



**CITY OF COLONIAL HEIGHTS, VIRGINIA
MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION
Council Chambers in City Hall, 201 James Avenue
Tuesday, July 7, 2020
7:00 p.m.**

MINUTES

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:59 PM.

II. Roll Call

Mr. Hartson
Mrs. Schiff
Mrs. Hamilton
Mrs. Levenson-Melvin
Mr. Kohan
Mr. Cherry

Absent:
Mr. Wade

III. Determination of Quorum

A quorum was determined.

IV. Approval of Agenda

Mrs. Levenson-Melvin made a motion to approve the agenda and Mr. Cherry seconded the motion with all commissioners in favor.

V. Approval of Minutes

A. May 5, 2020 Meeting

Mr. Kohan stated that he was present at the May meeting, and the minutes listed him as absent. He asked that the minutes be edited to reflect his attendance.

Mrs. Schiff made a motion to approve the minutes with edits and Mrs. Levenson-

Melvin seconded the motion with all commissioners in favor.

B. June 2, 2020 Meeting

Mrs. Schiff Made a motion to approved the minutes and Mr. Kohan seconded the motion with all commissioners in favor.

VI. Hearing of Citizens Generally

No citizens spoke.

VII. Public Hearings

A. AN ORDINANCE NO. 20-20

Amending § 286-530.26 of Chapter 286, Zoning, of the Colonial Heights City Code by allowing donation collection bins in the City under certain circumstances.

Ms. Hall explained that an ordinance regarding this code section was previously brought to the Planning Commission, and this new version includes an exception. Any retail store operating that is designated as a non-profit organization, may locate one or more donation collection bins behind the front plane of the retail store. The purpose of this exception is to give stores such as Goodwill and Regenesis Thrift permission to place donation bins on site. The exception was at the request of City Council.

Mr. Kohan asked if there was a limit to the number of donation bins. Ms. Hall stated that there was no limit. Mr. Smith stated that they would still need to keep them behind the front plane of the store. Ms. Hall also stated that bins cannot be placed in parking spaces and there are setbacks which would create some limitations to the amount that would fit behind the building.

Mr. Cherry explained that this ordinance was a cleanup from Council after passing the ban without realizing that Goodwill had a donation bin outside.

Ms. Hall pointed out that the ordinance only specifies that the organization be a 501(c)3 organization which is not a difficult threshold to meet. Mrs. Schiff stated this was her concern and that by allowing an exception, the number of sites with illegal dumping would grow again.

Mr. Fisher explained that they must be a retail nonprofit which creates a narrower window. Mrs. Hamilton asked if the number of bins allowed was unlimited. Ms. Hall replied that it is unlimited but the area where they may be located is restricted and they must adhere to setbacks, so that would limit the number that could fit on a property and remain in compliance.

No citizens spoke.

Mr. Cherry made a motion to recommend Ordinance No. 20-20 and Mr. Kohan

seconded the motion.

Vote: 4-2

NO:

Mrs. Hamilton

Mrs. Schiff

YES:

Mrs. Levinson-Melvin

Mr. Hartson

Mr. Cherry

Mr. Kohan

Abstained: none

Motion: Pass

B. AN ORDINANCE NO. 20-22

To grant a special use permit with conditions to the St. Michaels Church Trustees to allow for a 6.8 square foot internally illuminated sign and a 31 square foot electronic message board on a renovated freestanding sign structure at St. Michael's Episcopal Church, 501 Old Town Road, also known as parcel identification number 680101010A011, which is zoned RL – Low Density Residential District.

Ms. Hall explained that this is similar to the schools' special use permits in previous meetings. It is using the existing sign foundation, and the internally illuminated sign was kept as small as possible.

Mr. Cherry observed that Ordinance No. 20-22 lists the address as 501 Old Town Road, however the correct address is 501 Old Town Drive.

Mr. Cherry made a motion to amend the ordinance and resolution to include the correct address, and Mrs. Schiff seconded the motion with all commissioners in favor.

Commissioners agreed that this will be similar to the previous electronic message boards.

No citizens were present to speak.

Mr. Cherry made a motion to recommend Ordinance No. 20-22 with amendment and Mrs. Schiff seconded the motion.

Vote: 6-0

Yes:

Mr. Hartson
Mrs. Schiff
Mr. Cherry
Mrs. Hamilton
Mr. Kohan
Mrs. Levenson-Melvin

No: None

Abstained: None

Motion: Pass

VIII. Old Business

Mr. Kohan recalled that in the meeting on May 5, 2020, Mr. Smith discussed the funding of the Violet Bank project and asked for an update. Mr. Smith stated he had no update yet, but that he would provide a written update to Mr. Kohan.

