



CITY OF COLONIAL HEIGHTS, VIRGINIA
MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE
PLANNING COMMISSION
Wednesday, January 4, 2017

I. Call to Order: 7:00 p.m.

Mr. Townes called the meeting to order at 6:59 p.m.

II. Roll Call

Present:

Mr. Green
Mrs. Hamilton
Mr. Hartson
Mrs. Schiff
Mr. Townes
Mr. Kollman

Absent:

Mr. Kohan

Also Present:

Dr. Davis
Mr. Flippen
Mr. Fisher

III. Determination of Quorum

A quorum was determined.

IV. Approval of Agenda

A motion was made by Mr. Hartson and seconded by Mr. Townes to adopt the agenda as presented with all Planning Commissioners in favor by unanimous vote.

V. Annual Organization Meeting

• **Election of Chairman and Vice-Chairman**

Mr. Green nominated Mr. Townes as Chairman, Mrs. Schiff seconded the motion. Mr. Townes was elected by unanimous vote. Mr. Townes stated that he appreciates everyone's support.

Mr. Townes opened nominations for the Vice-Chairman. Mr. Green nominated Mrs. Schiff, seconded by Mr. Hartson. Mrs. Schiff was elected by unanimous vote.

- **Appointment of Secretary**
Mr. Townes appointed Dr. Davis as Secretary based upon planning staff traditionally serving in this role.
- **Adoption of Rules**
A motion was made by Mrs. Schiff and seconded by Mr. Green to adopt the rules as presented with all Planning Commissioners with all commissioners in favor.
- **2016 Annual Report**
Dr. Davis pointed out that more zoning considerations were heard than in previous years, and a few less subdivision and preliminary site plans. A motion was made by Mrs. Schiff to acknowledge receipt of the annual report, Mr. Green seconded with all commissioners in favor.
- **Adoption of 2017 Planning Commission Meeting Schedule**
Dr. Davis stated that the July meeting has moved to Thursday, July 6th as the first Tuesday falls on a City holiday. The only other date that was moved was in December to Wednesday as it is in conflict with the annual Christmas parade. Mrs. Schiff made a motion to adopt the meeting schedule, seconded by Mr. Kollman with all commissioners in favor.

VI. Approval of Minutes for October 4, 2016 meeting

Mr. Green made a motion to adopt the minutes with no additions or deletions, seconded by Mrs. Schiff with all commissioners in favor.

VII. Hearing of Citizens Generally

None

VIII. Public Hearings

None

IX. Plans of Development - Site Plan /Subdivision

A. Preliminary Site Plan -resubmittal (PD – 17-1) – Southside Regional Medical Center – Freestanding Emergency Department; Lot 3 Southpark Medical Park

Dr. Davis stated that he received in writing from Timmons on behalf of their client to withdraw the application for the preliminary site plan as a resubmittal because they will be looking at other locations.

X. Old Business

None

XI. New Business/Reports

Mr. Hartson asked about the level of development activity in the City. Dr. Davis responded that from a building inspections standpoint in the last three months, three new homes and several business renovations have been permitted, but does not require Planning Commission action. Without a subdivision of land or a preliminary site plan, triggered by the addition of 2,500 square feet of impervious area, developments would not be reviewed by the Commission.

Mr. Townes stated that now is the time to make suggestions to City Council about changes that need to be made to stimulate future growth in the City. The City of Hopewell is doing innovative things now. They have a long wall of sponsors for the Kiwanis wine festival. The Council needs to discuss to allow festivals where alcohol is served. These neighboring localities are attracting millennials because events are adding to the quality of life. If Council thinks it is popular or not, it needs to be addressed.

Mr. Green stated that the Council would be greatly appreciative if the Commission provided concepts to encourage these festivals.

Mr. Townes reiterated that the code is misguided and the topic is negatively impacting the City.

Mrs. Hamilton continued that this is a great idea and stated that the Commission needs to be productive.

Mr. Townes asked Dr. Davis to draft a document to review the ordinance that regulates alcohol sales as it negatively affects the City's ability to compete with surrounding localities.

Dr. Davis asked whether this was in response to the ordinance prohibiting alcohol on public property.

Mr. Green stated that this is another case where the City is receiving kickback from businesses as the Ordinance states that alcohol cannot be served until 1:00 p.m. on Sunday. This is affecting the sale of beer and wine at restaurants that serve brunch on Sunday morning.

