Christiansburg Planning Commission
Minutes of June 11, 2012

Present: Barry Akers
Ann H. Carter
Harry Collins
M. H. Dorsett, AICP
Steve Huppert
Craig Moore, Chairperson
Ashley Parsons
Joe Powers, Vice-Chairperson
Jennifer D. Sowers
Randy S. Wingfield, Secretary Non-Voting

Absent: None

Staff/Visitors: Kali Casper, staff
Wayne Nelson, staff
Carol Lindstrom, 630 Depot Street, N.E.
Steve Semones, Balzer and Associates, Inc.
John Neel, Gay and Neel, Inc.
Jim Wessel, Showcase Home Builders

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:

Chairperson Moore stated that Item Number 3 on the agenda has been withdrawn.

Public Comment

Chairperson Moore opened the floor for public comment. No public comments were made.

Approval of meeting minutes for May 21, 2012.

Chairperson Moore introduced the discussion. Commissioner Collins made a motion to approve the May 21, 2012 meeting minutes. Commissioner Dorsett seconded the motion which passed 9-0.

Planning Commission public hearing for a Conditional Use Permit request by Jason Blackburn (agent for property owner Thompson Family Prop., L.L.C.) for a commercial garage at 100 Radford Street (tax parcel 526 – ((A)) – 155) in the B-3 General Business District. The Town Council public hearing is set for July 3, 2012.

Chairperson Moore noted that this item has been withdrawn.

DRAFT

A Conditional Use Permit request by Carl McNeil for a planned housing development at the intersection of Depot Street, N.E. and Harless Street (former tax parcel 497 – ((A)) – 288; Lots 1-3 in the recently approved "Plat Showing Harless Corner") in the B-3 General Business District. The Planning Commission public hearing was held May 21, 2012. The Town Council public hearing is set for June 19, 2012.

Chairperson Moore introduced the request. Chairperson Moore explained that Mr. Nelson is present to answer questions concerning drainage. Commissioner Carter asked about a flower wreath with metal marker. Mr. Nelson stated that he has not seen it but it is marked on the plat. Commissioner Powers confirmed that it is on the plat. Commissioner Carter asked if remains are buried there. Mr. Wingfield stated he believes it is a roadside memorial marker. Commissioner Powers stated that the marker is actually within the street right-of-way, not physically on the property. Ms. Lindstrom asked if Mr. Wingfield is sure that it is a roadside marker. Mr. Wingfield stated he cannot confirm with 100% accuracy, but that it appears to be a roadside memorial marker. Commissioner Carter noted the marker has a date of 1957.

Chairperson Moore noted that one concern for this request was drainage along the rear of the property. Mr. Nelson stated that from field reconnaissance either the system is not there or is buried. He stated that the Town will need to investigate further with a Public Works crew. Commissioner Powers asked for an explanation of the aerial photograph with drainage information. Mr. Nelson explained that there is an inlet at the intersection of Harless Street and Depot Street and that a ditch collects water coming down Harless Street. He noted that engineering was unable to determine if the system crossed the street or went further down Depot Street. Engineering did not find any culverts or storm drain piping on the side where the development is proposed. Mr. Nelson added that the location is overgrown. Mr. Nelson stated that near North Drive, near the church, there is a storm drain line and an open culvert that collects water from above although the range is unknown. Mr. Nelson stated that the Town will need to do maintenance work regardless of this request. Commissioner Powers asked if there is a need for any drainage easements. Mr. Nelson explained that as a subdivision, the development must meet water quantity and quality standards. Chairperson Moore asked if they would need to prove downstream channel adequacy. Mr. Nelson stated that they will need on-site controls for quantity and quality. Commissioner Dorsett asked about the ditch on Harless Street. Chairperson Moore noted that there is a ditch and that generally it does okay, but occasionally has flooded a yard in heavier rains. Commissioner Dorsett noted that sometimes water comes across Depot Street where Harless Street meets it. Chairperson Moore asked if drainage easement would be needed for the Town to perform work. Commissioner Dorsett suggested a condition that developer must work with Engineering Department at Town to create stormwater plan and maintain pre-development standards of quality and quantity. Commissioner Powers asked if Mr. Nelson has seen the sketch based on subdivision plat and Mr. Nelson stated yes. Commissioner Powers asked if the proposed location of units is where natural drainage would come through. Mr. Nelson stated that the engineer preparing the design would have to consider that. Commissioner Powers confirmed with Mr. Wingfield that plat has been approved. Commissioner Powers asked how the Town will ensure the project meets stormwater standards. Mr. Nelson stated that the Town would require addressing the issue in a stormwater plan.

