

Town of North Wilkesboro
Planning Board Meeting Minutes
February 10th, 2022
Town Hall and on Zoom at 5:30 pm

Planning Board Members Present: Nichols, Cox, Minton, Queen, Suddreth and Long
Also Present: Meredith Detsch, Planning Director, Danny Johnson, Town Attorney online via Zoom, Michael Parsons, Board of Commissioners, Chantelle and Jason Sargood, applicants, Jeffrey Espin and Jo Ann Church.

Vice-Chair Nichols called the meeting to order at 5:33 pm. Vice-Chair Nichols asked for any deletions or additions to the agenda. Hearing none, Queen moved to approve the agenda as presented and Suddreth seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, 6-0.

Vice-Chair Nichols stated she would entertain a motion for the minutes for the Planning Board Meeting on August 12, 2021. Minton moved to approve the minutes as submitted and Cox seconded the minutes. The motion passed unanimously, 6-0.

Vice-Chair Nichols asked if there was anyone here tonight to speak about a matter not on the agenda, there was not.

Election of Vice-Chair and Chair were needed as Otis Church, previous Chair, was no longer on the board as he is a Commissioner now. Minton asked if Nichols could naturally succeed into Chair. Detsch noted there was nothing in the Rules and Procedures that stated that, it was the board's discretion. Nichols asked if she would be serving out the remainder of Otis's term and potentially yes as elections would be in June. Discussion of how many terms and length were noted by the members and staff, the chair and vice-chair terms were one year. Queen moved to nominate Nichols for Chair, Minton asked Long if he would accept the Vice-Chair nomination. Long would accept it and Minton moved to nominate Long as Vice-Chair, Cox seconded both motions. The motion passed unanimously, 6-0.

The next order of business was the appointment of an in-town member on the board. Chair Nichols welcomed all the applicants and complimented the amount and quality of applicants. Chair Nichols noted there were four wonderful applications and unfortunately only one space available. She didn't want to discourage any of the applicants if they did not get the position and noted there was a position open on the Board of Adjustment and she encouraged them to apply for it and also again on the Planning Board as they will lose members over time. Detsch noted only two applicants were present at the meeting to introduce themselves. Jo Ann Church introduced herself and told the board her husband and she owned a store downtown, they lived in town and were very active in the town. Nichols called Jeff Espin next, he introduced himself and explained he is new to the Town, has lived here three years and his wife is from the area. He is originally from the Charlotte area and believes he could bring a unique point of view as he has lived in many other areas. Nichols noted in the past they have conducted interviews and had the applicants come in one at a time. Since there is only two it was up to them how they would like to move forward. The applicants felt fine to stay. Chair Nichols stated that Jo Ann's husband is a Commissioner and was the previous Planning Board Chair.

It was suggested her applying to the Planning Board to be vetted by the Commissioners and Town Attorney and it was and she is a viable applicant. Chair Nichols opened the floor to the other Planning Board members to ask questions. Minton wanted to ask a question and noted she would be asking all the applicants the same question. Minton asked she has noticed a lack of progression, lack of change, lack of ideas and asked what would you bring to this board that the board doesn't already have? Mrs. Church stated her husband and her owned a store since 2009 and knows all the downtown merchants, the strengths and weaknesses of the Town, they are very active in merchant's society, part of events in town, they moved back here as this is home to them. They are both retired and wanted to get involved. Nichols asked if she wanted to add anything and Mrs. Church thanked the board for their consideration and would be honored to serve on it. Jeffrey Espin introduced himself and Minton asked the same question, what would you bring to this board that the board doesn't already have? Mr. Espin noted he is not familiar with the board members and noted he has lived in many different places and seen challenges and can provide solutions. His perspective is more outside looking in. Nichols asked what Mr. Espin what he did for a living and he explained he worked for a paper making company out of Sweden. He is the sales manager for North American and can live anywhere he wants. He is responsible for all sales and has a technical operation background. With no other questions, Chair Nichols invited them to stay for the meeting and the board may or may not vote on the item tonight. Mr. Espin asked if there were any red flags on the application and the board felt they were both great and thorough applications. Long noted it would be a tough decision. The board would like to try to reach out to the other applicants and speak with them next month and then vote on the application. Nichols asked if both applicants would be available for one night a month for the Planning Board and they agreed they would. Minton asked how much effort was put into contacting the applicants and staff explained she emailed them and spoke with Mr. Piner this afternoon who had to work this evening and couldn't attend. Nichols stated they could hold off until the 10th of March and try to get them at the meeting. They would vote regardless next month.

