

Town of Lovettsville

Minutes of the Planning Commission Regular Meeting August 17, 2016

Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman McDonough called the Regular Meeting of the Lovettsville Planning Commission to order at 7:30 p.m. on August 17, 2016 at the Lovettsville Town Hall, 6 East Pennsylvania Avenue, Lovettsville, VA.

Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman McDonough led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present at Meeting

- Chairman Frank McDonough
- Commission Thomas Ciolkosz
- Commissioner Nate Fontaine
- Commissioner Christopher Hornbaker
- Commissioner Joseph Mueller
- Commissioner Shiva Schilling
- Commissioner Stephanie Wolf

Staff Present

- Zoning Administrator Joshua Bateman
- Town Clerk Harriet West
- Town Manager Laszlo Palko

Public Comment

Chairman McDonough called for comments from the public. There were none.

Additions/Deletions/Modifications to the Agenda

There were none.

Planning Commission Minutes

There were none.

Zoning Administrator Monthly Activity Report

Chairman McDonough asked whether there were any questions on the July Monthly Activity Report. Mrs. Wolf asked whether the Dollar General was still relevant and, if not, stated that it should be removed from the report, and Mr. Bateman agreed to remove it from the report.

Action/Discussion Items

A. Comprehensive Plan Review – Housing and Residential Land Uses

Mr. Bateman distributed copies of the draft amendment to chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6 and noted that these materials reflect all the changes agreed to by the committees and requested by the Commission during previous work sessions.

Mr. Bateman read and explained these more recent changes requested by the Planning Commission, beginning with Chapter 4, and asked the Commission to verify that these specific changes are acceptable, whether during this meeting or offline should they identify deficiencies later. He explained the nature and purpose of changes he made to the demographic data, tables and projections. He summarized changes drafted to specific policies in the Housing and Economic Development Chapter as directed by the Planning Commission during prior meetings.

Mr. Bateman said that Chapter 5 still needs a considerable amount of work, especially with respect to the background information and future needs, but that several policies were updated at the behest of the Planning Commission. Mr. Bateman reviewed edits to the background information in Chapter 6 and policies added or edited based on issues previously raised by the Commission.

Mr. Bateman presented on undeveloped and underdeveloped residential parcels in Town and reviewed projected residential build-out of those properties in terms of new residential dwellings. He said that this updated demographic information was recently requested by new businesses.

Mr. Ciolkosz asked whether, since when the Town talks about affordable housing the number of stories has something to do with it, the Town tracks the number of stories constructed. Mr. Bateman said no, but the County does track that information on its online GIS, although the data cannot easily be aggregated for analysis purposes. A discussion followed on whether certain houses in Lovettsville Town Center have a second story or basement that can be converted into a separate, independent dwelling unit.

Mr. Bateman noted that Table 2 has been updated to reflect projections for 18 additional units in Town Center Section 4 during Fiscal Year 2016-2017. He explained the numbers of dwelling units projected to be constructed in the Town's various residential zoning district. He explained that the Town projects 173 new dwellings, mostly single-family detached dwellings, and 539 new residents during the period 2016 to 2026. Mr. Bateman explained that the size of these dwellings would fall into a predictable range of between 1,800 and 3,000 square feet, on average. Development of the Game Club and Hummer properties for residential use, which is possible but unlikely to be developed in the next ten years, could yield an additional 39 dwellings and 122 residents if developed during that period. Mr. Bateman said that the total population of the Town would rise to 2,808 if all undeveloped areas in the Town's corporate limits were to build out.

Mr. Fontaine asked whether these numbers are consistent with the numbers proposed earlier in the year by Mr. Palko, and Mr. Palko replied that they were close but that the numbers have been recently adjusted to reflect the most recent information available. Mr. Bateman explained that the number of houses constructed this year far exceeded last year's projections due to the large drop-off that occurred the previous year. He said the projections for the next ten years are likely more accurate than those for any given year.

