Christiansburg Planning Commission
Minutes of November 13, 2012

Present: Ann H. Carter
M. H. Dorsett, AICP
Steve Huppert
Craig Moore, Chairperson
Ashley Parsons
Joe Powers, Vice-Chairperson
Nichole Hair, Secretary Non-Voting

Absent: Harry Collins
Jennifer D. Sowers

Staff/Visitors: Kali Casper, staff
Missy Martin, staff
Glendora Dalton, applicant 310 Bell Road
Jim Jones, Lifeline Ambulance Service
David Rita
David Franusioh
Several others

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

Approval of meeting minutes for October 8, 2012.

Chairperson Moore introduced the discussion. Commissioner Parsons made a motion to approve the October 8, 2012 Planning Commission meeting minutes. Commissioner Carter seconded the motion which passed 5-0.

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Planning Commission Public Hearing on Council's intention to adopt an ordinance in regards to a rezoning request by Marine Holding, LTD for property located at 310 Bell Road (tax parcel 499-((A))-13) from I-2 General Industrial to B-3 General Business. The property is scheduled as Industrial in the Future Land Use Map of the Christiansburg Comprehensive Plan. The Town Council Public Hearing is set for December 4, 2012.

Chairperson Moore opened the public hearing. Glendora Dalton stated she is representing the team putting together the new child care center looking to locate at 310 Bell Road. Ms. Dalton noted the group has been planning a family-owned child care center for the last year with the State Board of Education and has licensing for child care centers in the State of Virginia. She added the intended name is the Twine Family Life Center. Ms. Dalton noted her oldest daughter graduated from Christiansburg High School and her granddaughter is in the Christiansburg school system now. She added the team of educators and family has done this for thirteen years and their special education master's level directors have done this for more than 20 years. Commissioner Dorsett arrived at 7:05 p.m. Ms. Dalton stated they have a specific interest in this location because of the particular housing that is in the area as well as the collaborations they have already established with Shelor Motor Mile, the Christian Growth Center, and the current property owners who support their focus on educational excellence. Ms. Dalton noted research shows if they can start now, while the children are in a licensed certified pre-care program, they can impact those becoming valuable citizens wherever they go. She added efforts will be made to reduce recidivism for children who may be at-risk in other areas. Ms. Dalton noted the area has a lot of children and teenagers and this facility will include an after-school program. She stated the organization is faith-based, not a non-profit organization. She explained part of the contribution to the community is that much of what they do will be at no cost to the participants and families. She added children and communities can benefit from these things long term. Ms. Dalton noted she could continue on this forever as it is her passion and the passion of the team she represents. She noted she is prepared to answer specific questions regarding the credibility, why here, why now, and that the bottom line is they see the need.

Ms. Dalton stated the education system particularly in the State of Virginia is deteriorating. She has worked in the field for the past 20 years primarily in Roanoke City, Roanoke County, Pittsylvania County, Chatham, and Danville City. She noted the organization is bringing the tools that actually do work and collaborating with the Department of Social Services and organizations of that caliber as well as organizations within the Town such as faith-based organizations. Ms. Dalton stated there will be a diverse group of people serving these children. She stressed the focus is educational excellence; when the children leave this facility, they want them to be prepared. Like her children were prepared since they had a good home provider while she was working 80 hours a week. Ms. Dalton added the children will be so prepared; they may be able to skip grades at the beginning of their school education because they receive that kind of educational care in the facility. She noted the facility is also open to homeschool children because they believe the social interaction is critical to stabilize the children.

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Ms. Dalton added the director has more than 25 years of experience in the State of Virginia in an educational capacity and has a Master's Degree in Special Education. She noted another component of the Twine Family Life Center will be to support those with special needs academically working on cognitive development.

