

**Christiansburg Planning Commission
Minutes of November 16, 2015**

Present: Matthew J. Beasley
Ann Carter
Harry Collins
David Franusich
Hil Johnson
Craig Moore, Chairperson
T.L. Newell
Virginia Peeples
Joe Powers
Nichole Hair, Secretary Non-Voting

Absent: Steve Huppert
Jennifer D. Sowers, Vice-Chairperson

Staff/Visitors: Sara Morgan, staff
Will Drake, staff
Cord Hall, Christiansburg Town Council
Henry Showalter, Christiansburg Town Council
Gary Fain, 3543 Country Meadows Drive
J.C. Poff, 680 Church Street
Jason Poff, 606 East Main Street
Steve Velarde, 1265 Flint Drive
Jim Viers, 1475 Turnberry Lane, Riner VA

Chairperson Moore called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Christiansburg Town Hall at 100 E. Main Street, Christiansburg, Virginia.

Public Comment.

Chairperson Moore opened the floor for public comment. Steve Velarde, 1265 Flint Drive, expressed his gratitude that urban chickens were up for consideration and inquired about the status of the deliberations. Ms. Hair stated Planning Commission will make a recommendation to Town Council on whether or not to move forward with the proposed ordinance and zoning permit during the November 30th meeting. Ms. Hair added it will be Town Council's decision to set public hearings. Mr. Velarde shared several statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to demonstrate the relative low risk of salmonella outbreaks from poultry. Mr. Velarde stated the safety risk from chickens is low, compared to many other allowed, everyday practices. Chairperson Moore clarified there was a previous vote on this topic several years ago. Chairperson Moore noted the November 30th vote on this matter will be whether or not Planning Commission recommends Town Council moves forward on this issue.

Public Comment - (continued).

With no further comments Chairperson Moore closed the floor for public comment.

Approval of meeting minutes for November 2, 2015.

Chairperson Moore introduced the discussion. Commissioner Beasley made a motion to approve the November 2, 2015 Planning Commission meeting minutes. Commissioner Collins seconded the motion, which passed 6-0. Commissioners Franusich, Newell, and Peeples abstained, as they were not present for the last meeting.

Planning Commission public hearing on a Conditional Use Permit request by Apple Acres Properties, L.L.C. for contractor equipment storage at 1950 Palmer Street, N.W. (tax parcels 436 - ((2)) - 14,15) in the B-3 General Business District.

Gary Fain, the applicant and property owner, introduced his application for the Conditional Use Permit. Mr. Fain stated the building on the property was originally built to store and distribute trees for a Christmas tree farm. Mr. Fain added the building has large doors and ample space but access to the property is not conducive to high-traffic, retail-type uses. Mr. Fain stated he is seeking a Conditional Use Permit because the access limitations of the property and the size of the building make it well-suited for contractor equipment storage. Mr. Fain stated his current tenant is a paving contractor and he stores dump trucks and paving equipment in the building and on the lot. Mr. Fain added the tenant works off-site most days and there is no customer traffic.

Jim Viers, 1475 Turnberry Lane, Riner VA, introduced himself as an adjacent property owner. Mr. Viers stated he owns the building next door, which currently houses Go Race. Mr. Viers stated he is interested in preserving a business environment. Mr. Viers requested there be some shielding or a fence to screen vehicles parked on the applicant's property. Mr. Viers indicated he would like to see most of the vehicles parked inside the building. Mr. Viers reiterated his clients are interested in preserving a business-like environment.

J.C. Poff, 680 Church Street, introduced himself as an adjoining property owner. Mr. Poff stated the current tenants of the parcel in question keep their equipment well-maintained. Mr. Poff added the equipment is washed and clean. Mr. Poff stated he has never had a problem with the current tenants and he hopes they can stay.

Chairperson Moore closed the public hearing.

Chairperson Moore stated Planning Commission will discuss this Conditional Use Permit at the November 30th meeting.

Presentation by Sachin Kalbag, Michael Baker International, regarding UDA study.

Mr. Kalbag stated he was present to update Planning Commission on the progress with the UDA study. Mr. Kalbag stated the consultants are currently refining the conceptual boundaries of the UDAs and he expects the project will likely conclude in mid-March.

