

Draft

Planning and Zoning Board

Minutes

Thursday, September 17, 2015

5:30 p.m.

The Blowing Rock Planning and Zoning Board met on Thursday, September 17, 2015 for their regularly scheduled meeting. Chairman Harwood called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm. Members present were David Laughter, Lisa Stripling, Jim Steele Genie Starnes, Kim Hartley and Natalie Bovino. Members Wes Carter and Joe Papa were absent. Staff members present were Town Manager Scott Fogleman, Town Engineer Doug Chapman, Planning Director Kevin Rothrock and Administrative Assistant Tammy Bentley.

Chairman Harwood said that, per the Planning Board by-laws, the agenda needs to be approved. He then asked that Other Business be moved to the top of the agenda due to members needing to be recused for the second agenda item. *Mr. Laughter made a motion to move Other Business to the top of the agenda, seconded by Ms. Starnes. All members were in favor of the motion.*

Other Business

There was none.

Chairman Harwood asked if there were any changes to the August 20, 2015 meeting minutes. There were none. *Mr. Steele made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Ms. Bovino. All members were in favor of the motion.*

CUP 2015-03 R&R Builders of North Carolina

Mr. Rothrock reviewed the staff report and Powerpoint presentation. R&R Builders of North Carolina is requesting a conditional use permit to construct two 2-unit townhouse buildings on Ransom Street. The subject properties are zoned R-6M, Multi-Family Residential and are located in the WS-IV-PA water supply watershed. The site will be a combination of 460 and 488 Ransom Street and are further identified by Watauga County PINs 2817-06-3466-000 and 2817-06-4412-000.

The project meets the setbacks and parking space requirements. Site lighting will conform to Town Code. Storm water from the site will be collected in the parking lot to an above ground retention system located in the front yard. This detention system is designed to meet Land Use Code standards. Any drainage will be detained and released to a catch basin on the edge of Ransom Street.

The applicant is requesting an 8' landscape buffer on both sides of the property. The Land Use Code requires a 16' buffer. The project would need a waiver of the landscape buffer width.

Chairman Harwood asked if there were questions for staff.

Mr. Steele asked where the 16 feet is measured from. Mr. Rothrock said from the building wall to the property line. Chairman Harwood asked the depth in the back. Mr. Randy Jones, Architect for the project said it is 9.5' to the roof overhang. Chairman Harwood asked about the length from unit B1. Mr. Jones said it is about 12' to 14'. Chairman Harwood asked the height of the retaining wall. Mr. Jones said no more than 6' on the sides and about 7.5' on the back. Chairman Harwood asked if the area to the west of the retaining wall would remain undisturbed. Mr. Rothrock said yes, mostly.

Ms. Hartley asked if the storm water detention would be full at times. Mr. Rothrock said yes; that after a heavy rain event and that the water drains out at a prescribed rate to meet Town code. Mr. Duane Coen, Landscape Architect for the project, said that it would look like a little meadow when dry.

Mr. Tony diSanti, Attorney for R&R Builders, told the Board that he was struck at the transition that Ransom Street is undergoing. He added that he felt this project is a nice addition for Blowing Rock and at a much needed price point.

Mr. Jones thanked the Board for their time. He said that the shape of the property presented some difficulties with positioning the project. He added that they can meet the 8' setback and wondered why the buffer requirement was twice the setback size, but they can't meet the landscape buffer requirement. He added that the site is "stair-stepped" and the back appears higher as a result.

Mr. Steele asked what materials the retaining walls will be. Mr. Jones said they would either be reinforced poured concrete or concrete block faced with stone. Mr. Jones added that they would not be segmental block.

Chairman Harwood asked where the HVAC units would be placed. Mr. Jones said probably in the center courtyard and that they would be screened. Mr. Jones added that there is a 2

foot offset between the buildings due to the grade; that the catch basin will be like a little water fall during rain events and that all the slopes can be mowed.

Chairman Harwood asked if the retaining walls require railing. Mr. Jones said that the uppermost rear wall would probably have a split-rail fence on it.

Ms. Stripling asked about the lower level area of the buildings. Mr. Jones said this may be storage and would be screened.

Chairman Harwood opened the meeting to public comment.

Ms. Betsy Wilcox asked the approximate size and price of the units. Mr. Jones said approximately 1936 square feet and the proposed price would be in the high \$300,000 to low \$400,000 price range.

Ms. Starnes made a motion to close the public comment period, seconded by Ms. Stripling. All members were in favor of the motion.

