Christiansburg Planning Commission
Minutes of February 13, 2012

Present: Mark M. Caldwell, III
Ann H. Carter
M. H. Dorsett, AICP
Steve Huppert
Craig Moore, Chairperson
Joe Powers, Vice-Chairperson
Randy S. Wingfield, Secretary Non-Voting

Absent: Barry Akers
Jennifer D. Sowers

Staff/Visitors: Nichole Hair, staff
Kali Casper, staff
Jim Vanhoozier, Town Council
Steve Semones, Balzer and Associates, Inc.
Carol Lindstrom, 630 Depot Street, N.E.
Harry Collins

Chairperson Moore called the meeting to order at 7:02 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. Ms. Lindstrom complimented the Planning staff and Planning Commissioners that worked on the overall zoning ordinance amendment.

Approval of meeting minutes for January 30, 2012.

Chairperson Moore introduced the discussion. Commissioner Dorsett made a motion to approve the meeting minutes. Commissioner Caldwell seconded the motion which passed 6-0.

Commissioner Powers requested to amend the agenda to revisit the CUP request for property on Fairview Street and the recommendation from Councilman Stipes to require a traffic study and the Planning Commission agreed to amend the agenda. Commissioner Powers suggested that this be added as the last item on the agenda.

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Planning Commission public hearing for Council's intention to adopt an ordinance amending Chapter 30 "Zoning" of the Christiansburg Town Code in regards to residential density allowances in the Residential, Mixed Use and Business Districts. The Town Council public hearing is set for March 6, 2012.

Chairperson Moore introduced the discussion. Mr. Wingfield indicated he knew the Planning Commission had specifically mentioned drafting an amendment to allow up to 16 units per acre in the MU-2 Mixed Use District but that he advertised the amendment to give the Planning Commission some flexibility for the density allowances. Chairperson Moore read the drafted amendment that would allow "minimum lot area for a multiple-family dwelling shall be 15,625 square feet and density of development shall not exceed the ratio of sixteen dwelling units per gross acre" in the MU-2 District.

Commissioner Powers indicated this is just the public hearing to receive comments. Chairperson Moore requested any public comment on this issue and there were none.

Review of a Conditional Use Permit request by Oscar Gray (acting as agent for property owner Rakesh Aggarwal) for a game room at 1225-C Roanoke Street (tax parcel 528 – ((A)) – 92) in the B-3 General Business District. The public hearing was held July 20, 2010 and approval given on August 3, 2010.

Chairperson Moore introduced the discussion. Commissioner Dorsett inquired if there have been any comments or complaints. Mr. Wingfield stated there have been no complaints or violations. Commissioner Huppert inquired about the location of the property and Mr. Wingfield stated it is beside the former Craig Mountain Market on Roanoke Street. Commissioner Powers inquired if staff has reviewed and investigated the property for compliance and Mr. Wingfield stated that is correct. Commissioner Huppert indicated the applicant has gone beyond the minimum requirements. Commissioner Carter stated she would like to go forward on a complaint basis.

Commissioner Dorsett made a motion to allow staff to continue to monitor the property for compliance with no further review by Planning Commission. Commissioner Carter seconded the motion which passed 8-0.

Update on the Development Subcommittee activities.

Chairperson Moore introduced the discussion. Mr. Wingfield stated Commissioner Powers serves as the Chair of the subcommittee. Mr. Wingfield stated the subcommittee has been working on downtown parking requirements and has begun studying the possibility of a Town traffic impact analysis requirement. Mr. Wingfield stated these items have been kept separate from the overall Zoning Ordinance rewrite and added that much of the Zoning Ordinance rewrite is for clarification or to address items that are not particularly controversial. Commissioner Powers indicated Commissioners Carter and Sowers are also on the subcommittee and requested Mr. Wingfield review the changes. Mr. Wingfield detailed the summary of the Zoning Ordinance rewrite, which is attached as part of these minutes.

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Update on the Development Subcommittee activities – (continued).

Commissioner Dorsett stated she thought the changes were good but she does take issue with the definition of flea markets adding that she thought thinks like antique stores, craft stores, and art galleries could fall under the definition. Commissioner Powers stated that would be reviewed further. Ms. Lindstrom stated it should be clarified to the Planning Commission the Blacksburg Transit service could be eliminated by Town Council at any point. Commissioner Powers stated that has been considered with the draft of the Zoning Ordinance rewrite. Commissioner Dorsett stated the provision helps areas of Town that may not have enough parking but have bus stops.

Commissioner Dorsett inquired about storage lots. Mr. Wingfield stated he views storage lots as bus storage, tractor trailer storage, and equipment storage. Commissioner Dorsett inquired if the two tractor trailers stored on Alleghany Street would be considered a storage lot. Mr. Wingfield stated that would be a violation as a trucking terminal in a Residential District. Ms. Lindstrom inquired about a definition of storage lot. Mr. Wingfield stated there is not one in the Ordinance and that would be left up to his interpretation. Commissioner Powers suggested looking at a definition to be added. Chairperson Moore suggested adding a requirement for signage for motorcycle and compact parking spaces.

Commissioner Dorsett inquired about terms of mentally retarded or physically disabled. Mr. Wingfield stated he will verify how the Code of Virginia words the ordinance. Commissioner Powers stated the intent is to bring the Ordinance into compliance with state law. Commissioner Powers stated the changes will be reviewed in four weeks before going to Public Hearing.

Updated on Comprehensive Plan Subcommittee activities.

Chairperson Moore introduced the discussion. Commissioner Dorsett stated the subcommittee will be meeting Wednesday at 4:30 p.m. and will be coming up with the standards for the Land Use section. Commissioner Dorsett stated once the goals for this section have been drafted, it will come to Planning Commission. Commissioner Powers stated the intent is to be a slimmer Comprehensive Plan.

