

Planning and Zoning Board

Minutes

Thursday, February 17, 2005

The Blowing Rock Planning and Zoning Board met on Thursday, February 17, 2005. Chairman West called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Members present were Doug Drury, Albert Yount, Cullie Tarleton, and Ron Mace. Staff members present were Scott Hildebran, Town Manager, Kevin Rothrock, Planning Director, Andy Lovingood, Town Engineer and Sherrie Pitts, Administrative Assistant.

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

The Stonemaker Conditional Use Permit # 2004-09

Mr. Rothrock presented the staff report to the board in reference to the conditional use permit # 2004-09. The request is to construct two, four bedroom duplexes on two vacant lots off Hwy 221. The properties are zoned R-6M multi-family.

The applicant is requesting the following waivers: 1) to reduce the driveway width from 18 feet to 14 feet 2) to reduce the landscape buffer from 16 feet to eight feet and provide a denser opaque screen along the Holtshouser property 3) a waiver of coach lights in the parking areas and using floodlights on the buildings to the parking areas.

Mr. Yount, board member, for the record stated that he was a financial appraiser and had been hired to do the appraisal on the Pelsmaeker property, which adjoins this project.

Chairman West asked if there were easements for the storm drain. He also questioned if the drain was under the corner of the house. Mr. Rothrock stated that the line goes right up to it, and the architect or the engineer could better answer storm drain issues. Andy Lovingood, town engineer, stated that the on site storm drain was the best available solution, and as the project moves forward they will have to submit plans for review.

Mr. Drury, board member, questioned the density of the landscape buffer and if it would increase even with less buffered space. He also asked why the applicant needed a waiver here. Mr. Rothrock commented that even with less space the amount of shrubbery and trees would be increased. Lack of space is the reason for the request of a narrower buffer.

With no further questions for staff Chairman West opened the floor to the applicant.

Benjie Thomas, of West Consultants, commented that because of the length of the driveway and the infrequency of vehicles meeting on the drive the waiver for a 14-foot driveway was requested.

Jerome McSorley, for Castleview Construction, addressed the question about the reduced buffer size. The lot size is small we requested a waiver of buffered area and would add more foliage for the same result.

Mr. Drury, board member, questioned the reason for using floodlighting instead of town standard coach lighting. Mr. McSorley stated that the floodlights on the plans would be located in the eaves of the buildings pointing down into the parking area.

Chairman West asked about the easements. Mr. Thomas stated that the required 12-foot wide easement would narrow to about 10 feet around the corner of the Pelsmaeker house.

With no further questions of the applicant Chairman West opened the floor to the public.

Andy Lovingood, town engineer, commented that the 14-foot driveway was a concern. It is not large enough for two-way traffic and could cause traffic problems.

Carol Horne, on behalf of the new owner of the Holshouser property, asked if they would still have access to the back of the house and the garage there. Mr. Lovingood pointed out that there is an easement; the Holshouser property owners will have access.

Mr. Wayne Greene, representing the Abshers and Pelsmaekers, advised that there was not an agreement at this time for easements. They are working on solutions. Mr. Greene commented that his clients did not want a blanket easement, they want it for this project and maintenance thereof only and would like it documented. Mr. Greene also advised his clients were concerned about storm water not being connected to the Wallingford Street storm drain. If water is released on the road it could cause problems for other neighbors.

Mr. Thomas, speaking for Mr. Jim Surane, stated that they would use coach lights instead of floodlights, an easement to the Holshouser property would be on record, and that they would be able to amend the plan to accommodate a 16-foot driveway.

Chairman West closed the public hearing.

Mr. Drury made a motion to approve Stonemaker using a 16-foot driveway, coach lights, a waiver on the buffer from 16 feet to 8 feet opaque, and with the endorsement of the town engineer that the storm water management works prior to Town Council meeting. Mr. Tarleton seconded the motion. All members were in favor of the motion.