Chairman Harwood said he thinks this is a nice use of the lot and that it will really enhance Ransom Street. Ms. Starnes said that she thinks this is something nice and has not been done before. Mr. Steele said that he also likes the project. He thinks it is good for the town and that it fits in with the 2014 Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Laughter made a motion to send to Town Council as written with the buffer reduced to 8', seconded by Ms. Starnes. All members were in favor of the motion.

CUP 2015-02 RWL 1, LLC

Chairman Harwood said that Ms. Stripling and Mr. Steele asked to be recused from the RWL 1, LLC CUP meeting. Ms. Stripling has been discussing business location options with Mr. Lovern and Mr. Steele's wife is Mr. Lovern's (principal of RWL 1, LLC) agent. *Ms. Starnes made a motion to recuse Ms. Stripling and Mr. Steele from the meeting, seconded by Mr. Laughter. All members were in favor of the motion.*

Mr. Rothrock reviewed the staff report and Powerpoint presentation. RWL 1, LLC is requesting a conditional use permit to convert the old Moody Furniture building to a restaurant/retail establishment. The subject properties are zoned CB, Central Business and are located in the WS-IV-PA water supply watershed. The site will be a combination of 125 and 127 Sunset Drive and is further identified by Watauga County PINs 2807-98-3020-000 and 2807-986-3068-000.

The front of the existing building including the porch encroaches into the street setback. The front porch will be extended along the entire length of the building and a new terrace will be added to the east side of the building. Both additions will encroach into the street setback between 3 and 7 feet. The applicant is requesting a setback waiver.

The proposed restaurant use of the building will require an additional 7 parking spaces. The applicant is proposing 21 parking spaces including one ADA van-accessible space. Some of the excess parking will be reserved by the applicant for off-site retail and off-site tenant parking. The parking lot will be accessible from Sunset Drive and is proposed for 2 way traffic. Staff recommends that the access be one-way with traffic exiting onto the Maple Street public parking lot.

Required lighting will meet Town Code. Storm water will be collected in the parking lot access off Sunset Drive and directed to an underground retention system designed to meet Town Code standards. This will be directed to a new drainage system to be installed in Sunset Drive to the Maple Street intersection.

The applicant is requesting a waiver of the 15' street setback along Sunset Drive to allow for expansion of the existing porch and addition of a dining terrace.

Mr. Rothrock told the Board that he initially met with the applicant over one year ago and that they have worked hard to keep the character of this unique building and improve the site.

Chairman Harwood asked if there were any questions for Staff.

Ms. Starnes said she liked the Maple Street exit. Chairman Harwood asked if the parking was adequate for employees and patrons. Mr. Rothrock said not if the building is full, but that there is plenty of adjacent parking. Chairman Harwood inquired about the spaces reserved for tenant parking. Mr. Rothrock said there are 6 spaces reserved. Mr. Lovern added that 4 are for tenants of the old Capel building and that 2 are for tenant parking for the apartments in the old Thirtle building located at 1077 Main Street. Chairman Harwood asked Mr. Rothrock how losing a space at the Maple Street lot would affect the parking. Mr. Rothrock said that it would not affect the parking as the applicant would still have a surplus. Mr. Rothrock added that he did not think that a parking space on the Maple Street lot would be eliminated; that he thinks the exit onto that lot can be accommodated keeping the existing spaces intact.

Chairman Harwood asked if the applicant is paying for the storm water system down Sunset Drive. Mr. Rothrock confirmed the applicant is. Chairman Harwood asked if this would be integrated with the Streetscape enhancement of Sunset Drive. Mr. Rothrock said it would depend on the timing of the two projects.

Mr. Mike Trew, Engineer for the applicant, thanked the Board for their time and said the Staff had been very cooperative with this project. He said that the goal has been to retain the character of the building while upgrading it and bringing it up to code and that fixing up the building is an asset to Sunset Drive.

Mr. Trew said the storm drainage will collect on the property per Town Code and release slowly. The catch basin will be underground and the location requires a long drain line down Sunset Drive.

Chairman Harwood asked how they feel this project will impact the Maple Street lot. Mr. Trew said he thinks exiting on the Maple Street lot is a good solution, but it needs more research.

Mr. Bob Lovern told the Board that he was very excited to buy the building due to its historical significance. He said that he has spent \$50,000 to \$60,000 on the foundation because he loves the building and wants to ensure its survival. He added that he feels this project will make Sunset Drive more accessible to downtown. He said the interior is unbelievable and plans to maintain most of it and is incorporating wood that was left in the building into the project. Mr. Lovern added that Mr. Rothrock has been most helpful with the process and his input has helped with the final solution.

Chairman Harwood opened the meeting to public comment.