The Urban Development Area Technical Grant Program is offered through the Virginia Office of Intermodal Planning & Investment. This technical assistance is for the adoption of Urban Development Areas. Urban Development Areas are designated by a locality in their comprehensive plan for higher density development that incorporates the principles of Traditional Neighborhood Development. The grant is an opportunity for Christiansburg to develop a vision for future growth. The UDAs are designated areas appropriate for higher density development due to proximity to transportation facilities, availability of water and sewer, or proximity to a developed area. Boundaries of UDAs must be shown on land use maps of the Comprehensive Plan. The concentration of future development should be where public infrastructure can be provided with the greatest fiscal efficiency.

Mr. Kalbag stated during the team's visit in mid-September they met with administrative and department staff and various stakeholders and presented to Planning Commission. Mr. Kalbag added since the last visit the team has reviewed the Town's zoning ordinance and comprehensive plan to analyze how the UDA program can support and build upon the Town's vision for future growth.

Mr. Kalbag summarized the analytical process his team will perform to finalize the UDA boundaries. Mr. Kalbag noted the first step included a review of the comprehensive plan, current zoning, and future land use. The team will then review all parcels in the proposed UDAs to evaluate their development potential. Mr. Kalbag added the last step will include speaking with stakeholders.

Mr. Kalbag stated the final deliverables of the study will include a map of the UDA boundaries and proposed text amendments to the comprehensive plan. Mr. Kalbag noted this process is intended to support Christiansburg's overall development vision. Mr. Kalbag added the UDAs can help market Christiansburg for future investment.

Mr. Kalbag presented the preliminary boundaries of the three UDAs. The three UDAs are known as *Mall Area, Cambria, and Downtown*.

Mr. Kalbag summarized the difference between developed, undevelopable, and developable parcels, as they are labeled on the preliminary UDA maps. Mr. Kalbag explained developed parcels have existing structures with significant market value and are unlikely candidates for future development.

Presentation by Sachin Kalbag, Michael Baker International, regarding UDA study - (continued).

Mr. Kalbag explained undevelopable parcels include right-of-way, civic and non-profit uses, parks, schools, and other uses that are not suitable for future development. Mr. Kalbag explained developable parcels are vacant or underutilized. These are the areas with the greatest capacity for future development.

Commissioner Collins asked for clarification about the process for simplifying the UDA boundaries. Mr. Kalbag stated the preliminary UDA boundaries were drawn largely with respect to the current zoning and are demarcated along commercial uses. Mr. Kalbag explained after receiving feedback and conducting a parcel analysis, the team will further refine these boundaries.

Mr. Kalbag presented the preliminary future growth analysis. Based on the projected population increase and the projected increase of supporting commercial space, one of the next steps for the consultants will be to see how much of the projected growth can be accommodated in the proposed UDAs.

Mr. Kalbag discussed next steps for the study. Mr. Kalbag stated once the UDA boundaries are finalized, the team will determine how much developable acreage is available in the UDAs. The team will calculate the projected growth that can be accommodated in the UDAs. Mr. Kalbag clarified each UDA features different characteristics and serves a different need. As part of this study, the consultants will provide examples of the appropriate type of residential and commercial structures that would fit into each of the UDAs. Mr. Kalbag stated the team will also evaluate the current development ordinances to verify that they will allow the type and density of development needed for the UDAs. Mr. Kalbag added the team will also draft design guidelines for the traditional neighborhood design elements required by the UDA program.

Commissioner Collins commended Ms. Hair and Ms. Morgan on their work to secure the UDA grant.

Commissioner Collins asked Mr. Kalbag to provide suggestions for next steps. Mr. Kalbag responded he believes the three UDAs represent different markets and each offers a different type of urban form. Mr. Kalbag noted each UDA presents a different opportunity. Mr. Kalbag added the UDA boundaries should not be too wide. Mr. Kalbag explained the UDA should be focused in order to be effectively promoted. Mr. Kalbag added even though the Mall Area UDA is large, it can capture a wide range of housing and commercial services. Commissioner Powers suggested Planning Commission review each UDA to provide comments.

