

**Christiansburg Planning Commission
Minutes of September 2, 2014**

Present: Matthew J. Beasley
Ann Carter
Harry Collins
M.H. Dorsett, AICP
David Franusich
Steve Huppert
Craig Moore, Chairperson
Joe Powers, Vice-Chairperson
Jennifer D. Sowers

Absent: Jonathan Hedrick
Nichole Hair, Secretary ^{Non-Voting}

Staff/Visitors: Missy Martin, staff
Sara Morgan, staff
Cindy Wells Disney, Montgomery County Planning Commission
Richard Bird
Wayne Brockenbrough, 302 W. Main Street
Mr. and Mrs. Wortzberger, 311 E. Main Street
Mr. and Mrs. Hanson, 300 E. Main Street

Chairperson Moore called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. in the Christiansburg Town Hall at 100 E. Main Street, Christiansburg, Virginia, following the pledge of allegiance, to discuss the following items:

Public Comment.

Chairperson Moore opened the floor for public comment.

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

Approval of meeting minutes for August 18, 2014.

Chairperson Moore introduced the discussion. Commissioner Dorsett made a motion to approve the Planning Commission meeting minutes. Commissioner Sowers seconded the motion, which passed 9-0.

Discussion by Planning Commission on a Conditional Use Permit request by Wayne Brockenbrough for residential use at 302 W. Main Street (tax parcel 526 – ((A)) – 180) in the B-2 Central Business District. The Planning Commission public hearing was held on August 18, 2014.

Chairperson Moore read the proposed conditions. There are three conditions.

1. The use of the building fronting on W. Main Street shall remain business.
2. Residential use of the building is not to exceed 60% or 3,765 square feet of the total square footage (6,276 square feet) of the building.
3. Skylights or other similar devices shall be used for natural lighting in each residential unit.

Commissioner Collins asked for clarification on condition #2.

Commissioner Dorsett asked about greenspace requirements. Commissioner Sowers noted that it presently has no greenspace. Commissioner Franusich clarified that it is not required in the B-2 Central Business District.

Commissioner Dorsett moved to approve the request with proposed conditions. Commissioner Sowers seconded the motion. The motion passed 8-0. Commissioner Beasley abstained due to his absence for part of the discussion at the last meeting.

Chairperson Moore encouraged the applicant to be present for the Town Council Public Hearing on September 23, 2014. Commissioner Huppert explained the Town Council process for Mr. Brockenbrough and Mr. Bird.

Planning Commission public hearing on a Conditional Use Permit request by Glenn and Karen Smith for a bed and breakfast inn at 305 East Main Street (tax parcel 527-((A))-125) in the R-3 Multi-Family Residential District.

Chairperson Moore opened the floor for public comment.

Kay Hanson, 300 East Main Street, expressed her confusion due to the applicant not being present for the meeting. Ms. Morgan noted that the applicant is moving from Florida and plans to start a bed and breakfast with four rooms. The applicant was made aware of the public hearing. Ms. Hanson would like to know more details regarding the proposed bed and breakfast and is concerned with the lack of a Historic Review Board.

Many Commissioners voiced concern over lack of information provided by the applicant.

Commissioner Powers suggested coming up with questions for the applicant. The Planning Commission discussed questions they would like answered by the applicant. Parking, informal site plan, number of bedrooms and exterior alterations were topics of concern.

Planning Commission public hearing on a Conditional Use Permit request by Glenn and Karen Smith for a bed and breakfast inn at 305 East Main Street (tax parcel 527-((A))-125) in the R-3 Multi-Family Residential District (continued).

Commissioner Powers and Commissioner Dorsett discussed the potential for exterior alterations. Commissioner Dorsett does not believe they would be changing much of the exterior because it is a historic building and would risk losing the historic district designation. Commissioner Powers would like the applicant to confirm this.

Due to the lack of information on the request the Commissioner Dorsett moved to table the decision until the next meeting, September 15, 2014. Commissioner Franusich seconded the motion. The motion passed 9-0.

Chairperson Moore reviewed the questions posed by the Planning Commission for the applicant.

Commissioner Powers asked for clarification on the zoning ordinance definition for bed and breakfast. Commissioner Franusich clarified that there is a maximum of five bedrooms. It is noted the definition of bed and breakfast was recently amended to six bedrooms, including the use of accessory structures.

