

Planning and Zoning Board

Minutes

Thursday, January 19, 2006

7:00 p.m.

The Blowing Rock Planning and Zoning Board met on Thursday, January 19, 2006 for their regular scheduled meeting. Chairperson Jim West called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Members present were Dennis Quinn, Albert Yount, Sue Sweeting, Jim Steele, Nelda Miller, Ron Mace, and Cullie Tarleton . Member Doug Drury was absent. Also present was Mr. Scott Hildebran, Town Manager, Kevin Rothrock, Planning Director, Kent Graham, Director of Emergency Services, Sonya Long, Administrative Assistant, Doug Chapman and Shad Walters from McGill Associates.

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

Blowing Rock Emergency Service Building - Conditional Use Permit #2006-01

Mr. Rothrock reported the Town of Blowing Rock is requesting a Conditional Use Permit to construct an emergency services facility on Valley Boulevard. The Town Fire, Rescue, and EMS Departments will be relocated from downtown to the new building.

The new building meets all required setbacks for the General Business District. The site will have two (2) driveway cuts, one for exiting only. The north driveway will be for emergency vehicles only. Seventy five (75) parking spaces would be required according to the Town Code. Staff's opinion is that the Town Code requirement was excessive based on the use. Thirty-eight (38) spaces are being proposed, thirty-seven (37) less than required.

The Land Use Code requires a 16-foot, semi-opaque buffer along the vacant Keyes Estate property to the north. Based on discussions between the Town and the property owner, both parties desire a campus-like setting with a buffer that blends well with both developments. Mr. Rothrock suggested that the required 16-foot buffer be reduced to 8-feet due to the size of the project and the land.

Mr. Rothrock reviewed with the Board the waivers that were requested by the Town; 1) Parking spaces reduced from 75 spaces to 38 spaces, 2) north side landscape buffer reduced from 16 feet to 8 feet, or sufficient buffer to accommodate the adjacent property owner's desires, and 3) Special Intensity Allocation of 47% impervious surfaces (built-upon areas).

Ms. Sweeting pointed out a spring located on the property that was not shown on the survey. Mr. Walters with McGill Engineering stated that most of the activity would not be in that area and the water from that spring could be diverted off the property into the existing creek. She also questioned the entrances. Mr. Walters explained the south side of the property would be the main entrance per NCDOT and all fire trucks and other traffic would exit on the north side. The north side driveway would be for exiting only.

Mr. Graham compared parking to the Training Room capacity. The capacity is 48 people, but pointed out that most people would not be there at the same time.

Mr. Tarleton reviewed with the Board the letter from Mr. Wayne Green. He asked Mr. Rothrock about Mr. Green's concerns. Mr. Rothrock stated the Planning Board was the Watershed Review Board, however, the Town Council grants watershed waivers on Conditional Use Permits. He also pointed out that staff had met with adjoining property owners and they had agreed to the reduced 8 foot buffer.

Mr. Yount pointed out that the truck pads could provide additional parking. Mr. Scott Garner, architect for the project, stated an additional 16 spaces could be counted from the use of the pads, just on the Fire Department side of the building.

The Board discussed the use of the large siren that goes off at noon everyday. They discussed the continuation and moving of the siren. Mr. Graham stated the siren is of no use to the Fire Department, it is a tradition. Pagers have taken the place of the siren.

Ms. Sweeting had questions regarding the lighting of the outside of the building and parking area. Mr. Garner stated plans did show some lights on the building but the complete lighting plan had not been completed. Ms. Sweeting suggested the security lighting in the parking lot be downward lights due to the adjoining development.

Mr. Garner reviewed the rendering of the building and what materials would be used. He explained the actual colors of the different materials would be chosen by the Town Council.

Mr. Roy Gryder, member of the Rural Fire District Association was present. Mr. Gryder commented on the great design and plans for the new building and how excited the Board was about the new Fire Department. The Rural Fire Board did have some concerns. He explained that citizens that live out of the city limits still pay a fire tax. The Rural Board was concerned over the cost of the new building and if cost could be cut by using different exterior materials. The money saved by doing this could be used on equipment instead.

The Board discussed the waivers that had been requested by the Town. Mr. Rothrock stated that the flexibility in the Town Code would allow the waivers. Mr. Dick Goosman, owner of the Meadowbrook Inn, requested the Board review the watershed requirements. If the Board granted close to 100% waivers on the watershed requirements, the law needed to be changed.

With no further comments, Chairman West closed the Public Hearing.

Mr. Tarleton made a motion to recommend the approval of the plans and the waivers that had been requested. Motion was seconded by Mr. Mace.

Mr. Quinn suggested the additional parking of 24 spaces as overflow in the apron and all emergency vehicles exit only on the north side of the building, be added to the motion. Mr. Tarleton agreed to add the additional overflow parking in the apron to his motion. Mr. Mace seconded the addition to the motion. All were in favor of the motion.

Big Box Ordinance Update

Mr. Rothrock updated the Board on the status of the Big Box Ordinance. In December, the Town Council decided not to place a moratorium on “big box” development, but rather wait on ordinance recommendations from the Planning Board. The Council also provided some direction to the Board in drafting the regulations.

The Council preferred not to impose a demolition bond on commercial developments, but rather establish maintenance bonds to keep up the property’s appearance if the building ever became vacant. They also wanted the Planning Board to study intensity regulations such as maximum floor area ratios and minimum green space requirements.

Mr. Rothrock provided the Board with a revised table outlining requirements on large-scale commercial buildings. He removed references to demolition bonds, market analyses, and footprint ratio design as these are probably not necessary in Blowing Rock. He also reviewed definitions and explanations for the additional requirements. Mr.

Rothrock stated he would be taking this ordinance back to the zoning sub-committee with comments from the Planning Board.

The Board agreed they would discuss the ordinance further once the sub-committee met and reviewed the new information.

Other Business

Ms. Sweeting provided the Board with an update to the Town's Master Plan. A sub-committee made up of Ms. Sweeting, Mr. Tarleton, and Mr. Quinn, had reviewed the 2004 Comprehensive Plan to see what items had been completed or still needed to be accomplished. She explained the sub-committee would meet with Mr. Hildebran and then bring suggestions back to the Planning Board at their next meeting.

Mr. Goosman had questions regarding the history of the Big Box Ordinance. Chairman West explained this issue had been addressed in the Master Plan a few years ago. The concern was over big buildings with no windows, flat roofs, etc. Public Hearings would be held so that the public could comment before final approval from the Town Council.

Adjourn

With no further business, Mr. Yount made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Ms. Sweeting. All were in favor of the motion.

Board adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Jim West, Chairman

Sonya Long, Administrative Assistant