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The Brookside Inn Conditional Use Permit # 2005-02

Mr. Rothrock presented the staff report to the board in reference to the conditional use permit # 2005-02. The request is for additions and exterior modifications to the Brookside Inn. A new deck will be added to the rear of the building, a new lobby porte-cochere will be added in front and several changes will be made to the exterior building facade. Phase II would include some storm water drainage improvements. A culvert would be removed and opened to its natural path with rock lined banks. In Phase III, the pond in front of the building would be dredged and modified, and a gazebo will be added.

Mr. Tarleton asked if there was a time line for each of the Phases. Mr. Rothrock commented that the applicant would be able to better answer that question. Mr. Tarleton asked if the bark siding was real wood bark. Mr. Rothrock advised the applicant should answer that, but he assumed it is poplar bark.

Mr. Lovingood stated that in Phase III they would need the Army Corp of Engineers permit to open the channel.

Mr. Drury asked where the culvert to be removed was. Mr. Rothrock advised that it was on the south side of Brookside Inn next to Twigs parking area.

With no further questions of staff, Chairman West opened the floor to the applicant.

Mr. Larry Greene, architect representing Charming Inns of Blowing Rock, stated that the bark siding was real wood. The reason for opening the culvert is to create the brook effect. Phase I would be completed in April. Phase II and III may not be done.

With no further questions of the applicant, the floor is open to public comment.

Chairman West closed the public hearing.

Mr. Tarleton made a motion to approve the conditional use permit. Mr. Yount seconded the motion. All members were in favor of the motion.

Other Business

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Draft Ordinance for Building Heights in Central Business

Mr. Rothrock discussed information on a draft ordinance concerning building heights in Central Business. Through the direction of Town Council, there will be no overlay district as originally proposed. The height standards will apply to Central Business as a whole. Some of the key issues with the revised draft ordinance are:

- All streets in CB will have a 15-foot setback so the setback/height standard can be equally applied. Side streets currently have a 10-foot setback.
- The 35-foot maximum building height has been reduced to 30 feet.
- The proposed 30-foot setback can be increased up to 40 feet with additional setback.
- No building wall may exceed 25% above the average height of existing adjacent buildings.
- Heights for buildings built farther than 50 feet from the back of the sidewalk (existing or proposed) shall be measured from the finished grade adjacent to the primary entrance.
- Maximum eave heights have been established. The eave heights may be increased with increased setback.
- The minimum roof pitch has been increased to 6:12.
- The appropriate roofing material for commercial buildings has been clarified.

Ms. Sue Glenn, resident and business owner, had questions about setback measurements and height scale. Mr. Rothrock responded to the questions.

Mr. Tony DiSanti, attorney representing the Cartwrights, discussed building height standards and sidewalk issues. Mr. Rothrock commented on how the ordinance was set up and how it did allow the front of the property to be utilized with a maximum building height of 30 feet. Mr. Rothrock also stated that with a 65-foot setback the building could be 40 feet in height.

Mr. Rothrock advised that a flat roof maybe allowed on a building on Main Street where the majority of buildings have flat roofs. Copper maybe considered appropriate accent for some buildings.

Mr. Drury made a motion to approve the draft ordinance with changes discussed 1) flat roofs may be allowed on a building on Main Street where the majority of buildings have flat roofs 2) copper roofing shall be considered appropriate for some building accents Mr. Tarleton seconded the motion to open for discussion.

Mr. Tarleton questioned the reason in the roof pitch from 4:12 to 6:12. Mr. Rothrock commented that most building officials he had talked with are using 6:12 as a standard. Mr. Hildebran, town manager, commented that 6:12 is a standard and 4:12 is an exception. Chairman West commented that 6:12, 8:12 and more are more common 4:12 could still work. The change in the language states "strongly recommended" so 4:12 could still be used.

Chairman West requested an amendment to Section 16-184.02 to read that the sidewalks extend 5 feet from the edge of the street, in the Central Business.

All members were in favor of the motion.

