

Town of Blowing Rock

Planning Board

Minutes

October 19th, 2023

The Blowing Rock Planning & Zoning Board met on Thursday, September 21st, 2023 for their regularly scheduled meeting. Members present were Chairman Bill McCarter, Tom Barrett, Gregg Bergstrom, Chris Squires, Lindsay McClanahan-Cook and Brooks Mayson. Staff members present were Interim Planning Director Brian Johnson and Support Specialist Taylor Miller.

Chairman McCarter called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Tom Barrett made a motion to approve the agenda, seconded by Lindsay McClanahan-Cook. All members in favor.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chris Squires made a motion to approve the September 21st minutes, seconded by Mr. Tom Barrett. All members in favor.

1. Mountain Rentals, LLC (Blowing Rock Lodge) – Conditional Rezoning

Interim Planning Director, Brian Johnson presented the staff report for Mountain Rentals Conditional Rezoning. They will be requesting a change from General Business (GB) to Conditional Zoning – General Business (CZ-GB). They are asking for satellite annexation into the Town of Blowing Rock to connect to the utilities the town offers. The property is in the ETJ. Town code requires you to annex into the Town to use the utilities. The current sewer system for the property is declining, which is the purpose for wanting to connect to the towns sewer and water systems.

The current property is being used for long-term rentals. The site has multiple structures on it. The main building you can see from the road is the one that has most of the long-term rentals in it and then there are two single family dwelling unit structures on the property. All units are pretty much occupied. Main building is over 7,000 square feet. There are 36 existing spaces. No storm water on the property. It's always been in the county so there has never been a requirement for it. It could be an issue if it is ever redeveloped. Applicant would be responsible for connections to town water and sewer. Staff put in some conditions to try to bring the property in with as little non-conformities as possible. These include garbage, signage and landscaping. The staff feels like these are simple things we can bring into compliance as long as the applicant agrees.

Member Brooks Mayson asked if the applicant was looking for any other relief from requirements of being in General Business. Mr. Johnson said he wasn't concerned about any more reliefs right now. He noted that General Business has the widest range of uses but if they change anything, they have to come back and have their plan approved.

Michael Trew with Municipal Engineering spoke on behalf of the applicants. They did the engineering for the property and said that the bottom line is that the current septic field is failing, and they need to be on the town's sewer. It would be better for the environment and for the property owners in the long run. He noted that the property owners are providing a much-needed service for long term rentals for people that live around here or work in town. One of the conditions is the addition of a dumpster. They previously had a dumpster but had people from the neighborhoods around them throwing trash into the property's dumpster. They were throwing it over the fences and filling the dumpster. They decided to get rid of the dumpster and the current tenants take their trash to the convenience center just around the corner. They would like to continue doing that. Mr. Trew said that Mr. Johnson suggested that the board could add a condition that if trash became an issue at the property, that they would have to add a dumpster but could continue taking their trash to the convenience center for the time being.

Chairman McCarter asked where the tie-ins were for the sewer. Mr. Trew pointed out that they are just below the pump station to the existing gravity line.

Member Chris Squires asked about the storm-water management system and if there are any existing drainage problems. Mr. Trew acknowledged that there is a pond on the property that acts as its own drainage system because it is a sediment basin. He also noted that if they do redevelop the property then they would have to make sure they meet town requirements for a draining system.

The applicants referenced the dumpster condition again and said they would be okay with putting one in if the town decided they needed to but figured it's easier for their tenants to take it themselves because of the light occupancy. It would also keep others from throwing their trash in their dumpsters who do not live there.

Member Brooks Mayson asked if there were any issues with emergency services. Mr. Johnson noted it was sent to police and fire. He said that the Police Chief did request records of calls to that address from the county Sheriff's Department to see if there would be any issues. If this property is brought in, we will take over the police response to that location if it is needed.

Member Lindsay McInahan-Cook asked for the expected duration of the project. Mr. Trew said it would take about two weeks to do the ties.

The applicant, Mr. David Kennedy, said that they have had tenants there anywhere from 3-7 years. Most of the tenants work in Blowing Rock. There are quiet hours from 10 p.m. – 6 a.m. Most of them like living there and have been there for a while. Chairman McCarter noted that there's always been talk of workforce housing and this made him think of that. Mr. Kennedy said they do have some graduate students but most of the tenants work around here.

Member Chris Squires asked about the signage and landscaping conditions. The property owner said he didn't know exactly what the requirements were but that they would do what they needed to do to comply. Mr. Johnson noted the sign stuff would mostly be maintenance and the landscaping the same

thing. There are some dead trees on the property that need to be taken care of but most of the maintenance would be minimal. Some new plantings might be necessary.

