

**Town of Blowing Rock**  
**Planning Board**  
**Minutes**  
**Thursday, August 15<sup>th</sup>, 2024**

The Blowing Rock Planning and Zoning Board met on Thursday, August 15th, 2024 for their regularly scheduled meeting. Members present were Chairman Bill McCarter, Tom Barrett, Chris Squires, Brooks Mayson, Lindsay Cook, Gregg Bergstrom, Steven Cohen, GK Naquin and Woody Hubbard. Staff members present were Planning Director Kevin Rothrock, Zoning Officer Brian Johnson and Taylor Miller.

Meeting called to order at 5:30 pm.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

*A motion was made by Mr. Steve Cohen to approve the July 11<sup>th</sup>, 2024 minutes, seconded by Mr. Chris Squires. All members in favor.*

Mr. Rothrock clarified some rules of the Special Use Permit process before presentation of the staff report for the project.

1. Special Use Permit # 2024 – 03 – David Reule (Watership Down)

Mr. Kevin Rothrock, presented the staff report. Mr. David Reule has proposed to partially demolish 4 existing units at Watership Downs, 133 Morris Street. He will reconstruct in the same footprint but will add a second story to the building. Mr. Reule owns 3 of the 4 properties. The other property owner is involved in the project and his building will be partially demolished and re-built as well. The property is zoned Central Business and is in the watershed. There is a 5-foot setback on the sides and rear property lines. The existing code would allow for reconstruction in the existing footprint at one-level but does not allow the second story in the 5-foot setback on each side. The applicant is asking for a waiver of the ordinance to build the second story in the 5-foot setback.

The other waiver the applicant is asking for is related to parking. He has parking planned on the rear side of the building. He is asking for the spaces to be 8.5-foot by 19-foot. The ordinance requires 9-foot by 19-foot. He will be adding 6 additional spaces in the rear parking lot. There are 4 spaces in the front of the building which totals 10 spaces for the building.

Mr. Rothrock talked about stormwater management for the property. The applicant will pick up the existing drainage from the Hanna building and take it to an existing retention box. The box is not on his property, but the Town put the box in about 10 years ago.

There will be one building with offices in it and the other buildings will be residential.

The dumpster pad on the backside of the building will be moved off the applicant's property and onto Six Pence's property.

Mr. Rothrock touched on the landscaping. He said there is not much room for landscaping to be done. Maybe some raised beds or planters to soften the look of the building.

Member Chris Squires asked Mr. Reule why he is trying to create 10 spaces instead of only the 7 spaces required. Mr. Reule said he is trying to create a sort of "relief valve" for the parking on the front side of the property. He described the current parking lot as a "cluster" – a bit of sour feelings between some of the co-owners of the parking lot. He wanted to provide the 6 spaces behind the building to try to help with the parking stress on the front side of the building.

Mr. Reule noted that he will own one of the buildings for office space. He needs an office for himself. Another building will be for the Carter's who are the current owners. The third building would be a spec house. The last building will be for his father. It will be residential and he will live in it.

The parking in the back will be dedicated parking for the people who will be living there or utilizing the offices. One for him, his dad and the Carter's and anyone else utilizing the office space or living in the spec house.

Member Lindsay Cook asked Mr. Reule to walk through the parking in the front and explain how it will work. Mr. Reule used an aerial photo to explain where the current parking is on the front side of the building. There is no striping so people just try to wedge in the lot. He hopes the parking in the rear lot will help relieve the parking in the front.

Mr. Keith Tester, an adjacent property owner and business owner in Watership Downs, was there to talk about the parking. He informed the Planning Board members how many spaces could fit in the front of the building. If you squeeze everyone in, you can fit 8.

Member Brooks Mayson asked if this property could be short-term rented. The applicant said yes. Member Brooks Mayson asked about garbage collection. Mr. Rothrock stated there would be roll-outs. The roll-outs could be accessed through the back. Mr. Rothrock stated he did not know how the trash was handled now. Mr. Tester stated they take their trash in roll-outs to Morris Street. Some of the units in the back can take their trash to the dumpster that's there in the back.

Member Woody Hubbard asked about a renter coming with a large vehicle and had to park in the rear lot. It would be difficult for them to fit. Mr. Reule stated they could be language in an agreement that could address that issue.

The POA was brought up and Member Brooks Mayson asked if something regarding parking could be written into the bylaws. Mr. Tester stated the property has a defunct POA but something could be written in. Mr. GK Naquin stated that this would be an issue the property owners involved in the POA would need to figure out together and not from a Planning Board stand point.

Member Lindsay Cook asked how people would get through the gate. Mr. Reule stated there would be remote access for property owners as well as a key pad.

Mr. Tester stated the traffic needs to really be considered for this project. There is a lot of traffic on Morris street, including school traffic and that makes this project different.

George and Themena Hanna asked for the planning board members to go see the property. They said the building looked good in the drawings but it is very large. They don't want a project that will make life more difficult with the traffic and parking.

Mr. Tester stated he likes the project but that it comes with risks that need to be managed.

Mr. GK Naquin noted that the project will probably be under construction during school time meaning there will be school traffic backed up on Morris Street. He thinks the Blowing Rock Police should reroute traffic for anything construction related during pick up and drop off times. Mrs. Lindsay Cook noted that there will be a new pick up and drop off procedure for this upcoming year with the new principal. She said there will still be traffic but the goal of the new plan is to alleviate some of the congestion for Morris Street. Mr. Rothrock noted there could be a condition that mentioned construction deliveries during drop off or pick up times for the school.

*Member GK Naquin made a motion to recommend approval of the project with the variance requests of the second story being built into the setback and the smaller parking spaces as well as limiting access to the property from construction crews during drop off and pick up (7:00am-8:00am and 2:30pm-3:30pm) hours for Blowing Rock School. Member Steve Cohen seconded the motion. **Five members voted for the motion, 4 voted against.***

Member Chris Squires did not agree with the idea of interfering with construction delivery for the project. He understood the purpose of the condition but did not want to interfere with the relationship of the contractor and construction crews on when to deliver to the jobsite.

*Member Chris Squires made a second motion to recommend approval of the project with the variance of the second story in the 5-foot setback and the smaller parking spaces. Seconded by Member Gregg Bergstrom. **All members in favor.***

\*This second motion was made by mistake due to thinking only 4 members had voted in favor of the original motion. It was not realized until after the meeting that the original motion had a majority vote. This makes the second motion void and the first motion holds as the recommendation for Town Council.\*

Meeting adjourned at 6:49pm.

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Chairman Bill McCarter

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Planning Specialist, Taylor Miller