

Planning and Zoning Board

Minutes

Thursday, March 19, 2009

7:00 p.m.

The Blowing Rock Planning and Zoning Board met on Thursday, March 19, 2009 for their regular scheduled meeting. Vice-Chairman Sweeting called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Members present were Debbie di Santi, Nelda Miller, Web Alexander, Jim Steele, Greg Grana, and Ada Webster. Chairman Jim West was absent. Staff member present was Planning Director Kevin Rothrock.

Mr. Alexander made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Ms. diSanti. All members were in favor of the motion.

Swearing in of new members

Ms. Brenda Fairbetter was sworn in by Vice-Chairman Sweeting. Ms. Fairbetter will serve as the Extraterritorial Jurisdiction member.

Items of Business

Grand Opening Banners

Mr. Rothrock opened the discussion on grand opening banners by pointing out that the Town Council had asked the Board to consider some other ideas and issues related to the banners. Those issues were listed in the packet as follows:

- To allow business anniversary date banners after 10 years and every five years after
- To allow businesses to display “grand re-opening” banners after major renovations
- To allow banners for businesses to recognize special community events or parades (horse show, Winterfest, etc.)
- To allow customer appreciation banners – one day per year
- To allow display of “Business After Hours” banners
- To allow businesses to display banners notifying customers of their merchandise related to a special event
- Limit display of grand opening banners to 14 *consecutive* days

Mr. Rothrock asked the Board to consider each of the issues individually and pointed out that the draft ordinance included in the packet was revised to include the consensus of the Council during their February meeting. Those changes included limiting display of banners to 14 consecutive days and allowing businesses that relocate or spend a certain amount on renovation costs to have grand opening banners as well.

Prior to voting on each issue the Board had some general discussion about the banners.

Ms. diSanti shared that each business could have 16 different banners if allowed to have a banner for each of the situations on the list.

Mr. Rothrock responded by stating the Council wanted to have an overall limit on the number of banners allowed per business per year.

Mr. Grana commented that a limit on the total is good, but felt that the staff would have a hard time administering the banner program.

Mr. Steele asked if the discussion was on grand opening banners or all banners. Mr. Rothrock responded by saying the discussion was mainly for grand openings but other banners were being discussed as well. Mr. Steele then said that each business should be limited to three banners and that the special events are already being advertised on the posters inside businesses' display windows.

Ms. diSanti thought that the banners might be a distraction from the available window space at each business.

Mr. Grana was in favor of allowing grand opening banners.

The general consensus of the Board was to amend the draft ordinance to limit the display period to 14 consecutive days and to allow businesses that complete a renovation of at least \$50,000 to display a grand opening banner.

There was an in-depth discussion on banners, among items discussed were signs for interior as well as exterior. The Board understands and is sensitive to businesses, but feel that signage should be inside rather than outside of the buildings.

*Ms. diSanti made a motion to approve the amended text as discussed and send back to Council. Mr. Grana seconded the motion. **All members were in favor of the motion.***

The Board then proceeded to vote on the remaining banner issues not covered in the draft ordinance.

1. To allow business anniversary date banners after 10 years and every five years after.

The Board agreed to allow anniversary banners for 25 and 50-year anniversaries.

2. To allow banners for businesses to recognize special community events or parades (horse show, Winterfest, etc.).

The Board did not recommend allowing banners for businesses for special events, but businesses should be allowed to continue to use signs inside their buildings.

3. To allow customer appreciation banners – one day per year.

The Board did not recommend allowing customer appreciation banners.

4. To allow display of "Business After Hours" banners.

The Board did not recommend allowing "Business After Hours" banners.

5. To allow businesses to display banners notifying customers of their merchandise related to a special event.

The Board did not recommend allowing banners related to special events. The Board discussed continuing to allow businesses to display placards or posters in windows.

Other Business

The Board discussed a staff report and a report from Chairman Jim West about the Retail Strategy Steering Committee meetings. Mr. Rothrock presented the information to the Board and summarized what the steering committee's role was. He reported that Chairman West was requesting the Board review the implementation sequence in the Retail Strategy Report and identify any issues where they should be involved.

Ms. Miller recommended that any issues dealing with zoning districts, design guidelines, and a corridor study should be addressed by the Planning Board.

Mr. Grana stated that anytime Chairman West felt an issue in the Retail Strategy Study should be brought before the Planning Board, it should be studied.

The Board then discussed other general issues in Town including the Downtown Streetscape Improvements. Ms. diSanti made a recommendation for the Town crews to clearly identify a route from the sidewalk in front of St. Mary's to the historic sidewalk. She said it is unclear that public access is available to the sidewalk due to a no entry sign being posted at Village Green condos for their driveway.

Adjourn

*Mr. Alexander made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Miller seconded the motion. **All members were in favor of the motion.***

With no further business the Planning Board adjourned at 8:30 PM.

Jim West, Chairman

Kevin Rothrock, Planning Director