

**Draft**

**Planning and Zoning Board**

**Minutes**

**Thursday, November 20, 2014**

**5:30 p.m.**

The Blowing Rock Planning and Zoning Board met on Thursday, November 20, 2014 for their regularly scheduled meeting. Chairman West called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm. Members present were David Harwood, David Laughter, Alice Roess, Rich Scheurer, Wes Carter, and Natalie Bovino. Members absent were Lisa Stripling and Genie Starnes. Staff members present were Planning Director Kevin Rothrock, Town Engineer Doug Chapman and Administrative Assistant Tammy Bentley.

Chairman West asked if there were any changes to the October 16, 2014 minutes. There were none. *Mr. Harwood made a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Ms. Roess. All members were in favor of the motion.*

**CUP 2014 – 04 Appalachian Ski Mountain**

Mr. Rothrock gave the staff report. Appalachian Ski Mountain is requesting a conditional use permit to construct a 960 square foot welcome center with 12 parking and 3 bus spaces on the northwest corner of Edmisten Road and Highway 321. The subject property is located within the Town's Extraterritorial Jurisdiction (ETJ) and is zoned GB, General Business. The property is further identified by Watauga County PIN 2818-44-6195. Mr. Rothrock added that the renderings as shown in the presentation show an orange trim color that is not an approved Town color.

Mr. Scheurer asked if there would be public restrooms. Mr. Brad Moretz with Appalachian Ski Mountain said there would be 2 unisex public restrooms.

Mr. Harwood asked if the building is within 200' of existing water and sewer lines. Mr. Rothrock confirmed and added that the applicant would not be required to tap on as the property is not in the Town's corporate limits. Mr. Harwood ask for confirmation that connection to Town water and sewer is not required in the ETJ. Mr. Rothrock confirmed.

Chairman West asked if Phyllis Lester, owner of the subject parcel, was the applicant. Mr. Rothrock replied no. Chairman West asked if there was a purchase agreement on the property. Ms. Lester replied yes, that the property is under contract and the purchase is contingent on the conditional use permit being approved.

Chairman West asked if the soil was suitable for a septic system. Mr. Moretz responded that they have an application with the health department and that they would take whatever measures required to make a septic system work.

Mr. Brad Moretz addressed the Board. He told the Board that they will lose the billboard on Highway 321 and they are not able to have any off site signage on Highway 321 and this is why they are requesting a conditional use permit. He noted that, unlike other ski resorts in the area, the slopes at Appalachian Ski Mountain are not visible from the road. Mr. Moretz told the Board that the project would be presented in a first class manner and the welcome center has a “mountain-esque” feel and would be constructed from local materials. He said that the orange trim color is minimally presented on the building and that it would be covered by commercial gutters on the sides of the buildings. He added that the design and colors are tied to the buildings at the ski resort. Mr. Moretz said that the orange color is part of their branding and signature to their identity.

Mr. Harwood asked what activities would go on at the welcome center. Mr. Moretz said that there would be information on Boone and Blowing Rock and that there might be retail sales. Mr. Harwood asked if lift tickets and lodging would be sold at the welcome center. Mr. Moretz said they have no plans to sell lift tickets at the welcome center as they accomplish that very efficiently at the lodge.

Mr. Carter asked if anyone had spoken with the neighbors about the noise from buses engines. Mr. Moretz said that he does not think that will be an issue, that there is thick vegetative screening between the parking lot and the neighbors, and that they do not intend to sell a lot of merchandise at the welcome center.

Mr. Carter asked if Mr. Moretz had reviewed the approved Town colors to see if there is an approved color close to the proposed orange color. Mr. Moretz said he was not sure that any other color would suffice.

Ms. Roess asked if the orange color is the same as the orange in their logo. Mr. Moretz confirmed.

Chairman West noted that the hill between the parking lot and neighbors would deaden more noise than the vegetation.

Ms. Bovino noted that there were businesses on this property in the past and asked Mr. Moretz if anyone had spoken to the neighbors if they had any problems with traffic in the past. Mr. Moretz said the neighbors in the green house had only been there 10 years and the previous businesses predate them. He added that these neighbors like the new egress option.

Mr. Carter asked if they had gotten a letter from the neighbors indicating their support for the project. Mr. Moretz said they were in the process of getting such a letter.

Mr. Harwood asked if the HVAC units and trash receptacles would be screened. Mr. Moretz said the trash cans would be hidden by some type of wood screening. Mr. Rothrock said that the HVAC unit would be screened. Chairman West asked if there would be low shrubs around the HVAC unit on both sides. Mr. Rothrock confirmed.

Mr. Harwood asked if there would be a propane tank. Mr. Moretz said no.

Mr. Harwood asked if the roof slope is 4:12 and pointed out that the minimum per the land use code is 6:12. He asked if the 4:12 slope was in keeping the buildings at the ski resort. Mr. Moretz responded yes.

Ms. Roess asked if the sign would be illuminated all night. Mr. Rothrock replied that there is no amount on the time for sign illumination, but that the brightness is restricted.

Chairman West opened the hearing to public comment.

Ms. Phyllis Lester, owner of the subject property, told the Board that she has a signed letter from the Timber Creek property owners stating that they are very much in favor of this project. She added that she is not thrilled about the ETJ as they have no services and asked the Board to be lenient with the orange color.

Mr. Scott McIntosh, owner of Blowing Rock Investment Properties said that he thinks this is a great idea and that, as a neighbor, he encourages the Board to accept the trim color.