Commissioner Huppert asked about the location of the proposed rezoning. Ms. Dalton referred to Hubbell Lighting. Commissioner Powers asked to view the map. Ms. Martin displayed the aerial map and the Zoning Map. Ms. Dalton noted the facility is to the left of Hubbell Lighting. Commissioner Powers asked about the use that is shown on the aerial photograph. Ms. Hair noted the property is currently vacant and was previously used by Lifeline Ambulance. Commissioner Powers asked if the photo was showing ambulances. Ms. Hair indicated yes. Commissioner Powers commended Ms. Dalton for her proposal. He added that examining the proposal from a land use perspective the location is currently industrial and is surrounded by industrial uses. He added that I-2 is the most intensive industrial category in the Town of Christiansburg so there is trucking traffic, noise, and that sort of thing. Commissioner Powers asked if those are concerns about delivering the program in an industrial setting. Ms. Dalton stated the building official (Mr. Heinline) inspected the building and a representative of the State Licensing Board for the southwest part state of Virginia, looked at the facility as a preliminary overview, all prior to leasing the building. She added both of those people have indicated it is a good location. Ms. Dalton stated as far as sound, the building is phenomenal, as it was a Verizon operations center and has state of the art technology. Ms. Dalton added they are planning to be a certified preschool and she is looking at an afterschool program to provide them with pre-vocational and educational tools in an industrial zone. Ms. Dalton indicated as far as the traffic, the Board of Education and the State Licensing Board addressed the issue since the building sits farther off the main street than required by both agencies. Additionally, the site will not be required to fence in areas for infants or children with disabilities because the Licensing Agents stated the facility is far enough off the road.

Commissioner Powers asked if any of those comments are available for review in writing. Ms. Dalton responded no. She added Mr. Heinline may have records of his inspections. Ms. Dalton indicated the licensing agent cannot provide any written approval because the organization cannot obtain a business license at the location due the zoning. She continued the Town cannot approve a business license until the property is properly zoned.

Commissioner Dorsett asked if the housing just north of the facility is primarily Section 8. Ms. Dalton indicated yes. Commissioner Dorsett noted this location is in walking distance of the population it will serve. Ms. Dalton noted they are in the middle of it. Commissioner Dorsett stated children could walk to the facility and there are other housing areas they may serve.

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She asked about proposed transportation options for other areas. Ms. Dalton responded that they have clearance and availability to provide transportation from the local school system. She added for students that get suspended or expelled, they have the academic training background to keep those kids off the street and out of trouble. She noted the space will allow them to have a complete wing dedicated to serving at-risk youth. Commissioner Dorsett asked about local organizations they are working with. Ms. Dalton responded they will work with the local Department of Social Services, the Department of Juvenile Corrections, the State Police Department, and Department of Criminal Justice. She personally serves on those boards in the State of Virginia and has done so for the past five years. Ms. Dalton noted those are the organizations that can identify the targeted populations to create some adversarial opportunities for them to do something more proactive with their lives. Commissioner Dorsett asked if Ms. Dalton has worked with the Community Center. Ms. Dalton stated she is familiar with the Community Center but cannot represent herself at the Twine Family Life Center since they are not yet legal.

Commissioner Huppert asked if there are photos of the facility to show to Town Council at their next meeting. He added it would be beneficial to show photos of the physical school area, inside and outside. Ms. Dalton noted they have staged the entire facility for that purpose. Commissioner Dorsett asked if they have a PowerPoint. Ms. Dalton responded yes. Commissioner Dorsett noted from a planning standpoint, she understands why this is a perfect location and she is glad there are transportation options available. Ms. Dalton is prepared to present a PowerPoint but did not bring this to the meeting because this is her first opportunity to attend any of the Council or Commission sessions in Christiansburg since she moved back in March. She noted she has a minor in Marketing. Ms. Dalton explained not all the marketing materials can be used because they cannot put a name on materials yet due to licensing.

Commissioner Dorsett requested something showing the appropriateness of the building and the proximity of the neighborhood. Commissioner Powers stated he has some concerns about people walking since the area has no sidewalks. He added we are encouraging putting pedestrians on the street in an area with major truck traffic since it is a major industrial area. Ms. Dalton noted she has noticed the major truck traffic is primarily at the Hubbell Lighting building. She added the Christian Growth Center has an exit that goes out to Roanoke Street. Ms. Dalton added while she has not done a study or count, she has not noticed a large amount of traffic. She stated anyone going to the left of the facility is going to their residence and the only other use back there is the storage buildings directly adjacent to the property. Ms. Dalton commented there is a tremendous amount of foot traffic already since children have to walk to catch their local school busses.

