

WASHINGTON COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
January 5, 2015

The Washington County Planning Commission held its regular meeting on Monday, January 5, 2015 at 7:00 p.m. at the Washington County Administration Building, 100 West Washington Street, Room 255, 2nd Floor, Hagerstown, Maryland.

Commission members present were: Chairman Terry Reiber, Clint Wiley, Dennis Reeder, Drew Bowen David Kline, and Ex-officio Leroy E. Myers, Jr.. Staff members present were: Washington County Department of Planning & Zoning – Steve Goodrich, Director; Jill Baker, Chief Planner; Justin Lindley, Comprehensive Planner; and Debra Eckard, Administrative Assistant; and Washington County Department of Plan Review & Permitting - Terry Irwin, Deputy Director; Tim Lung, Chief Planner; and Lisa Kelly, Senior Planner.

CALL TO ORDER

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

MINUTES

Motion and Vote: Mr. Wiley made a motion to approve the minutes of the December 1, 2014 meeting minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Reeder and unanimously approved.

NEW BUSINESS

-SITE PLANS

Doubs Mill Cellular Communication Silo (SP-14-040)

Ms. Kelly presented for review and approval a site plan for the Doubs Mill Cellular Communication silo to be located along the west side of Black Rock Road just north of I-70. A special exception to erect the silo was granted by the Board of Zoning Appeals in December 2013. The total disturbed area of the site will be 5,000 square feet and will be located in an open field approximately 475 feet from the closest neighboring property. The developer, Verizon, is proposing to construct a 91 foot tall silo, 25 feet in diameter. A 12 foot by 26 foot equipment shed is also proposed. The silo's finish will be concrete gray with a pearly white roof. The tower and antennas will be located inside the silo. The tower will be located 980 feet from the I-70 right-of-way and there are no structures to be located within a 90 foot radius of the silo. There will be no signage on the silo. There will be a right-of-way to the site from the existing lane that connects with Black Rock Road. An 8 foot tall fence will surround the 5,000 square foot site with the appropriate required signage on the fence. No solid waste facilities will be required. The proposed tower will accommodate three carriers. The site is exempt from Forest Conservation Ordinance requirements. All agency approvals have been received.

Motion and Vote: Mr. Reeder made a motion to approve the site plan as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Bowen and unanimously approved.

DEVELOPMENT PLANS

Emerald Pointe PUD Development Plan (DP-14-001)

Ms. Kelly presented for review and approval a development plan for the Emerald Pointe PUD located along the east side of Marsh Pike. The total development site is 97 acres. In 2013, the developer requested a change in the existing development plan that was approved in 2003. The change provided for the expansion of a community center on the interior of the site, the removal of the interior commercial building, and the removal of the retirement living center. In place of the retirement living center, the developer is proposing a mixture of office/retail space and a convenience store/gas station. The site is currently zoned RT(PUD) – Residential Transitional Planned Unit Development. There is currently one access into the site via Emerald Drive. The development plan is proposing an additional full service access as well onto Marsh Pike directly across the road from Gentry Drive and a full service access onto the Leitersburg Pike north of the intersection of Leitersburg Pike and Marsh Pike. Public water and public sewer will serve the site. The development plan is proposing a residential build out of 259 units on 58 acres. The community center will be located on 2.9 acres and the commercial area will be built on 6.5 acres for a total of 9.4 acres of commercial use on the entire site. The changes to the site were approved by both the Planning Commission and the Board of County Commissioners following a joint public hearing. Approvals are pending from the Department of Plan Review & Permitting (Plan Review section) and State Highway Administration; all other agency approvals have been received.

Mr. Robert Slocum, Director of the Division of Engineering and Construction Management, noted that the State Highway Administration (SHA) initially recommended a right-in/right-out access at Maryland Route 60. Following a review of the Traffic Impact Study, it was determined that this would not be beneficial for circulation and traffic patterns; therefore, a full access onto Maryland Route 60 has been designed and submitted to SHA for review. There are on-going discussions regarding the proposed traffic signal at Gentry Drive and the timing of that signal. Mr. Slocum expressed his opinion that when Eastern Boulevard is relocated and connects to Maryland Route 60 across from Marsh Pike, a traffic signal will be needed at that intersection; thus both locations have been considered. Additionally, he does not believe

that a second signal will be beneficial only 650 feet away at Gentry Drive. This issue has been discussed with SHA, the traffic consultant and the developer. Both the County and the SHA agree that the traffic study needs to identify a definitive threshold that would warrant where and when the traffic signal(s) are needed.

