

**Christiansburg Planning Commission
Minutes of August 31, 2020**

Present: Thomas Bernard
Ashley Briggs
Felix Clarke Jr.
Mark Curtis
Johana Hicks
Jeananne Knies, Vice - Chairperson
Jennifer D. Sowers
Will Drake, Secretary Non-Voting

Absent: Jessica Davis
Ann Sandbrook
Hil Johnson, Chairperson

Staff/Visitors: Jude Cochran, staff
Jared Crews, staff
Andrew Warren, staff

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

Public Comment

Vice-Chairperson Knies opened the floor for public comment. With no comments, Vice-Chairperson Knies closed the floor for public comment.

Approval of Planning Commission Minutes for the August 17, 2020 Meeting

Commissioner Sowers made a motion to approve the August 17, 2020 Planning Commission meeting minutes. Commissioner Hicks seconded the motion, which passed 5-0. Commissioners Curtis and Briggs abstained, as they were not present for the August 17, 2020 meeting.

Presentation on the Christiansburg Placemaking Plan by Andrew Warren, Assistant Town Manager.

Vice-Chairperson Knies opened the discussion.

Andrew Warren, Assistant Town Manager, gave a presentation on the Christiansburg Placemaking plan, which included the following topics:

- Overview of Plan Development.
 - The definition of Placemaking.
 - Benefits of great places

- Placemaking Plan phases.
- Action Areas
 - Cambria, Midtown, Downtown
- Community Outreach
 - Issues and Popular Amenities
- Goals/Strategies/Priority Projects
 - Goals- Accessibility, Maximize best use, enhancing current community assets, infill, redevelopment, etc.
 - Strategies – permanent farmers market, park enhancements, purchase greenspace, Just Start, The Buddy System, Signs of Success, etc.
 - Priorities – farmers market, park enhancements, Zoning Ordinance revisions, encourage workforce and market rate rental housing downtown, streetscape plan, incentives for new business, signage incentives and landscaping, etc.
- Next Steps

Commissioner Hicks questioned why Roanoke Street was not included in the plan. Mr. Warren explained the plan was originally focused on Downtown and then expanded to include the Cambria and Midtown areas, but stated there is a desire to focus on all areas of the Town moving forward.

Vice-Chairperson Knies noted it was challenging to walk from Downtown to Cambria, particularly along Depot Street. Mr. Warren noted the Town is hoping to receive VDOT funding for a proposed Cambria Trail project which would see the installation of a trail section from Mill Lane at the future passenger rail site to Holmes Street and then into Cambria along Depot Street. Mr. Warren noted the goal would be for the trail to ultimately extend southeast along Depot Street and connect to Roanoke Street.

The Commission discussed a possible amendment to the Zoning Ordinance, which would prohibit or require conditional use permits for certain ground-level uses. Mr. Warren stated an amendment like this would have many considerations to take into account, including existing businesses and the desires of downtown landowners, noting the results of ground-level zoning regulations is generally a long term process.

The Commission discussed parking availability downtown. Mr. Warren noted parking in downtown needs to be taken into account during planning processes to ensure adequate access to parking is provided for the public. The Commission reviewed a map of parking availability in downtown and discussed possible ways to address issues with parking.

Vice-Chairperson Knies stated she was appreciative of Mr. Warren presenting the Placemaking Plan and sharing the intended direction of the Town to the Planning Commission.

Commissioner Hicks stated she approved of the new sidewalks along North Franklin Street but noted she would like to see additional landscaping provided. Mr. Warren stated the North Franklin Street corridor improvement project is still underway. Commissioner Briggs noted the Town Bikeway Walkway Committee often discussed sidewalk updates and suggested attending meetings for more information.

Vice-Chairperson Knies questioned the availability of covered areas for members of the public to gather in the downtown area. Mr. Warren noted Depot Park and Downtown Park have open seating and pavilions. Commissioner Briggs suggested adding pavilions and covered structures to the Town Amenities Map.

Mr. Warren stated he would be happy to return and further discuss the Placemaking Plan with the Commission if they desired.

With no further comment, Vice-Chairperson Knies closed the discussion.

Other Business


Vice-Chairperson Knies opened the discussion.

Mr. Drake stated if the Commissioners had any questions or comments regarding the Placemaking Plan, he or Mr. Warren could be reached at any time.

Commissioner Briggs noted the Bikeway Walkway Committee had resumed its normal meeting schedule, noting meetings are currently held via Zoom on the first Friday of every month.

Vice-Chairperson Knies mentioned the possibility of instating a Planning Commission outreach program for local youth interested in local government, wherein a student could sit in on meetings and observe local government processes. The Planning Commission expressed interest in discussing the topic further.

With no further business, Vice-Chairperson Knies adjourned the meeting at 8:12 p.m.


Hil Johnson, Chairperson
Will Drake, Secretary Non-Voting