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Commissioner Huppert suggested the applicant consider what questions might be asked by Town Council so they are prepared. He noted the Town Council might ask who will cover the costs, when will they open if it is approved, and how many students. Ms. Dalton responded 50 students and noted that she has the answers to those questions. Commissioner Huppert suggested including the information in the presentation so Council is comfortable with what is going on. Ms. Dalton responded she will include a portfolio of the intended use, cost, and rate sheet since all that is public information and added the rate is competitive, more than 90% of the day cares in Christiansburg. Commissioner Powers stated the number of students, short and long-term is important, since lots of schools require police-directed traffic. He added there is only one exit onto Roanoke Street.

Commissioner Powers asked about the request coming from Marine Holding, LTD and what is the relationship here. Mr. Jim Jones stated he is not Marine Holding but is the owner/operator of Lifeline Ambulance Service. He added Marine Holding is a financial and investment company that was a lien holder on the property. He surrendered the property to them when Lifeline Ambulance stopped operating and the property has been for sale for two years. Mr. Jones added Ms. Dalton was the first call in two years. Mr. Jones indicated that the front of the building was a training center for Verizon so it has a perfect layout. He added the church across the street used to operate a daycare until a year or two ago. Commissioner Powers asked about the area of the Verizon training center. Mr. Jones responded the area is under the white roof and is 5,000 square feet. Commissioner Carter asked about the rest of the building. Mr. Jones noted the brown roof is a two story addition added in 2002 for the ambulances. Mr. Jones noted there is a BT stop in front of Hubbell and the Pepsi plant is now an RV repair shop. He continued that once a week on Saturday or Sunday a Frito Lay truck comes into the storage warehouses.

Commissioner Powers noted on the GIS system there is not an address for Marine Holding and asked about whom the owners are and who signed the application. Ms. Hair indicated Mr. Jones signed the application as the agent. Mr. Jones noted there is a realtor who represents them but he could not be here tonight. Commissioner Powers stated there is no signature from the property owner requesting the rezoning and asked if Mr. Jones is an agent and can Mr. Jones. Mr. Jones stated he is the resident custodian until something is done with the building. Commissioner Powers stated a custodian is different from having the authority to ask for a rezoning. Mr. Jones noted he can get that signed. Commissioner Powers asked if that can be available before they vote. Mr. Jones indicated yes and they have lawyers in Richmond that he deals with.

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Commissioner Powers asked if the entire property is being leased. Ms. Dalton indicated they are leasing the 5,000 square feet at the front. Commissioner Powers stated the one building is being leased. Ms. Dalton indicated yes, one building. Commissioner Powers asked if the grounds are being leased. Ms. Dalton indicated they are leasing the grounds adjacent to the building. Mr. Jones noted the presence of the fencing at the sides and rear. Commissioner Powers asked what part of the fenced in area is being leased. Mr. Jones indicated they are leasing in front of the fence. Chairperson Moore stated nothing within the fenced in area. Mr. Jones and Ms. Dalton indicated nothing within the fence. Commissioner Huppert asked about the number of parking spaces. Mr. Jones said there are about 50-60 spaces. Ms. Dalton stated there is parking on either side in the front. Commissioner Huppert indicated it is considerable. Ms. Dalton stated it is more than sufficient for the number of children the State will allow by license. Mr. Jones indicated the previous the location of parking for the former day care across the street.

Commissioner Powers noted the rezoning is for the entire property while the use will only be on the front third or fourth of the property and any business use could be put in at the rear. Chairperson Moore asked for additional public comment. Mr. Jones added trucks make a loop around the Hubbell building so traffic is not an issue. Commissioner Huppert stated the Planning Commission supports education and Ms. Dalton's presentation was good and he hopes it has not diminished her purpose. Ms. Dalton stated she takes this meeting as an educational experience and appreciates knowing what to expect at the Town Council meeting. She added she is a business developer and they would like to purchase the building but cannot currently do so since the zoning is not appropriate. Mr. Jones confirmed that. Commissioner Dorsett noted we tend to place educational facilities in places that are inaccessible to the students that need it. She added she likes that it is in a neighborhood. Commissioner Parsons noted affordable daycare which focuses on education is hard to find in Christiansburg.

