

**ROCKY MOUNT TOWN COUNCIL  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
SPECIAL JOINT WORK SESSION MEETING  
OCTOBER 18, 2011**

The October 18, 2011 special joint work session of the Rocky Mount Town Council and Planning Commission was held at the Community & Hospitality Center (Depot) located at 52 Franklin Street, Rocky Mount, Virginia at 5:00 p.m. with Mayor Steven C. Angle presiding on behalf of the Rocky Mount Town Council and Chair Janet Stockton presiding on behalf of the Planning Commission.

*(Dinner was served at 5:00 p.m., with meeting starting immediately afterward at 5:15 p.m.)*

On behalf of the Rocky Mount Town Council, the meeting was called to order by Mayor Angle, with the following members of Council being present:

Vice Mayor Gregory B. Walker and Council Members Jerry W. Greer, Sr., Bobby M. Cundiff, P. Ann Love, Robert L. Moyer and Robert W. Strickler

For the record, the following were present: All members of Town Council as noted, Town Manager C. James Ervin, Town Planner Patrick Rust, Town Attorney John T. Boitnott, and Town Clerk Patricia H. Keatts.

On behalf of the Planning Commission, the meeting was called to order by Chair Stockton, with the following members of Planning Commission being present:

Vice Chair John Speidel and Planning Commission Members W. Boyce (Bud) Blanchard, Ina Clements, Jerry W. Greer, Sr., Derwin Hall and John Tiggler.

For the record, Town Clerk Patricia H. Keatts represented both the Rocky Mount Town Council and Planning Commission as Clerk.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Prior to the meeting, Council and Planning Commission had received the agenda for review and consideration of approval.

- Motion was made by Planning Commission Member Clements to approve the agenda as presented, with motion on the floor being seconded by Vice Mayor Walker and carried unanimously by those present.

## **ITEMS FOR JOINT CONSIDERATION**

### A. Update on Comprehensive Plan Review to Include Time Line and Goals

The Town Planner presented the following:

- The 20-Year Long-Range Plan for 2007 to 2027 was adopted May 14, 2007.
- According to the Code of Virginia, the Town's Comprehensive Plan needs to be revised at least every five years.
- The Planning Commission gave staff direction two years ago for an early partial revision of the Comprehensive Plan. Due to staffing and projects, staff has been unable to complete. Staff will begin work in earnest in November, with expected public meetings and hearings in late spring, with approval in the summer of 2012. Per original direction from the Planning Commission, staff will rewrite the plan and prepare the maps, then give the public the opportunity to comment before submitting to the boards for their approval.
- Also, it was discussed to update sections of the Comprehensive Plan every year, or every two years instead of completely updating the entire Comprehensive Plan at each five-year mark.
- Staff's main objective is to tweak the existing Plan with current statistics, maps, goals and objectives, as the Town has changed and grown over the past five years.
- Staff looks to spruce up the Plan by making it more visually appealing and easier to read.
- Over the next few months, staff will be looking for guidance and suggestions on the Comprehensive Plan update.

At this time, there were no questions or comments for the Town Planner.

### B. What Is The Next Big Thing?

The Town Manager commented that Item B and C (Direction from Council and Planning Commission to staff on where to focus the Town's efforts now that the Uptown Project is done.) are basically the same thing. He further commented that about three years ago, the Town was working hard to build a road into the Cox

property; extend Old Fort Road; and was in the middle of doing the Uptown Project. With this now being complete, the real big question is what does the Town Council and Planning Commission want to do jointly or independently to give staff guidance on what projects to pursue. He further stated that staff is currently looking at:

- Working on economic development for the Cox property. Franklin County (County) has expressed an interest in sharing that cost and has discussed bringing the Industrial Development Authority on board to do some type of bond. There is a need for more grading on the last remaining parcel before the Town and County can market the site.
- Have discussed a music venue in the past, but the project was stalled due to lack of funding and some opposition from the public regarding the proposed site of Mary Elizabeth Park. Staff questions whether or not Council still wants them to proceed with this.
- Working on items to help retailers and businesses in-town, such as signage. Since losing the Chamber of Commerce and with Community Partnership for Revitalization not helping the Town from a functional standpoint, Town staff has to do more marketing.

