Christiansburg Planning Commission
Minutes of June 24, 2013

Present: Matthew J. Beasley
Ann H. Carter
Harry Collins
M.H. Dorsett, AICP
David Franusich
Jonathan Hedrick
Ashley Parsons
Joe Powers, Vice-Chairperson
Jennifer D. Sowers
Nichole Hair, Secretary Non-Voting

Absent: Steve Huppert
Craig Moore, Chairperson

Staff/Visitors: Kali Casper, staff
Cindy Disney, Montgomery County Planning Commission
Mr. J.C. Martin, Jr., 2000 Tower Road

Vice-Chairperson Powers called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. in the Christiansburg Town Hall at 100 E. Main Street, Christiansburg, Virginia to discuss the following items:

Public Comment.

Vice-Chairperson Powers opened the floor for public comment. Vice-Chairperson Powers asked if Mr. Martin would like to comment. Mr. Martin noted he would address Planning Commission during the request later. No other public comments were made. Vice-Chairperson Powers closed the floor for public comment.

Approval of meeting minutes for June 10, 2013.

Vice-Chairperson Powers introduced the discussion. Commissioner Dorsett made a motion to approve the Planning Commission meeting minutes. Commissioner Sowers seconded the motion which passed 7-0, with Commissioner Franusich and Commissioner Carter abstaining.

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Planning Commission discussion on a proffer amendment request by Johnny C. Martin for property located at 3295 and 3301 Roanoke Street (an approximately 1.3 acre portion of the total 36.798 acre tax parcel 502 – ((9)) – 5C and an approximately 0.65 acre portion of the total 4.0756 acre tax parcel 502 – ((9)) – 5), which is zoned B-3 General Business, to amend a proffer statement to allow automobile sales.

Vice-Chairperson Powers opened the discussion and reviewed the request. He asked that Ms. Hair review the information provided in the meeting packet. Ms. Hair explained the photos showing the area proposed to limit for paving for the display area. Vice-Chairperson Powers asked if the photo showed the former barn. Mr. Martin responded yes. Ms. Hair reviewed the photos and the amended proffer statement. Vice-Chairperson Powers noted that Planning Commission has a copy of statement and reviewed the amended proffer statement differentiating between previous and new proffers. Vice-Chairperson Powers asked for comments or questions from Planning Commission.

Commissioner Franusich asked for clarification about the two parcels shown on the map. Mr. Martin responded that the parcels have actually been combined. Ms. Hair confirmed that they are now one parcel not two. Commissioner Franusich asked for clarification about the building connected to the driveway on the aerial photo. Ms. Hair responded that it is Mr. Martin's home.

Commissioner Hedrick asked about the number of automobiles. Mr. Martin responded that they must pave 10 parking spaces and that is what they proposed to do. Mr. Martin noted that the question was about paving up to the spaces and they would like to see if it will be amended. Commissioner Hedrick clarified that his question is about number of automobiles for sale. Mr. Martin responded that they did not specific a number.

Vice-Chairperson Powers explained the Planning Commission has been working on an amendment to the parking ordinance that would allow for flexibility as to the number of spaces and type of parking if the proffers clearly indicate a reduced intensity of use. Vice-Chairperson Powers reviewed the draft of this language. He explained that the intent is if the proffers significantly reduce the intensity of use showing "x" number of parking spaces or "x" number of employees, then they could reduce the number of spaces and design standards. Commissioner Hedrick noted specificity would be helpful. Vice-Chairperson Powers clarified that there would need to be a proffer that states a maximum to qualify for this exception. Commissioner Sowers responded this proffer should be tied to a maximum number of cars rather than maximum number of employees. Vice-Chairperson Powers asked Mr. Martin for a realistic limit on the number of cars. Mr. Martin responded that he does not want to limit his father but also would prefer not to pave so he is open to suggestions. Commissioner Sowers asked Planning Commission about 20 cars. Commissioner Dorsett said that is too many. Commissioner Hedrick said 15 would be a good amount. Vice-Chairperson Powers said 15 on the lot behind the fence with 1 allowed up front and that it would not include any vehicles off-site.