DRAFT

A Conditional Use Permit request by Carl McNeil for a planned housing development at the intersection of Depot Street, N.E. and Harless Street (former tax parcel 497 – ((A)) – 288; Lots 1-3 in the recently approved "Plat Showing Harless Corner") in the B-3 General Business District. – (continued)

Commissioner Powers asked what plan he is referring to. Mr. Nelson stated that the developer will have to submit a grading plan and stormwater plan. Commissioner Dorsett would like to make that a condition to underscore the importance. Mr. Nelson noted that meeting the regulations will be a challenge due to size of the property. Chairperson Moore noted that the Commission would like to add a 4th condition requiring a stormwater and erosion and sediment control and grading plan, prior to issuance of a Building Permit. Ms. Lindstrom asked if that means it should be prior to land disturbing activities and Mr. Nelson stated this was correct. Commissioner Powers stated that this is tied to development under the Conditional Use Permit.

Commissioner Powers asked about sidewalk extension. Mr. Nelson noted that this will also be a challenge. Mr. Nelson noted that it will require grading and potentially construction of the sidewalk on private property and require a public access easement. Commissioner Dorsett noted presence of sidewalk on Depot Street. Commissioner Carter asked if extending the sidewalk on Depot Street is included in the conditions. Chairperson Moore stated yes it should be and that the sidewalk on Harless Street is more problematic. Commissioner Powers asked how far around the curve of Harless Street sidewalk needs to be for pedestrian safety. Mr. Nelson estimated that it would need to extend to the right-of-way line. Chairperson Moore stated it would need to be approximately a quarter circle.

Commissioner Collins asked about drainage for the other two lots. Mr. Nelson stated that those lots would not have a large impact, but would still need to control stormwater. Chairperson Moore asked about putting a culvert across Depot Street for the lot above this. Mr. Nelson noted that it will probably be needed anyway. Chairperson Moore asked about property directly north of this. Mr. Nelson noted it would be acceptable if that was the only option available. Mr. Nelson explained that these issues are considered during the review process. Chairperson Moore noted that this may end up restricting other property development in the future. Mr. Nelson noted that may be an issue if there is not a drainage easement along the right-of-way. Chairperson Moore asked about a 10 to 15 feet easement along the street that would be dedicated to the Town. Mr. Wingfield stated that it could be required. Mr. Nelson stated that it would depend upon final grading plan as to whether it was needed. Chairperson Moore asked if a drainage easement should be required as a condition. Commissioner Powers suggested that drainage easements may be required. Chairperson Moore noted that this will be dependent on Town review. Commissioner Powers stated this is to put the developer on notice that it may be a requirement.

The fourth condition was drafted as follows: Stormwater and erosion and sediment control plan and grading plan shall be submitted by the applicant and approved by the Town prior to the commencement of any land disturbing activities. Drainage easements may be required by the Town.

DRAFT

A Conditional Use Permit request by Carl McNeil for a planned housing development at the intersection of Depot Street, N.E. and Harless Street (former tax parcel 497 – ((A)) – 288; Lots 1-3 in the recently approved "Plat Showing Harless Corner") in the B-3 General Business District. – (continued)

The fifth condition was drafted as follows: Sidewalks shall be extended the radius of Harless Street to the satisfaction of the Town Manager or Town Engineer.

Chairperson Moore read the other conditions. Commissioner Powers noted that since lots are small, there will be challenges and would like to ensure that developer could switch to two lots if desired. Mr. Wingfield confirmed that they could change to two lots. Commissioner Dorsett made a motion to recommend approval with two additional conditions. Commissioner Parsons second the motion which passed 9-0.

