

COLUMBUS PLANNING BOARD & BOARD OF ADJUSTMENTS
Minutes of Regular Meeting
Tuesday, July 7, 2020

The Town of Columbus Planning Board and Board of Adjustments met on Tuesday, July 7, 2020 at 6:00 p.m.

Roll Call: Catherine Elliott, Chair
Virginia Green
Mark Blanton, Alternate Member

Staff Present: Timothy J. Barth, Town Manager
Shana Atkins, Assistant Town Clerk

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. A roll call was taken, and the chairman acknowledged all present except Marshall Watkins, Kathleen Nowakowski, Jimmi Buell, and Ernie Kan.

Public Comment

There were no public comments

Consideration of Minutes of the February 4 and June 2, 2020 Planning Board Meeting and March 3, 2020 Board of Adjustments Meeting.

Mrs. Elliott asked if there were any changes to the February 4 and June 2, 2020 Planning Board minutes or the March 3, 2020 Board of Adjustments minutes. There were no changes requested.

Mrs. Green made a motion to approve the February 4, and June 2, 2020 Planning Board minutes as written, Mr. Blanton seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Mrs. Green made a motion to approve the March 3, 2020 Board of Adjustments minutes as written, Mr. Blanton seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Discussion of Section 6 (Goals and Strategies) of the Comprehensive Plan

Dale Holland from Holland Consulting Planners Inc. was present and addressed the three comments and concerns that some of the Planning Board Members had at the last Planning Board meeting. Mr. Holland stated that there was a question about item 1.7 on page 6-4 of the Comprehensive Plan regarding zero-lot lines. Mr. Holland explained that the zero-lot line is aimed primarily at the residential development and new subdivisions. Mr. Holland stated that the zero-lot line gives a potential developer another option, and not something the town would impose on someone. Mr. Holland stated that the zero-lot line has some potential appeal for Columbus because the town has a lot of irregular shaped parcels of land that are undeveloped. Mr. Holland added that the zero-lot line was included in the Comprehensive Plan as a recommendation for consideration when the board updates the land development ordinance. Mr.

Holland recommended that the zero-lot line be left in the plan, but the final decision would be up to the Planning Board. Mr. Holland stated that there were questions about item 1.8 on page 6-4 of the Comprehensive Plan regarding temporary health care facilities. Mr. Holland explained that temporary health care facilities could be a small standing unit on someone's property that would allow the property owner to care for someone that is dependent upon them. Mr. Holland added that when that need no longer exist the unit would have to be removed. Mr. Holland explained that the temporary health care facilities are allowed under state law. Mr. Holland stated that one of the Planning Board members mentioned that Polk County has a great transportation system and asked if the Planning Board should recognize that transportation system in the strategy section of the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Holland suggested that the counties transportation system be recognized in the existing conditions / future conditions section of the Comprehensive Plan under transportation. Mrs. Elliott asked Mr. Holland to make a note to put Polk County Transportations information into the Comprehensive Plan. Mrs. Green added that Polk County's Transportation information should be added in the transportation section on page 3-28 of the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Holland stated that the next step would be to send the Comprehensive Plan to the Town Council for consideration and then have a public hearing. Mr. Holland stated that the Town Council could suggest modification and changes to the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Holland stated that the Planning Board would not make a motion to approve the Comprehensive Plan but would make a motion to recommend the Comprehensive Plan to the Town Council for their consideration. Mrs. Elliott stated that she has read through the strategies and that there is a couple that are the exact same under two different categories such as implementing strategies on page 6-6 I.25. Mrs. Elliott explained that on page 6-6-I.25 states "As Planning Board membership vacancies occur, recruit members who have interest and / or expertise in public health" is the same strategies as I.70 under community services and recreation. Mrs. Elliott added that on I.70 of the Comprehensive Plan there is some additional wording, that states "representing the 40-year old and younger population, and community diversity. Mr. Holland stated that is redundancy and does not need to be in both sections but added that he would leave that section in community services. Mrs. Green suggested waiting until all the Planning Board Members could get together for a final discussion before making the recommendation to submit the Comprehensive Plan to the Town Council for consideration. Mr. Blanton asked if the Planning Board waited until the next meeting to submit the Comprehensive Plan would it put everything behind. Mr. Holland stated that the Comprehensive Plan is way behind because of COVID-19, but there is no defined timeline. Mr. Holland stated that the board has about another year to submit the final Comprehensive Plan to the Fish and Wildlife Commission because of their funding on the project. Mrs. Elliott stated that the board was overwhelmed last month and did not get to discuss everything in detail.