Mr. Hartson made a suggestion that we assess locating food trucks in the City. Dr. Davis stated he would report on staff's progress on that topic later in the meeting.

Dr. Davis continued by asking if the Commission wanted to send a letter to the Council that is signed by the Chairman.

Mr. Green recommended that, with additional ideas the Commission develops. Dr. Davis responded that the Commission could develop ideas during this meeting.

Mr. Townes replied that the Commission will have time to come up with ideas, but Spring is the best time to have an event, get Chamber involved, and to bring attention to this community.

Mrs. Schiff stated she discussed thoroughly with the Economic Development director about the City's lower income average and North elementary school having up to 70% of students free and reduced lunch. She questioned whether we can apply to grants for federal funding to assist with these issues.

Mr. Green stated that the schools do a lot of that and confirmed that the Safe Routes to School program assists with funding for sidewalks. The City could also receive Federal assistance due to the lack of ball fields and recreational facilities by the number of children in school system, but we cannot find the money as a City internally.

Mr. Townes stated that the City needs to identify several places where it would be good to have mixed use development. If developers know there are places they can assimilate properties and get the zoning to build mixed use concepts, they will want to build. If ideally, a full block was set aside for mixed use with office and restaurant space on the bottom like Chester Village Green, we could see new development in the City.

Mr. Green thought that the City needs to be willing to make investments because it cannot compete with the counties when it has to charge more to provide services. The City needs to be more business friendly.

There was brief discussion by Mr. Townes, Mr. Hartson, Mr. Green, and Dr. Davis on the closing of Martin's, the renovation of the building to be occupied by Publix, and Kroger.

The discussion moved back to mixed use development.

Mr. Fisher suggested that the Comprehensive Plan identifies one area for Mixed Development at Conduit Road and Westover Avenue. If the Commission suggested other areas for mixed development for the Council, it would be helpful for the impression that Council has on the matter.

Mr. Hartson suggested the site next to Home Depot. Mr. Green suggested areas on the south end of the Boulevard, from Dupuy Avenue South.

Dr. Davis recalled that the subcommittee that the former City Manager formed, the Southern Gateway Land Use committee, assisted the development of the Courthouse. The committee has discussed the

area around the Courthouse, including Dupuy Avenue and Battery Place with concepts of different uses. A public information session was held with 30-35 residents attending with a majority individuals wanting to keep neighborhood the same. The Committee has not had a follow up meeting because it may not be in the best interest of the residents to take it any further.

Mr. Hartson returned to the discussion of a suggested site because the City would not uproot anyone at that vacant location.

Mr. Green stated that in many college towns, land is bought in neighborhood corridors close by. In Ettrick and Radford, they are not resisting that, and the City should consider being proactive and rezoning to enable businesses to operate in the proper way, but not overburdening residential property.

Mr. Schiff questioned how the City gets this started without displacing people.

Mr. Townes stated that most often, people comfortable in your house will only sell a house unless the buyer's offer is high. Developers have to ask whether it is worth the time to make offers to home owners and work with City staff about getting a reasonable response. The toughest subject is to find people who want to completely restore older homes and incentivize that.

Mr. Green observed this happening in Petersburg, as people have started to buy houses at a low price and renovating. It is not the majority of homes, but it is happening with mixed use encouragement, older homes, historic districts with tax breaks, etc.

Mr. Townes asked for staff to look at various communities to come up with ideas about what motivates people to restore homes in specific areas.

Mrs. Hamilton responded that the City could offer prospective homeowners tax incentives, which is a way to attract young people. She personally loves older homes and neighborhoods. She continued by saying that the Boulevard is filthy. The maintenance of the parking lots and the presentation of businesses on the main thoroughfare is embarrassing. What allows business owners treat property like that and what can be done to have them take pride in their place of business.

Mr. Green stated that the Courthouse construction has brought complements, but haven't seen any completed development that has brought attention to the City since that time.