Dr. James Brown, owner of the vacant lot between the old Capel building and First Citizens Bank, told the Board that he thinks that this is as good a project as possible on this site that retains the historic character. He added that when Mr. Thirtle built his building on Sunset Drive the storm water drain went down the middle of Sunset and he tied into the same drain anticipating future development on his lot. He said that he does not see that drain now.

Dr. Brown said that his main concern is the 4' required buffer has been eliminated in lieu of a sidewalk on the west side of the property. He conceded that a buffer may not be good for him, but added that he is concerned with this impacting the ingress and egress of his lot. He wants to know the level of the sidewalk and would like for a committee to study whether the buffer should be eliminated for a sidewalk.

Chairman Harwood asked Dr. Brown if the alley serviced his property only. Dr. Brown confirmed. He added that a telephone pole with a "technology antennae" would have to be moved as it is located in the path of the proposed sidewalk. Chairman Harwood asked him who owns the alley. Dr. Brown said that was a good question and he had not been able to determine ownership.

Mr. Rothrock said that a guy wire for the utility pole must be moved and if the pole needs to be moved it will be. He added that a 4' buffer is required, but does not think it is prudent to install a buffer that will impede maneuverability.

Mr. Lovern said that he wants to provide access to the Maple Street lot from Sunset Drive and that currently there is a lot of foot traffic through his property to the parking lot. He added that the sidewalk will need to be elevated due to the existing run-off pattern; that this run-off has cut trenches beneath the old Moody building. Mr. Lovern added that the sidewalk needs to be elevated so people do not run over it and that he feels that screening landscaping serves no purpose here.

Mr. Lovern asked Dr. Brown if he is willing to install drainage on his property. Dr. Brown replied no.

Chairman Harwood asked how they anticipate pedestrians will access the building. Would they use only the front access? Mr. Lovern said there is more than one entrance and he thinks the other entrances will be used as much as the Sunset entrance. He added that the plan serves multiple purposes and makes sense.

Dr. Brown said that Mr. Lovern's question was a fair one and that he appreciates all that he is doing. Dr. Brown added that the current storm water pipe that he installed should be sufficient. Mr. Lovern said that he cannot address Dr. Brown's property, that he can address only his property.

Chairman Harwood asked Mr. Rothrock if the catch basin is on Sunset. Mr. Rothrock said yes, that it is shown on the survey. Mr. Chapman said that the sanitary sewer runs down Sunset, but is not sure where the storm water runs.

Mr. Thirtle said that when he built his building he tied his storm water drainage to a line that ran down the middle of Sunset.

Mr. Rothrock said that either way, the storm water run-off would be addressed.

Mr. Trew said that if the storm water drain is where Dr. Brown says it is that would be a great place to channel the run-off.

Mr. Rothrock said that the height of the sidewalk should also help to channel water to the storm drain.

Chairman Harwood asked if the sidewalk as designed is 6" above grade. Mr. Trew confirmed.

Chairman Harwood asked if it would be appropriate to have curb and gutter on the back side. Mr. Rothrock said it would be a toss-up whether gravel or curb and gutter would be better. Chairman Harwood asked if rolled gutter would be acceptable. Mr. Lovern said that neither he nor Dr. Brown owned the alley and they would not be able to intrude upon that property.

Chairman Harwood asked the width of the sidewalk. Mr. Rothrock replied between 4' and 5'.

*Ms. Hartley made a motion to close the meeting to public comment, seconded by Ms. Starnes. **All members were in favor of the motion.***

Mr. Laughter said that he thinks this is a great idea and noted that other buildings on Sunset appear to be inside the setback. Mr. Laughter said that it makes more sense to have storm water retention on the owner's property. Mr. Rothrock said that is what the plan shows.

Ms. Starnes said she thinks the project will draw people down Sunset. Ms. Bovino concurred.

Ms. Hartley asked Mr. Rothrock to confirm the proposed access. Mr. Rothrock said it would be one way in from Sunset Drive and one way out onto the Maple Street lot. Ms. Hartley also asked Mr. Rothrock where the buffer is not meeting the Land Use Code requirements. Mr. Rothrock indicated the location on a Powerpoint slide and said that based on the site plan the main access is on the left side of the building and it will have a buffer or a sidewalk there.

*Mr. Bovino made a motion to send to Town Council with the setback waiver, one-way traffic access and sidewalk allowed in lieu of a 4' buffer. Mr. Laughter seconded the motion. **All members were in favor of the motion.***

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

Chairman Harwood adjourned the meeting at 7:10 pm.

Chairman David Harwood

Tammy Bentley, Administrative Assistant