010 through June 30, 2011 was approved by a unanimous vote of those present.

Madame Chair Janet Stockton opened the floor for nominations for the office of Vice

Chairman. Planning Commission Member Tiggle nominated John Speidel for the office of Vice Chairman. Planning Commission Member Clements moved that the nominations be closed with motion being seconded by Planning Commission Member Hall. Let the record show that the nomination of John Speidel as Vice Chairman of the Planning Commission from July 1, 2010 through June 30, 2011 was approved by a unanimous vote of those present.

(Let the record show that Planning Commission Member Greer joined the meeting at 6:04 p.m.)

Madame Chair Stockton stated that the Planning Commission also needed to appoint a Clerk and questioned the Deputy Clerk if she was willing to continue in her role, with the Deputy Clerk confirming that she was, and Madame Chair Stockton noting that the office of Clerk to the Planning Commission was considered filled.

Madame Chair Stockton advised that Planning Commission also needed to appoint a Subdivision Agent. She confirmed with the Assistant Town Manager that he had been serving in this capacity as an interim title. The Assistant Town Manager also noted that there will not be anyone stepping into the role in the next year as the position of Town Planner has been defunded. Madame Chair Stockton questioned if he would be willing to serve in the capacity of the Subdivision Agent for another year, with the Assistant Town Manager advising that he sees few other options, and Madame Chair Stockton thanking him for his willingness to serve.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Madame Chair Stockton asked if there were any additions or corrections to the presented agenda. There being none, Madame Chair Stockton entertained a motion.

- Motion was made by Planning Commission Member Clements to approve the agenda as presented with motion on the floor being seconded by Planning Commission Member Tiggle. There being no further discussion, let the record show that the motion on the floor passed unanimously by those present.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Prior to the meeting, the Planning Commission received a copy of the following minutes for review and consideration of approval:

➤ May 5 , 2010 – Regular Meeting Minutes

Madame Chair Stockton asked if there were any additions or corrections to the minutes, and being none, entertained a motion.

- Motion was made by Planning Commission Member Tiggle to approve the minutes as presented, with motion on the floor being seconded by Planning Commission Member Hall. There being no further discussion, let the record show that the motion on the floor passed unanimously by those present.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Let the record show there were no public hearings held at this time.

OLD BUSINESS

Let the record show there was no old business to discuss at this time.

NEW BUSINESS

(1) Review and discussion regarding pending work for the Planning Department

The Assistant Town Manager addressed the Planning Commission, stating that as he noted earlier, the position of Town Planner has been defunded, which puts the work of four people onto the shoulders of three. Noting that the Planning Department is now spread a little thin, he stated that he wanted to give Planning Commission a quick reset of where they are with certain issues:

- The Arts and Culture District is still pending. From an economic development standpoint, he hopes to get the work on this completed fairly soon. The trouble he is having is in finding meaningful incentives. He is looking at other localities to see what they are offering. Some of them can't be duplicated because the Town is not a city and does not do its own assessments. The Town will have to talk to the County about this, but it has not been done yet.
- Staff is still working on the Comprehensive Plan, but the work is slow. He expects the work on this and on the "blue book" to gain a little speed now, noting that the

Oaks at Rakes Tavern and Franklin Heights Baptist Church site plans, along with several smaller site plans and working with the Landmark developer, took his attentions away from the Comprehensive Plan and “blue book.”

- One of the planning issues that is on the table is tattoos and piercings. This has been left hanging as there does not seem to be an appetite for making a change to the code, given that right now someone would have to get a special use permit to locate such a business anywhere in town.
- Staff would like to undertake a review of uses by right. In reviewing the “blue book” there are some things that staff has questioned or would like some clarification on.
- There has been talk, off and on, about a light ordinance and underground utilities in redeveloped areas. With the investment in uptown and downtown, staff wants to make sure that someone cannot come in and put in utility poles when the Town has spent a lot of money in getting the utilities underground. The Town must, however, work with the utilities to develop some language that everyone can agree on.
- In reviewing the “blue books” staff has determined that some clarification is needed in definitions. One example is that in determining whether an accessory building is an acceptable use, staff has some questions regarding square footage. If an accessory building cannot be more than 50% of the main structure, is that the total square footage or is it the foot print of the structure?
- Another thing that has not been discussed but deserves some consideration given modern workflow is electronic submissions of site plans and subdivision plans. This is something that is not required now, but is certainly something that would be useful to staff. It could help reviews to go a little faster and would be simpler for staff to handle and to track. Therefore, staff may be asking for a slight change to site plan requirements to require that developers submit electronic copies along with paper copies.
- Another item for discussion is that staff thinks there are some properties in town that are not properly zoned. Mostly they are public properties. The armory is zoned R2 when it probably should be POS. The West Campus is zoned C1 when it should probably be POS. The American Legion is zoned R1 and could be POS since it houses county offices. These would be Commission initiated rezonings.
- One of the things that staff currently does not have in work flow is a subdivision application. When someone wants to subdivide a property they are expected to bring in a letter along with a set of plans. This leaves a lot of things incomplete, usually, so staff would like to develop an application that will guide developers through the process to help them better understand what they need to do.
- Staff currently has some minor site plans for review and is also looking at some problem properties that are either significant nuisances or are behind on taxes and are also nuisances. The hope is to get rid of some of the blight in neighborhoods. Staff is working with the Town Attorney to get title searches and the Franklin County

