

## Planning and Zoning Board

### Minutes

Thursday, April 15, 2021

5:30 p.m.

The Blowing Rock Planning and Zoning Board met on Thursday, April 15, 2021 for their regularly scheduled meeting in person and via Zoom. Chairman Gherini called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm. Members present were Harrison Herbst, Pete Page, Bill McCarter, Joe Papa, Sam Hess, and Sam Glover. Members absent were Mike Page and Wes Carter. Staff members present were Planning Director Kevin Rothrock, Planning and Zoning Support Specialist Tammy Bentley and Town Engineer Doug Chapman.

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

Chairman Gherini asked if there were any changes to the March 2021 minutes. *Mr. Glover made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Mr. Herbst. All members were in favor of the motion.*

Chairman Gherini asked for an update on Mr. Carter's health. Ms. Bentley advised the Board that Mr. Carter was still in the ICU.

#### **1. Conditional Rezoning (CB to CZ-CB, Central Business) – 144 Pine St**

Mr. Mike Trew advised that his firm made a mistake on the application and the total acreage is 0.39, not 0.29 acres.

Mr. Rothrock gave the staff report and Powerpoint presentation. Steve Heatherington, representing Lucrum 7, LLC, is requesting a conditional rezoning of the former Stone Pillar bed and breakfast (demolished) and Snips (demolished) property from Central Business to Conditional Zoning – Central Business (CZ-CB). The 0.39 -acre property is located between Pine Street and Laurel Lane. The Applicant is proposing the construction of 8 townhomes on the property. The property is further identified by Watauga County PINs 2807-87-8611-000, and 2807-87-7474-000.

The Central Business zoning district allows up to 5 units per acre for multi-family uses. The Applicant is requesting a residential density of up to 20.35 units per acre (0.39 ac on site) for a total of 8 units for the project. Allowing 20.35 units per acre would require a waiver of the residential density requirements in Section 16-12.2.3 of the Land Use Code. The 2014 Comprehensive Plan supports an increase in residential density of at least 8 units per acre in the most intensive residential zoning district. Central Business and the downtown area would be comparable areas of the most intensive residential zoning.

Of the proposed 8 units, 6 are one-bedroom units and 2 are two-bedroom units. The applicable street setback for Town Center is 15 feet and is measured from the back of the existing/proposed sidewalk along each street. The proposed buildings meet the required street setbacks from both Pine and Laurel.

The side setback is 5 feet, and the proposed buildings meet the side setbacks.

The maximum building height is 30 feet from the finished sidewalk elevations to the standard 15-foot setback. Beyond the 15-foot setback, the allowable building height increases incrementally for every 5 feet of additional setback. The proposed building height for both end units is 28 feet 10 inches. The building height for the next two interior units is 33 feet 10 inches. The proposed building height for the 2 middle units is 39 feet 10 inches. Based on the proposed elevations provided, all of the buildings meet the building height requirements for the Central Business district.

The building materials include a board and batten siding, lap and cedar shake siding, stone veneer, architectural roof shingles and architectural stone veneer. Some metal roofing accents are planned for some shed dormers and eave overhangs.

Access to the site will be through Pine Street, one-way through the site and exiting to Laurel Lane. The proposed project requires 15 parking spaces, and 15 angled spaces are provided.

The storm water runoff from the site will be conveyed to an onsite detention system and released to Pine Street.

Sewer will be connected to Pine Street. All electrical service will be provided underground. Garbage collection will be through roll-out containers in an enclosure located on the east side of the property adjacent to Pine Street.

All of the trees on site will be removed as many are in poor condition or are within the building or parking area footprint. There is a significant buffer along Laurel Lane since the Town owns an area 20 feet from the back of the existing sidewalk. The Applicant is proposing to remove the large white pines on the Town property and replace with other trees. The large white pines are overgrown, in poor condition, pose a safety risk, or are already dead.

### ***Applicant Proposed Conditions***

1. Density – Density to be modified to allow 8 residential units for the project at 20.35 units/acre. Based on lot acreage, 0.39, and current ordinance maximum of 5 units per acre, only two residential units would be allowed.
2. Roofing – Roof pitch on the rear shed dormers to be 4/12 instead of 6/12 for the middle six (6) units.

A neighborhood meeting was held at Town Hall and via Zoom on April 1, 2021, where the Applicant shared with the group their vision for the property.

Mr. Heatherington said they are requesting an increase in density for 8 townhomes.

Mr. Mike Trew, Engineer, said his firm helped with the Main and Pine project and Mr. Heatherington asked them to assist with this project. Mr. Trew apologized for the error in the total acreage on the application. Mr. Trew said this is a narrow lot and the project will be complimentary to Main and Pine. Mr. Trew said the parking is determined by number of bedrooms and that access will be one way entering on Pine and exiting onto Laurel which will preclude traffic being routed to Wallingford Street. Mr. Trew said the lot is almost flat with no fall to step the buildings. Mr. Trew said this is achieved in the design. Mr. Trew said the storm water detention is under the parking area and that the large white pines will be removed and replaced with new screening plants.

Mr. Bill Dixon, Architect, said this is a long, skinny site and the different floor heights, which meet the requirements of the code, help break up the building. Mr. Dixon said the exterior will be board and batten siding with a richer color than the Main and Pine buildings. Mr. Dixon said they are proposing 2 one-bedroom and 6 two-bedroom units that could be owned individually or by Mr. Heatherington. Mr. Dixon said the four shed dormers along the back have a 4/12 roof pitch.