Mrs. Green made a motion to table the discussion until next month's meeting with the intent of submitting the Comprehensive Plan to the Town Council for consideration. Mr. Blanton seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Discussion About the Possibility of Developing a Unified Development Ordinance

Mr. Holland stated that the handout he gave to the Planning Board Members list all the town's current land development ordinances. Mr. Holland stated that the update of the ordinance will be referred to 160-D legislation which is a complete re-write of state statues. Mr. Holland added

that the re-write will cause multiple changes to ordinances across the state. Mr. Holland stated that all ordinances must be revised to follow 160-D legislation. Mr. Holland proposed that the town take all the different ordinances and merge them into one document that would be referred to a Unified Development Ordinance (UDO). Mr. Holland stated that by doing an UDO it will put all land use regulations into one document and will eliminate a lot of duplicated documents. Mr. Holland stated that there are duplications in the town's current ordinances, and some contradict one another, so merging these documents into one UDO will reduce the volume and make everything simple. Mr. Holland stated that he will attend the August 4, 2020 Planning Board Meeting to discuss further detail about the UDO. Mr. Holland stated that he will give the Planning Board Members an outline of the ordinance and will explain what will be required by 160-D legislation. Mr. Holland stated that he thinks it will take about 8 months to finish the UDO.

Consideration of a Request to Locate a Taco Bell

William Pugh and Adam McCurry were present representing Taco Bell. William Pugh stated that the new Taco Bell project will be located on West Mills Street in the parking lot of the Food Lion Shopping Center. Mr. Pugh added that the new proposed Taco Bell will go on the side closest to First Citizens Bank. Mr. Pugh explained that the plan is to put a free-standing Taco Bell on .82 acres. Mr. Pugh stated that the company will be reducing pavement from 4,600 square feet. down to 3,200 square feet. Mr. Pugh stated that the company will be installing trees, parking lot, and a driveway off West Mills Street. Mr. Pugh stated that the company has submitted plans to the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) and that they have signed off on the driveway permit. Mr. Blanton asked if the main drive of the Food Lion Shopping Center and the secondary entrance would be closed during construction. Mr. Pugh replied that the developers could leave that main drive open to help relieve congestion. Mr. Blanton asked what the proposed construction timeline is for the project. Mr. McCurry stated that the construction duration will be 100-120 days. Mr. Barth asked how many parking spaces the company would add verses taking away. Mr. Pugh stated that he will get the net parking spaces and get back with Mr. Barth. Mr. Barth asked if the construction would affect deliveries to the current businesses located at the Food Lion Shopping Center. Mr. Pugh stated that deliveries to the other businesses will not be affected due to construction. Mrs. Elliott asked if this new Taco Bell would replace the existing Taco Bell located with Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC). Mr. McCurry explained that the company would be doing a decoupling which would allow each franchise to operate more efficiently. Mr. Blanton asked if the KFC and Taco Bell would have enough employees to operate once the businesses are decoupled. Mr. McCurry stated that more employees will need to be hired. Mr. Barth stated that he would like to get more information on parking and how it will be affected and the full count of parking spaces that are shared in the shopping center. Mr. Barth stated that he would like to get the existing number of parking spaces and what the existing number would be after completion. Mr. Barth stated that he would like to know the number of spaces that the facility would be taken up verses the number of spaces that will be eliminated and the number of spaces that will be created. Mr. McCurry stated that he would get that information to Mr. Barth and the Planning Board. Mr. Barth stated that he would like that information provided before approval. Robert Williamson stated that he would like to speak on behalf of this discussion. Robert Williamson stated that he is a resident of Columbus and a Rural Planning Organization Technical Advisory Committee Member, and that

