

## Planning and Zoning Board

### Minutes

Thursday, September 21, 2006

7:00 p.m.

The Blowing Rock Planning and Zoning Board met on Thursday, September 21, 2006 for their regular scheduled meeting. Chairman Jim West called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Members present were Ron Mace, Nelda Miller, Cullie Tarleton, Jim Steele, Albert Yount, Sue Sweeting and Webb Alexander. Staff members present were Planning Director Kevin Rothrock, and Sherrie Pitts, Administrative Assistant.

*Ms. Sweeting made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Mr. Tarleton. **All members were in favor of the motion.***

### Items of Business

#### Tree and Landscape Ordinance Revisions

Mr. Rothrock gave the staff report to the board in reference to the Tree and Landscape Ordinance and advised that it has needed to be revised for quite some time. The Tree and Landscape Ordinance is actually spread out over several Articles in Chapter 16 of the Town Code. Article XVIII (B) – Commercial Design and Appearance Standards contains some general landscaping standards for commercial properties. Article XIX – Screening and Trees provides additional standards for shade trees, tree protection, screening tables and descriptions of screens. Appendix E of the Land Use Ordinance provides guidelines for planting, recommended tree and shrub species, and other planting diagrams. The specific categories of proposed revisions include:

tree protection, proper pruning techniques, revised screening table, landscape maintenance, tree removal and replacement, licensing, clarification of terms and a revised plant materials list. The enclosed draft ordinance needs additional study and staff recommends that this be forwarded to a subcommittee. Mr. Rothrock welcomed initial comments and questions to determine if the proposed revisions thus far are consistent with objectives of the Planning Board.

Chairman West discussed creating a subcommittee for this item. Mr. Tarleton, Mr. Yount and Chairman West volunteered for this subcommittee. The board asked if Perry Davis, the Town Landscape Specialist and possibly someone from BRAAC could work on the subcommittee.

Mr. Earle Horne, resident, asked if it would be clarified about landscape standards and if they are for residential and commercial or if it only applies to commercial property. If residential properties are involved how will the information be disseminated to the public.

With no other questions or comments, Chairman West closed the public comment.

## Windmill and Wind Energy Devices

Mr. Rothrock gave the staff report to the board in reference to Windmills and Wind Energy Devices. About two years ago the Planning Board discussed the regulation of wind energy devices and towers. According to information provided by the Western NC Small Wind Initiative, wind is “ the world’s fastest growing source of energy”. Western North Carolina is a region targeted for this emerging technology because of the prominent mountaintops and ridgelines. In August, Watauga County became the first county in North Carolina to adopt an ordinance regulating windmills and wind energy systems. The ordinance allows small wind energy systems of a single wind turbine and tower not to exceed 135 feet in height. Large wind energy systems are also permitted but are further regulated by the County’s High Impact Land Use Ordinance. 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. Otherwise, wind energy devices and towers should be prohibited from Blowing Rock’s jurisdiction. This issue should again be studied by a subcommittee for a draft ordinance to be presented to the full board.

Mr. Alexander, Mr. Mace and Chairman West volunteered to serve on the subcommittee.

Ms. Sweeting suggested that staff check with the Town’s attorney to see if the current code text would cover this issue. Chairman West commented that the board should review Watauga’s ruling and the Town Attorney’s opinion.

With no questions or comments, Chairman West closed the public comment.

## Magazine and Newspaper Stands

Mr. Rothrock gave the staff report to the board in reference to regulating newspaper and magazine racks. Over the past several months, newspaper racks and real estate magazine racks have been appearing in new locations all over Town sidewalks. Staff has received several complaints of the proliferation of these racks in various locations. These racks are currently unregulated except that they are on Town sidewalks, sometimes conflicting with pedestrian traffic. Staff recommends that a subcommittee draft an ordinance regulating the placement and appearance of these racks on public sidewalks, and provide regulations on placement of racks on private property. Enclosed in the packet is a picture of a consolidated newspaper rack structure in Franklin, NC and enclosed a few pictures of newspaper racks and magazine boxes on Town sidewalks and private property.

Mr. Earle Horne, resident, commented that vendors own the boxes and generally put them in locations they believe will serve the most people.

Mr. Steele asked for information on how other communities regulate paper and magazine boxes.

Ms. Sweeting and Mr. Steele volunteered to sit on a subcommittee to review regulations.

Mr. Horne commented that in looking at regulations they need to be fair to the whole community.

With no other questions or comments, Chairman West closed the public comment.

Chairman West asked for a moment of silence at the passing of Walter Green former Planning Board member and Louise Oberle, wife of Ron Oberle current Board of Adjustment member and former Planning Board member.

## Stucco as Allowable Building Material in Downtown

Mr. Rothrock gave the staff report to the board in reference to stucco as an allowable building material in downtown. At the September Town Council meeting, the conditional use permit request to apply stucco to the sides of the Napier building was denied. The request was denied for several reasons, but one reason was the aesthetic appearance of stucco. Council has requested the Planning Board study the application of stucco on

commercial buildings in Downtown. One of the concerns is that the character of the red brick on older buildings will be lost if stucco is the “cheap fix” for deteriorating brick. The Land Use Code currently allows stucco in warm color tints on building walls not adjacent to a street. The Comprehensive Plan does not mention stucco as a material within the common theme of the buildings in Downtown, but instead lists native stone, dark red brick or wood siding. If the Planning Board is prepared to make a decision on this issue, a draft ordinance can be prepared for the October Town Council.

Ms. Sweeting commented that it is addressed in the Land Use Code.

No motions were presented to change the existing code.

### **Adjourn**

*With no further business, Ms. Sweeting made a motion to adjourn at 8:11 p.m., seconded by Mr. Alexander. **All members were in favor of the motion.***

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Jim West, Chairman

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Sherrie Pitts, Administrative Assistant