Building Inspector to determine if any of the properties are condemnable. Planning Commission Member Greer stated that he thought this was looked at last year and questioned if the Building Inspector is changing where he stands on it. The Assistant Town Manager advised that it was not looked at last year to the extent it is being looked at now. There are a couple of structures in which leaning on them might cause them to fall down. The Town's Code Inspector has been out with Building Inspector Beard for inspection, and they have determined that at least two of the structures need to be condemned because they are not structurally sound. Madame Chair Stockton questioned the number of houses in Town that are in this kind of shape, with the Assistant Town Manager advising that staff has been working on developing a housing survey for all the houses in Town, with the hopes of producing a better number. However, right now, there are nine properties on the board, with three or four of them being condemnable right away. Some are abandoned.

- Regarding STEP, Inc.'s recent request, staff is currently waiting for STEP to respond back to the Town. The Assistant Town Manager has advised STEP that the lot on Dent next to the apartment building is subdividable, but because of the contemplated use that was discussed by Mr. Morris, namely a homeless shelter, he has advised that a shelter in this district will require a special use permit, not just a homeless shelter, but any kind of shelter, based on the definition found in the Town code. Staff is waiting on a response from STEP as to whether they wish to proceed in seeking a special use permit.
- Planning Commission Member Clements questioned what had gone into the Bailey Insurance Building. The Assistant Town Manager advised that The Crooked Stitch had moved there, noting that it had previously been located in the old Earth Environmental space. He also noted that The Crooked Stitch did not obtain a Zoning Compliance Certificate before contemplating the move, and some parking issues have arisen. Staff is working to get this resolved.

COMMISSIONER CONCERNS

Madame Chair Stockton questioned if next month they would be welcoming their new member, with the Assistant Town Manager advising this would be entirely up to Town Council. Planning Commission Member Greer questioned if Planning Commission had been asked to offer any names, with the Assistant Town Manager confirming that they had, and had chosen not to offer any, noting that Planning Commission always had the opportunity to do it individually with Council members.

Planning Commission Member Hall noted that he is getting a lot of questions about the

Uptown Revitalization Project and asked for a brief synopsis. The Assistant Town manager advised that basically there are three or four phases to go through. The contractor is almost finished with the first phase which is the demolition of the concrete and installation of conduit on the courthouse side of the street. They have also been putting in storm sewer and this is where they have hit delays, particularly where they have hit rock in front of Eric Ferguson's building. The storm sewer had to be nine and a half feet deep, in order to have the elevation to flow downhill, but the last eight feet they went through was solid rock. Once they got past that, they have been able to move up the street more quickly. There have been a few minor hiccups along the way. The parking lot that the coffee shop primarily uses was temporarily closed for about two weeks so the coffee shop closed as well. The next phase will be the water and sewer which will be in the middle of the street. In order to accommodate this, the plan is to close Main Street at night. This will be the least disruptive option and it will cause a little more of a headache for the contractor to have to set up lights to work, and it could also be more of a public works headache if the contractor hits a water line or something like that. It may mean that public works or utilities crews will have to come out at night. This will probably take about six weeks. The next phase will be the replacing of the sidewalk on the other side of the street, to the point of taking down some power lines. This will probably be September or October. During this same time they will also be replacing the sidewalk on Warren Street. This project is a lot of work and is very complicated. They have hit water lines a couple of times and an old fuel tank that required remediation, but things are moving along and are on track to be done by the end of the year. Hopefully there will be newly paved streets in time for the Christmas parade.

Planning Commission Member Clements questioned what is going in the old Midway Cleaners building. The Assistant Town Manager advised that Darlene Swain is moving her hair salon from atop Law's Barber Shop to the Midway Cleaners building, and Verdella Holland is renovating the top floor of the barber shop into a new apartment for herself. Other activity nearby is actually the staging site for the Uptown Project in the parking lot that is owned by Cornerstone Land Surveying.

Planning Commission Member Clements discussed the height of the new Confederate monument statue on the courthouse lawn.

The Assistant Town Manager advised that Walgreens is moving along fairly quickly. Madame Chair Stockton noted that she did not realize that the new Walgreens facility was going to be so tall and that it would block the view of the other stores. The Assistant Town Manager noted that the shopping center sign will be going back in place so that it can be seen from the road. He also confirmed to Planning Commission that Walgreens has enough parking and that there will be a wall put in between Walgreens and

Bojangles and the area will be filled in to provide adequate parking. Regarding the traffic pattern there, he noted that it should limit the number of motorists trying to turn left onto Route 40 and it should also diminish the traffic hazard by narrowing the lanes there from five widths down to three.

Planning Commission Member Clements noted that El Rodeo seems to be flourishing in its new location.

ADJOURNMENT

At 6:30 p.m. and with no further business to discuss, Madame Chair Stockton entertained a motion to adjourn, with motion being made by Planning Commission Member Clements, seconded by Planning Commission Member Tiggle and carried unanimously by those present.

Janet Stockton, Chair

ATTEST:

Stacey B. Sink, Deputy Clerk

/sbs

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