

Planning and Zoning Board

Minutes

Thursday, May 28, 2020

5:30 p.m.

The Blowing Rock Planning and Zoning Board met on Thursday, May 28, 2020 for their regularly scheduled meeting via a Webex virtual meeting platform. Chairman Gherini called the meeting to order at 5:39 pm. Members present were Wes Carter, Kim Hartley, Joe Papa, Mike Page, Pete Page and Bill McCarter. Members Sam Glover and Harrison Herbst were absent. Staff members present were Planning Director Kevin Rothrock and Planning and Zoning Support Specialist Tammy Bentley and Town Engineer Doug Chapman.

Chairman Gherini asked if there were any changes to the agenda. *Mr. Mike Page made a motion to approve the agenda, seconded by Ms. Hartley. All members were in favor of the motion.*

Chairman Gherini asked if there were any changes to the minutes. *Mr. Pete Page made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Mr. Papa. All members were in favor of the motion.*

1. Discussion of Hwy 321 Visioning Recommendations

Mr. Rothrock reviewed the Board members' observations for the 321 Visioning Valley Boulevard Study (attached). Mr. Rothrock and the Board discussed each member's observations and concluded the following.

The Board agreed that the Town should not purchase the DOT property on the east side of Valley Boulevard, in part because two tracts have been sold or are under contract.

The Board determined that the approved Town color chart is fine as is. Mr. Rothrock advised that staff works with applicants in this area, within reason.

The Board agreed that minimum standards are superior to calculating points to ensure compliance.

The Board agreed that there is no need for an overlay district as the current zoning, General Business, applies only to Valley Boulevard. Mr. Rothrock noted that the current Land Use Code could be amended for needed changes.

The Board recommended staggering the building height based on the front and side setbacks. Mr. McCarter asked from where the building height is measured. Mr. Rothrock advised at the adjacent grade at the primary entrance to the peak of the roof. Mr. Mike

Page and Mr. Carter both indicated that they want to look at this in more depth. Mr. Carter asked given the new highway and new look to the bypass if development can be uniform relative to the sidewalk.

Mr. Mike Page asked if the properties are so unique that each must be considered on its own merit. Mr. Rothrock said any hardships can be addressed, adding that properties on the west side of Valley Boulevard have hardships due to the new height of the road. Mr. Rothrock added that the larger tracts have more flexibility than the smaller tracks. Mr. Rothrock advised that the Conditional Use Permit and Conditional Rezoning process can address unique properties.

The Board agreed that parking areas should not be focal points unless it is not practical to do so. Mr. Mike Page noted that many current properties have parking in the front and asked if proposed projects, that are not able to provide parking on the side or back, would be closed out due to this portion of the code. Mr. Rothrock noted that parking should not be a focal point, unless having parking on the back or side is impractical. Mr. Rothrock indicated he finds the current Land Use Code language regarding parking acceptable. Mr. Mike Page agreed.

Mr. Rothrock said that Town Engineer Doug Chapman can provide guidance on water quality standards. Ms. Hartley asked how water quality falls under zoning. Mr. Rothrock said per the Land Use Code. Mr. Rothrock advised that all of the General Business zoning district is in the watershed, and that the storm water regulations are designed to address water runoff and were not designed specifically for water quality. Mr. Rothrock said the Planning Board is the watershed authority, adding that the Planning Board is charged with making recommendations for any change in the ordinance. Mr. Rothrock said water quality can be incorporated in the Land Use Code.

Chairman Gherini asked where money comes from for mitigation. Mr. Rothrock asked if this is relative to existing sites. Chairman Gherini confirmed. Mr. Rothrock said that sometimes grants are available, adding that we are dealing with sites that have already developed the stream bank. Mr. Rothrock said that it is his responsibility to ensure that the 30-foot buffer from the stream is maintained and not encroached upon. Mr. Rothrock advised that the New River Conservancy is involved in the rebuilding of the stream bank below the Water Treatment Plant.

Mr. Pete Page said that stacked rock walls are a good idea and they are beautiful. Mr. Rothrock said they look great but are very expensive and are a 'down the road' project.

Mr. Pete Page asked how many tracts are available for development. Mr. Rothrock said the parcels fronting Valley Boulevard on either side of Ransom could be developed, but he does not have an exact number.

Chairman Gherini said most of his comments have been covered. The Board reiterated the need for a sliding height to setback scale and to look at the side setback with is currently just 8 feet. The Board also discussed limiting roof-top mechanical equipment when reasonable.

The Board discussed the changes to NCGS 160-D. Mr. Rothrock advised the Board that the deadline has been extended to August, 2021 due to Covid-19. Chairman Gherini asked if any changes will materially affect this process. Mr. Rothrock said no. Mr. Rothrock said the

changes in terminology are to create clarity across jurisdictions, adding that one such change is to replace Conditional Use Permit with Special Use Permit. Mr. McCarter said a group of retired planners were looking into this and that he doesn't think our Land Use Code looks too bad. Mr. Mike Page asked who is responsible for bringing the Land Use Code into compliance with 160-D. Mr. Rothrock advised the Planning Board recommends and the Town Council approves.

Mr. Mike Page noted that extending the Middle Fork Greenway is a priority in the 2014 Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Mike Page asked Mr. Papa if this will cross his property. Mr. Papa said yes, per Bill Hall.

Chairman Gherini said that he wanted to hear comments from each Board member. Chairman Gherini wanted to remind everyone that the Town Council had asked the Planning Board to look at the Land Use Code on Main Street. Mr. Mike Page noted that he, Chairman Gherini, David Harwood and Sue Glenn spent much time and effort on this and the Town Council did not accept any of the Planning Board's work. Chairman Gherini asked Mr. Rothrock to be very thorough with comments to Town Council so they can have a very clear idea of the Planning Board's recommendations. Mr. Mike Page noted that much of the past problem was due to the Blowing Rock Civic Association uproar and that they packed the Council meeting and blindsided the Council with questions to which the Council had no answers. Mr. Page added that the Board needs to work on getting more stakeholder participation in this process.

Chairman Gherini asked Mr. Carter for his comments. Mr. Carter said he would like a standard off the sidewalks for visual continuity. Mr. Papa said he did not feel this is possible due to the west side properties being below the sidewalk. Mr. Carter said he was referring to the height. Mr. Papa responded that he is good with that.

Chairman Gherini asked Mr. Rothrock when he will get this information to the Council. Mr. Rothrock said he will summarize these comments and update the Council at the June meeting.

Other Business

Mr. Rothrock said the 1150 Main Street project is nearing completion with occupancy scheduled for mid-July and the Speckled Trout deck and the BR Hotel site work are in progress. Mr. Rothrock advised the Board that he is waiting on Rainey Lodge to address his comments on plans submitted. Mr. Mike Page asked if there are any pending applications for Valley Boulevard. Mr. Rothrock said the Blowing Rock Country Club is planning a new Pro Shop.

*Having no further business Mr. Carter made a motion to adjourn. **All members in favor of the motion.***

Chairman Gherini adjourned the meeting at 6:55 p.m.

Chairman Gherini

Tammy Bentley
Planning & Zoning Support Specialist