

COLUMBUS PLANNING BOARD
Minutes of Regular Meeting
Thursday, November 21, 2019

The Town of Columbus Planning Board met on Thursday, November 21, 2019 at 4:30 p.m., at the Columbus Town Hall, 95 Walker Street, Columbus, North Carolina.

Roll Call:

Kathleen Nowakowski
Jimmi Buell
Brent Jackson
Virginia Green
Catherine Elliott
Marshall Watkins

Staff Present:

Timothy J. Barth, Town Manager
Shana Atkins, Assistant Town Clerk

The meeting was called to order at 4:35 p.m. A roll call was taken, and the chairman acknowledge all present.

Public Comment

There were no public comments.

Consideration of Minutes of the October 15, 2019 Regular Meeting

Mrs. Nowakowski asked if there were any changes to the October 15, 2019 minutes. There were no changes requested. Ms. Buell made a motion to approve the October 15, 2019 minutes as written. Mr. Jackson seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Discussion of the First Two Sections of the Comprehensive Plan

Dale Holland introduced himself and stated that he and the Planning Board members will go over the first two sections of the comprehensive plan. Mr. Holland stated that he will meet with the Planning Board to review the different sections of the comprehensive plan over the next several meetings. Mr. Holland stated that based on his schedule, a draft of the comprehensive plan will be presented in May. Mr. Holland expressed the importance of citizen participation to help with the development of the comprehensive plan. Mr. Holland stated that sections one and two of the comprehensive plans are on the town's website and that section three of the plan will be on the website in the morning. Mr. Holland stated that sections one and two of the comprehensive plan provide background information and a brief explanation of the current conditions of the town. Mr. Holland stated that the comprehensive plan will be used as a marketing tool because it gives people knowledge of the community and will also help when the town applies for grants. Mr. Holland stated since 1990 Columbus has been the 2nd fastest growing community in the county with a growth rate of 64 percent. Mr. Holland added that he doesn't see that growth rate being sustained without some unanticipated annexations because there is not much vacant land in the corporate limit area available for development. Mr. Holland

stated that Columbus's housing tenure has a high rental occupancy rate, a high percent of single-family homes, and a low percentage of manufactured homes. Mr. Holland stated that the unemployment rate will be updated before the plan is completed, but as of now Columbus has the lowest unemployment rate in the county at 5.9%. Mr. Holland stated that employment by industry data explains what is happening economically in Columbus. Mr. Holland stated that about 57 percent of the town's employment is in the service industry, which reflects a tourist-driven economy, ten percent is in construction, and eleven percent is in manufacturing. Mr. Holland stated that 27% of the employment base commutes ten minutes or less to work. Mr. Holland stated from an economic perspective he thinks Columbus is in good shape given the lack of manufacturing.

Distribution of a Draft for Section 3 of the Comprehensive Plan

Mr. Holland passed out section 3 of the comprehensive plan to the Planning Board. Mr. Holland stated in section 3 the board will discuss environmental factors, community facilities, transportation, and existing land use. Mr. Holland stated that the town received a \$12,000 grant from the North Carolina Wildlife Resource Commission which is intended to help focus on preservation of Chocolate Drop Mountain and wildlife preservation in general areas of Columbus. Mr. Holland stated that the Planning Board will find conversation of wildlife diversity, green toolbox management for development and other things relating to wildlife protection and preservation in section three of the comprehensive plan. Mr. Holland stated that anyone can view the comprehensive plan online by visiting <https://plancolumbus.com/>. Mr. Holland strongly recommended that the Planning Board members write down ten to twelve goals of the comprehensive planning process to help determine what the plan will to focus on and email them to him by December 6th. Mr. Barth informed the Planning Board Members that the office staff can assist with emailing the goals to Mr. Holland if anyone should need assistance. Mr. Holland stated that he will meet with the Planning Board in January to discuss the top ten goals and section three of the comprehensive plan.

Mr. Holland stated that he would like to meet with the Planning Board on Tuesday, January 14, 2020 at 6:00.

Mr. Holland stated that Casey Cook with the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission will be attending the Town Council meeting tonight at 6:00 pm to make a brief presentation of wildlife involvement in the comprehensive plan.

Mr. Jackson made a motion to change the next Planning Board meeting to January 14, 2019 at 6:00 pm. Mrs. Green seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Consideration of a Special Use Permit for Thermal Belt Outreach Ministries

George Alley from Thermal Belt Outreach Ministries (TBOM) was present and stated that he had applied for a special use permit for the consideration of a planned residential unit development that would be built on TBOM property. Mr. Alley stated that TBOM would like to build nine affordable housing units, a daycare, and a foster home at the back of their property on White Drive. Mr. Alley stated that TBOM will be the sole owner of the housing units and that TBOM has talked about putting the water bill accounts in their name so that the town would be guaranteed payment for the water bills.

Mr. Barth stated that TBOM's property is now zoned Highway Commercial, which does not allow for single-family residential units, but does allow for planned unit development. Mr. Barth

stated that the property will remain zoned as Highway Commercial, but TBOM is requesting a Special Use Permit that will allow single-family residential units. Mr. Barth stated that with a special use permit the Board can require TBOM to develop the project with additional requirements to ensure it is done in a way that the Board desires. Mr. Barth stated that TBOM already knows that White Drive must be widened, and a new water line will have to be installed to extend Town water service. Mr. Barth stated that the process of approving the Special Use Permit requires a Public Hearing, which will be held on December 3, 2019 at 6:00 pm. Mr. Barth stated that a planned unit development allows houses to be grouped in a smaller area and that the only requirement is to leave at least 20 feet between each house so emergency services can have access behind the houses. Mr. Barth stated that on December 3, 2019 the Board of Adjustment will make the decision to approve or deny the special use permit submitted by TBOM.

There being no other business to discuss Ms. Buell made a motion to adjourn. Mrs. Elliott seconded, and the meeting was adjourned at 5:29 p.m.

Kathleen Nowakowski, Chairman

Shana Atkins, Assistant Town Clerk