Mr. Ciolkosz asked Mr. Bateman about the 3,500-population threshold and whether that has changed over the years, and Mr. Bateman replied that it has not changed to the best of his knowledge since the time he worked in the Town of West Point earlier in his career. Mr. Fontaine inquired about the annexation policy and asked Mr. Bateman whether, in his opinion, the Town should hold off on annexations until the end of the next ten years. Mr. Bateman replied that completion of the Kingsridge Subdivision would be the only residential development outside of the existing corporate limits that would be unlikely to push the Town over 3,500 population. He said that this assumes, however, that undeveloped properties develop under the by-right zoning, that no apartments or townhouses are constructed, and residential development occurs on the Game Club and Hummer properties as previously described. Mr. Fontaine suggested adding a projected number of housing units on the remaining section of Kingsridge located outside of the Town limits, and Mr. Bateman agreed to do so using R-1 zoning. He noted that these projections are based on his best estimates and should be viewed with caution.

Mr. Ciolkosz stated that residential development is not desirable from a budgetary standpoint because it adds expenses, and Mr. Palko replied that the Town is too dependent on availability fees for water and sewer, but that residential development is positive for economic development. He stated that because the Town does not manage its own schools, residential development does not have much of a negative effect on Town finances. Mr. Ciolkosz asked whether the Town should consider some targeted annexations and, if so, describe what they would look like. Chairman McDonough said that any such annexation should be consistent with the annexation policy, and Mr. Palko agreed and said that Town needs to see where it is in five years before annexing any land for residential development. Mr. Ciolkosz said that in five years there will not be that much left for the Town to do, and Mr. Palko stated that a recession could occur at any time, which would slow down development. Mr. Palko stated that he does not think the Town Council wants to address the issue of residential annexation at this time, and Mr. Bateman said that he would be willing to estimate the number of units and people associated with annexation of the remaining land in the Kingsridge Subdivision. Mr. Ciolkosz said the Comprehensive Plan should contain advice or nuggets for the next review in five years, such as the connector roads he has advocated for previously and the development of the Game Club property. Mr. Bateman said that the Annexation Policy does contain recommendations stating that annexations may be approved to complete existing residential subdivisions, and Mr. Fontaine suggested that the Comprehensive Plan contain similar policies as well. The Commission agreed without objection to add a reference to that specific policy of the Annexation Policy.

Mr. Fontaine asked about the diagram of inflows and estimated number of workers employed in Lovettsville and noted the discussion at a previous meeting about how those figures may be inaccurate. Mr. Fontaine asked staff whether the updated policies reflect the presence of home-based businesses. Mr. Bateman noted that the census statistics do not reflect the presence of home-based businesses and occupations, and he noted that a statement

about this was added for this specific reason. Mr. Ciolkosz asked whether information is available showing where workers in Town are coming from, and Mr. Bateman stated that he did not know. Mr. Ciolkosz stated that the data showing outflows of commuters does not include people traveling to Brunswick, Frederick or Ranson. He said he would think the number of workers commuting to places of employment in those destinations would be greater. A discussion followed regarding the accuracy of the data and numbers of people traveling to other employment destinations as well as where people reside who are employed in Town.

Mr. Bateman asked, if he were a business owner, where would he obtain workers for his store. He gave an example of the restaurant where his wife works as the type of restaurant that would consider opening a store here in town. He asked where the workers would likely come from and who is likely to work in a hypothetical Lovettsville burger restaurant. Chairman McDonough replied that the workers would likely come from Brunswick, and Mr. Bateman repeated the question to Mr. Ciolkosz. Mr. Ciolkosz replied that workers would likely come from Brunswick, Leesburg and Frederick and that workers would come from places that have the affordable housing opportunities necessary to support them. He said that they might also come from Ranson. Mr. Bateman said that foreign-born workers from Leesburg would be unlikely to reverse commute from Leesburg given the number and variety of job opportunities available in the restaurant industry in that community. Mr. Ciolkosz replied that the reverse commute would be more convenient than commuting to Sterling or Dulles Town Center. Mr. Hornbaker said that one of the managers of the Chick-Fil-A in Purcellville lives here in Lovettsville in New Town Meadows, and that he sees it more of an issue of the demographics of that store wherein you may have one spouse that has a full- or part-time job and do not want to drive to Leesburg or Frederick, in addition having high school and college students available to work there. He said that he thinks that that demographic is more likely in a small-town such as Lovettsville rather than workers coming from affordable housing in Ranson or some other location.