The first item under new business was a proposed text amendment for signage in the Corridor Overlay district. The applicants Chantelle and Jason Sargood were at the meeting to present their item to the board. The Sargoods introduced their business as The Meat Sweats located at 1608 West D Street and explained that half of the store would be retail for meat sales and half would be meat processing including wild game. Detsch presented the item explaining that only monument signs were permitted in the Corridor Overlay District. Detsch explained that no other signage is allowed and within the overlay district. The NCDOT has huge right of ways which limits where the business owners can even put the monument signs. The businesses within this district have it tougher than other areas of town as there are landscaping requirements, parking and signage regulations stricter than other locations. For this request, the proposed amendments include the Corridor Overlay District and Article Ten, Signage. With any text amendments we do look at the Comprehensive Plan to ensure we are consistent with it and some of the goals including strengthening community appearance and redevelopment of vacant buildings. Additionally we want to ensure we are keeping the intent of the Corridor Overlay ordinance and staff believes we are as this is such a minor change. Staff noted that the properties in the Corridor Overlay District are along our highways and have very large right of ways to navigate with their monument signs. Allowing wall signs in this district would help the property owners advertise their business while overcoming the right of way challenges. Staff proposes the text for the wall signage allowance in the Corridor Overlay district to be the same as the underlying zoning district regulations. Minton commented that she had heard from several business owners how restrictive the Corridor Overlay District was and was glad to see this change. Detsch explained she spoke with Mrs. Sargood and they

came to the conclusion to make these changes to accommodate businesses in the district while still protecting the integrity of the district's intent. Detsch asked the Board if they were comfortable with allowing both types of signs at the business or have it either or. The board discussed the options and felt comfortable with allowing both types of signs. Long moved to accept the proposed changes as written to the zoning ordinance. The Town of North Wilkesboro's Planning Board deems the proposed amendments to the Zoning Ordinance, in regards to the signage in the Corridor Overlay District, is consistent with the Town's comprehensive plan, any small area plans or elements thereof and, does support the Comprehensive's Plan goals and policies. Further the proposed amendments regarding the signage in the Corridor Overlay District is reasonable in the public's interest. The Planning Board recommends to approve the amendments to the Zoning Ordinance. Nichols welcomed the Sargoods to Town and is excited to have them. Detsch would get this on the Board of Commissioners schedule for consideration. The board asked about the business and the Sargoods explained their model including butchering shop and they would process wild game during the season.

The next item of business is the proposed multi-family text amendments. Detsch explained the Commissioners brought this item to staff's attention and Michael Parsons was available at the meeting if there were any questions. Staff was bringing this to the Planning Board for the technical review. Detsch explained there were several options to consider for tonight's discussion. Currently we only allow multi-family in R-20 Rural Residential or it must be rezoned to Multi-family Conditional District. Conditional rezoning is a three month process and does require a site plan. Additionally the boards may request architectural plans and by that point the applicant has invested significant time and money without knowing if they are approved for the multi-family use. The first option we are looking at is permitted by right which allows multi-family by right in our commercial districts (Highway Business, HB & General Business, GB) which is staff reviewed. The next option is permitted with Supplemental Standards, which is staff review and similar to permitted by right but also includes supplemental standards that developments must meet prior to staff approval. Everything from the way it looks to site development can be regulated in addition to the current zoning ordinance requirements. The next option is a regular rezoning which would not require a site plan. The public could come out and still comment but the developer would not have to produce a site plan before they got the approval to develop the property. Staff described the zoning districts that this proposed text would effect. Detsch explained that the board would also need to look at scenarios with if the proposed apartments are next to residential properties then additional regulations would be required and asked the board to think of those. The board could also limit density of the multi-family units or have it trigger a certain process if the units became over a certain density. The Board of Adjustment could also review the use as a special use permit but architectural plans and a site plan would still be required by the applicant before they would have the approval to develop the property. Chair Nichols asked that this was two separate issues, and staff answered yes. Chair Nichols noted she was at the Board of Commissioners meeting when this began and Neil Shepherd was interested in developing property. The Planning Board is looking at this now as the technical review group. Chair Nichols thought lessening the regulations for multi-family in the General and Highway Business Districts was a good idea. Minton asked how much available property was zoned that in our jurisdiction. Staff showed the board the GIS map and noted the properties zoned appropriately based on this proposal. The board discussed how to regulate commercial properties abutting residential properties. Chair Nichols asked if we could do distances from residential properties and staff agreed you could but it gets very complicated hence the abutting or adjacent to. Commissioner Parsons asked to speak on the matter and noted that other municipalities could create a buffer between the two uses. Commissioner Parsons also noted he wanted to look at making the Town