Commissioner Powers asked about what the regulations are on water quantity and quality. Mr. Nelson explained that water quantity and quality are typically combined in larger developments. He stated that with water quantity, the idea is to maintain the pre-development rate. He explained that water quality addresses the quality of water that leaves the site and that quality is a new challenging area in development. Mr. Nelson noted that there are different methods, including stormwater ponds that detain water for pollutants to settle out, bio-retention, basins, and rain gardens that allow rain water to filter down through plant life and grass. He explained that the State has requirements according to impervious area on the site and noted that with limited impervious areas, grass swales can be used. Usually, larger sites require retention and detention basins. It will be a challenge to meet standards in limited space as well as needing to divert off-site water around your stormwater controls. Commissioner Powers noted that the addition of parking in downtown area may create a challenge. Mr. Nelson noted that there are also manufactured controls that can be used but require specific maintenance which requires someone to maintain the controls on regular basis for them to be effective.

Presentation of Traffic Study for Proposed Development – Farmview Road, N.E. The Planning Commission public hearing was held January 9, 2012 and recommendation made on February 13, 2012. The Town Council public hearing was held February 7, 2012 and approval given on February 21, 2012.

Chairperson Moore introduced the presentation. Mr. Wingfield explained that the study was e-mailed to members as well as a letter with the detailing the response from the Street Committee. Mr. Wingfield summarized the study. The Street Committee will not require an additional turn lane at this time and the stop sign at Sunset Drive will be reviewed one year after the final Certificate of Occupancy for the development. Commissioner Powers asked about assumptions going into the traffic study. Mr. Semones noted that study considered total number of trips generated by the development in terms of level of service and queue length. He explained that three different scenarios were considered: existing conditions at three peak times, 7:00 - 9:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m., and 4:00 – 6:00 p.m.; background conditions 5 years out in 2017 using annual growth rate without development (from VDOT standards); and with full development of project with background conditions in 2017.

DRAFT

Presentation of Traffic Study for Proposed Development – Farmview Road, N.E. The Planning Commission public hearing was held January 9, 2012 and recommendation made on February 13, 2012. The Town Council public hearing was held February 7, 2012 and approval given on February 21, 2012. – (continued)

Mr. Semones noted that the assumptions were observing intersection with background conditions, where the cars are moving and how, and then projecting future traffic. Two access points make future projection of traffic challenging. Mr. Semones noted that one assumption is much of the traffic will head towards Blacksburg. The study assumed that 70% of traffic generated from development will be travelling to Blacksburg to the north and of that 70%, half through each direction (half through Farmview Road and half through the private access through K-Mart). He explained that this projection did not create a failing level of service. He noted that it is critical to monitor the assumptions as development occurs.

The report concluded that an additional turn lane is not required because of the development and the additional stop sign not required for the intersection of Farmview Road and Sunset at this time as the study does not suggest the queue at Farmview Road and N. Franklin Street does not appear to back up to the intersection . Mr. Semones stated that traffic issues will be reported to staff and then the stop sign can be considered in the future. Mr. Semones stated that the study was presented to the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and VDOT completed a cursory study because it did not meet VDOT threshold requirements.

Commissioner Huppert asked about the second entrance and exit for construction traffic. Mr. Semones noted that currently heavy equipment will come in through Farmview Road, not through the parking lot of K-Mart. Commissioner Huppert asked about when second road will be built. Mr. Semones stated that Conditional Use Permit requires it be built during the first phase. Commissioner Powers asked how long the traffic study took to complete. Mr. Semones responded that it was completed in a couple of weeks. It was not as long as a full Traffic Impact Analysis to VDOT standards but is still time consuming. Mr. Semones would like information and guidance from the Town as a consultant about when traffic studies will be required (if VDOT thresholds are not met). Commissioner Powers asked if it took less time since it was an abbreviated study. Mr. Semones stated that VDOT reviewed it outside of the regular review process so it took less time. Commissioner Powers asked if the traffic study was helpful from a staff perspective. Mr. Nelson responded yes. Commissioner Collins asked if the K-Mart road is State maintained. Semones responded no and that the easement runs with the property. Commissioner Huppert stated that Roger Woody owns the K-Mart property and Mr. Semones stated that this is correct. Commissioner Powers thanked Mr. Semones for the follow up.

