

Planning and Zoning Board

Minutes

Thursday, April 16, 2009

7:00 p.m.

The Blowing Rock Planning and Zoning Board met on Thursday, April 16, 2009 for their regular scheduled meeting. Chairman West called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Members present were Debbie diSanti, Ada Webster, Brenda Fairbetter, Greg Grana, Nelda Miller, Sue Sweeting and Web Alexander. Staff members present were Planning Director Kevin Rothrock, Town Engineer Chris Brown and Administrative Assistant Sherrie Pitts.

Chairman West commented that he had been absent from the last meeting and abstained from voting on the minutes.

Ms. diSanti commented that on page two of the minutes in the voting issues of banners there had been more discussion than was noted. She stated that the Board was sensitive to businesses but felt that signage should be inside stores rather than outside.

Ms diSanti made a motion to accept minutes with an amendment to address signage items discussed in regard to allowable indoor/outdoor signs. Mr. Grana seconded the motion. All members were in favor of the motion. Chairman West abstained from voting on the minutes.

Chairman West asked for nominations and discussion on officers for this year. With no other comments, Ms. Sweeting stated that she was willing to serve again as vice-chair. Chairman West stated that he also was willing to serve again as chair.

Ms. Sweeting nominated Mr. West to continue as chairman of the board. Ms. Fairbetter seconded the motion. All members voted in favor of the motion.

Chairman West nominated Ms. Sweeting to continue as vice-chair. Mr. Alexander seconded the motion. All members voted in favor of the motion.

Items of Business

CUP 2009-01 Holiday Inn Express

Mr. Rothrock gave the staff report to the board in reference to Milan, Inc. requesting a conditional use permit to renovate the exterior of the Days Inn building and construct a new covered entry. The proposed renovations are in anticipation of the conversion from Days Inn to Holiday Inn Express that will take place over the next few months. The permit process will require some upgrades to some existing elements of the site including sidewalks, dumpster screening, landscaping, ADA requirements, and improvements of the maintenance building. The subject property is located in the WS-IV-PA watershed.

The following issues that need to be addressed as part of the CUP application:

1. The antenna the front of the building should be removed if no longer in use.

2. The large satellite dish behind the building should be removed if no longer in use.
3. Dumpster screening is required for both dumpsters. Dumpsters shall be placed within the screen area. The dumpster screening behind the building will need to be extended to hide the sides of the containment area.
4. The juniper bushes along both sides of both driveways will need to be cut back from the edge of the road for sight triangle purposes.
5. Handicap signs that meet the NC State Building Code are required to be in place at all designated spaces.
6. The maintenance shed needs improvements and should match the hotel building colors and materials.
7. Exposed HVAC equipment and vents on the hotel roof shall be painted to match the roof color.
8. Additional landscaping/screening will need to be installed along Ransom Street.
9. A five foot wide sidewalk will need to be installed along the full length of Hwy 321 and the section of property along Ransom Street. The sidewalk along Hwy 321 can be deferred until the widening project is underway.

The following exterior changes are proposed:

1. A new porte cochere is proposed at the main building entry. The new entry will have a pitched roof and the appearance of a heavy beam structure. The base of the support columns will be stone to match the existing stone columns.
2. A new covered entry at the rear entrance.
3. A new paint scheme for the building.
4. New roof shingles on the entire building.

Ms. Sweeting asked about the utility lines in back of the building and if they could be put underground. Mr. Rothrock commented that if it was a large cable it could be a 3 phase power line and cable and phone attached also. He stated that the lines were behind the building not required to go underground.

Ms. Sweeting wanted to know if DOT or Holiday Inn was responsible for the storm water. Mr. Rothrock said that DOT was responsible for water within their right-of-way. Holiday Inn would be responsible for the runoff that comes outside the DOT right-of-way.

Ms. diSanti questioned issues involved with the US 321 widening. Mr. Rothrock explained that most of the project would be expanded on the opposite side of 321 from the hotel.

Mr. Grana asked if the crosswalk that had been discussed between the proposed retail/office building on the neighboring property and the Holiday Inn to allow pedestrian traffic from the hotel to the restaurant was still planned for construction.

There was some discussion on no left turns out of the Holiday Inn after the 321 widening.

Chairman West commented on the painting of the roof vents and asked if paint material had become more durable.

Mr. Grana wanted to add maintenance of the painted roof fixtures to the CUP.

With no other questions or comments of staff the floor was opened to the applicant.

Mr. William Robinson, architect for the project, opened discussion on questions from the board. In reference to the roof fixtures there is a plastic material that fits over existing vents that can be colored which would last longer without required maintenance.

