

**Christiansburg Planning Commission
Minutes of November 7, 2011**

Present: Barry Akers
Mark M. Caldwell, III
Ann H. Carter
M. H. Dorsett, AICP
Craig Moore, Chairperson
Joe Powers, Vice-Chairperson
Jennifer D. Sowers
Randy S. Wingfield, Secretary Non-Voting

Absent: Jim Vanhoozier

Staff/Visitors: Nichole Hair, staff
Kali Casper, staff
Carol Lindstrom

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

Public Comment.

Chairperson Moore opened the floor for public comment. There being no public comments, the public comment period was closed.

Approval of meeting minutes for October 10, 2011.

Chairperson Moore introduced the discussion.

Commissioner Caldwell made a motion to approve the meeting minutes for October 24, 2011. Commissioner Dorsett seconded the motion which passed 7-0.

Discussion of 2011 New River Valley's Bikeway-Walkway-Blueway Plan (prepared by New River Valley Planning District Commission).

Chairperson Moore introduced the discussion. Vice-Chairperson Powers requested Ms. Hair provide further information. Ms. Hair indicated the Town of Christiansburg met with the staff from the NRPDC in regards to the plan for approximately two years on the update and then met with Montgomery County and Blacksburg to plan for future connections. Commissioner Dorsett suggested the possibility of developing a Christiansburg Bikeway-Walkway Plan after the Comprehensive Plan is completed.

Vice-Chairperson Powers inquired about the level of detail for the trails and how that was acquired. Ms. Hair indicated existing trails that the Town is aware of were used in generate the detail. Vice-Chairperson Powers inquired if those can be found on subdivision plats and Ms. Hair indicated that is correct. Vice-Chairperson Powers stated this could serve as a basis for the Town's Bikeway-Walkway Plan and the Town's plan could be forwarded on to the PDC.

Discussion of 2011 New River Valley's Bikeway-Walkway-Blueway Plan (prepared by New River Valley Planning District Commission) – (continued).

Vice-Chairperson Powers inquired about the enhancement grant for the sidewalk project on Roanoke Street. Ms. Hair indicated this project is through Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds. Ms. Hair stated Phase I is to improve, replace and build sidewalks to Wade's Supermarket and Phase II would be to Town Hall and up E. Main Street. Ms. Hair stated the intent is to provide sidewalks up Park Street to the stock pen area and back to Roanoke Street. Ms. Hair stated funds have been decreasing for CDBG and the Town will evaluate how to best use the funds to serve the needs.

Vice-Chairperson Powers inquired about the Huckleberry Extension to the Recreation Center and into the Town. Mr. Wingfield stated there are dedicated easements for trail construction through the Oak Tree development. Mr. Wingfield added there is also the potential to use new and existing sidewalks along N. Franklin Street to connect to the downtown area.

Commissioner Dorsett suggested looking at other creative funding sources to build sidewalks and trail systems.

Discussion regarding the change to separate public hearings.

Chairperson Moore introduced the discussion. Mr. Wingfield indicated the Development Subcommittee has meet in regards to fees for public hearing items. Mr. Wingfield stated the committee proposes properties consisting of less than 5 acres will maintain the current public hearing fee of \$500; properties consisting of 5-20 acres will have a public hearing fee of \$750; and properties consisting of 20 or more acres will have a public hearing fee of \$1000. Mr. Wingfield indicated that with any public hearing having more than 50 adjoining property owners, an additional \$6 per letter will be added to the applicable public hearing fee. Ms. Lindstrom asked for clarification on the current fee of \$500 and that it is valid for a 1 acre property or a 20 acre property. Mr. Wingfield stated the fee for the public hearings is currently \$500 regardless of the size of the property.

Vice-Chairperson Powers inquired if the Planning Commission should make a recommendation to the Town Council to set the new fees. Mr. Wingfield stated a public hearing would be required and stated that Town Manager Barry Helms had indicated that the public hearing could be held soon or the Town could wait until May to incorporate the new fees with the next budget cycle. Commissioners Dorsett and Carter recommended making the fee change as soon as possible.

