

Draft

Planning and Zoning Board

Minutes

Thursday, November 16, 2017

5:30 p.m.

The Blowing Rock Planning and Zoning Board met on Thursday, November 16, 2017 for their regularly scheduled meeting. Chairman Harwood called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm. Members present were Joe Papa, Kim Hartley, Mike Page, Genie Starnes, Wes Carter and George Ellis. Member Natalie Bovino was absent. Staff members present were Zoning Administrator Kevin Rothrock, Planning & Zoning Support Specialist Tammy Bentley and Town Manager Ed Evans.

Chairman Harwood asked if there were any changes to the agenda. There were none. *Mr. Ellis made a motion to accept the agenda order, seconded by Mr. Hubble. All members were in favor of the motion.*

Chairman Harwood asked if there were any changes to the August 17, 2017 meeting minutes. There were none. *Mr. Page made a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Ms. Starnes. All members were in favor of the motion.*

1. Conditional Rezoning 2017-02 – CB to CZ-CB, Inn on Cornish

Mr. Rothrock gave the staff report and Powerpoint presentation. The Winkler Organization is requesting a conditional rezoning of two parcels on Main Street from CB, Central Business to Conditional Zoning – CB. The properties are located at 567 Main Street and includes the vacant lot to the north. The properties total .906 acres and are further identified by Watauga County PINs 2817-08-8480-000 and 2817-08-8580-000.

The properties front Main Street and Cornish Road. The majority of the property lies within the flood hazard area and approximately half is in the regulated floodway. No part of the building will be located within the regulated floodway.

The applicable setbacks for Central Business is 15 feet as measured from the back of the existing/proposed sidewalk, along Main Street and Cornish Road. The applicant has agreed to widen Cornish Road and provide curb and gutter and a sidewalk. Therefore, the applicant has requested flexibility in the setback on Cornish Road for 3 corners of the building. The maximum building height in Central Business is 30' as measured from the average elevation of the sidewalk along Main Street. The proposed building height is 32'. The applicant has requested flexibility with the building height. The project requires 21 spaces; the upper level provides 7 spaces, including 2 ADA spaces; the lower level provides 20 spaces.

Storm water runoff will be conveyed to a drainage collection system under the building and the lower level parking garage. This will meet the Land Use Code. The garbage generated from this property will be minimal and collected by cleaning staff to be placed in an area in the lower level parking garage. It will be hauled away by a private contractor.

A general landscape plan has been submitted for review. A finalized, detailed plan will be submitted once construction plans are finalized. The existing trees along Main Street will be removed. The applicant plans to replace these trees with shade trees between the building and sidewalk.

A neighborhood meeting was held at Town Hall on October 26, 2017, attended by approximately 35 neighbors and other citizens. The applicant shared their vision for the properties and how this would function differently from a traditional hotel.

Chairman Harwood asked if the base flood elevation (BFE) is 3480'. Mr. Jason Gaston, project engineer, said it is 3486'. Chairman Harwood asked about the BFE of the lower garage. Mr. Gaston said the garage is 3481'. He added that habitable areas must be 1 foot above BFE. Chairman Harwood asked the elevation of the sidewalk. Mr. Gaston responded 3491'.

Ms. Hartley asked about the width of Cornish Road. Mr. Rothrock said it is 15' wide at Main Street and widens to 18 to 20' by the bridge. Mr. Hubble asked if the bridge would be widened. Mr. Rothrock said no; that the current bridge exceeds the minimum width. Mr. Rothrock added that the applicant plans to widen Cornish Road to 18' from Main Street to the point where the road is currently 18' wide.

Mr. Ellis asked Mr. Gaston if the retaining wall will act as 'compression' and wanted an assurance that the neighbors both upstream and downstream would not realize any negative impact. Mr. Gaston said that the floodway is where the water moves, and there would be no impact. He said that part of the ponding area would be impacted, but not any of the conveyance area.

Mr. Page asked if they are replacing any existing sidewalk. Mr. Rothrock said not along Cornish Road. Mr. Page asked if the widening and adding sidewalk to Cornish Road could be viewed as an improvement. Mr. Rothrock confirmed and added that installing a sidewalk is required on commercial uses. He added that the applicant has agreed to widen Cornish Road.