DRAFT

Presentation of Depot Street Park development, Diamond Hills Park development, and Huckleberry Trail extension projects.

Chairperson Moore introduced the topic. Mr. Wingfield explained that this is coming before Planning Commission as an update. Mr. Wingfield stated that the Town is talking with Rosa Peters Playground Board about the trail on their property. Mr. Nelson noted that the Town applied to the Department of Conservation and Recreation to improve waters at Depot Street Park but were not awarded the grant. Chairperson Moore inquired whether armored gator blocks or natural measures would be used and Mr. Nelson responded natural measures to coordinate with the walking trail. Commissioner Dorsett inquired as to why there is not a bridge from the Skate Park to the Depot Street Park on the plans. Mr. Nelson noted that bridge locations worked with overall layout and design. Mr. Neel stated that there is a tremendous grade. Commissioner Powers stated that he would like access outside of the Skate Park to Aquatic Center parking. Mr. Nelson noted that the grade is a challenge. Commissioner Dorsett stated there must be somewhere behind the Aquatic Center that would work.

Mr. Neel responded that 100-Year Floodplain is another consideration for design. Commissioner Dorsett suggested that the Coal Mining Heritage Park bridge was designed for flooding and that it cost $147,000 in 2005 and is longer than this space requires. Commissioner Powers stated it would be a good link to the Huckleberry Trail and the necklace of parks to connect through downtown. Commissioner Huppert noted that Dennis Nagel from the Christiansburg Soccer Club was ready to give Town of Christiansburg $5,000 to work on the soccer field for Depot Street Park. He added that this was approved by Council and the money should be coming. Commissioner Huppert noted that the budget included $25,000 for Depot Street Park for surveying and grading.

Mr. Neel stated that the Town applied for two grants: a land and water conservation grant and a recreational trails grant. He added that the land and water conservation grant was not awarded to the Town, but that the recreational trails grant was still a possibility. The requirements for that grant necessitate a loop trail not point A to point B. Mr. Neel added that the soccer field would be an academy field and accommodate travelling teams from Roanoke, Salem, etc. Commissioner Huppert added that some of the land is owned by Kroger and that they would like a stormwater pond in conjunction with an easement to use the land. Chairperson Moore asked if there are water and sewer lines on the backside of the property and Mr. Nelson responded yes. Ms. Lindstrom asked how a bridge would work for parking and people with strollers. Chairperson Moore stated that we hope people walk. Commissioner Huppert indicated the existing parking lot on non-Aquatic Center (Depot Street) side by the basketball courts could be used for park access. Commissioner Huppert added that the playground next to basketball court will likely be enlarged and benches added, if the Parks and Recreation budget allows. Commissioner Powers stated his interest in tying it in to the Aquatic Center because of the parking available when events are going on. Commissioner Huppert noted that the drawing has been around for a year or so. Ms. Lindstrom asked about the possibility of checking with Hubbell on solar lighting. Mr. Neel responded it is possible but the Town must consider maintenance issues. Commissioner Huppert noted that lighting will be needed for basketball area for safety purposes.

DRAFT

Presentation of Depot Street Park development, Diamond Hills Park development, and Huckleberry Trail extension projects. – (continued)

Mr. Wingfield introduced the Diamond Hills Park project and stated that this project would include streambank stabilization and a more passive use trail. Mr. Nelson noted that the Town is currently finalizing the contract with Branch Highways for the streambank stabilization. He added that the purpose of the project is to mitigate a project in Wytheville and that the contractor would like to rebuild the channel from Independence to Crab Creek rather than pay into the fund. The plat was prepared by Balzer and Associates and part of the project allows for trail alignment and laying subgrade. The Town would then build the trail in the future. Mr. Nelson stated that the Town hopes to build an elevated walkway with educational experiences including pictures from existing conditions. The project reconnects this property to the existing floodplain and the area would be planted with landscaping and put into a conservation easement (still allowing the trail). Commissioner Dorsett noted that the County has construction plans from the County bridge based on a WPA era Northwest Area bridge. The builder of the County bridge also built Wildwood and Bisset Park bridges as well as the Cascades bridges.