Commissioner Dorsett made a motion to recommend to Town Council changing the fees for rezoning and Conditional Use Permit public hearings. Commissioner Akers seconded the motion which passed 7-0.

Mr. Wingfield indicated he will request the public hearing be set for the fee increase.

Consideration of amendment of Planning Commission By-laws.

Chairperson Moore introduced the discussion. Mr. Wingfield indicated the amendment includes changing the regular Planning Commission meetings to 6 days following Town Council meetings instead of 8 days prior to Town Council meetings. Mr. Wingfield inquired when the Planning Commission would like to make the changes effective. Chairperson Moore suggested January 1st when the new process is effective. Commissioners Dorsett and Carter agreed with January.

Chairperson Moore inquired if the Planning Commission would like to consider addressing Commissioners wishing to run for political office with the By-law amendment. Chairperson Moore suggested Commissioners wishing to run for office could resign from the Planning Commission or take a leave of absence. Chairperson Moore indicated this would not apply to the designated Town Council representative of the Planning Commission.

Ms. Lindstrom suggested the member be able to remain on the Planning Commission during their campaign but not able to vote. Chairperson Moore indicated he is reluctant that someone would use the Planning Commission as a political avenue for their campaign.

Vice-Chairperson Powers inquired when the petitions are filed for elections. Commissioner Dorsett indicated petitions are filed in August. Commissioner Caldwell indicated one is not an official candidate until the petition is filed.

Commissioner Carter suggested tabling the adoption of the amendment in order to consider this issue. Commissioner Powers suggested moving forward with the proposed amendment and have Mr. Wingfield draft an additional amendment in regards to the campaigning of Planning Commissioners for political office.

Commissioner Caldwell inquired if the Town Council liaison has always voted. Mr. Wingfield indicated this is correct.

Vice-Chairperson Powers stated he felt the candidate should take a leave of absence from the Planning Commission during an election. Commissioner Dorsett wanted to point out the regulation regarding missing 3 absences should not apply in this case.

Vice-Chairperson Powers inquired about the Town Council liaison running for political office while serving on the Planning Commission. Commissioner Caldwell suggested the liaison be a non-voting member. Vice-Chairperson Powers agreed with this statement. Chairperson Moore stated he would like Town Council's input in regards to their representative's ability to vote on the Planning Commission. Chairperson Moore requested Town staff review other localities for how the liaison handles voting on the Planning Commission.

Consideration of amendment of Planning Commission By-laws – (continued).

Commissioner Caldwell inquired how the Town Council will be notified of this new issue. Mr. Wingfield indicated he will speak to Town Manager Helms regarding this issue and request he present it to Town Council. Mr. Wingfield indicated taking away a voting member affects the quorum. Vice-Chairperson Powers indicated the current quorum is to be of voting members. Commissioner Dorsett suggested the liaison could be the tie breaking vote. Vice-Chairperson Powers stated such a vote could be seen as political. Commissioner Carter stated she had made the suggestion to expand the Planning Commission and make the liaison a non-voting member when she left the Town Council. Commissioner Carter added while she served as liaison between the Planning Commission and Town Council she did change her vote on two occasions. Mr. Wingfield stated the quorum is the majority of voting members. Vice-Chairperson Powers stated that could be the majority of members. Ms. Casper indicated Mr. Wingfield is a non-voting member of the Planning Commission and that is something that could be considered. Mr. Wingfield indicated that former Town Manager John Lemley had been a voting member of the Planning Commission but that this was changed when Lance Terpenny became Town Manager. Mr. Wingfield stated that he did not think it was appropriate for staff to be a voting member and the Planning Commission agreed.

Chairperson Moore suggested the Planning Commission table the amendment until this issue is resolved and staff has provided additional information. The Planning Commission agreed. Mr. Wingfield stated that he typically contacts Blacksburg, Radford, and Montgomery County with research questions and asked if any other localities were desired. Commission Powers indicated Roanoke and Salem could be contacted.

There being no more business Chairperson Moore adjourned the meeting at 7:39 p.m.



Craig Moore, Chairperson



Randy S. Wingfield, Secretary

Non-Voting