Ms. Martin apologized for the lack of information provided for the public hearing. She explained that Ms. Hair may have received more information regarding the request after she went on vacation but assumed the agent would be present to represent the applicant. Chairperson Moore appreciated Ms. Martin's statement but believes the applicant should have been present for the meeting. Ms. Martin went on to discuss her conversation with the applicant, stating they are moving from Florida. Mr. Smith will be working at Virginia Tech and Mrs. Smith would like to start a bed & breakfast to occupy her time. The applicant is not looking to hold any events.

Commissioner Collins asked about restrooms requirements in bed and breakfasts. Chairperson Moore, Commissioner Powers and Commissioner Sowers clarified that there are some rooms with private restrooms while others are communal.

Commissioner Dorsett would like the applicant to consider putting the parking in the back of the property as to not disrupt the view shed. Chairperson Moore confirmed that Commissioner Dorsett would like to see Low Impact Development parking. Commissioner Dorsett noted the historic and residential neighborhood aspects of the property and why it would not be beneficial to have parking in the front of the property. The rear parking area of the Ivy Crest bed and breakfast was discussed. Commissioner Carter noted the depth of the property.

Commissioner Franusich expressed concerns over off-street parking. Commissioner Carter clarified that off-street parking would not be regulated.

Chairperson Moore asked Ms. Morgan to follow up with the applicant or agent about the concerns.

Other Business.

Commissioner Franusich was approached by a neighbor about the auto sales business on the corner of Robert Street and Roanoke Street. There is concern about how the business is operating and if it was in compliance. He believes the matter has been brought to Ms. Hair's attention via email. Commissioner Franusich asked about the possible planning mechanisms to use when this issue arises. Commissioner Powers noted that if it has a Conditional Use Permit and the use has not been operating for a two year period then the Conditional Use Permit becomes void. Ms. Martin clarified that the business is operating and staff is aware of the issues on the property. Staff will provide an update at the next Planning Commission meeting.

Linda Wortzberger asked about the outside appearance of 305 East Main Street and surrounding homes. She believes there are other houses in the area that need exterior improvements. Commissioner Franusich noted the concern about the exterior of those homes. Chairperson Moore added that unfortunately there is nothing the Town can do about them when they are not in violation of the Zoning Ordinance.

Commissioner Collins asked if there has been a Historic Review Board in the past. Chairperson Moore went over the history of the historic review that included surveys and public input. Commissioner Dorsett added that the public was not in favor of a review board and commented about the Town of Blacksburg's Historic Design Review Board. Commissioner Collins and Commissioner Dorsett discussed regional review boards and demolition by neglect. Commissioners discussed Historic Design Review Boards and if it would work in Christiansburg. Commissioner Franusich believes providing an incentive would help the Historic Review Board gain support. Commissioner Dorsett recalled looking at the tax credit issue in 2003, which would be a positive reinforcement rather than negative. The expense of owning a historic structure was discussed. Commissioner Collins asked the public in attendance if they would like a Historic Review Board. All attendees stated they would be in support of a Historic Review Board. Incentives were discussed by the Planning Commission. Commissioner Powers noted the tax implications. Chairperson Moore noted that it takes sacrifice by other citizens in town. Commissioner Franusich brought up the use of grants. Commissioner Dorsett and Commissioner Powers discussed grants for commercial and residential property. Commissioner Powers noted the County's work in preserving agricultural land and how that impacts tax payers. Commissioner Franusich added that Christiansburg has lost much of its history and should therefore preserve what is left. Chairperson Moore noted that a lot of time has already been spent on this and was turned down by the surveys and public outreach. Commissioner Dorsett believes the survey was slanted to discourage the implementation of a Historic Review Board. She suggested reaching out to Virginia Tech students to conduct the survey. Commissioner Collins suggested creating a committee with the citizens and let them decide the need. Commissioner Carter and Commissioner Powers noted that a committee has already been created. The Planning Commission would like to make sure they have Town Council's support before moving forward with research or action.

Other Business.

Chairperson Moore volunteered to talk to Town Council about the interest in studying this topic and providing an incentive. He noted that historic preservation requires a sacrifice from the home owner and the community. Chairperson Moore will coordinate with Ms. Hair to be added to Town Council's agenda. Commissioner Collins and Chairperson Moore discussed the use of Virginia Tech students.