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Mr. Martin asked if the paving requirement will be amended. Vice-Chairperson Powers asked for Planning Commission thoughts on number of parking spaces paved and paving the driveway back to the spaces. Mr. Martin responded that there is sketch of a 60 foot by 40 foot area near the barn that he proposed to pave for 10 parking spaces.

Vice-Chairperson Powers asked if Planning Commission would like 10 spaces to be paved with 15 cars. Mr. Martin responded he would prefer to keep the driveway gravel. Vice-Chairperson Powers clarified that the issue is paving the driveway more than the parking area. Mr. Martin responded yes due to the length of the driveway. Mr. Martin stated he could proffer 15 paved parking spaces by the barn. Vice-Chairperson Powers responded the paved parking is for customers to park on more than the vehicles for sale. Commissioner Dorsett stated she would like to see less than 15 spaces paved since there is no stormwater system on the property. She added a paved driveway would create runoff onto Roanoke Street and it is not adequate. She would prefer not to have a paved driveway since the gravel allows some of the water to infiltrate and not end up in the ditch system. She added that it would be more ideal to have less pavement in terms of water management. Vice-Chairperson Powers added that there is currently no pavement with the construction business. Commissioner Dorsett reiterated that she would prefer a minimum number of paved spots due to stormwater issues. Commissioner Franusich agreed.

Commissioner Hedrick asked staff if Mr. Martin would come before the Planning Commission again for increasing the parking if the amendment goes through. Ms. Hair responded the Mr. Martin would be required to submit a site plan that addresses stormwater quality and quantity. Vice-Chairperson Powers responded that Mr. Martin would not come before Planning Commission again because the use of selling automobiles is the same assuming he proffers a maximum of 15 vehicles and 1 in front. He added that Mr. Martin could pave the driveway later even if Planning Commission does not require it. He explained that Planning Commission is reducing the minimum but not setting the maximum for paving. Mr. Martin added if the Planning Commission wanted to pave in the future, it would likely be over 10,000 square feet and a site plan would be required. Mr. Martin noted that he is happy doing 10 parking spaces if that is acceptable as a minimum by the Dealer Board. Vice-Chairperson Powers responded that it is a requirement of Christiansburg's Zoning Ordinance but not by the DMV.

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Vice-Chairperson Powers added that there are two issues to make recommendations to Council; Mr. Martin's request with the provision of adding an additional proffer for 15 vehicles and 1 extra by the road; second issue is about directing staff to move forward with the ordinance amendment for flexibility. Vice-Chairperson Powers asked Ms. Hair for timeline for ordinance amendment. Ms. Hair responded that it may take 8 weeks since it needs to be reviewed by the Town Attorney before public hearing. Commissioner Collins asked for clarification regarding the 15 spaces. Vice-Chairperson Powers responded that Planning Commission is not reducing the number of spaces until the ordinance amendment. Ms. Hair responded that if the site plan is submitted under the new ordinance, it will follow those new regulations.

Commissioner Parsons asked if Mr. Martin would return to Planning Commission to be granted an exception. Ms. Hair responded that it would depend on the ordinance wording and passing of the ordinance. Commissioner Collins asked if Mr. Martin should withdraw the application so as to not pave the driveway. Ms. Hair responded no, he can complete this request process and then return after ordinance amendment is decided. Commissioner Collins noted that approval for the proffer amendment would go forward to Town Council. Ms. Hair responded the request with the recommendation from Planning Commission would be up for a vote from Town Council at the 2nd meeting in July. Vice-Chairperson Powers added that Planning Commission would have an opinion on the ordinance amendment by the 2nd meeting in July.

Vice-Chairperson Powers stated that the Planning Commission is considering a resolution to recommend to Town Council provided an additional proffer of 15 cars behind the fence and 1 next to the road by the Town Council public hearing. Commissioner Dorset asked if Mr. Martin is okay with that. Mr. Martin responded yes. Commissioner Collins clarified that the 15 is vehicles not parking spaces.