Presentation by Sachin Kalbag, Michael Baker International, regarding UDA study - (continued).

Commissioner Franusich asked Mr. Kalbag if transportation boundaries were taken into consideration when drafting the UDA boundaries. Commissioner Franusich commented on the wall created by the Cambria Street/Franklin Street intersection. Commissioner Franusich stated that while the length of Franklin Street in the Mall Area UDA is a business corridor, the area south of Cambria Street has a different feel than the area north of Cambria Street. Mr. Kalbag agreed and noted the proposed development forms in the northern portion of the Mall Area UDA will be different from the proposed development forms in the southern portion of the Mall Area UDA.

Commissioner Powers noted the section of North Franklin Street within the Mall Area UDA already suffers from traffic problems. Commissioner Powers asked how a UDA could help address the traffic problem instead of bringing in more traffic and compounding the existing issue. Mr. Kalbag discussed the different impacts between residential and commercial uses. Ms. Hair added having designated UDAs will strengthen the Town's HB-2 application and hopefully provide more opportunities for road improvements. Commissioner Powers commented residential uses may attract complimentary commercial uses that are more pedestrian-oriented. Mr. Kalbag agreed and noted commercial uses are all different. Mr. Kalbag stated traffic impacts can be limited with thoughtful design and appropriate mixing of uses.

Jason Poff, 606 East Main Street asked if the study will consider exterior market forces. Mr. Poff asked if the study will consider development patterns in Blacksburg. Mr. Kalbag stated the study will not look at competing markets. Mr. Kalbag added once the UDA boundaries are established, the next steps for Christiansburg may include a detailed market-analysis.

Commissioner Powers noted the Corning plant has a large amount of vacant space that serves as a valuable buffer. Commissioner Powers stated Corning is a valuable employer and an important part of the Town's tax base. Commissioner Powers reiterated the need to preserve the buffer around the Corning plant. Mr. Kalbag noted the area around the Corning plant would be undevelopable, even if it falls within the Mall UDA.

Commissioner Powers noted the Marketplace shopping center is underdeveloped.

Commissioner Collins asked Mr. Kalbag to consider commercial development options for the areas surrounding the two Interstate 81 access points.

Presentation by Sachin Kalbag, Michael Baker International, regarding UDA study - (continued).

Mr. Poff inquired about stakeholder input for the UDA study. Ms. Hair stated public meetings will be held after the boundaries are solidified. Mr. Poff discussed Cambria's legacy as a mixed-used community and stated his desire to see more mixed-use return to the area. Mr. Poff stated he would like to see Town Council support greater mixed-use in the Cambria area.

Mr. Poff inquired about passenger rail access. Mr. Poff stated the Cambria UDA would be the likely location for rail service in Christiansburg. Ms. Hair stated Christiansburg is one of the candidates for passenger rail service in the area. Ms. Hair added adopting UDAs may increase Christiansburg's ability to attract passenger rail service.

Commissioner Powers asked Mr. Kalbag to explain the difference between the terms 'mixed use' and 'traditional neighborhood design. Mr. Kalbag clarified the terms are the same. Mr. Kalbag explained he uses the term traditional neighborhood design because this term is used by the Virginia UDA guidelines. Mr. Kalbag stated traditional neighborhood design and mixed use look the same. Mr. Kalbag explained traditional neighborhood design includes structures that come to the property line with doors that open out on to the street. Mr. Kalbag added pedestrian-oriented design, featuring wide sidewalks, lampposts, and trees are common features of this design style. Commissioner Powers stated these structures achieve mixed-use by having commercial uses on the first floor and residential uses on the upper floors.

Mr. Poff stated it might be appropriate in Cambria to have vertical or horizontal mixed use. Mr. Kalbag stated his team will provide examples of appropriate mixed-use designs for Cambria. Mr. Kalbag noted parking will be a challenge in Cambria and they will likely need to develop shared parking strategies. Mr. Poff added mixed used development in the Cambria UDA would open up greater development options for the community.