A member of the public, Nick Bovino. He stated that his mother was with him, and she was a resident in the hill above the property. He noted that the Blowing Rock Lodge has been excellent neighbors. He said his only question is what will happen to the existing well and what would become of it. The well is on his mother's property. Mr. Johnson asked if it served his mother's house. He said no. Mr. Johnson said that the property owners would have to talk to the county health department. Mr. Johnson asked for the address for the record. The address is 143 Ski Crest Park.

Member Tom Barrett said the Blowing Rock Lodge is serving a need. He noted there may be some things that need to be picked up or cleaned up but overall, it's clean and well kept. He commended the property owners for providing a much-needed service for the community.

Member Chris Squires made a motion to recommend approval with the signage and landscaping conditions of bringing it into compliance with the town ordinance, as well as a dumpster requirement if necessary. Seconded by Mr. Tom Barrett. All members in favor.

2. Dumpster Screenings

Brian Johnson said that staff did an inventory of what dumpsters were complying and which ones were not. We did an inventory of approximately 100 properties. They consisted of commercial, multi-family and downtown areas. Many of them are in our downtown areas. About 75% of the properties are complying meaning about 25% are not. The ones who are not in compliance either don't have dumpsters or have some enclosures that are not in compliance. We also noted a lot of rollouts that have become a bigger problem. People just may have a higher need for somewhere to put the trash and keep adding rollouts to try and help with the trash need.

Mr. Johnson noted that he and Mr. Rothrock talked about November 1st, 2024, as the amortization date. The biggest issue will be the ones that don't have a dumpster at all because they will have to pay for all the requirements.

Member Brooks Mayson asked about the ones that don't have concrete pads. Mr. Johnson said there were only about 10 that don't have those. Again, the bigger problem we found being rollouts. Mr. Johnson said the biggest challenge might be finding a location on the properties to put the dumpster pad and enclosure. Member Lindsay McClanahan-Cook asked if any of the ones with a dumpster or pad would have their parking effected by trying to add on. Mr. Johnson said most likely. He also noted that some dumpster providers can help the property owner's figure out what size dumpster might be best for the property.

Member Chris Squires asked about somewhere that could be utilizing many rollouts. We're not requiring places to have dumpsters specifically, but they need an enclosure or screening for what they have. They can keep the rollouts, but they need screening. Mr. Johnson said with rollouts, we may not need a concrete pad, but we need screening. The screening is to hide the trash, but it is also to keep it contained. We are not dictating what kind of receptacle they have but how they contain it.

Chairman McCarter noted that at some point, it might be more expensive to provide an enclosure for 12 rollouts as opposed to an enclosure for one dumpster.

Member Tom Barrett stated that from an appearance standpoint, a safety and sanitary standpoint and just from the standpoint of being a good neighbor, you need to contain your trash. It's a part of your responsibility. The screening would be based on our section of the ordinance that requires the screening to be compatible with the property and materials. Typically, wooden enclosures painted or stained. We would be open to something that is also cost effective.

Member Tom Barrett made a motion to approve the dumpster ordinance and amortization. Seconded by Member Lindsay McClanahan-Cook. All members in favor.

Chairman McCarter asked if there was any other business.

Mr. Johnson discussed training options for the future for the Planning Board. All members seemed open to future trainings.

Mr. Johnson noted that the Embers project is still moving along. No set opening date yet.

870 Main Street is pretty much completed on the second and third floors. A couple of tenants looking at the restaurant. The sidewalk project is being completed in that area.

The coffee shop on 321 is for sale. The use of a coffee shop would still run with that project location until their 2-year limit is up. If a new use is proposed, it would have to come back to us and council for approval.

Mr. Johnson talked about the trial run of the grass lot on 321 for free public parking.

The Scotchman is still trying to move forward with the project. The clock is ticking on their two years, but we issued a demo permit last year. We will hopefully know more within the next month.

Members asked about Anne Furr's building. She is working with contractors for pricing. We still do not know the official use.

Citgo project is still coming along. We anticipate them moving in soon.

Rhoddie's bike shop is moving from Sunset to 321 next to Sweet Mimi's.

Member Gregg Bergstrom asked about the daycare of 321 using Papa Joes as an extension of the daycare. Mr. Johnson said they didn't have any permits.

Member Lindsay McClanahan-Cook asked about Storie Street Grille and the vacant building next door. They wanted to turn it into a bar next door. Mr. Johnson said their intent is still to expand, we just haven't heard anything recently.

Member Chris Squires asked about the coffee shop on 321 and Sunset. He stated there must be a time frame on when they can still do that. Mr. Johnson said that they will lose the use of the coffee shop if the special use or construction isn't started within a certain time frame.

Member Gregg Bergstrom asked about the Short-term Rental property that got grandfathered in. Mr. Johnson noted they were given the right to short-term rent, but they are just renovating right now.

Mr. Johnson noted the open house for the Comprehensive Plan. It is Monday, October 30th in Town Hall.

Chairman McCarter adjourned the meeting at 6:19 p.m.

Chairman McCarter

Planning Support Specialist Taylor Miller