Commissioner Dorsett made the motion as stated by Vice-Chairperson Powers. Commissioner Hedrick seconded the motion.

Commissioner Collins asked about the trees and if Mr. Martin wanted to have 20 vehicles could he. Vice-Chairperson Powers noted that a change to increase the number of vehicles would require a proffer amendment. Mr. Martin noted 15 is sufficient for now. The motion carried 8-0, with Commissioner Carter abstaining since she was absent at the public hearing.

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Vice-Chairperson Powers added that the second motion is for staff to draft the amendment for the ordinance to create flexibility when the intensity of use is limited by proffer or conditional use permit. Commissioner Dorsett made the motion. Commissioner Beasley seconded the motion which passed 9-0. Mr. Martin asked for clarification for the process. Ms. Hair responded that the request will move forward to Town Council and the ordinance amendment will lag behind since it will be reviewed.

Work Session-Comprehensive Plan

Vice-Chairperson Powers opened the discussion. Commissioner Dorsett made a motion to go into work session. Commissioner Carter seconded the motion which passed 9-0.

The work session on the full draft of the Comprehensive Plan was held.

Commissioner Carter made a motion to close the work session. Commissioner Dorsett seconded the motion which passed 9-0.

Other Business

Vice-Chairperson Powers asked for any other business. Ms. Hair responded nothing at this time.

Commissioner Dorsett asked about installing sidewalks from the Aquatic Center to Cambria due to customer complaints. Ms. Hair stated that the Aquatic Center grant was for a bike lane as opposed to a trail. Commissioner Dorsett stated that there were no sidewalks along Depot Street; just a narrow asphalt path. Ms. Hair responded that it could be considered during the process for the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. Vice-Chairperson Powers asked about the timing for the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. Ms. Hair responded that it falls in the next fiscal budget and that Mr. Brad Epperley, Director of Parks and Recreation will be working with the PDC on it.

Vice-Chairperson Powers noted that development subcommittee met prior to the Planning Commission tonight for downtown parking. Commissioner Franusich explained that the subcommittee is considering changing the parking regulations for downtown to help with redevelopment. He explained that significant structural changes or additions require downtown buildings to meet the parking requirements. He added the subcommittee completed a parking study last week and they hope to make the data useful.

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Other Business (continued.)

Commissioner Carter asked Commissioner Franusich to elaborate on the study. Commissioner Franusich explained that there were four teams of two people that studied parking four times during the day: 10:00am, 12:30pm, 3:00pm, and 5:30pm to get a broad cross-section of what the use was through the day. He added that it did not cover the entire Central Business District but covered the most heavily used quadrants. He added that signage would help people utilize parking better. Commissioner Dorsett stated that the parking issue is intriguing because it was not always a problem historically and there are fewer businesses now. Commissioner Franusich clarified that finding parking is not the issue but that the parking requirements for new development and redevelopment are the issue. Commissioner Dorsett asked when the parking requirements for downtown were created. Commissioner Franusich responded that he is unsure what year. Vice-Chairperson Powers noted that one particular piece was 2002. Commissioner Carter noted the parking requirements stifles business. She provided Bob Poff's building as an example. She explained that significant structural changes would require his original 42 spaces be developed. Commissioner Franusich added that those spaces are only for one floor of development and then more additional spaces would be required if the property is developed. Commissioner Carter explained that employees use the parking all day as opposed to customers and that very few people are using the parking garage. Commissioner Franusich clarified the parking requirements stifles new development in that they cannot develop without off-street parking and there is no room for it. He added that there have been developers buying parking lots just to redevelop existing buildings. Vice-Chairperson Powers noted the participants in the parking study.

There being no more business Vice-Chairperson Powers adjourned the meeting at 7:41 p.m.

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Joe Powers, Vice-Chairperson Nichole Hair, Secretary Non-Voting

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