Commissioner Newell inquired about the Corning, Truman-Wilson, and Chandler Concrete parcels being incongruent with traditional neighborhood design. Mr. Kalbag clarified the Truman-Wilson and Chandler Concrete parcels will be excluded from the Mall Area UDA boundary. The Corning parcel may fall within the UDA boundary, but it is considered non-developable. Commissioners Newell and Powers stated the developable acreage will decrease by removing these parcels, but noted additional developable lands may be added when the consultants evaluate the underutilized parcels.

Chairperson Moore suggested moving on to the Cambria UDA.

Presentation by Sachin Kalbag, Michael Baker International, regarding UDA study - (continued).

Commissioner Newell noted the topography in the southern portion of the Cambria UDA is very steep.

Commissioner Newell stated Norfolk Southern owns the land surrounding the train depot and the intersection of Depot Street and the railway. Commissioner Newell stated Christiansburg is constrained due to its lack of ownership of these parcels. Commissioner Newell added this area is the heart of district and needs to be included, but the lack of ownership presents a complex challenge.

Commissioner Powers commented each UDA has its own character. Commissioner Powers added development in Cambria may have a much different scale than the Mall UDA.

Chairperson Moore suggested moving on to the Downtown District

Commissioner Collins asked if parking issues in the downtown district can be addressed. Mr. Kalbag noted the downtown district has ample surface parking with very deep blocks. Mr. Kalbag added that parking will be internalized within the blocks as the district is developed.

Commissioner Powers stated he was glad the old middle school site was included within the Downtown UDA. Mr. Poff inquired about the redevelopment potential for the old middle school site. Ms. Hair stated the parcel is owned by Montgomery County. Commissioner Powers noted the old middle school site has great potential for residential use.

Commissioner Powers inquired about the amount of growth that is projected to go into the UDAs. Mr. Kalbag clarified the figures represent targeted growth. Mr. Kalbag noted the purpose of the UDAs is to designate areas where growth can be steered. Commissioner Powers noted the Assistant Town Manager, Mr. Wingfield, had prepared an inventory of subdivisions that have been approved but not yet developed. Commissioner Powers stated these future subdivisions will likely have a significant impact on future growth accommodations.

Commissioner Newell inquired about generating a list of properties within the UDAs that are exempt from town real estate taxes.

Commissioner Powers noted Christiansburg recently amended the multi-family ordinance to allow up to 20 dwelling units per acre with a conditional use permit in a planned housing development. Commissioner Powers noted the ordinance change is applicable to any R-3 or B-3 zoning district. Commissioner Powers added the density increase may be more appropriate if its application were limited to the UDAs.

Presentation by Sachin Kalbag, Michael Baker International, regarding UDA study - (continued).

Commissioner Powers asked Mr. Kalbag to consider this change when the consultants are working on the proposed code amendments.

Commissioner Powers inquired about next steps for the UDA study. Ms. Hair stated she will continue to share the UDA work with the Development Subcommittee and the Comprehensive Plan Subcommittee. Ms. Hair added there will be an opportunity in the future to bring citizen stakeholders into the process.

Councilman Hall inquired about staff reviewing the UDA study. Ms. Hair stated all department heads have been invited to review the study. Ms. Hair added many of the local engineering firms were invited to the initial UDA meeting.

Councilman Hall noted the point made by Commissioner Powers that there are a number of developments in the Mall Area UDA that have been approved but not yet constructed. Councilman Hall stated these approved developments will have a substantial effect on the amount of developable acreage in the Mall Area UDA.

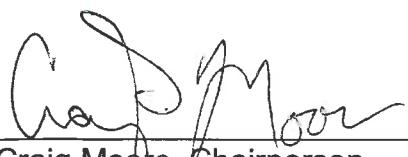
Chairperson Moore closed the discussion.

Other Business.

Ms. Hair noted copies of the draft ordinance and draft zoning permit for urban agriculture were available for Planning Commission to review

Ms. Hair confirmed the joint meeting between the Comprehensive Plan Subcommittee and Development Subcommittee is scheduled for December 16th at 8:30 a.m.

There being no more business, Chairperson Moore adjourned the meeting at 8:06 p.m.



Craig Moore, Chairperson



Nichole Hair, Secretary Non-Voting