



Minutes of the Planning Commission Worksession  
25 January 2021

Approved:

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

Attendees: Commissioners Georgette Cole, Charlie Challstrom, Robert Johnson (alternate), Deborah Mehlferber, and Peter Nagrod, HPC Chair Bob Booher, residents Joan Mahaffey, Audrey Maskery, and Paula Puglisi.

Call to order 7:32 pm.

1) Charlie moved approval of the agenda; Deb seconded. Deb pointed out the Planning Commission urgently needs to work on the many outdated ordinances. The PC agrees but it will not affect tonight's agenda. Approved, 5/0.

2) Robert moved approval of the 12/16 minutes; Peter seconded. Approve with one date correction 5/0.

3) Comprehensive Plan

3a) We viewed the new Zoning Map courtesy of a volunteer collaboration between Charlie and Kirk Eby. Kirk is a City of Gaithersburg employee who is one of their GIS mapping experts. Pat Patula suggested we contact him. Kirk has very kindly been working on our map on his own weekend time. Charlie showed us the current Zoning map. It is close to completion needing only a few minor tweaks. Audrey Maskery for Forestry and Beautification Committee expressed concern the map did not delineate Zoe Park and McGregor Park which are both in the East Woods FR Zone. Apparently, this is hard to show on this type of map. Several other parks, like McCauley Park, Wade Park, Knott Park, Railroad Park and the Dog Spot are also not marked (or not correctly marked). After discussion, we concluded this is not a matter to be solved on the Zoning Map, where the main purpose is to show the Town Zoning correctly. Bob has a map which may be more amenable to correctly showing where all the parks are. The PC will look into this for inclusion in the 2021 CP.

3b) Section 13 (Sustainability)

This is a completely new section for the CP, submitted by the Sustainability Committee (Chaired by Bob Booher).

13.1 Global Climate Challenge—accepted as written.

13.2.2 (Energy Sources for heating) several changes were made to reflect concerns about recommending energy sources which add both carbon and particulates to the air. The first recommendation was altered based on suggestions from the Racial Equity Committee (REC) to emphasize why a survey was recommended.

13.2.3 (Electricity Sources) had two minor changes.

13.3.1 (Town Infrastructure) Corrections were made to some of the numbers used. The cost figures for energy at McCathran Hall and the Maintenance shop were simplified.

13.3.2 (Town Infrastructure) Town lighting history and cost figures were corrected.

13.3.3 (Town Natural Resources)

Plant-Matter Energy Potential: This topic generated considerable discussion. The following changes represent the overall consensus of the Planning Commission taking into account feedback from a Woods Committee Chair and an F&B Committee member during the discussion. Composting was accepted and a recommendation to promote it's use among residents was added. Biodigestion and pyrolysis were deemed interesting, but better suited to a large-scale operation within the County in which Washington Grove could participate. The edited text reflects this.

Under Landscaping, the suggested conversion of parks to forest and the Craig English athletic field to a natural meadow were not accepted. Our tree-planted parks add almost as much canopy as our Town Woods. The Town parks and single athletic field serve specific Town recreational functions (including dog walking) which become unavailable if long grass is present (ticks, among other hazards). An additional issue is the prevalence of non-native invasive species which out-compete our native species due to the natives being such attractive fodder to our resident deer population. Mowing is currently the best way to prevent the growth of these non-native invasive species, especially as residents are not in favor of using of chemical treatments in these heavily-used areas adjacent to their homes.

The recommendation to continue planting trees on Town land to replace those reaching the end of their lives was retained. This has been official town policy for many years (at least 20) and the pace of tree planting has accelerated in the past 10 years.

The Community Garden suggestion was retained as the residents may indeed want to pursue it at some point.

13.3.4 (Town Operations) Added consideration of financial parameters to the EV charging stations recommendation.

13.4.1 (Existing Residential Grove Housing) Accepted without changes.

13.4.2 (Residential Homeowner Opportunities) Accepted, including four additions from the Racial Equity Committee and a wording change by the PC for one recommendation.

13.4.3 (Residential Outdoor Property) Largely accepted as written. Under recommendations, however, the PC (and the RE Committee) felt education and possible financial support would be a more positive way to encourage installation of trees on private property than a tree ordinance.

4) We did not have time to go over the new language for our Public Ways and Property Permit forms. This matter will be addressed at the regular PC meeting on February 3.

Our next regular work session date would be Feb 17, but the Washington Grove Connector-Crabbs Branch Way Extension Virtual Public Meeting will be that evening from 7-9pm. We decided to move our work session to Monday Feb 22 at 7:30pm.

We adjourned at 10:10 pm.

Georgette will integrate the current changes into a 012521 draft for circulation to Commissioners and posting to the Town web site before the next work session.

Our next meeting will be February 22.

Submitted by Georgette Cole