Ms. Amber Winkler introduced herself as Mr. Winkler's daughter and said she is speaking on behalf of her mother, Jan Winkler. She introduced their team, Jason Gaston, Valor Engineering; Brent Davis, Architect; and her father, John Winkler, of The Winkler Organization. Ms. Winkler said the family is local, going back six generations. She said her father and mother, Jan Winkler own property in Blowing Rock and are very involved with the Foley Center at Chestnut Ridge and are heavily involved with student housing in Boone, but not Blowing Rock. She said her family loves Blowing Rock and have made sure that the project is in keeping with Blowing Rock. Ms. Winkler said they think this inn

will fill a need and they hope guests take advantage of shopping, events, and dining in Blowing Rock.

Mr. Jason Gaston thanked Mr. Rothrock for detailing the project plans. Mr. Gaston said the parking deck will be accessed off Cornish Road; that the building will be 2 stories in the front and 3 in the back. He added that there are only seven parking spaces on the upper level, two of which are ADA compliant. Mr. Gaston said they are asking for concessions on the setback along Cornish Road as the road will be widened, and in the building height, to ensure that potential water in the parking garage can drain out. Mr. Gaston added that based on the ITE Manual, this project would add 187 trips per day, resulting in 15 trips during peak hours.

Mr. Hubble asked if there would be loading and unloading in the front of the building. Mr. Gaston said that there are seven spaces on the upper level and if those are full, guests will have to park below and use the stairs to get their luggage upstairs.

Chairman Harwood noted the elevation at the corner of Main and Cornish is 3491' and that it is 100 feet from the corner of Main to the garage entrance on Cornish, resulting in steep access for this entrance. Mr. Gaston acknowledged that it is somewhat steep; that it is 12% on the inside corner, but not so bad on the outside corner.

Mr. Carter asked if special foundations are required in a floodplain. Mr. Gaston said this is not in the floodway, so no special foundation is required. Mr. Davis said he did not know of any special requirements. Mr. Carter asked if they are planning to go down to the rock on the site. Mr. Davis said no. Mr. Carter asked if they had determined the rock level. Mr. Gaston said no.

Chairman Harwood commented that the building is beautiful and asked for confirmation that the dormers are decorative and there is not a third floor. Mr. Davis confirmed.

Chairman Harwood noted that there is not much difference between a 30' and 32' height for the building and asked if there is a hardship. Mr. Davis said no, but they want a steeper roof for snow shedding and appearance.

Chairman Harwood said that the exterior finishes were not determined at the neighborhood meeting and asked if they have been finalized. Mr. Davis said yes; that the exterior would be cultured stone and board and batten, and architectural shingles. He added that all colors would be approved Town colors.

Mr. Carter asked their plans if they hit rock. Mr. Davis said they are having soil boring tests performed soon. Mr. Carter asked if the Town allows blasting. Mr. Rothrock confirmed.

Mr. Davis said the structure is 3 stories; that the parking structure is on 60' deep and that only 30 to 35' feet is on a concrete slab.

Mr. Papa asked if the Cornish entrance is in the floodway. Mr. Gaston said no. Mr. Papa asked if it is in the floodplain or flood zone. Mr. Gaston said there is nothing in the floodway. Mr. Winkler indicated the area to be excavated on the site plan. Mr. Papa asked if the Cornish access would be flooded during a 100 year flood event. Mr. Gaston said yes, and that the parking garage could also be flooded.

Chairman Harwood asked if the Cornish access road is acceptable to the Town. Mr. Rothrock said yes. He added that staff proposed upgrading Cornish Road to the applicant, necessitating setback relief along Cornish.

Chairman Harwood opened the meeting to public comment.

Mr. Charlie Sellers, of 137 Hilltop Way, suggested the developer strongly consider adding an elevator. Mr. Sellers said that he does not think this is a 'make or break' decision, but that the lack of elevators in a new townhomes had negatively affected the sale of the units.