Ms. Annie Whatley, owner of the Village Café, thanked the Planning Board and staff for their efforts. She encouraged the Board to do whatever they needed to do to approve the color and project since Appalachian Ski Mountain had done so much for Blowing Rock and western NC.

Mr. Butch Triplett, owner of Woodlands Restaurant, said that he helped to build the original ski lodge and that the resort helps his business in the winter. He added that this would be the most expensive billboard ever built.

Ms. Roess asked if they only need a billboard, why build a building. Mr. Moretz said that current regulations prohibit off premise advertising and they must have a building to have a sign.

Mr. Carter asked if there were any plans to expand the building in the future. Mr. Moretz said he did not foresee that now, but would not rule out the possibility. He added that there is only about 0.45 acres that is buildable due to the shape of the property and the setbacks. Mr. Rothrock said that some of this area would have to be reserved for the septic system.

Mr. Moretz said that he was moved by the support shown and that he did not solicit it. He added that the orange color is part of who they are and that the project would very tasteful and would represent Blowing Rock very well.

Ms. Reba Moretz said that they contracted with a company many years ago to devise a logo. She said the company said that they needed a logo that would differentiate them from the other ski areas and that is how the logo and color came to be.

Chairman West closed the meeting to public comment.

Mr. Laughter asked if the Town Council had ever approved a color not on the chart. Mr. Rothrock said that most sign colors are approved administratively. He added that the ordinance does allow flexibility and could be applied to the roof pitch as well.

Mr. Scheurer said that he thought this was all about purpose and understands continuity in downtown, but that this is in the ETJ and that taking away the orange color would negate the whole purpose of this project. Mr. Rothrock responded that while this is in the ETJ it is still in the Town's jurisdiction.

Mr. Carter said that there are variances for a reason and that he thinks it is appropriate to approve the orange color if the neighbors are ok with the color. Ms. Bovino agreed with Mr. Carter.

Chairman West noted that Ms. Lester stated that the Timber Creek owners are ok with the project.

Mr. Carter recommended that the applicant get a letter from the neighbor that will share the driveway.

Mr. Grady Moretz addressed the Board.

*Mr. Laughter made a motion to re-open public comment, seconded by Mr. Carter. **All members were in favor.***

Mr. Grady Moretz told the Board that in the beginning the ski resort was called Blowing Rock Ski Lodge, but they went bankrupt. He added that he had to buy the resort to protect his investment and they decided to change the name to Appalachian Ski Mountain.

Ms. Lester told the Board that she had given the brochure to the Timber Creek neighbors and they were fine with the orange color.

Ms. Bovino noted what an icon this is and that sets the precedent to allow the color.

*Ms. Bovino made a motion to approve the application as submitted by the applicant with allowance of the orange color and 4:12 roof pitch, seconded by Ms. Roess. **All members were in favor of the motion.***

Chairman West called a five minute break.

## **Comprehensive Plan**

Mr. Rothrock asked to Board to look and the actionable items on the plan and to put together their recommendation list for the Town Council to consider during their retreat in January.

Mr. Scheurer asked if anything could be done immediately to make the Glen Burney Trail safer. Mr. Rothrock sad that some steps have been taken already, including additional signage and revised maps. Mr. Carter asked about getting cell service on the trail. Mr. Rothrock said that was being investigated.

Mr. Rothrock suggested that the Board look at allowing accessory apartments in the R-15 zoning district. Mr. Harwood asked if the current setbacks would apply. Mr. Rothrock confirmed. The Board discussed the current size restriction for accessory apartments and if those should be changed. Mr. Rothrock said that the he thought the current percentage is a good number.

The Board discussed the priorities list and how to rank the items. Mr. Harwood said that finishing the streetscape should be the first priority. Mr. Rothrock said there were some “touchy” areas in front of some shops. Mr. Harwood suggested looking at the seasonality of completion. Mr. Rothrock agreed. Mr. Harwood said the second priority should be a multi-use path to Bass Lake. Ms. Roess said she thought eliminating the overhead utility lines on Main Street should be a propriety. Mr. Laughter said completion of the Middle Fork Greenway should be a priority. The Board discussed the logistical and cost barriers of the list. The Board also discussed having someone with the Middle Fork Greenway make a presentation to the Board. Mr. Scheurer said he would love to see how to connect downtown to Bass Lake and the Greenway and asked what route is planned to connect Bass Lake. Mr. Rothrock said 221 and that in 2000 a planned sidewalk to Bass Lake was shelved and bike lanes were installed instead.

Chairman West suggested the Board identify players and a plan of action. He added that many items were long term, but if they were not started that they would always be long term.

Mr. Scheurer asked if any of the bond money was earmarked for the streetscape. Mr. Rothrock confirmed.

Chairman West suggested using a flow chart to clarify what the Board is going after. Mr. Rothrock suggested reviewing chapter 4 of the Comprehensive Plan. Chairman West said the Board needs to focus on 2015 and what can be done on several priorities.

## **Other Business**

Chairman West asked for an update on the lawsuit related to Mountainleaf. Mr. Rothrock said that an appeal to the decision had been filed in Watauga County Superior Court.

*Mr. Carter made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Laughter. All members were in favor of the motion.*

Chairman West adjourned the meeting at 7:55 pm.

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Chairman Jim West

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Tammy Bentley, Administrative Assistant