IX. New Business

A. Reports

- i. Chairman** – Mrs. Hamilton has been interviewed regarding the Greater Richmond and Tri-Cities Affordable Housing Study, and Mr. Hartson stated that he was scheduled to participate via Zoom in a focus group discussion on July 14, 2020. This discussion is on the subject of access to housing and potential social and economic barriers. Mr. Hartson invited other Planning Commission members to participate in the stakeholder discussions.
- ii. Director of Planning and Community Development** – Ms. Hall stated that there were no applications for the Planning Commission meeting scheduled for August so there will be no meeting. She also provided an update about the Crater Area Planning District Commission. The Crater Area PDC went through a transition and now have a new director, Mr. Ruffa. Mr. Ruffa has been more focused on joint meetings amongst economic development and engineering departments of the Crater Area localities. At the suggestion of Ms. Hall, Mr. Ruffa will be considering reinitiating district planning meetings.

Ms. Hall also updated commissioners regarding donation bins. All donation bins on Boulevard are compliant as well as the Southgate Square area, only the bins in the Southpark Mall area remain, and the zoning department will move on to phase two of enforcement.

- iii. City Engineer or Designee – Mr. Flippen, Acting Director of Public Works**
Mr. Flippen reported on three projects that are set to be completed in July: the bridge rehabilitation, Temple Avenue signalization, and the Appomattox River Greenway Trail, phase four. The Boulevard Resurfacing project is now complete. Mr. Flippen said work on Lakeview Avenue will be next, in the area between Boulevard and Brijadan Lane. The Engineering Department is waiting on the VDOT authorization to put a construction bid out for the project.

Mrs. Schiff asked about progress on Dupuy Avenue. Mr. Flippen replied that they encountered underground utilities which slowed down progress during the winter and spring, and the contract ends September 1st. They are trying to meet that date; however, as a result of the conflicts found during construction, they may request an extension. The goal is to have the project completed in the fall.

iv. Others, as necessary or appropriate

1. City Manager – Mr. Smith—

Mr. Smith provided an update regarding the small business grant program through the Economic Development Authority (EDA). The EDA was designated funds from the Federal CARES Act to provide businesses financial relief from unexpected loss as a result of COVID-19. At that time, 47 applications were requested, 10 applications had been submitted, and 9 grants had been issued for a total of \$50,000. Approximately 32 applications were hand-delivered to businesses, so more applications are expected to come in before the next deadline.

Mr. Smith volunteered that he had no updates in regards to the Mission BBQ restaurant. Also, in light of the pandemic, the Chili Peppers baseball team cancelled their season for the year. Mr. Smith said they were working on adjusting the contract so the team is still able to play three seasons in Shepherd Stadium.

Mr. Smith provided an update that City Council approved the purchase of the parcel near Violet Bank as discussed at a previous Planning Commission meeting.

In the upcoming Council meeting they would request support for submitting several Smart Scale applications for City projects on Lakeview Ave and the Boulevard modernization project. Mr. Smith also said he and Mr. Flippen would be meeting with FOLAR representatives regarding smart scale projects in the area including the Ashland-Petersburg trail in the VSU region of the City.

2. City Attorney – Mr. Fisher

Mr. Fisher reported that under the subdivision ordinance, an applicant for a subdivision can bring a variance request to the Planning Commission for subdivision. If an applicant wants to subdivide a property and does not meet the requirements for the zoning ordinance, the applicant can come to the Planning Commission and ask for a variance with exception to allow the subdivision of a property.

Mr. Fisher also stated that given the volume of Special Use Permit applications for electronic message boards, the Planning Commission may want to consider adding a provision in the zoning ordinance to allow these boards by right. Ms. Hall said electronic message boards would be added during the revision to the sign ordinance.

Mr. Fisher also shared that during a recent court case it was determined that the City would be allowed to repair 608 Hamilton Avenue to meet the Uniform Statewide Building Code. Building Official Mr. Bernie Murrell is soliciting bids in order to begin work. The court authorized the City to complete the repairs, and unless the property owner pays the City back for the work, a lien will be placed on the house until it is paid or the property is sold.

X. Adjournment

Mrs. Schiff made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Mr. Cherry seconded the motion with all commissioners in favor.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:48 PM.

X 

Kelly Hall
Secretary

X 

Mitchell Hartson
Chairman