Update on Historic District Subcommittee activities.

Chairperson Moore introduced the discussion. Ms. Hair stated the subcommittee consists of Commissioner Carter and Commissioner Akers, with Commissioner Akers serving as Chairperson. Ms. Hair stated the subcommittee will be meeting on Wednesday at 11:00 a.m. Ms. Hair indicated Ms. Casper will be attending the meeting to review the downtown parking project she has been conducting. Ms. Hair provided an update on the designation of the Downtown Historic District, indicating Ms. Wyatt has completed writing the descriptive essay and taking photos. Ms. Hair stated the next step is writing the history essay. Ms. Hair added she has provided Ms. Wyatt with mapping for the Preliminary Information Form (PIF). In terms of a deadline, Ms. Wyatt has until May 2012 to complete the PIF.

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A Conditional Use Permit request by Balzer and Associates, Inc. (agent for property owner RWW36, LLC) for a planned housing development at the end of Farmview Road, N.E. (tax parcels 436 – ((A)) – 37, 38, 39, 40, and 41 and a portion of 436 – ((A)) – 35 and 36) in the B-3 General Business District. The Planning Commission public hearing was held January 9, 2012 with a recommendation made on January 30, 2012. The Town Council Public Hearing was held February 7, 2012.

Chairperson Moore indicated the agenda has been amended to include discussion of requiring a traffic study for the CUP request by Mega Builders on Fairview Road. Commissioner Powers stated he would like to review a request by Councilman Stipes requiring a traffic impact study and the impact the development would have on nearby sites. Commissioner Powers suggested making a recommendation to Town Council that the Planning Commission supports the traffic study. Mr. Wingfield stated it was brought up at the Town Council public hearing and Councilman Stipes did not want a full traffic impact analysis. Mr. Wingfield stated Councilman Stipes wanted to have the intersection studied and Councilman Stipes did want the analysis conducted by a licensed engineer.

Mr. Wingfield read the drafted condition: "The approval shall be subject to a revised traffic study prepared by a Virginia Licensed Engineer including Peak Hour turning movement counts (TMC) performed for AM, Midday, and PM peaks at the intersection of Farmview Road and N. Franklin Street; future build out year of the development accounting for background traffic growth, at a rate determined by VDOT historical traffic counts or VDOT/Town planning data; site trip generation volumes to anticipated future year no build volumes; and future year site development traffic analyzed using Highway Capacity Software or Synchro, to determine impacts to the existing traffic signal with the following Measures of Effectiveness (MOEs) to be evaluated: movement and intersection delay, Level of Service (LOS), queues, to determine capacity constraints related to development, and to identify mitigation solutions. Approval of the Conditional Use Permit shall be subject to the site pan addressing recommended improvements of the revised traffic study to the satisfaction of the Town Engineer." Commissioner Powers stated this would be an important way to address this project as it takes into account what is happening on other properties and what will happen in the future.

Commissioner Powers made a motion he would like to send a recommendation to Town Council to add this as an additional condition. Commissioner Dorsett seconded the motion. Chairperson Moore indicated the wording "professional" engineer should replace "licensed" and the Planning Commission agreed. The motion passed 8-0.

Commissioner Caldwell inquired about the revised traffic study done for the request. Mr. Semones stated traffic data from a former study associated with the 2006 County rezoning was used with updated data from VDOT trip numbers. Mr. Semones indicated Mr. Stipes had referenced using an engineer stamp and a portion of what is required for VDOT Chapter 527 traffic impact analysis. Mr. Semones stated he feels comfortable with the wording that has been presented.

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Mr. Wingfield stated the traffic analysis could still be submitted to VDOT for review at the site plan level and while VDOT's recommendations would not be binding, the Town Engineer could choose to require any recommendation. Mr. Semones stated in his discussion with Councilman Stipes the conditions regarding the turn lane could be removed since the traffic study would determine the need of the lane. Commissioner Powers stated that condition is to be left up to the Street Committee and the Town Engineer, who can review the study and determine if a turn lane is needed. Commissioner Powers indicated there is not a need to strike any conditions as they are left up to the Street Committee and Town Engineer and he felt they may want the flexibility if the traffic study comes back with a close situation as to whether the extra lane should be installed.

Mr. Wingfield stated he spoke with the Town Engineer and half of the Street Committee who stated if the data did not warrant a turn lane; a turn lane would not be required and added that the other half of the Street Committee was present. Mr. Vanhoozier agreed that he thought this was the understanding. Mr. Semones stated the study will determine if a turn lane is needed. Commissioner Huppert inquired if the applicant has spoken with adjoining property owner to acquire right-of-way to widen for a turn lane. Mr. Semones stated the application is not at that level yet.

Commissioner Carter inquired about condition 11 and inquired if the condition should be edited to reference the traffic study. Commissioner Powers stated the condition should remain as is since the Street Committee and Town Engineer will have all the necessary data to make the decision. Commissioner Huppert inquired about the time frame to complete a traffic study. Commissioner Powers stated the applicant can do it in conjunction with the site plan. Mr. Semones stated this will be the first thing they do to see if the project is feasible.

Other business.

Mr. Wingfield stated there had been inquires by the Planning Commission regarding the new Courthouse parking garage and Mr. Wingfield found it cannot accommodate an additional level and stated that he believed the County had approached the Town about paying for the additional costs to accommodate another level, but that neither Town Council or the Board of Supervisors wanted to pay the additional costs.

There being no more business Chairperson Moore adjourned the meeting at 8:03 p.m.

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Craig Moore, Chairperson Randy S. Wingfield, Secretary Non-Voting

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