Mr. Bateman said that he has noticed large numbers of teenagers roaming around town this summer without jobs and glued to their cell phones. He said that he has been working since he was sixteen years old and stated that, although a lot of teenagers work in local businesses, many do not. He asked whether the number of high school students willing to work in businesses in Lovettsville has been maxed-out since so many parents are buying their kids clothing, cell phones and other devices.

Mr. Fontaine replied that the plan is a fifteen-year plan and that fifteen years from now his kids will be in high school looking for job opportunities, and Mr. Bateman noted that the Town has prospective businesses looking to open in town now. Mr. Fontaine said that the community is currently very young but that the demographics will likely show a trend line indicating that the number of people reaching working age will continue to grow, and Chairman McDonough pointed out that five years from now you will have 50 twelve-year-old kids that will turn seventeen. A discussion followed regarding the potential for teenagers living in and around the town currently to fill prospective jobs likely to be added within the next five years.

Mr. Bateman stated that he thinks the Town is going to run into problems in the future with respect to the types of housing available relative to the types of workers employed in Town restaurants and other businesses. He noted that kitchen staff in Loudoun County restaurants are often Hispanic immigrants and that there is little reason for them to come to Lovettsville to work and little in the way of affordable housing if they do. He said that townhouse dwellings cater more to young couples and empty-nesters and do not add much in the way of affordable housing, but that workforce housing in the form of apartments do. Mr. Bateman said that without such workforce housing, Town businesses will struggle to find workers and that some businesses already complain about this. He noted further that high-school students can be unreliable at showing up to work especially when working conflicts with school or extra-curricular activities.

Mr. Ciolkosz stated that as it relates to economic development in the comprehensive plan, the Town needs to think about these topics and where the Town is going to find these workers. He noted that the secondary piece is whether the Town offers services like job fairs to attract workers, because if businesses are started without the workers to work there, it is going to eventually become a problem.

Mr. Bateman asked whether the Town needs more affordable housing like apartments, and Mr. Mueller and Chairman McDonough replied in the affirmative. Mr. Palko stated that a lack of affordable housing for high-school educated workers is the largest obstacle to job creation in Northern Virginia, and that such affordable housing is needed to attract restaurant workers and those employed in light industrial areas. Mr. Ciolkosz noted that he lived in Orange County, California and that most of the low-skilled and lower-wage employees came from Riverside and towns and the other side of the foothills. Mr. Bateman explained that he used to work for a regional commission here in Virginia and that low-income people express that they have challenges associated with child care, transportation, and housing. He stated that when you are low-income, every day can be a crisis and working becomes secondary to finding a roof over your head. He explained how tax-credit financing programs provide one way to create below-

market housing for a community's workforce. He reiterated his concern about attracting and retaining workers in Lovettsville without suitable housing.

Mr. Mueller stated that this has been a problem for a long time, and although the community wants primarily single-family housing to attract families, the Town needs to look at other types of housing for existing and future workers. He said that apartments tend to concentrate poverty in a specific location and that duplexes and other affordable housing types need to be interspersed with single-family dwellings. A discussion ensued about the commuting patterns of regional workers, opportunities for creating affordable housing in Lovettsville through the conversion of unfinished basements in Lovettsville Town Center into accessory apartments, and availability of government tax credits to build workforce housing.

