

Minutes of the July 22, 2009 Planning Commission

Meeting called to order at 7:00 P.M. by Chairman Toby Gearhart. Planning Commission members Martin Sokolich, Margaret Haven, Jeff Garrett, and Mickey Newport were present. The following were also in attendance: Dale Mumford, Commissioner; Jake Day, Eastern Shore Land Conservancy; Shane Johnston, Johnston and Associates; Brian and Teresa Jordan; Nancy Gearhart; Archie Carroll; and Anne Ogletree.

Toby introduced Mr. Jake Day of the Eastern Shore Land Conservancy, saying that he was going to talk about how planning commissions can deal with the changed economic realities and still hold the line of quality with regards to the quality of life and upholding ordinances. Mr. Day mentioned some of what ESLC is doing in relation to town planning commissions, and the proposed projects that ESLC considers good, compact, urban design on a good scale, including good connectivity. He stated that none of the examples are quite as good as the Ridgely Park proposal. There was some discussion and Mr. Day asked about the DRRA. Toby stated that there was no allocation to build, and will not be for a while. Martin said that the bottom line was that Ridgely Park came in with a proposal for 403 houses, but they weren't going to build an upgrade for the WWTP until they got to 180 houses. Mr. Day said that when a developer is in dire economic straits, the tendency scale back and/or remove the amenities – in Ridgely Park's case the alleys, the sidewalks, and some of the features that would make the neighborhood look and feel a lot like an extension Ridgely. He suggested that the town may want to consider stating that a precedent has been set, that plan has been approved, there was a DRRA and if/when a new one is created it stipulates the very same conditions. Mr. Day also said that ESLC is building an online town planning library, including approximately 700 resources, including a section dealing with DRRA's. ESLC is also working on their annual planning conference, which will be held in February. The key conference issues will be those relating to the market downturn.

New Business

Building Permit for a Sign at 3 Central Avenue – There was some discussion.

Building Permit/Design Review for 1 Ninth Street – After reviewing the information, Jeff made a motion to approve the building permit application, seconded by Martin, unanimously approved.

Building Permit for 118 N. Central Avenue – Plans for the temporary classroom at Ridgely Elementary School were reviewed. A motion to approve the building permit was made by Mickey, seconded by Jeff, unanimously approved.

Old Business

5 E. Fifth Street New Construction – The setbacks on the previously submitted and approved plans need to be revised due to a situation with the possible relocation of an overhead power line. After some discussion, a motion to approve the revised setbacks was made by Margaret, seconded by Mickey, unanimously approved.

Cow Barn Property – Ms. Ogletree said she mailed Jack Hall a draft of regulations for the Planned Redevelopment Overlay Zone. Because this is a floating zone it has to be placed somewhere on the map. The Planning Commission has to recommend it to the Commissioners, and recommend the requirements for it because currently there are not any requirements. Jack Hall has been concerned about spot zoning. Ms. Ogletree stated that her understanding is that Ridgely had approved just a residential redevelopment zone. She had proposed some regulations that Jack Hall was to email to the Planning Commission. She has also talked to Jack Hall about the façade easement, and she has some suggestions. Ms. Ogletree advised that the draft presented is a working document. Toby asked about the subdivision; Ms. Ogletree said it was her understanding that the façade easement needs to be in

place first, then proceed with the subdivision plat for the Cow Barn parcel. She will touch base with Jack Hall and let him know what was presented. Dale asked if the Comprehensive Plan permits this use of the land, if the overlay is still needed. Ms. Ogletree said the overlay district is the district that is deemed compatible with the rest of zoning of the town, but certain requirements still have to be met. She stated that because Ridgely has infill areas, and this is one of the biggest infill areas, you want to have something that is compatible and at the same time a little unique. This is a recommendation that this zone be placed on this particular site.

Comprehensive Plan – Shane provided and reviewed the abbreviated executive summary handout. He stated that there had recently been a meeting with the Caroline County Planning Commission. No substantive comments regarding the plan were received from the county, other than a few items regarding the Business Technology Park. The county attorney didn't want that area shown as parks and open space because those areas are not open to the public, so it was basically a map change; other than that, there were no issues with the Comprehensive Plan. Shane said he told the County Planning Commission that Ridgely Park is no longer, and the plan had to be amended due to that change. Shane referenced the document from July 17th that explained all the changes made to the Comp Plan. Most of the comments received from the county and state were good comments. A couple comments stood out, and Shane discussed those points. The Maryland Department of the Environment stated that the town should include a denied access policy for service line extensions outside the town's corporate boundaries. The Maryland Department of Planning also suggested the town also have a specific policy to restrict water and sewer utilities to only those users within its corporate limits, limiting water and sewer expansion unless annexation occurs. The county commented on inter-jurisdictional coordination and Transfer of Development Rights. It was recommended that the town adopt official policy in reference to annexation and extension of services. Shane stated he moved the Master Plan concept for Ridgely Park back to the Implementation section, rather than including it in the Municipal Growth Element.

Tech Park Subdivision/Water Storage Tank – Toby read information from the Director of Public Works, Robin Eaton, included in Missy's memo. Toby asked if that information answered questions the Planning Commission had regarding the proposed subdivision. There was some discussion, and the issue of wetlands in the area of the Tech Park was mentioned. The issue was tabled.

Commission Roundtable Discussion

Dale said that it was his understanding that business licenses are issued by the county, and the revenue stays with the county. However, the county doesn't concern itself as much with business permits as do people in the town. Dale wants to suggest that the town issue business licenses and set the standards by which they are issued. Toby asked where would the proposal start, how home-based businesses would be defined, and if those businesses would be included. There was some discussion.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Jeff, seconded by Margaret, unanimously approved.

Sincerely,

Missy Vanskiver
Asst. Clerk