Mr. Glover asked if the air conditioning units would be on the back side of the building. Mr. Dixon said there will be 2 small outdoor units per townhome which will be screened and not seen from Wallingford. Chairman Gherini asked if there would be gas for cooking, etc. Mr. Dixon said the units will be all electric, except for gas fireplaces. Mr. Pete Page asked the clearance between the patios. Mr. Dixon said 6.5 feet.

Chairman Gherini asked about Fire Department access. Mr. Trew said this will comply with the Fire Department's requirements and code requirements for building access. Mr. Trew advised that, per the Fire Department, a fire hydrant on Laurel Lane will not be required.

Chairman Gherini asked the square footage of the units. Mr. Dixon said the one-bedroom end units are 1275 square feet and the remaining six middle units are 1687 square feet.

Mr. Trew advised that the water line on Pine Street is currently 4 inches and will be increased to 6 inches and will be extended to the corner of the property.

Mr. Dixon advised that the landscape buffer facing Wallingford will be a 4-foot broken buffer and will shield the HVAC units. Chairman Gherini asked who maintains this. Mr. Dixon advised by Mr. Heatherington or the HOA. Mr. Heatherington said the Laurel Lane buffer, once replaced, will be the responsibility of the Town.

Mr. Glover said that some folks do not acknowledge one-way signs. Mr. Trew said the signs will be on Town property. Mr. Dixon added that the diagonal parking makes going the wrong way difficult.

Chairman Gherini asked the construction start time. Mr. Heatherington said around 8:00 a.m. until 4 or 4:30. Mr. Rothrock advised that construction Town-wide can commence at 7:00 a.m. Monday through Friday.

Chairman Gherini asked each member their thoughts.

Mr. McCarter said he is okay with this and asked how to deal with density in the long term. Mr. Rothrock said this process is the only way now.

Mr. Glover asked the zoning of the Devore lot. Mr. Rothrock advised O/I, Office-Institutional.

Mr. Pete Page asked if short-term rentals will be allowed. Mr. Heatherington said they are allowed in the CB zoning district and he intends to rent these short-term, like the Main and Pine units. Mr. Heatherington said these are townhomes as he wants the flexibility to sell individual units based on market conditions. Mr. Page asked if this new zoning request would change this. Mr. Rothrock advised that it would not as the current underlying zoning allows short-term rentals.

Chairman Gherini said his questions were answered.

Mr. Hess asked if granting the density requested sets a precedence in other areas. Mr. Rothrock advised that the process creates a zoning district for this property and each property stands on its own. Mr. Rothrock said the Board will watch for trends and codify the code as necessary, but that the Board can currently address density for each project. Mr. Rothrock added that the Town Council is under no obligation to approve a Conditional Zoning request.

Mr. Papa asked if short-term rental use affects parking. Mr. Rothrock said no that the parking is based on the number of bedrooms and residential use. Mr. Papa said there may be multiple cars per unit. Mr. Rothrock said he thinks the parking will be designated. Mr. Heatherington confirmed and said the parking at Main and Pine is designated.

Mr. Glover asked the rationale for 8 units per acre. Mr. Rothrock said that residential density is a watershed requirement and maximum density is currently 5 units per acre. Mr. Rothrock advised that this property is outside the watershed, that we must use the R – 6M zoning which is 5 units per acre. Mr. Heatherington said he is looking at return on investment. Mr. Glover asked if mixed-use is counted the same way. Mr. Rothrock said the retail portion is not factored into the residential density.

Mr. Herbst asked about the density of the surrounding properties. Mr. Rothrock advised that Main and Pine is 17 units per acre. Mr. Glover noted that the new Winkler building has 12 units on a half-acre.

Ms. Simms, of 275 Wallingford Street said that is a lot of units in one area which will increase people and traffic. Ms. Simms said she assumes the Town is doing this for the taxes. Mr. Rothrock said the Town is not doing this, Mr. Heatherington is. Ms. Simms asked why this is being allowed. Mr. Rothrock said the Town has not allowed this yet, that the Town Council will hear this in May. Mr. Heatherington said he could build a hotel and that the Land Use Code determines the size of the building. Ms. Simms asked if this is to the Town's benefit. Mr. Heatherington said he did not know. Ms. Simms said there are no hotels in town. Mr. Rothrock said there are several motels/hotels in town. Ms. Simms said she does not want the character of Blowing Rock to change. Mr. Heatherington said that this helps the town as people park, typically leave their cars parked, and walk to everything in town and that this pumps sales tax into the town as these people shop and dine out. Mr. Heatherington said he hopes to start this summer, adding that Main and Pine was completed in 12 months.

Ms. Simms asked about voting. Mr. Rothrock advised that the Planning Board votes to recommend, then the Town Council will vote in May. Mr. Rothrock added that what is being proposed must be built.

*Mr. Herbst made a motion to close the public comment, seconded by Mr. Hess. All members were in favor of the motion.*

Mr. Glover said he appreciated the comments from the public.

*Mr. Herbst recommended to approve, seconded by Mr. Hess. **All members were in favor of the motion.***

**Other Business**

The Board hopes to continue working on 321 in May. Mr. Rothrock said the BRCC Pro Shop request may come back.

Mr. Hess said he does not want to have to approve higher density based on precedence. Mr. Rothrock said this is only an issue in CB and that the Board needs to put together a subcommittee to look at this.

*Having no further business Mr. Herbst made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Glover. **All members were in favor of the motion.***

Chairman Gherini adjourned the meeting at 6:50 p.m.

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Chairman Gherini

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Tammy Bentley  
Planning & Zoning Support Specialist