Discussion ensued regarding the points brought forth by the Town Manager:

- The Cox property is the last piece of property in the Town and County that is jointly owned in the Industrial Park, and at some point and time, will have to look at another site either individually or jointly with the County. The Cox property site needs to be graded in order to market it. There is a seven year window to put someone on the Cox property before the Town will have to pay approximately \$380,000 back to the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), with this being the reason why the road needs to be graded as soon as possible. Due to the economic downturn in the past three years, quite a few localities are hitting no returns from the funding assistance from VDOT and will be having trouble paying the money back to them. The Town can join those localities in trying to get VDOT to extend the deadline date for the funds to be paid back. May be feasible to get a bond to help with the Cox property site being graded. Discussed what it would take to grade, with a \$2.1 million cost estimate being given when the Town received the last Tobacco Commission grant money. Thompson & Litton engineering firm was paid to do concept work on the proposed grading at that time. Discussed that the Town will have to deal with streams when grading by going through permitting process.
- The Town, at some point and time, will most likely need to look at a boundary adjustment in order to take in more land to market for industrial use. Some of the proposed sites discussed were the approximate 80 acres of the Smithers'

property located out in the County behind Sycamore Street, with it having another approximate 100 acres behind it. The County would have to be involved with this.

- Discussed possibly having dirt removed from the property on Byrd Lane where the two houses will be removed and putting it on property behind Bland Street that is behind the old VDOT office, and perhaps using that land for an industry to locate.
- Discussed Town and County possibly working with 84 Lumber (which is located in the County) to see if they can lease their building to another business instead of having it lay vacant for so long.
- Regarding the music venue, it was discussed that the Town needed to keep pursuing it, but perhaps not have it located at Mary Elizabeth Park but instead have either Mod-U-Kraf Homes or Fleetwood Homes build a temporary stage and place it in one of the vacant parking lots (mentioning the old Lane building parking lot), and holding the music venue there, as there would be plenty of available parking, with it not being that near to residential homes. Also mentioned that a trailer might work. Discussed using the County-owned building located behind the Farmers' Market, with staff commenting that the Town is working with the County regarding this, but due to the County attaching other issues that do not pertain to a music venue to the agreement, this has not been worked out yet with the County. Discussed how well Bill Fuller has managed the "Footlights of the Blue Ridge" concerts with no more than \$3,000 annually, and how successful that event has been. Mentioned how challenging it is to make sure that businesses in the North Main Street and uptown/downtown area can receive the benefits of people coming into the Town for such music venue events, and that wherever the music venue is placed, it needs to draw people into the Town. The Floyd, Virginia events were discussed and how successful it has become, even though it is located in a store. The Town needs to keep those people going to Floyd in the Town for similar events, but the music venue needs to encompass not just bluegrass, but other types of music as well, such as gospel, etc. If music venue was placed in Mary Elizabeth Park and it became successful, questioned how it would grow; therefore, the music venue needs to be in a place that would support such growth.

#### D. Planning Commission Concerns

- a. Feedback on perceptions of Planning Commission and Town Council:
  - Chair Stockton asked what is the perception of Council for the two groups to work together. Discussion ensued regarding the Planning Commission

wanting direction from Council and to know what role they are to play in that it seems like things have changed in terms of their function during the last year or so, with the Planning Commission doing less planning and doing more zoning.

- There was much discussion regarding the role the Planning Commission took in dealing with the application received from Stepping Stone Missions wanting a soup kitchen to be located in a residential area, and that the Planning Commission wants to be mindful of residents. Discussed North Main Street being a mix bag of properties, with the Planning Commission wondering what Council wants for this location, and how does Council want them to put this into the Town's Comprehensive Plan. Further discussed how there were quite a few residents that showed up for the Council public hearing on the soup kitchen; whereas, the Planning Commission had no one to show up voicing a concern over the soup kitchen being located at the proposed site. It was pointed out that Town staff had appeared on the *Rise 'n Shine* show the morning of the Council public hearing, and that quite a few people look at this show; thus, the public was more aware of the Council's public hearing on the soup kitchen. Due to this, the Planning Commission wants to be included in the *Rise 'N Shine* show before their meeting takes place so the public will be more aware of what is on their agenda for their meetings. It was discussed that, currently, staff does public hearing notices for both the Planning Commission and Council public hearings; certified letters are sent to the adjoining/facing property owners; and a sign of the public hearings is placed on the site, with all this being done prior to the public hearings for the soup kitchen. It was explained that the decision vehicle presented to the Planning commission was functionally identical to a rezoning and that if a special use permit was granted, a rezoning request could be submitted.
  - Regarding the Comprehensive Plan, it was decided that the Town Planner needed to make sure that he pull in some of the Planning Commission members to have a different set of eyes looking at the Plan; thus, not encumbering Council as it is now. Also, it was indicated that the Chair of the Planning Commission, along with the Town Manager and Town Planner, needed to sit down at least every two months to discuss matters that may be of interest to the Planning Commission.
- b. Tying together the visual appearance of the Town, including signage, crosswalks and other visual elements.
- Chair Stockton mentioned that the Town needs to work on signage. Discussion ensued that signage did, indeed, needed to be worked on,

