

Town of Colonial Beach Planning Commission Minutes

Date: July 12th, 2012 – Town Center, 22 Washington Avenue

Time: 5:30 p.m.

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

Absent: Ed Grant

Staff: Director of Planning and Community Development, Gary Mitchell
Planning Manager, Josh Frederick

Item 1: Call to Order

Chairwoman Holt called the meeting to order at 5:31 p.m. Member Grant was absent.

Chairwoman Holt informed the Commission that Robin Schick was interviewed and approved by Council as the newest member of the Commission; she was welcomed.

Item 2: Adoption of Updated Bylaws

Chairwoman Holt asked if there were comments or questions regarding the updated Commission Bylaws.

Member Urquhart noted inconsistencies between the usage of the terms *secretary* and *clerk*. She indicated her approval of the bylaws with this inconsistency resolved.

Mr. Mitchell stated that *clerk* was the proper term, and the changes will be made to correct the inconsistencies in the document. He also informed the Commission that the only change to the bylaws was to move the meeting time to 5:30 p.m.

Chairwoman Holt asked for a motion to approve the update bylaws, as amended. Member Coombes made the motion.

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

That the Planning Commission bylaws be approved, as amended.

Item 3: Approval of Minutes

Chairwoman Holt asked for a motion to approve the minutes from June 7th, 2012 regular meeting. Member Urquhart made the motion to approve the minutes, as written.

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

That the minutes of the June 7th, 2012 regular meeting be approved.

Item 4: Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Item 5: Public Hearing – To Consider an Amendment of Article 14 of the Zoning Ordinance

Chairwoman Holt opened the public hearing.

There being no public comment, Chairwoman Holt closed the public hearing.

Member Coombes stated that prior to opening a public hearing on such matters, it would be beneficial for any members of the public present to describe the purpose of the amendment to which the meeting pertains.

Chairwoman Holt agreed and read aloud the purpose of the proposed amendment as it relates to eliminating the site plan requirement for commercial buildings in which there is only a change in tenant, and no expansion.

Item 6: Discussion and Approval of the Amendment of Article 14

Chairwoman Holt asked for a motion to approve the amendment of Article 14, provided there was no further discussion.

Member Rodeheaver made the motion to recommend approval of the text amendment to Article 14 of the Zoning Ordinance, as presented, to Town Council. Member Urquhart seconded the motion.

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

To recommend approval of the amendment of Article 14 of the Zoning Ordinance to the Town Council.

Item 7: Public Hearing – To Consider an Amendment of Article 02 of the Zoning Ordinance

Chairwoman Holt opened the public hearing. She summarized the contents of Article 02 which describes the purpose of the Zoning Ordinance, outlines necessary legal foundations and procedures, addresses the Comprehensive Plan and grants the authority of Staff, the Commission and Town Council in relation to the Ordinance.

There being no public comment, Chairwoman Holt closed the public hearing.

Item 8: Discussion and Approval of the Amendment of Article 02

Chairwoman Holt asked if Staff had any comments on the proposed amendment.

Mr. Mitchell reminded the Commission that the amendment of Article 02 dates back to the January 2012 regular meeting, during which a list of comments, changes and questions were proposed. Staff

utilized these to produce a revised Article 02, as presented to the Commission at their June 2012 regular meeting. Additional comments were added to produce a final document, which the Commission authorized for advertisement and is on the July 2012 agenda for approval. The Commission had some final, minor revisions, which only removed redundancies in the language of the article. The approval of this revised document is on the agenda for the July 2012 regular meeting.

Member Coombes had a question regarding the final revisions and their extent.

Mr. Frederick informed the Commission that these changes were only to the first page of the article, and they were only to remove identical, redundant language.

Chairwoman Holt asked for a motion to approve the amendment of Article 02, provided there was no further discussion.

Member Coombes made the motion to recommend approval of the text amendment to Article 02 of the Zoning Ordinance, as amended, to Town Council. Member Urquhart seconded the motion.

Member Rodeheaver requested that future staff reports and supporting documents related to cases requiring Commission approval have not only the case numbers, but also a brief description of the case for identification purposes during the meeting.

Mr. Mitchell confirmed the request.

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

To recommend approval of the amendment of Article 02 of the Zoning Ordinance to the Town Council.

Member Coombes commented that he has had ongoing concerns over “regulatory overreach” in regards to the language of the amendments of the Zoning Ordinance.