Dr. Davis confirmed that the Department is reviewing ways to adopt models of a single family housing tax abatement program. This would be a local budgetary issue, not a state or federal taxation program. In regards to some of the questions in this meeting, such as drawing individuals that are career oriented, higher income levels, addressing trash on the Boulevard, the quality of life issue is responding to and meeting those desires; looking for amenities and attending festivals, having places be walkable from their home, etc. The City has a long road of hope ahead. The goal of the Economic Development Strategic plan is to set the course, but it is not completed overnight. The City needs to have people dedicated over time with goals that don't change, eventually seeing dilapidated areas become flourishing, nice places for homes and business. He drew attention to a long-term plan and goal to revitalize housing and business corridors in Charleston, South Carolina.

Mr. Green responded that people in the loft apartments are 50-80% military or retired military, because they have fallen in love with the area, they can walk, bike, or access additional incentives in place.

Mr. Townes stated that if this Commission is going to be successful, there is a need to come up with list of priorities to create an environment and product people want to be in and put it together in a plan.

Mr. Fisher responded that the Commission should consider a rehabilitation credit on taxes, for example by improving the value of a home by a certain percentage, will receive a complete abatement of tax for a specified period, which is a tremendous incentive to improve homes.

Dr. Davis mentioned a program brought to him by Mr. Townes. Mr. Townes confirmed that Henrico County made a brochure to advertise the program.

Mr. Townes continued that the items from this meeting need to be addressed in work sessions.

Dr. Davis stated that work sessions will have to occur in the same forum.

Reports

1. Chairman

None

2. Director of Planning and Community Development – Dr. Davis

Dr. Davis explained that staff has developed a preliminary draft of zoning language for Mobile Food Units, or food trucks and moving forward with the City Attorney. Also, an application from Mobilitie is still being reviewed by staff. They are considered a public utility by the SEC in the technology area. The representatives have submitted seven sites for Special Exception Permits as Towers, per the zoning ordinance. These sites are in the public right-of-way. Staff has submitted feedback. Some of these towers are over 120 feet tall and are not the most aesthetically pleasing structures; however, they are most likely coming to the City and throughout the country.

Mr. Fisher stated that legislation has been proposed by the General Assembly to make it easier for technology companies to locate transmission towers, and the locality does not have much control.

Dr. Davis continued that there is the ongoing discussion of neighborhood trailers and vehicles that will be reviewed at the Council retreat. The department is currently working on the budget for each division for capital and operating expenses which will be delivered by January 16.

Mrs. Hamilton had a request for historic signage in neighborhoods and would like to revisit as an item on the budget.

Dr. Davis responded that the planning budget operates strictly out of the planning office and would need to come from other City funding source.

Mr. Green stated that represented by Planning department, the historic society and resident volunteers. He asked about what they will support and how much the City would support.

Mrs. Hamilton stated the cost will be \$175 per sign. She asked who she could submit this request to and why does a citizen need to be the requesting party.

Mr. Green continued that \$700 was approved to add an art display in the Courthouse and considering starting a phase 2 on that project. Mr. Rooney is the president of historic society and can pursue it. He stated he will bring it up in front of the committee.

3. City Engineer or Designee – Asst. Director of Public Works – Mr. Flippen

Mr. Flippen gave an update on VDOT transportation projects, specifically House Bill 2. There is a large emphasis on multimodal transportation to encourage millennials, and the selection committee is giving points for sidewalks, park and rides, bike lanes, bus stops, etc.

Dr. Davis concluded that it was passed as house bill 2 and has changed the name to Smart Scale.

Mr. Townes asked about the status of the high speed rail station.

Dr. Davis stated that it has passed through the legal department with the federal government side and the technical committee for the local MPO will be meeting Friday. Colonial Heights is still one of three finalists.

Mrs. Schiff asked about providing a rendering in another phase.

Dr. Davis confirmed.

Mr. Green stated that the City has the business community that committee is looking for. There was a desire for a bus service in the past, which led to the PAT. They wanted \$300,000 per year to support the funding but could not provide data on cost of operation and cost by rider and it was poorly managed. They proceeded to offer to operate for free for three years if the City supports in the future. The public does not want to give up the trolley, but will need to pay a portion. He views additional concepts for transportation as a business opportunity.

4. Others, as necessary or appropriate

a. City Attorney/ Acting City Manager – Mr. Fisher

None

XII. Adjournment

Mr. Townes moved to adjourn the meeting with all Commissioners in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 8:05 P.M.



C. Scott Davis, LP.D.
Secretary



Charles E. Townes
Chairman