especially since uptown is completed. Need to show the Town off, with entrance signs announcing Rocky Mount helping to do this. Discussed that the four different entrance signs in the Town were being taken down and refreshed. Also mentioned that way-finding sign concept could be used. Need signage for parking, Farmers' Market, Court House, and different points of interest. Also discussed the new proposed sign located on U.S. 220 North that the Town has recently agreed to lease, and how it will promote all the retailers and businesses and not just one or two individual businesses.

E. Council Concerns

- Briefly discussed making the bridge wider that is located on State Route 40 West that is near the old 84 Lumber site. Discussed that once the Pigg River bridge is replaced, the Town could possibly start looking at having the State Route 40 West bridge placed on VDOT's list of projects for future funding that the Town needs to have fixed.
- Discussed needing sidewalks for Scuffling Hill Road and if there are any funds that may be available through the state. Mentioned that the Town possibly could use maintenance money for this.
- Briefly mentioned that there will be crosswalks and flashing lights on State Route 40 East near the Holiday Inn entrance; and also crosswalks at Sheetz.
- Discussed that there will be two lanes for the proposed replacement bridge at Pigg River, with it being two-lane wide, and the same width of the road coming from South Main Street from the town side (same width as standard road, but new). The bridge should be in the same location.
- Mentioned that when work is being done on the Pigg River bridge, the Town could take that dirt and have it as fill dirt for the erosion site on the Old Furnace Creek bank.
- Discussed that there is also fill dirt needing to be placed on the Pigg River side near the dam where some dirt is sluffing away from the bank near the walkway. Discussed the Town needing to put more than a plastic barrier to keep people away from the bank, such as caution tape. Discussed that when the Pigg River dam is removed, this will lower the water level and help keep the water from rising up so far and taking chunks of the bank away with it.

F. Open Discussion

Mayor mentioned that everything on the agenda had been discussed in an open session.

The Town Manager gave a summarization of items brought forth by Council and Planning Commission:

- Staff needs to take baby steps for the music venue.
- Need to bring the Cox property into play.
- For re-growth strategy, re-think signage in order for it to be a good balance for people to shop.
- Sensed what was discussed on how does staff need to guide people on land use property, with staff needing to sit down with the Planning Commission to look at this.
- Will have Planning Commission involved in working on signage.
- Will follow-up with Mr. Richard Shoemaker on getting the Planning Commission members to appear on the *Rise 'N Shine* show prior to their meetings.

Vice Mayor Walker commented that the Town needs to keep in mind that when the water bond is paid off, he would like to see all, or a good part of it, go back into the fund balance. The Town Manager stated that he agrees to continue to look into spending less each year, and if the budget is looked at in its entirety, there has been a lot of funding put into infrastructure, and on the heels of that, the Town has had three challenging budget years. Vice Mayor Walker stated that he would like to do all that was discussed during the meeting, but the Town cannot economically do it all. The Mayor commented that the Town will need to prioritize the projects and look at what can be done in 20 years.

The Town Manager confirmed to Council Member Greer that he would get with the Chief of Police about the bay area at the Emergency Services Building still leaking when it rains.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

On behalf of the Town Council, at 6:33 p.m. motion was made by Council Member Strickler to adjourn, seconded by Council Member Greer and carried unanimously.

On behalf of the Planning Commission, at 6:33 p.m. motion was made by Planning Commission Vice Chair Speidel to adjourn, seconded by Planning Commission Member Tiggie and carried unanimously.

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Steven C. Angle, Mayor  
Rocky Mount Town Council

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Janet Stockton, Chair  
Rocky Mount Planning Commission

ATTEST:

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Patricia H. Keatts, Town Clerk