Item 9: Informational Item – “Cozy Pocket Neighborhoods Have Sprawl on the Move” Article

Mr. Frederick offered an overview of the article, as it pertained to the growing popularity of “pocket neighborhoods” with retirees and those looking to downsize. He indicated the timeliness of this article, as the Town has received a planning grant to develop architectural and development guidelines for multifamily housing.

Chairwoman Holt commented positively on the article and its pertinence to Colonial Beach.

Member Urquhart asked whether or not changes to the Zoning Ordinance would be required in order for this type of development to be permitted.

Mr. Frederick responded that the Zoning Ordinance currently permits multifamily housing, but no property within the Town is zoned as such; a rezoning would be required. Ideally, the grant will allow the Town to establish guidelines for multifamily development, prior to rezoning any land to this use. Member Schick commented positively that there are already areas within the Town that resemble the form of development indicative of pocket neighborhoods.

Member Urquhart commented that she appreciates the informational articles presented to the Commission each month.

Item 10: Discussion – Establishment of Subcommittee to Address Sign Ordinance Revisions

Chairwoman Holt requested an introduction of this agenda item.

Mt. Mitchell informed the Commission that this had arisen from questions regarding digital signs in the Town. Rather than adopt a piecemeal amendment, Mr. Frederick will lead a subcommittee over the next couple of months to not only address the possibility of permitting digital signs of some fashion, but also to update, clarify and simply the sign ordinance.

Chairwoman Holt had a question regarding the meeting time.

Mr. Mitchell responded that that will up to the members of the subcommittee.

Member Rodeheaver expressed concerns over the necessity of such a comprehensive amendment to the Zoning Ordinance, as the article pertaining to signs was updated only a couple of years ago.

Chairwoman Holt acknowledged the concern, but stated that this is an effort to streamline regulations and to be more business-friendly.

Member Rodeheaver questioned the necessity of a subcommittee, stating that they had only been utilized in the past for very sensitive or overwhelming issues.

Mr. Mitchell claimed the subcommittee is necessary in this instance because of the complexity and time required of the members.

Member Rodeheaver again expressed concern over the necessity of such an amendment in regards to the time required by the Commission.

Member Coombes proclaimed that the instigation for this amendment was born from a local business's unpermitted use of a digital sign, and the subsequent desire for digital signs by other businesses. He also asked for clarification on the "issues" with the current sign ordinance.

Mr. Mitchell responded that the goal is to reduce the complexity of the ordinance.

Member Coombes stated that if this is the case, he approves.

Member Schick added that introducing as much flexibility as possible into the sign ordinance is a great idea. She also indicated she would be willing to serve on the subcommittee.

Mr. Frederick reiterated what was intended to be accomplished by forming the subcommittee in regards to the ordinance language and its readability.

Member Urquhart expressed her desire to serve on the subcommittee as well.

Member Schick asked the Commission whether or not her serving on the subcommittee alongside her father, who is affiliated with the Chamber of Commerce and also serving on the subcommittee, would be a conflict of interest.

Chairwoman Holt claimed it would not be, as the subcommittee will be tasked with creating a revised sign ordinance which will be brought before the Commission for discussion and recommendation. She also thanked the Commission members who volunteered.

There was further discussion regarding the timeline for developing a document to bring before the Commission.

Member Rodeheaver again expressed his concern over utilizing a subcommittee to update the sign ordinance, as it is a change from the normal courses of action.

Chairwoman Holt clarified with Mr. Mitchell that digital signs are not currently allowed under the ordinance, and there is no way to get an exemption or variance for one. She again thanked the Commission members who volunteered and requested a progress report at the next regular meeting in August.

Item 11: Adjournment

Chairwoman Holt requested an update on the CDBG grant application status, referencing the fact that the Town of Montross was awarded funding while Colonial Beach was not.

Mr. Mitchell informed the Commission that Staff has an upcoming meeting with VHCD to discuss points of improvement on the Town's application, which will be resubmitted next year. He also urged the Commission to consider adopting the Downtown Revitalization Plan, on which much of the grant application was based, as a component of the Comprehensive Plan, which would give the document more leverage in the regulation of future development.

There was further discussion about the manner in which the Commission would prefer to receive the information contained in their monthly packets, as provided by Staff.

Member Coombes stated to the Commission that each member has a responsibility to read and understand the information provided to them by Staff, and to utilize Staff as resource whenever questions arise.

Chairwoman Holt asked for a motion to adjourn. Member Rodeheaver made the motion.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:05 p.m.

Chairperson, Colonial Beach Planning Commission