he works with NCDOT on traffic issues. Mr. Williamson stated that he is also an elected Town Council Member and a resident right behind the Bojangles development. Mr. Williamson stated that he has seen the impact of the construction in his back yard. Mr. Williamson stated that when he looks at the parking lot comp from Google Maps of the actual lines on the pavement there is already a deficit in parking at the Food Lion Plaza. Mr. Williamson stated that there is not enough parking at the Food Lion Plaza to meet the Town's ordinance. Mr. Williamson stated that when the Taco Bell creates parking for the business it will add 14 or so parking spaces to the numbers, but that the entire parking lot is 102 parking places short of what the ordinance requires. Mr. Williamson stated that parking and traffic is an issue on West Mills Street. Mr. Williamson added that every business in the corridor has had help wanted signs up and added that the town has the lowest weekly average wage in the county region. Mr. Williamson stated that a lot of businesses have a hard time hiring employees at the wage of \$8.60- \$9.57 for several reasons which include age group, temp part time jobs. Mr. Williamson also stated childcare could be an issue as well.

Discussion Regarding a Possible New Subdivision


Sara Grimes stated that she is the executive director of the Housing Assistance Corporation located in Hendersonville NC. Mrs. Grimes worked with Town Manager Tim Barth last year on a Community Development Block Grant for Infrastructure (CDBGI) grant to take water and sewer out HWY 108 to a property they just purchased. Mrs. Grimes stated that the Land Conservancy purchased 1,200 acres of Little White Oak Mountain. Mrs. Grimes stated that they bought 28.35 acres at the bottom to build affordable housing. Mrs. Grimes stated that this grant is only eligible for a municipality for county government to apply for. Mrs. Grimes stated Ashlyn McCoy will be writing the grant for the Town of Columbus and will do everything on the town's behalf while applying for the grant. Mrs. Grimes stated that the grant would help extend water and sewer to the building site of where the 32 units of affordable houses would be placed. Mrs. Grimes stated that in the packet that she passed out to the Planning Board Members the first two pages are summaries that they did last year. Mrs. Grimes stated that the top 3 were awarded this grant last year and they placed number 4. Mrs. Grimes stated that on the 1st page you will find a narrative on what was in the application last time and on page 2 the budget scenario for the project. Mrs. Grimes stated on page 3 is a preliminary survey and the site plan showing the 32 lots with flood wetlands. Mrs. Grimes stated that you can see that the wet land areas will not be disturbed. Mrs. Grimes stated that the grant promised that 8 homes will be built in three years and then the additional 24 homes will be completed after. Mrs. Grimes stated that these houses would be built with a USDA Self Help program where the homeowners will put approximately 600 hours into their home and their neighbor's home. Ashlyn McCoy stated that she is at the meeting to give the board a little more information about the project description and then will come back in August with the full development plan. Ms. McCoy stated that the grant is CDBGI from the NC Department and Environment of Natural resources and the total amount is 2 million dollars that must be used in 2 years. Mrs. McCoy stated that one of the criteria of the grant is to serve low- and moderate-income people. Mrs. McCoy stated that there is a need for low income housing in the area. McCoy stated that the lots will be about a third of an acre. Mr. Blanton asked what the square footage would be of the homes. Mrs. Grimes replied that the three-bedroom will be 1,346 square foot and the four-bedroom will be 1,448 square foot. Mr. Blanton asked if he could see a photo of the types of structures that will be built. Mrs. Grimes showed photos of the home on her phone. Mr. Blanton asked if the applicant would own the homes. Mrs. Grimes

stated that the applicant would own the home and that their sweat equity would bring down their payments. Mrs. Grimes stated that she tries to recruit homeowners from the county for the affordable homes. Mrs. Grimes stated that the new homeowners will have a mortgage and go through a certain criteria for approval of the program. Mrs. Grimes invited all the board members to come for a tour of the home that they built in Henderson County.

Board Member Comments

There being no other business to discuss Mr. Blanton made a motion to adjourn. Mrs. Green seconded, and the meeting was adjourned at 7:19 PM.


Catherine Elliott, Chairman


Shana Atkins, Assistant Town Clerk