

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

The Planning Board of the Town of North Wilkesboro met on Thursday, November 10th, 2022, in the Commissioners Room at Town Hall. Board members in attendance included: Chair Martha Nichols, Amy Cox, Jeffrey Espin, Jarrell Suddreth, and Kenneth Turner. Staff participating in the meeting included Planning and Inspections Director Meredith Detsch and Planner 1 Sarah Davis. No visitors were in attendance.

Chair Nichols called the meeting to order at 5:30pm and asked for any additions or deletions to the agenda. Hearing none, Suddreth made a motion to approve the agenda as present. Turner made a second and the motion passed 4-0.

Nichols stated she hoped members had reviewed the draft minutes from the previous meeting and asked for a motion to either accept or amend the minutes as presented. Cox made a motion to approve the minutes; Suddreth offered a second and the motion carried 4-0.

Noting the absence of any members from the public in attendance, Nichols stated there was no need for a public comment period and opened up the floor for old business which included text amendment proposals for temporary RV camping.

Director Detsch took the floor to provide an overview of what qualifies as a recreational vehicle (RV). She explained that RVs are not built to building code requirements and are not recognized as a permanent residence. She explained that the Zoning Code already has requirements in place for permanent RV parks, but not temporary RV parks. Director Detsch emphasized the need to regulate temporary RV parks to provide for life safety in the event of an emergency and to ensure that waste is not illegally dumped.

Director Detsch explained that initial staff recommendation is to allow temporary RVs parks across zoning districts, limiting permits to three times per calendar year. Nichols interjected that the number of permitted times per year may need to change if the event series gets bigger. Director Detsch further explained that staff recommends the permit must list dates of operation for the temporary parks and emphasized once again that illegal dumping of waste will not be allowed. She explained that any other utilities will be regulated by the designated permitting agency. No food or retail will be permitted to be sold from the campers. Continuing, Director Detsch explained that anyone wishing to operate a temporary RV park will be required to submit an evacuation plan to ensure that emergency service vehicles have access to the temporary parks at all times. Espin questioned how park operators will submit evacuation plans. Director Detsch explained that park operators will submit evacuation plans to her, and she in turn will distribute them to the appropriate emergency service groups. The last requirement is that the property owner must be aware of and sign off for a temporary permit. Director Detsch notified the Board that she will need to get in touch with the Health Department and SMI Racing to make sure they are on-board with temporary RVs parks.

Nichols verified that the temporary permits are issued for the entire lot, not individual campers. Director Detsch confirmed yes, the permit will be issued for individual lots in entirety and encompass RVs that choose to temporarily park on that specific lot. Turner mentioned that property owners with large tracts of land could park over 50 campers and it may become difficult to monitor and enforce regulations. Espin reflected that permitting temporary RV parks may come with a steep learning curve, but it is better to be prepared.

Director Detsch asked the Board for suggestions about how to advertise the temporary permits. Nichols suggested the Town's phone tree system and a radio ad. Since radio advertising is costly, the Board was in agreement to utilize free advertising avenues like the Town's Facebook and website and GoWilkes.com.

Espin questioned ways to share temporary permit information with the event sponsors. Director Detsch answered that this will be a good way to partner with SMI Racing and make sure the company is on-board with plans recommended by the Planning Board.

Nichols asked if Board members had any other suggestions or items they would like to discuss. None being offered and no new business to discuss, Director Detsch proceeded to provide an update on current code enforcement cases around Town. Nichols asked about the building at 821 Main Street. Director Detsch explained that the property owner had been issued a letter notifying her that she has until the 30th of the month to either present a signed contract with a buyer or present a signed contract with a company to fix the building's roof. If the property owner fails to meet either of those conditions, the next step is to get the Board of Commissioners to adopt an ordinance to board up the building's doors. At that point, the clock starts ticking allowing the property owner two years to correct all the issues with the building. If the property owner does not remedy the issues at the end of that two-year period, the Town has the authority to demolish the building. At this point, Director Detsch let the Board know that the Town's current code enforcement officer is stepping down from his position. Former code enforcement officer John Ganus will be filling this position beginning in December. Director Detsch reminded the Board that Ganus originally worked with her to write the Non-Residential Buildings Ordinance, so she is optimistic to have him back to help with the case at 821 Main Street. Director Detsch let the Board know that the focus of code enforcement moving forward will shift to minimum housing cases as these can take substantial time to resolve.

Nichols brought up the vacancy created by Holly Minton's resignation from the Planning Board when she assumed the role of Town Manager. The Board recommended advertising in the paper for the two current vacancies.

Nichols asked if anyone had anything else to discuss. Director Detsch said if Board members would like to see a particular case prioritized on the code enforcement list to let her know. Director Detsch invited Board members to the ribbon cutting for the new inclusive playground at Smoot Park on Thursday, November 17th. The Board complimented the work that's been done at the Park.

Director Detsch let the Board know she has been working with the State on a grant to hire a contractor to come on-site at the old tannery property and do soil testing to determine the

integrity of the soil. Currently, no one knows how much contamination is at the site. Espin questioned current ownership of the property. Director Detsch explained that the current owner is a corporation that is a now-defunct heirs' property. Once the amount of contamination is determined, Town leadership will have to decide if the Town will take ownership of the property. Director Detsch explained that, if the Town assumes ownership, we'll become eligible for additional grant money but we also have to assume liability for the property. The State will acknowledge ownership as a good faith effort and won't hold us liable, but the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will continue to hold the property owner liable. Turner said it's wise to do what we can do for future generations, especially since the property is right by our river and parks. Turner said the more the public knows about the situation, the easier it will be to tackle it and noted the need to continue doing public engagement about this project.

Having no further business to discuss, Nichols asked for a motion to adjourn. Turner made a motion with Cox offering a second. All voted in favor 4-0 and the meeting adjourned at 6.23pm.

Respectively submitted,



Meredith Detsch, Planning Director



Martha Nichols, Planning Board Chair