Mr. Robinson displayed a model and discussed the cantilevered roof over the main entrance doors that would be replacing the flat porte cochere. He explained that Holiday Inn wants to create an ambiance using blue and green lighting inside the roof line of the porte cochere. They propose to add an exit driveway in back of the building onto Ransom St.

Ms. Sweeting commented that she did not believe it was allowable to add a driveway onto Ransom St.

Days Inn owner Mr. Manu Patel commented on the antennas and dishes on the building most of which are still in use. The dish on top of the porte cochere was for Days Inn and can be removed. The tall metal antenna out front is still in use and under contract until 2013.

Mr. Robinson passed around a photo of a sign depicting the standard theme that Holiday Inn uses.

Mr. Grana asked if the photo was like the sign they planned to use. Chairman West discussed town approved colors and requirements for signs.

There was discussion on an alternate exit onto Ransom St. Mr. Rothrock advised that the Board could recommend that if Holiday Inn wanted an exit onto Ransom Street such approval would require a Planning Board approval.

Ms. Sweeting asked about a timeline. Mr. Robinson advised that he would have construction drawings ready within about two weeks of Town Council approval and should have the project complete within three months.

Ms. Sweeting asked about the drainage on the right of the property and the standing water near the shed. She also wanted to know if the dumpster screening would be brought to code. Ms. Sweeting commented on the doors under the front side fire exit and asked if they were to remain working doors because one was damaged and there were mops and brooms standing in that area. In the front of the building there is a rock wall. Ms. Sweeting wanted to know if rockwork would be extended in the back of the building.

Mr. Robinson said that there was a wooden fence in the front that would be extended. The fence in the back would be removed.

With no other questions or comments of applicant the floor was opened and closed with no comment from the public.

Ms. Sweeting made a motion to recommend approval of the CUP application as follows:

- 1. The metal antenna in front be removed*
- 2. The large satellite dish behind the building be removed if no longer in use (as written)*
- 3. Dumpster screening should be opaque*
- 4. The juniper bushes along both driveways should be cut back for sight triangle (as written)*
- 5. Handicap signs should meet NC State Building Code in all designated spaces (as written)*

6. *Maintenance shed needs improvements and should match hotel colors and materials (as written)*
7. *Exposed HVAC equipment and vents on hotel roof should color match and be maintained*
8. *An opaque screen buffer along Ransom Street*
9. *Ransom Street sidewalk should be installed – Hwy 321 sidewalk to wait for widening of the Highway*
10. *Request Town staff to address the sink hole, the poles and water issues on site.*
11. *If the applicant desires a driveway connection with Ransom Street a CUP amendment must come back before Planning Board.*

Mr. Rothrock asked if the antenna could be removed and an alternate device be used for movies. Mr. Patel advised he would check to see if another device could be substituted for the antenna tower.

Chairman West commented that the board strongly recommends the applicant get information on antenna options before the Town Council meeting.

Mr. Grana seconded the motion. All members were in favor of the motion.

Discussion of Town Center District

Mr. Rothrock opened discussion on a potential Town Center District with a preliminary map enclosed in board packets. There was general discussion about possibly changing building heights and other flexibility with code issues.

Chairman West talked about how and when downtown could become retail only that encouraged more tourist traffic.

Mr. Rothrock advised the subcommittee might look at options and changes including no office on the first floors of buildings, allow restaurants, etc.

Chairman West commented the board should not be in a hurry to recommend use changes on Main Street. The board needs to study options for a special downtown center district and decide on requirements and limitations for the district.

Mr. Grana made a motion to refer a study and discussion to the zoning subcommittee. Ms. Sweeting seconded the motion. All members voted in favor of the motion.

The zoning subcommittee members are Ms. diSanti, Mr. Grana, Chairman West and Mr. Steele.

Loading Zones and Delivery in Downtown

Mr. Rothrock commented on loading zones and deliveries in downtown and mentioned the photo that was included in the board packets.

Ms. Sweeting made a motion to refer loading zone/delivery items to the planning subcommittee, along with streetscape issues. Mr. Grana seconded the motion. All members were in favor of the motion.

Other Business

Mr. Rothrock talked about banners and advised Town Council wanted the Planning Board to look at it again.

*Mr. Grana made a motion to postpone discussion and deliberation to the May meeting. Mr. Alexander seconded the motion. **All members were in favor of the motion.***

Adjourn

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

With no further business the Planning Board adjourned at 9:34 PM.

Jim West, Chairman

Sherrie Pitts, Administrative Assistant