

Planning and Zoning Board

Minutes

Thursday, October 21, 2004

The Blowing Rock Planning and Zoning Board met on Thursday, October 21, 2004. Chairman Jim West called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m. Members present were Dennis Quinn, Cobb Milner, Albert Yount, Jim Steele, George Snyder, and Cullie Tarleton. Staff members present Kevin Rothrock, Planning Director, Tyler Jones, Intern, and Sherrie Pitts, Administrative Assistant.

Mr. Yount made a motion to approve the minutes as submitted, seconded by Mr. Milner. All were in favor of the motion.

Items of Business

Draft Ordinance to Allow Increased Building Height in CB District

Mr. Rothrock presented the staff report information to the board in reference to building heights in the Central Business District. Owners and developers have requested a study to possibly increase the allowable building height on properties larger than one acre in the Central Business District. To provide some flexibility, Mr. Rothrock drafted some language to address building heights on these properties, and included some setback requirements to help reduce the mass of larger buildings. These setbacks would apply to the street, the side, and rear property lines. Mr. Rothrock gave an overview of the standards for the Town Center started in 2002 and put into the Land Use Code in 2003.

Chairman West stated that one discussion in subcommittee was how to treat all properties equally considering steep grades, above and below the standard grade, and of building entrances. Mr. Quinn, board member, asked if the subcommittee had decided on an agreement of higher buildings on larger properties. Chairman West commented that is in discussion now.

Mr. Phillip Pickett, owner of Boxwood Lodge and Blowing Rock Inn, had comments on heights and setback adjustments. Mr. Pickett commented that each property is so different that different rules should apply when looking at the issues.

Mr. Pat Cartwright, property owner, stated that he supported the draft to change height requirements.

Mr. Mike Keibelbeck, manager of Meadowbrook Inn, asked if the height limitation was only on new construction or did it include additions to existing buildings. Mr. Rothrock confirmed that the standards apply to new as well as reconstructed buildings. Owners have to go through building, zoning, and conditional use permits; these permits go by the standard currently in effect. Mr. Keibelbeck commented that he supported the draft for the change in height.

Chairman West commented that the committee does plan to discuss issues that were brought up in the meeting tonight.

Mr. Ron Oberle stated that he did not think building requirements should get exceptions to most of the properties in discussion now.

Mr. Quinn, board member, mentioned that looking at going back 5 feet to go up 5 feet is not the same visual perspective. A 1 to 3 ratio is more appropriate than 1 to 1.

Chairman West, with no further comments, closed discussion on building heights.

Draft Ordinance to Regulate Windmills and Wind Energy Turbines

Mr. Rothrock presented the staff report information to the board. According to information provided by the Western NC Small Wind Initiative, wind is "the world's fastest growing source of energy". Small-wind technology provides clean, affordable energy through the use of wind turbines. Wind turbines or "windmills" have been placed in the back yards of single family property in other areas of the country to harness wind energy. Western North Carolina is a region targeted for this emerging technology because of the prominent mountaintops and ridgelines.

Staff, Planning Board, and Town Council are concerned with the unregulated placement of wind turbines on ridgelines in Blowing Rock's Planning and Zoning jurisdiction. Currently the Land Use Ordinance does not list windmills or wind turbines as a permitted use in any zoning district. However, if permitted, staff feels that specific standards should be drafted to address the placement of wind energy devices and towers. On October 12th the Town Council enacted a six-month moratorium on windmills in Blowing Rock to provide time to study the issue and develop standards.

Mr. Tarleton, board member, stated that this is cutting edge technology. We should learn as much as we can to make the best decisions.

Chairman West commented on setback issues, and said that setbacks should be in accord with towers.

Mr. Rothrock asked if the board wanted to set up a study for wind issues. Chairman West asked about Mr. Drury being chair for this committee, since he did attend a seminar on wind technology. Mr. Quinn, Mr. Tarleton, and Mr. Snyder agreed to work on the committee. A meeting time will be set up at a later date.

Chairman West, with no further comments closed discussion on windmills and wind energy.

Draft Ordinance to Establish Setbacks in GB, O/I, and HMC Zoning

Mr. Rothrock presented the staff report information to the board. The GB, O/I, HMC zoning have no setbacks except for a minimum street setback of 30 feet from the street centerline. After the August meeting, the Planning Board recommended the following setbacks: GB- 20 street, 8 side/rear setback; O/I- 15 street, 8 side/rear setback; HMC- 15 street setback, 8 side/rear setback.

At the September meeting, the Town Council referred the draft ordinance back to the Planning Board for review and to consider the impacts of setbacks on townhouse developments. The concern raised by Town Council was that townhouses could not meet interior setbacks between buildings. Mr. Rothrock researched townhouse definitions and guidelines for townhouse development from other jurisdictions. He provided draft language to address townhouse development, and recommended that these definitions and standards be adopted to clarify the Land Use Code.

Chairman West asked if a townhouse owner owned the land around the house. Ron Oberle commented a condo is a type of ownership. Wayne Green advised a condo development is an association; the association owns the property. A condo owner owns their space but no land. A townhouse owner owns land under and above their space. A townhouse can be O/I, Commercial or Residential. Wayne Green commented that it might be good to define townhouse as a structure where individual unit lot lines are under the buildings. Chairman West said where two or more attached buildings are located on individual lots. Mr. Green commented that you might want to address townhouse to multi-family and define if it is O/I. Mr. Tarleton, board member, stated that appurtenances should be added to the definition. Mr. Quinn, board member, gave his understanding of a townhouse definition as, the development of a zoning lot consisting of two or more attached buildings and appurtenances located on an individual lot. Chairman West recommended that townhouse codes should be added to commercial use categories.

Mr. Quinn made a motion to accept the proposed ordinance with changes discussed. Mr. Steele seconded the motion. Chairman West requested to add language on the table of permitted use throughout the zoning ordinance. **All were in favor of the motion.**

Chairman West, with no further comments closed discussion on setbacks.

Draft Ordinance to Establish Outdoor Art Display Guidelines

Mr. Rothrock presented the staff report information to the board. Mr. Rothrock gave some possible standards to consider for the display of outdoor art.

Mr. Tarleton, board member, stated that he agreed with numbers 1 through 9, but number 11 is so subjective, that he would like to see it replaced with something like, "In the event any art display violates what Town Council considers acceptable community standards the CUP shall be immediately revoked."

Chairman West requested that the board receive a copy of the old ordinance that was almost put into place in regard to outdoor display and compare to present ordinance discussion.

Chairman West, with no further comments closed discussion on art display.

Mr. Quinn made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Yount. All were in favor of the motion.

-

Adjourn

With no further business, the Planning Board adjourned at 9:47 P.M.

-

Jim West, Chair Sherrie Pitts, Administrative Assistant