

Commissioners of Ridgely

Public Hearing – Ordinance No. 311

July 14, 2008

There was a Public Hearing held in the Ridgely House on the above date at 7:00 pm. Chuck Hunter, President; Linda Epperly-Glover, Commissioner; Kathy Smith, Commissioner; Joe Mangini, Town Manager; Merl Evans, Police Chief; Robin Eaton, Director of Public Works; and Carol Balderson, Town Clerk, were present. There is a list attached of others in attendance.

Call to Order – President Hunter opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence for our service men and women.

Opening Comments – Joe said there has been some discussion about changing the area on Railroad Street. This has been going on for a year or two. One section was re-zoned to C-2. One of the things that has come up to the Planning Commission is to look at it in more detail and actually establish a floating zone for that area of W. Railroad and provide rules and regulations covering that zone.

Joe read Ordinance No. 311 – “An Ordinance of the Commissioners of Ridgely to establish a floating zone for the redevelopment of West Railroad Street and to provide rules and regulations governing the zone.” This is the section of Railroad Street that abuts Memorial Park between Maryland Ave. and Caroline Ave., and is being established for the purpose of encouraging economic development along the south side of West Railroad Street.

Joe explained that one of the parcels on W. Railroad St. was re-zoned to C-2, which was to enable the owner of that property to have apartments on the second and third floor, but the first floor had to remain commercial. It has been like that for about two years. The owner has not been able to get anyone to come in on the first floor. He asked the Planning Commission for help. The Planning Commission wanted to help in a way that would be fair for everyone, but also protect the integrity of the area. They have come up with a proposal. This would allow different uses in that zone. There is a Rails to Trails coming in that area.

Martin Sokolich – P & Z Member – Martin said the Planning Commission was trying to look ahead, and felt that folks may want to have other businesses along there with the development of the park and the drug store. They tried to pick uses that would blend with the mixed use of the area, not include all of the uses that are on Central Ave.

Commissioner Smith asked about the parking situation; it is not the same as Central Ave. Martin said they feel they will need short-term on street parking on both sides of the road. They spoke with the Chief about it, and seemed to think it would work for the gradual development of the area.

Commissioner Smith said the Historical Society had discussed the parking situation for the park/trail and said there wasn't supposed to be parking on the other side of the street. Joe said W. Railroad is a state road. The Md. Transportation Authority is still in control of the ground. The only part of the easement that has actually been leased over is the 66-foot railroad track area. DNR is leasing that area, and they are sub-leasing to us.

Joe said unlike a standard established zone, this is a floating zone. That means that every project that comes into that zone has to be approved with a site plan, etc. by the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission is in total control of that.

Nancy Gearhart asked if after the corrections/changes were made if the document came back to the Planning Commission for their approval.

Martin said they approved the marked up version of it.

Commissioner Smith asked if the property owners on that side of the street were notified. Joe said it was advertised in the paper; because it is a comprehensive zoning there is not a requirement for individual letters.

No comments had been received at the Town Office.

Martin said it is an optional use for those living there now.

Nancy asked what “comprehensive zoning” meant.

Joe said it encompasses an area, not just one or two parcels.

Commissioner Smith and Nancy felt that letters should be sent to property owners in that area.

Martin said at the Rails to Trails meetings they discussed the folks using the trail would park in the parking area on E. Railroad St.

Commissioner Smith asked how that would be controlled.

Joe said the C-2 zone does not have parking requirements now.

President Hunter made a motion to send letters to property owners in the affected area, and carry the hearing over to August 4, seconded by Commissioner Epperly-Glover.

Unanimously approved.

Public Hearing adjourned at 7:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol A. Balderson
Clerk