



Minutes of the Planning Commission Worksession
18 August 2021

Approved:

This meeting was held online using the Zoom App. Attendees could attend by video or telephone.

Attendees: Commissioners Georgette Cole, Christine Dibble, Robert Johnson (alternate), Deborah Mehlferber, and Peter Nagrod, and residents Joan Mahaffey and Paula Puglisi.

Call to order 7:32 pm.

1) Deb moved approval of the agenda; Peter seconded. Consideration of minor changes to the Introduction was added. Approved, 5/0.

2) Robert moved approval of the 6/21 minutes; Peter seconded. Approved as submitted 5/0.

3) Comprehensive Plan

3a) Discuss visit by Maryland Department of Planning Regional Planner, Susan Llareus. Discussion was general as we are still reading and digesting the 17 pages from MDP, plus additional feedback from the Maryland Department of the Environment (2 pages), Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development (2 pages), Maryland Historical Trust (3 pages). We will ask the Mayor to postpone the public hearing on Sept 2. A PC work session will be scheduled for that evening as well as our usual date on Sep 15. At the Sep 2 session we will decide if the new public hearing will be in late September or in early November. October will be avoided since Mayor Compton will be out of the country then. See the action items agreed to at the end of this meeting.

3b) Discuss public feedback to date: Letter from Marc and Peggy Hansen on July 27. The Hansens are concerned about expanding Commercial Corner use for eating and drinking establishments. They explain exactly why relying on the special exception process is deeply flawed and ineffective. They ask why the business improvement tax district process has been removed. Moreover, they are strongly opposed to the adoption of a Historic Preservation Ordinance. Their reasons are clearly delineated. They support instead use of an Historic Preservation Easement Program. Also clearly explained.

The Historic Preservation Commission submitted a letter addressing the Hansen's concerns. They say "Not every preservation ordinance must contain the draconian measures mentioned in the letter, nor are financial burdens necessarily their byproduct. As to the voluntary nature of any burden, all our current zoning requirements already impose involuntary limits on construction, and both zoning and preservation legislation has stood the test of time in good community planning.

The Planning Commissions agreed the current Comprehensive Plan changes were due to the benefits to the Town of making the Commercial Corner more economically viable. Changes should not be made simply on the basis of one letter. However, Marc as Chair of the BZA, is in a uniquely strong position to point out the flaws in the current system for special exceptions. The PC agrees this should be addressed. Peter said he would look into why the business improvement tax district section was removed.

In terms of Historic Preservation the PC agreed the Comprehensive Plan was bringing up a conversation the Town has been avoiding for many years. Do we want to wait until a historic cottage is replaced by a "McMansion" before doing anything?

3c) Public Hearing date confirmed postponed until October or November.

4) Forest Conservation Plan for 17050 Railroad Street: Discussed both the FCP and the common elements required by the cluster development subdivision/annexation. Our overall conclusion was that the common elements were required at the time of the first permit approval. The FCP mentions a conservation deed of easement category one requirement. Deb and Georgette will look into this. Robert has already located a category one deed of easement from Montgomery County we could use as a template.

5) How to get a permit page on web site. This is an evolving situation and already improving as Christine works on the web site. More later.

6) We adjourned at 9:45 pm.

Action Items from Tonight's Meeting:

Peter: Ask Jon re: joint mtg dates, check with Charlie re Business tax district.

G: call Mayor re Public Hearing date, email Bob re: dates for demolition consultant, work with Deb on easement doc.

Deb: work with G on FCP easement doc.

Christine: web site, especially the "permit page".

Robert: Make electronic copies of Cator Prop final FCP (3pp), Comcast permit.

All: read and digest the MDP doc (attached again here) and prepare to discuss Sept 2.

Georgette will prepare minutes for circulation to Commissioners and posting to the Town web site.

Our next meeting will be September 4, with another to follow September 15.

Submitted by Georgette Cole