Chairman McDonough stated that the Town does not have sufficient undeveloped property for constructing affordable apartments, and a discussion followed about properties where such development might be able to locate in the future. Mr. Ciolkosz reiterated his support for converting basements into accessory apartments. Mr. Mueller asked Mrs. Wolf whether she is suggesting that locations of townhouses, duplexes and apartments need to be fleshed out in the plan, and Mrs. Wolf replied by pointing to a mini-series on television that features efforts to construct affordable housing in a neighborhood in New York. She said that providing garden-level apartments and spacing out apartments reduces the potential for apartment complexes to turn into urban ghettos. Mr. Ciolkosz stated that project housing in Chicago has likewise been demolished because it did not work, and that affordable housing should be mixed into single-family subdivisions like Town Center. Rob Gentile said that the Town can create such an affordable housing requirement and that federal funding for subsidized housing currently is targeting low-income residents, and Mr. Bateman provided an example of a tax-credit funded housing development in the Town of Orange. A discussion followed regarding the best way to fund and construct such affordable dwelling units and possible locations for future affordable housing.

Mr. Ciolkosz suggesting forming a committee to study the issue, and Chairman McDonough suggested softening the requirements for the creation of accessory dwelling units to incentivize the creation of apartments. A discussion followed on the merits of these proposals. Mr. Gentile recommended forming a committee to study the issue of affordable housing and make recommendations, and Mrs. Wolf said that Policy 21 unnecessarily restricts the locations of potential affordable housing types. Mr. Bateman explained that the Housing and Residential Land Uses Committee instructed him to add that restriction, and Mr. Hornbaker explained how that policy came about. Mr. Fontaine suggested taking the time to study this before putting documentation in the comprehensive plan, and Mr. Bateman thanked Mr. Ciolkosz for raising this issue because he remembers that the issue regarding the addition of townhouses, duplexes and apartments to uses permitted in the zoning ordinance is what led to the comprehensive plan review and revision in the first place. Mr. Ciolkosz agreed and stated that we are kicking the can down the road again. He recommended the addition of Policy 23 calling for the creation of a task force on affordable housing. Chairman McDonough said that a task force could be created involving Town Council without a specific policy to this effect, and Mr. Ciolkosz said that a policy needs to be added to the comprehensive plan. A discussion followed about whether a policy should be added and when the committee should meet. Four commissioners indicated a desire to add a policy regarding the creation of an affordable housing committee to the comprehensive plan, and Mr. Bateman indicated that he would do so.

Mr. Bateman indicated he has revised the policies, land use category descriptions and map in Chapter 5, but that the chapter still needs work. He said that he has come up with a plan to tackle the sections that were postponed until after the committee finished its review. He reviewed changes he intends to make to the Background, Table 4, Table 5, Existing Development, and Issues and Future Needs sections and the Existing Land Use Map. Mr. Ciolkosz recommended adding a column to Table 5 regarding the number of undeveloped lots remaining in each zoning district, and Mr. Bateman agreed to add this information. Mr. Ciolkosz recommended adding a percentage completed for each major development, and Mr. Bateman agreed to add this as well. Mr. Bateman suggested updating the Issues and Future Needs based on his own understanding of how those have evolved over time, and the Commission agreed without objections to this proposal. Mr. Fontaine suggested changes to Issue 2, and Mr. Bateman agreed to draft changes to bring back to the Commission for further discussion and consideration.

Mr. Bateman explained the purpose of amending the Guidelines for Designing Developments and proposed amending rather than deleting these altogether. A discussion followed, and the Commission agreed that Mr. Bateman should draft changes to this section for future consideration by the Commission.

Information Items

There were no information items.

Next Meeting

Chairman McDonough announced that the next meeting will be held on September 7, 2016

Committee Reports

Planning Commissioners reported on activities and happenings with respect to the various Town Council committees of which they are members.

Comments from the Mayor and Commissioners

There were none.

There being no further business, upon a motion by Mr. Hornbaker, seconded by Mr. Ciolkosz, the meeting was adjourned at 9:07p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Harriet West, Town Clerk

Date Approved: April 18, 2018

Attachments:
None