



Because of the Coronavirus pandemic, this meeting took place via ZOOM videoconference. In attendance were Commissioners Georgette Cole (Chair), Sung Chang (Alternate), Jonathan Dail, Sylvie Favret, Robert Johnson, Peter Nagrod (TC Liaison).

Georgette Cole called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

Approval of Agenda: Peter Nagrod moved to approve the agenda. Sylvie Favret seconded the motion. The Commission added a discussion about plans for new basement entrance steps, driveway, and a new fence and shed at 201 Washington Grove Lane.

Approved 5-0.

Building Permit Applications:

121 Maple Road: Jonathan Dail explained the interior renovations proposed for this property. In addition, there will be a new deck and patio. The plans fit Town requirements. Jonathan moved to approve the renovation planned for 121 Maple Road. Peter seconded the motion. *Approved: 5-0.*

201 Cherry Avenue: Jonathan Dail reported receiving a building permit application from Gary Hayward. The Commission will revisit this next month.

201 Washington Grove Lane: Ahead of the meeting, the property owner received advice from Georgette Cole about a driveway, fence, egress to basement and the shed on his property. A permit application will be coming soon.

Georgette Cole reminded the Commissioners that Article VII Section 1 requires a Washington Grove building permit if a person:

- a) erects or causes to be erected, a building or other structure;
- b) makes any structural alterations to a building or structure;
- c) moves, demolishes, removes, or replaces any existing building or structure or fence;
- d) encloses a porch; or
- e) installs a swimming pool.

Only ordinary maintenance and repair can be done without a building permit. A project which is only inside to an existing building will need the appropriate Montgomery County permits from DPS, but not a Town permit.

There are a few special structures which do not require a building permit: trellises seven feet or less in height; clotheslines; patios; and pergolas under 10 feet in height.

Please remember that almost all buildings and structures in Washington Grove need a building permit.

Public Ways & Property Permits: There were none.

Evaluation of 6th Avenue for paving:

Andrew Hotaling asked the Town Council about paving more of 6th Avenue to improve vehicular access to more of his property (407 5th Avenue). Mayor Compton tasked the Planning Commission with evaluating this request for consistency with the 2022 Comprehensive Plan. Georgette explained what she found, in terms of history, in both the Comprehensive Plan and the Town archives. Local access is clearly allowed for the residents at 17 Circle and 407 5th Avenue based on Town Council minutes from 021169, 061273, and 071073. This is also clear in the Planning Commission minutes from 100417. However, certain conditions stated in the 1969 document apply:

- 1) No vehicle may be parked, except for loading and unloading, on or adjacent to this roadway in a manner which could prevent access by town or emergency vehicles;
- 2) Pedestrian rights retain ascendancy over vehicular rights;
- 3) This section retains all other aspects of a restricted walkway.

This is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan (CP) emphasis on the importance of maintaining the historic walkways. The CP says “this layout and pedestrian walkways are contributing elements cited for inclusion of the Town on the National Register of Historic Places. This legacy must continue to be protected and preserved for future generations.”

The Planning Commission concluded that adding asphalt or crush-and-run to a walkway, especially in the radial layout of the original tent district, is not consistent with the goal of retaining its historic integrity. However, walkway maintenance of this area has not been done for some time and the Planning Commission concluded that maintenance with the traditional hard-pack dirt and walkway gravel to improve the surface would be helpful for both pedestrians and the local vehicular access which is permitted on this avenue.

Chairman Cole will summarize the Planning Commission findings in a memo and send it to the Mayor and Town Council before their March 11 meeting. A copy of the memo appears on the last page of these minutes.

Approval of the Minutes – February 7, 2024: Sylvie Favret moved to approve the February minutes of the Planning Commission. Peter Nagrod seconded the motion. Approval: 4-0, Jonathan abstained.

Review Status of ADU Zoning Text Amendment: The Town Council subgroup review is going well. Some wordsmithing took place and a limit of 800 SF of enclosed space has been added to new ADU construction. An exception is made for conversion of existing space in the primary dwelling, for example, a 1,200 SF basement can be completely converted into an attached ADU.

Annual Report to Maryland Department of Planning: Georgette showed the members the State Planning Commission report that she will send to the Department of Planning. Georgette Cole moved to approve sending the report to the State. Peter Nagrod seconded the motion. Approved: 5-0.

Commercial Corner Update: Peter Nagrod reported not much has changed during the month. The group is still considering monthly meetings. He also reported that the truck that was obstructing the view in the parking lot has been moved to the other side of the parking lot.

Report from Town Council: Peter Nagrod explained the RFPs that were going out; Auditing Services, Refuse and Recycling, Leaf Collection, and Stormwater Management. They will be reviewed at one of the March meetings or at the April meeting.

Gateway Committee: Jonathan Dail reported that the Committee was prioritizing projects, both long and short term. They discussed the following:

- Road clean-up
- General Maintenance
- Identifiers (fences, signs)
- Safety items
- Town road map
- Maintaining 4th Avenue and Grove Avenue

Walkway gravel will be coming soon.

Other Business: Nothing to report.

There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 8:52 pm.

Kathryn L. Lehman, Town Clerk

Memo March 7, 2024

To: Mayor and Town Council

From: Georgette Cole, Planning Commission Chair

Subject: Planning Commission Recommendation Regarding Request to Asphalt an Additional Portion of 6th Avenue

The Planning Commission has reviewed pertinent portions of the 2022 Comprehensive Plan related to this request. In addition, thanks to the assistance of Kathy Lehman, all pertinent previous actions on the “local access” portion of 6th Avenue were located and reviewed.

The authorized use of 5th Avenue for local access is well documented in letters and the Town Council minutes from 1969, 1973, and 2017. PDFs of these documents can be provided if needed. Three parameters confirmed in the Council minutes are:

- 1) No vehicle may be parked, except for loading and unloading, on or adjacent to this roadway in a manner which could prevent access by town or emergency vehicles;
- 2) Pedestrian rights retain ascendancy over vehicular rights;
- 3) This section retains all other aspects of a restricted walkway.

The 2022 Comprehensive Plan refers to the walkways in multiple sections especially in Section 3) Transportation: “The original plan for Washington Grove, developed by its founders in the late 19th Century, established a concept of pedestrian walkways separated from vehicular ways, and interspersed with numerous parks and open spaces. The streetscape, comprised of alternating streets and pedestrian walkways, with the Circle anchoring its center, is a remarkably intact reminder of Washington Grove’s camp meeting period. Its “avenues” are grass or gravel covered and reserved for pedestrians only, while vehicles are directed to streets that are its “roads.”

This layout and pedestrian walkways are contributing elements cited for inclusion of the Town on the National Register of Historic Places. This legacy must continue to be protected and preserved for future generations.”

The Planning Commission concludes that adding asphalt or crush-and-run to a walkway, especially in the radial layout of the original tent district, is not consistent with the goal of retaining its historic integrity.

However, the Planning Commission also understands the concerns of the residents at 407 5th Avenue regarding the lack of surface maintenance on 6th Avenue. The comprehensive plan includes the recommendation 3.1 (a) “Continue to maintain walkways within the developed areas of Town, allow a sense of public ownership, invite pedestrian use, and ensure year-round emergency vehicle access.” The Planning Commission concluded that maintenance with the traditional hard-pack dirt and walkway gravel to improve the surface would be helpful for both pedestrians and the local vehicular access which is permitted on this avenue.