Chairperson Moore asked if this helps with the MS-4 program in terms of improvements. Mr. Nelson responded that the project helps address the Crab Creek TMDL. Chairperson Moore stated that this project is a win-win with environment, stormwater, and nature. Commissioner Dorsett asked about ways to deal with runoff from paved path near the Cambria Depot. Mr. Nelson noted that small sites are a challenge and does not believe the improvements required a plan. Commissioner Dorsett described problem area. Mr. Nelson added that this is the challenge that is faced with older small sites. Commissioner Dorsett stated that the area was concreted down to the Creek. Commissioner Powers asked if this is a demonstration project. Mr. Nelson stated that the Town is attempting to take a total watershed approach with a more comprehensive view of watersheds. He added that the Town is applying lessons that have been learned and put into practice so future generations will not have to deal with the same problems. Chairperson Moore stated that this includes public outreach and education for the MS-4 program. Commissioner Parsons asked about the implementation timeframe and maturity timeframe. Mr. Nelson responded that plants that will be purchased in the next season so likely two construction seasons. Parsons asked when plants will reach maturity. Mr. Nelson responded he is not sure.

Mr. Nelson described the phases of the Huckleberry Trail extension, II-A through II-F. The bridge across Route 114 will be constructed as part of the Route 114 widening project and the preconstruction meeting has occurred, so construction should begin soon. Mr. Nelson continued his description of the phases. He stated that phase II-A is a few weeks from advertisement of bid with II-B soon after. Mr. Nelson added that II-C will be built with Town forces, from the Recreation Center to Forelmont Street. Mr. Nelson indicated that a crosswalk, possibly an enhanced crosswalk, is planned where II-E and II-B intersect crossing Cambria Street. Mr. Nelson stated that II-F will hopefully include an enhanced crosswalk at Independence Boulevard. Commissioner Dorsett asked about connecting this trail to Diamond Hills area. Mr. Neel responded that it is extremely challenging. Mr. Nelson stated that the Diamond Hills trail system will extend to the end of Scattergood Drive, N.W. and tie in.

DRAFT

Presentation of Depot Street Park development, Diamond Hills Park development, and Huckleberry Trail extension projects. – (continued)

Commissioner Powers asked how much has been funded. Mr. Neel responded that all of it is essentially funded through a combination of banked TEA funds ($400,000), Renva Knowles Estate (approximately $1 million), and leveraging Renva Knowles money for revenue sharing money and Recreational Access Funds. Commissioner Powers asked if it is funded all the way to the High School. Mr. Neel confirmed that it is. Commissioner Huppert noted that a plaque will be created for Renva Knowles. Mr. Neel noted that Renva Knowles money was specifically assigned to bridge and as the VDOT Route 114 project unfolded, it was included. He added that the Renva Knowles money can be used for trail extension since VDOT will fund the Route 114 pedestrian bridge. Commissioner Huppert noted Councilman Stipes' involvement. Commissioner Powers asked if anything can be done by the Planning Commission on this project. Commissioner Huppert stated he will donate a bench in honor of his wife. Ms. Lindstrom asked about the possibility of camping within Town limits for bikers passing through the area. She added that if the Code prohibited it, it should be considered in the future.

Other Business

Chairperson Moore noted that at the Town Council meeting comments were made on zoning revisions. He added that one person wished to see a greater reduction in downtown parking requirements. He noted that there was some confusion over the Courthouse parking garage. He added that if renovations were made to the antique store, parking requirements would cause problems for development. There was also concern about increasing parking for apartments to 2.5 spaces from 2 spaces without consideration for number of bedrooms. Chairperson Moore noted that this was an update on public comments. He added that meeting minutes and video are available from Town Council. Chairperson Moore thanked the subcommittee for working on this and recommending changes. Commissioner Powers added that it is an ongoing process. Chairperson Moore thanked all attendees. Commissioner Huppert added that the work that has been done for the Huckleberry Trail and Depot Park is appreciated. Chairperson Moore noted that while the Planning Commission may want more, what has been done is still appreciated.

There being no more business Chairperson Moore adjourned the meeting at 8:27 p.m.

_____ _____

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

DRAFT