Mr. David Rita addressed the Planning Commission. He operates Lost and Found Recovery. Mr. Rita noted he has been in Christiansburg four years and Ms. Trina has had his daughter. He added the application is a loving caring family. Mr. Rita stated his daughter is four years old and can do sign language. He added that finding childcare is very hard and they went through three places. Mr. Rita added the child care it is very affordable and he would not change it.

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Commissioner Powers asked about the schedule for this proposal. Ms. Hair indicated the Planning Commission may vote on November 26, 2012. Chairperson Moore indicated it may be beneficial for the applicant to attend that meeting. Commissioner Huppert asked about when Town Council will hear the proposal. Ms. Hair responded December 4, 2012. Ms. Dalton asked about the time for the November 26th meeting. Ms. Hair responded 7 pm. Ms. Dalton asked about the location. Ms. Hair noted same location. Commissioner Huppert noted Town Council's meeting will be at 7:30pm. Chairperson Moore closed the public hearing.

Review of a Conditional Use Permit request by the Farmers' Market in Christiansburg/NRV Grown (agent for property owner Kenneth G. Thompson and Monty K. Thompson Partnership) for a farmers' market at 100 Radford Street (tax parcel 526-((A))-155) in the B-3 General Business District. The public hearing was held and approval given on April 5, 2011.

Chairperson Moore introduced the discussion. Chairperson Moore asked about any issues. Ms. Hair indicated no issues. She added the review was a condition of approval. Commissioner Huppert noted his involvement and how Laddy has tried to make a Christiansburg Farmers' Market work. He added there may be a grant available for $90,000 for a Farmers' Market and Town Council is considering it. Commissioner Dorsett asked if the location may eventually move. Commissioner Huppert indicated yes and there are some locations being considered. Commissioner Powers noted the Town would have a more active role. Chairperson Moore asked if it can be modified to review in one year. Ms. Hair noted yes. Chairperson Moore recommended that change since winter is beginning and there have been no issues. Commissioner Dorsett moved to amend Condition 17 to make it one year review. Commissioner Carter seconded the motion which passed 6-0.

Other Business

Chairperson Moore introduced other business. Ms. Hair noted the regular meeting scheduled in December falls on December 24, 2012 and Town Hall will be closed that day. Commissioner Dorsett noted as toy store owner she won't be here. Ms. Hair stated she will cancel that meeting. She added Planning Commission regular meeting dates are set according to Town Council meetings and the meeting dates for next year will be set after Town Council has set their meeting dates.

Ms. Hair noted there are four date possibilities for the joint Planning Commission with Blacksburg and Montgomery County. The dates are January 16, 17, 23, and 24. She noted dinner will be served prior to the meeting. The agenda will include comprehensive plan updates, a VDOT update, the Livability Initiative from the PDC and then Commissioners will play the Built NRV game.

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Other Business

Ms. Hair reviewed the dates. Commissioner Powers asked what days of the week the dates fall on. Ms. Hair responded Wednesdays and Thursdays. Chairperson Moore suggested ranking the dates by email. Commissioner Huppert asked about taking the van. Ms. Hair noted the meeting will be at the Montgomery County Government Center. Commissioner Huppert stated the van will not be needed. Chairperson Moore stated to e-mail staff by the end of this week. Commissioner Parsons said the dates are fine, Commissioner Dorsett agreed.

Ms. Hair noted staff will add the applications to the staff report packets for the Planning Commission in the future. Ms. Hair added will verify Jones' credentials as the agent for Marine Holding. Chairperson Moore noted appreciation for attendance tonight by the public.

There being no more business Chairperson Moore adjourned the meeting at 7:40 p.m.

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Craig Moore, Chairperson Nichole Hair, Secretary Non-Voting

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