

## **Town of Colonial Beach Planning Commission Minutes**

Date: December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2012 – Town Center, 22 Washington Avenue

Time: 5:30 p.m.

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Present: Maureen Holt, Chairwoman  
Desiree Urquhart  
Ed Grant  
David Coombes  
Robin Schick  
Kent Rodeheaver

Absent: None

Staff: Director of Planning and Community Development, Gary Mitchell  
Planning Manager, Josh Frederick  
Town Manager, Val Foulds  
Town Clerk, Kathleen Flanagan

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### **Item 1: Call to Order**

Chairwoman Holt called the meeting to order at 5:28 p.m. All members were present.

### **Item 2: Approval of Minutes**

Chairwoman Holt asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2012 regular meeting. Member Urquhart made the motion to approve the minutes.

Chairwoman Holt called for a voice vote; it was unanimously resolved:

That the minutes of the November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2012 regular meeting be approved.

### **Item 3: Public Comment on Planning Matters**

There was no public comment.

### **Item 4: Presentation – Possibilities for development of the site formerly occupied by Eleanor Trailer Park**

Mr. Frederick gave a ten-minute Powerpoint presentation on the former Eleanor Trailer Park site, which included a history of the site, provided relevant guidance from the Comprehensive Plan and offered illustrations and examples of what could be done with the site.

### **Item 5: Discussion – Possibilities for the former Eleanor Trailer Park Site**

Chairwoman Holt offered each Commission Member the chance to express their views on the site.

Member Rodeheaver indicated he would like to see a Town pool.

Member Schick indicated her approval of a pocket neighborhood-type development or a sort of recreational center that would utilize the waterfront feature of the land.

Member Urquhart stated that the Town should keep this property for the time being, but she feels the site should remain residential in use. She further stated that perhaps a referendum could be developed to be voted on by the citizens.

Member Grant expressed agreement with Member Urquhart's remarks, but questioned the feasibility of the Town taking on any projects.

Mr. Mitchell informed Member Grant and the other members that the Town would not be taking on any projects, but would develop a plan of development, should such a project be approved, which would be marketed to the private sector for development. He offered an example from the Town of Vinton in which a similar project was developed.

Member Coombes expressed concerns that the Commission should slow down and first decide whether or not to keep the property or sell it.

Chairwoman Holt stated that the Town should keep the property and indicated her approval of encouraging water-oriented development, such as a public boat ramp.

Member Coombes urged the Commission to "slow down" and utilize a multi-faceted approach to decide what to do with the Eleanor Trailer Park site.

Member Rodeheaver stated that the property should be kept in its natural state and maintained until the right development opportunity arrives.

Chairwoman Holt reflected upon her past years on the Commission, and briefly on Council, during which the citizens expressed disapproval over the Town selling vacant pieces of land. Regardless of what is decided, the Town should hold onto the property.

There was general discussion agreeing to this. The Commission unanimously agreed that the Town should keep the property for the time being.

Member Coombes stated that this recommendation should be given to the Council. He further indicated that the Commission should charge Staff with developing proposals for how to utilize the site for next few years.

Peter Fahrney, of 3419 Riverview Drive, requested permission to address the Commission. Dr. Fahrney encouraged the Commission to consider employing a public-private partnership for utilizing the site. In this scenario the Town would maintain the land but lease it to the private sector while utilizing incentives for improvements.

There was further discussion among the Commission regarding the site. The Commission requested Staff to develop more in-depth proposals, with cost estimates, for temporarily using the site for the next few years and present them at the next Commission meeting.

**Item 6: Informational Item – *Backyard Cottages are used as studios, offices or family apartments*  
Detroit Free Press news article**

**Item 7: Informational Item – Accessory Apartments briefing from the Thomas Jefferson Planning District**

Reflecting upon these articles, Mr. Mitchell informed the Commission as to the prevalence and increasing popularity of accessory dwelling units, which are currently not permitted under the Zoning Ordinance. The problem with this is that these units are being built without permits, so there are inherent safety considerations. The Commission was provided with sample code, based on research into other localities, which would permit and regulate accessory dwelling units.

**Item 8: Discussion – Permitting accessory dwelling units (ADUs) in Colonial Beach**

Chairwoman Holt indicated that she didn't see any reason not to permit these.

Member Coombes asked how many of these currently exist in Town and whether they are detached or attached units.

Mr. Mitchell responded that Staff knows of approximately 15-20 units currently in Town, which are a mixture of both attached and detached structures.

Member Coombes asked if there have been any problems or complaints regarding these units.

Mr. Mitchell responded that the problem lies in the fact that these accessory apartments are being constructed without permits and are therefore not being inspected for life and safety measures.

Member Coombes commented that there must be a problem to be addressed, or else Staff would not bring this issue to the Commission.

Member Grant asked about utility connections.

Several members responded that there would be no separate utility connections.

There was further discussion about defining accessory apartments and impacts of permitting them.

Member Urquhart voiced her approval of permitting accessory dwelling units in Town and praised Staff for taking a proactive approach on the matter. She urged the Commission to pursue the idea.

Member Rodeheaver asked what makes these units illegal.

Chairwoman Holt responded that they aren't a permitted use in the Zoning Ordinance.

There was further related discussion.

Member Schick voiced her approval of permitting accessory dwelling units.

After further discussion, Member Coombes made a motion to ask Staff to develop draft ordinance amendments to accommodate the use of ADUs in Town. Member Schick seconded the motion.

Chairwoman Holt called for a voice vote; it was unanimously resolved:

To ask Staff to draft ordinance amendments to accommodate ADUs in Town, to be reviewed at the regular January 2013 meeting.

**Item 9: Adjournment**

Mr. Mitchell informed the Commission that he will preside as Chairman over the regular January 2013 meeting until a new Chairperson is selected. The Commission will also need to adopt the by-laws, and amend if necessary, for the 2013 calendar year.

There being no further public or Commission comments, Chairwoman Holt asked for a motion to adjourn. Member Coombes made the motion.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:47 p.m.

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Chairperson, Colonial Beach Planning Commission