more business and development friendly. Staff asked if the board wanted to have a public input option or just let staff handle the development review process. Currently the board controls everything with multi-family, staff only does the technical review. Discussion of buffers and other options was discussed. Suddreth noted he has seen apartments built right up against single family residential with no buffers and over the years it has been problematic. For tonight's purpose, staff just wanted the board to start thinking about changes to the text to make apartments in the commercial districts simpler for developers. Staff showed the board a few examples that are zoned highway business and explained the different uses and processes for developing a commercial site. Minton asked what staff was looking for from the board. Minton felt permitting apartments with supplemental standards would work potentially. Staff showed the board the current supplemental standards and explained the extra layer of regulations with them. The board noted the standards were tough and needed to be looked at and considered changing. Sparta Springs was discussed as it is one of the few multi-family sites in town developed under the current regulations. Commissioner Parsons noted that the site plan was designed before they even had approval and they could have not been approved and lost the investment with the site plan. Commissioner Parsons is looking to make the Town more developer friendly with this ordinance change. Minton noted that the supplemental standards might not be what we need. Chair Nichols asked if staff could bring them the text without all the additional regulations. Discussion of looking at just Highway Business and General Business with making it simpler and permitted by right. Discussion of having staff review the proposals as permitted by right occurred among the board members. The timeframe and schedule was also discussed and the board asked staff to look at other community's text regulations on multi-family.

The next item was the 2022 meeting dates and deadlines. Staff asked if the board was open to holding a special meeting for a rezoning request. The board discussed dates and decided Wednesday February 23rd would work best. The board asked the scenario for the rezoning and staff explained that the property was under contract to be sold but the banks would not write the loan as it is a non-conforming use and structure. Rezoning it to R-6 would allow it be conforming and the houses also needed to be subdivided and the lots reallocated with watershed requirements of a one acre lot. There would not be spot zoning as there are properties around it and behind it zoned R-6.

Ron Queen asked the board and staff about properties near Eastover Drive and the large power transmission lines are. He noted that those lots could be prime development for housing. Staff recommended a survey or deed research to be done to determine the easements on the properties.

The last item of business was the staff reports. Detsch went over both the Planning & Inspections report and the Code Enforcement report with the board. Chair Nichols asked about 821 Main Street and Detsch explained this was a Non-Residential Code violation, John Ganus our Code Enforcement Officer has called for an inspection. During that inspection John notes the deficiencies and what will need to be fixed at the property to bring it up to the code requirements. The property owner is given so many days to correct the issues, if the timeframe goes by and the owner does not correct the issues then we would issue a close ordinance and the Board of Commissioners has to approve it. Then the Town will go in and correct the deficiencies or demolish it if necessary. A lien will be placed on the property for the amount of incurred costs, including staff time. The timeframe for when it will be closed may change as we have heard from the property owner that they are working with a contractor, extensions may be given depending on the circumstance. Minton asked about some of the items on the Code Enforcement report and Detsch provided an update on several minimum housing cases.

Ron Queen wanted to give the board an update on the Speedway. He now works for the Speedway and was presenting the North Wilkesboro Speedway at a conference in Texas. A lot of work is being done at the Speedway and everyone is excited about the future for it.

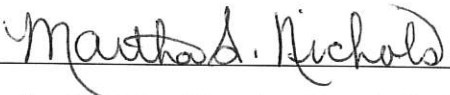
Discussion of code violations in the county near the Highway 115/Highway 421 intersection occurred as well as discussion on the Town's water and sewer policy for properties in the ETJ and outside Town limits.

With no other discussion Chair Nichols asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. At 6:48 pm Cox moved to adjourn the meeting and Long seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously 5-0.

Respectively submitted,



Meredith Detsch, Planning Director



Martha Nichols, Planning Board Chair *or*
Danny Long, Planning Board Vice-Chair