*Ms. Starnes made a motion to close the public comment. The motion was seconded by Mr. Ellis. **All members were in favor of the motion.***

Mr. Ellis asked the possibility of placing a small barrier at the corner of Main and Cornish to prevent small children from darting into the streets. Mr. Winkler said they will use landscaping as a barrier and that they may install a small fence or wall along Main Street.

Mr. Hubble asked Mr. Rothrock if he is troubled by the height of the sidewalk. Mr. Rothrock said no.

*Mr. Hubble made a motion to approve the request as presented for the Town Council. The motion was seconded by Mr. Ellis. **All members were in favor of the motion.***

2. Ordinance to allow beekeeping in Town

Mr. Rothrock gave the staff report. Staff received a letter from Mary P. Williams, President of the Watauga County Beekeepers Association, requesting that the town consider allowing beekeeping in the town limits. Currently beekeeping is allowed in the R-A, R-MH, CB, and TC zoning districts. There are currently no requirements for beekeeping in these areas. Mr. Rothrock highlighted the suggested ordinance changes for the Board.

The Board discussed the proposed changes to the ordinance. Ms. Williams educated the Board on the beekeeping process and how the ordinance language address same.

Ms. Williams told the Board there are many reasons that bees are in trouble and that beekeepers are getting older. She added that since the emergence of colony collapse there are many more backyard beekeepers.

Mr. Ellis asked if the hives are subject to state inspection. Ms. Williams confirmed. Mr. Page asked if bees swarm to a bait box, what happens next. Ms. Williams said bees swarm when the hive is overcrowded and that the bait hive is at a higher elevation than the hives. She said if bees swarm to a bait hive, the bait hive is then placed in a new box.

Ms. Williams said the average lifespan of a honey bee is 35 to 45 days and in that time period one bee will produce 1/12 of a teaspoon of honey. She said she would love to see developers plant pollinator pathways and for Blowing Rock to become a bee friendly town. She said their association now has 57 members and there is a huge interest in beekeeping.

Chairman Harwood asked the purpose of the fence. Ms. Williams said the fence would force the bees to go up in the air in the event of a swarm. She added it can be fence/wall or dense vegetation. Chairman Harwood asked if the fence is all around the hive. Ms. Williams said only in the front.

Mr. Carter asked the distance from the property line. Mr. Rothrock said that can be included in the ordinance. Mr. Carter said he thinks 10' is good.

Chairman Harwood asked about security and signage. Ms. Williams said signage could include 'No Trespassing' and 'Warning – Honey Bees on property'.

Chairman Harwood noted that Town Manager, Ed Evans, is a beekeeper. He asked Mr. Evans his experience with similar ordinances. Mr. Evans said he has had little experience with ordinances; that his hives are located in the county. He added that beekeeping is a fascinating life event process.

Mr. Hubble asked is there is a problem with abandoned hives. Mr. Evans said abandoned and occupied hives look the same. He added that most people do not let their hives deteriorate and that a hive lasts about 5 years.

Chairman Harwood asked Ms. Williams if she thought anything should be added to the ordinance. Ms. Williams recommended adding fence and maximum 4 hives language to the ordinance.

Mr. Page noted that the setback is arbitrary and may not work for all properties. He asked if there could be flexibility in the setback based on the property particulars. Mr. Rothrock said that there could be flexibility, but he would like a number. Mr. Page asked if this could be an administrative decision. Mr. Rothrock confirmed.

The Board discussed the setback distance and fencing requirements. Ms. Williams told the Board that if the hive is facing a neighboring property, the fence should be required to 10' from the property line and the front of the hive must be interior facing.

Chairman Harwood made a motion to amend the proposed ordinance by removing #2 and adding a 10' interior setback with the hive facing the interior of the property, for

*the Town Council. The motion was seconded by Mr. Hubble. **All members were in favor of the motion.***

*Mr. Hubble made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Ellis. **All members were in favor of the motion.***

Chairman Harwood adjourned the meeting at 7:00 pm.

Chairman David Harwood

Tammy Bentley
Planning & Zoning Support Specialist