Commissioner Dorsett spoke with a customer about tiny houses, as a secondary residential structure on the property, and believes it would be a good idea for the Development Committee to look into. Commissioner Powers believes the building code may restrict the use of tiny houses. Commissioner Dorsett explained zoning code prevents these houses and would like to see if the Code. Commissioner Franusich and Commissioner Collins discussed when tiny houses are located on trailers and whether they are considered personal property. A tiny house is an accessory structure and can be 8' x 22'. He also noted the Planning District Commissions' workshop in October on secondary structures. Commissioner Dorsett noted that tiny house could be used for mother-in-law or father-in-law suites, caregivers and children returning home. Tiny homes could also be used as rental units and help home owners with their mortgages. Commissioner Powers noted that without a Housing Maintenance Code there is potential for these units to become run down. Commissioner Carter suggested looking at what other localities require.

Chairperson Moore asked the public if there was anything they would like to add to the historic discussion. Ms. Wortzberger asked if there was a Town staff member dedicated to searching for grants. There is no one staff member dedicated to grants. Ms. Disney explained that she deals with grants in her job; there are many grants out there; however, there are specific qualifications. She went on to describe the limiting factors of grants. Ms. Disney noted that grants are hard to find and can be found in various fields. Commissioner Collins added that, from conversations with Valerie Tweedie, the Town does not have a staff member dedicated to grants. Ms. Wortzberger asked if the Town could talk to Virginia Tech about grants and possibly have an intern look at them.

Chairperson Moore and Commissioner Franusich talked about the success rate of people who are looking into grants and how much money they bring in verse how much their position costs. Commissioner Huppert spoke about the grants the Town has received in other areas, like maintenance. Commissioner Dorsett noted that grants are typically given to nonprofits and government agencies rather than individuals. Ms. Wortzberger and Commissioner Dorsett discussed the improvements made to Roanoke. Commissioner Powers encouraged the public to attend the next Town Council Public Hearing and express an interest in getting an intern to look at grants.

Commissioner Huppert talked about the number of grants the Town has brought in for infrastructure improvements. He notes this may not be the case for historic areas. Commissioner Collins spoke about using grants to help revitalize Downtown.

Other Business.

Commissioner Huppert noted the expense and work being done to Downtown Christiansburg in the last ten years. Grants were used to conduct this work. Commissioner Franusich noted that the appearance of Downtown has changed in terms of light poles and sidewalks but there has not been economic development work to help revitalize Downtown. Commissioner Dorsett noted that the downtown buildings are privately owned. Commissioner Franusich likes the idea of implementing programs like Roanoke has. Chairperson Moore spoke to the staff time that is required for grants. Commissioner Huppert noted the economic development staff that work for the Town and it is difficult for downtowns to bring people and businesses to the area. The Town of Christiansburg is supportive of bringing people Downtown. He added that the Town of Christiansburg was voted second best town in Virginia. The City of Salem ranked number one. Ms. Wortzberger noted the many ways she promotes Christiansburg. Commissioner Huppert noted the success of the Aquatic Center, Huckleberry Trail, the bowling alley, Harkrader facilities, and the new land purchased for athletic fields. The Town is doing a lot of things to bring people to Town and stay in Christiansburg.

Commissioner Collins spoke about discussions he has had with Buffalo & More about coming to Downtown Christiansburg. Ms. Wortzberger and Commissioner Dorsett noted the amount of customers they refer to the restaurant. Commissioners discussed possible locations and many commissioners noted their support.

Ms. Wortzberger asked what can be done about empty storefronts. Commissioner Franusich noted that the state gives them tax breaks for leaving them empty. Market Square was discussed by Commissioner Collins, Commissioner Carter and Commissioner Huppert as an economic development opportunity that the Town has been working on. There are no ordinances requiring the storefront to be filled in a certain amount of time. Ownership of the Downtown buildings was discussed. Commissioners hope that building owners, who are also Christiansburg residents, have an incentive to fill their empty store fronts.

Commissioner Dorsett told the public that she would appreciate their attendance at Historic Preservation committee meetings. Ms. Wortzberger would like to added to the listserv. Commissioners pointed her to the Planning Departments website.

There being no more business Chairperson Moore adjourned the meeting at 8:08 p.m.



Craig Moore, Chairperson



Nichole Hair, Secretary Non-Voting