Draft Ordinance on Single Family CUPS in Central Business

Mr. Rothrock discussed information on a draft ordinance concerning single-family housing in the Central Business District. The most protected area is the Town Center. The Town Council has asked the Planning Board to discuss possibly regulating not only commercial but residential structures in this district. The following is a draft text amendment to Section 16-302.02; This Article shall also apply to all development, redevelopment, repair, expansion, alteration and relocation of any structure in the Central Business District, including single-family homes. Such development or alteration of structures requires a conditional use permit.

Chairman West asked if single-family homes should truly be regulated with conditional use permits in Central Business. Mr. Tarleton commented that because of the character of Central Business he votes in favor of the amendment.

Mr. Yount makes a motion to accept ordinance amendment, seconded by Mr. Mace. All members were in favor of the motion.

Draft Ordinance for Maximum Street Grade

Mr. Rothrock discussed information on a draft ordinance concerning maximum street grade. Currently the Land Use Code requirements follow the NCDOT standards for road design allowing up to 18 % grade. The Town Council recommended the Planning Board consider a 14% maximum on streets and roads.

The staff also recommends limiting driveways to Town streets to a maximum grade of 18% and if the driveway exceeds 15%, an off-street temporary parking area should be provided for periods of inclement weather. The following are draft text amendments:

Section 16-213 Driveways that connect to Town streets shall not exceed 18% grade. On lots served by driveways that exceed 15% grade, an off-street parking area must be provided for temporary inclement weather parking. This parking area must be located outside of the Town's right-of-way, and must not visually impede sight distances along the street. If a temporary parking space cannot reasonably be located on the subject property, an agreement with neighboring properties may satisfy the requirements of the subsection.

Section 16-215 the maximum grade for all public streets and private roads shall not exceed 14%.

Mr. Wayne Green commented on the 14% grade advising that it would be harmful to property owners in the ETJ because of the slope of the land along US 321.

Mr. Drury made a motion to send this item to subcommittee for review. Mr. Tarleton seconded the motion. Mr. Yount made a substitute motion to send this item to Town Council and a public hearing with a change from 14% to 15% grade. All members voted in favor of the motion.

Draft Ordinance for Retaining Walls

Mr. Rothrock presented information on a draft ordinance on retaining walls. He stated that walls exceeding five feet in height be designed, monitored, and certified by a licensed professional engineer. The building code does not clearly regulate walls built for single-family residences. Additional clarification is needed in Section 16-171 Perimeter Fences and Walls. Subsections (B)(1) and (2) define the accepted maximum height of fences and walls in various locations on a property.

The following are draft text amendments:

Section 16-171 (B) (1) add above street grade at the end of the last sentence.

Section 16-171 (B) (2) strike other add located within a side or rear yard setback, add, No other fence or retaining wall, outside of applicable setback areas, shall exceed 12 feet in height above grade, except as expressly authorized by an applicable conditional use permit or by authorization from the Blowing Rock Town Council. Retaining walls and/or retaining structures exceeding 5 feet in height, measured from the top of the footing, shall be designed and constructed under the responsible charge of a NC registered professional engineer. The monitoring engineer shall submit a sealed report, including final approval, on the retaining structure(s) construction to the Building Code Official.

Mr. Tarleton made a motion to approve what staff has submitted, seconded by Mr. Yount. All members were in favor of the motion.

Chairman West opened discussion on Windmill-wind energy.

Mr. Drury advised that he was drafting a letter to send to Town Council. The letter will request an extension on the moratorium to collect information to explore and educate everyone on wind energy.

Chairman West opened discussion on art/merchandise display.

Mr. Rothrock advised that the Town Council requested this be addressed. A letter will be drafted and sent to merchants in regard to outdoor display. Mr. Tarleton asked if the letter would remind the merchants that they had agreed to monitor display themselves. He would still like to see them deal with and resolve these issues.

Mr. Mace made a motion to close meeting, seconded by Mr. Tarleton. All members were in favor of the motion.

Adjourn

With no further business, the Planning Board adjourned at 10:10 P.M.

Jim West, Chair Sherrie Pitts, Administrative Assistant