Questions and Comments: Mr. Bowen expressed his opinion that a flashing beacon should be installed at Gentry Drive until such time a traffic signal is warranted. Mr. Slocum stated that putting a flashing signal in at this point in time is not a good idea, but he recommended that the developer put all of the below grade wiring and mechanisms in place now so when the signal is warranted it can be put into operation quickly. Mr. Bowen reiterated his concern with regard to the intersection at Gentry Drive and the volume of traffic that currently exists and future traffic that will be generated by this development. He expressed his opinion that the traffic signal should be installed now. Mr. Reiber expressed his concern with regard to safety issues at this intersection and he believes that safety should be considered, not the number of vehicles on the road.

Mr. Bowen asked what the commercial element would be associated with the community center. Mr. Crampton, the developer, stated it would be a snack bar for people using the community center.

Mr. Kline expressed his opinion that the below grade work should be installed now and the light should be installed when it is warranted.

Mr. Reeder, Mr. Reiber, and Mr. Wiley expressed their concern that there is no vehicular access between the residential and commercial areas. Mr. Slocum stated that staff was concerned about cut-thru traffic and he believes the bicycle/pedestrian path between these two areas combined with the existing sidewalks and proposed sidewalks would be beneficial to pedestrians. Mr. Wiley also expressed his opinion that the light at Gentry Drive should be installed and operational soon.

Commissioner Myers expressed his opinion that the pedestrian/bicycle access between the residential and commercial areas is adequate to meet the needs of the development. He believes that the installation of the traffic signal(s) should be based on income and traffic generated by the commercial development and that the signal should not be installed before it is warranted. Mr. Slocum does not believe that the State Highway Administration would allow a traffic signal to be installed that is not warranted. He stated that when the traffic signal is warranted, "prior to the issuance of the next permit, the light will be installed as soon as SHA and the County can allow it to go in legally."

Mr. Reiber asked why a street is not being proposed within the development between the residential and commercial areas. He expressed his opinion that the residential community likely will be comprised of older residents that will want a direct vehicular access to the commercial area. Mr. Slocum stated that the comments from the Planning Commission members and comments from the Board of County Commissioners have been taken into consideration. However, the Board of County Commissioners have decided to rely upon the traffic study to address this issue and, according to the traffic study a connecting road is not required.

Motion and Vote: Mr. Reeder made a motion to approve the development plan as presented contingent upon receiving approvals from all reviewing agencies. The motion was seconded by Mr. Kline and unanimously approved.

OTHER BUSINESS

Rural Business Rezoning (RZ-14-002)

Ms. Baker reminded Commission members that the proposed text amendments to the Rural Business zoning district were remanded back to the Planning Commission by the Board of County Commissioners. During the December 1st meeting, Ms. Baker presented changes to the proposed text. The first proposed change would delegate approving authority to the Planning Commission [from the Board of County Commissioners] for Rural Business zoning applications. By giving the Planning Commission the approval authority for the Rural Business zoning applications, it would shorten the length of time needed to process these applications; however, a public hearing with the Board of County Commissioners would be eliminated.

Comments: Mr. Wiley expressed his opinion that asking the County Commissioners for the approval authority would streamline the process for citizens. He noted that if the change doesn't work, the decision could be reversed by the County Commissioners. Mr. Bowen agreed that this would be a benefit to the applicants. There was a brief discussion regarding the filing deadlines and schedules for rezoning applications. Ms. Baker reiterated that this process would only apply to the Rural Business floating zone. Members discussed an appeal process whereby the applicant, if in disagreement with the Planning Commission's decision, could file an appeal. The second issue deals with proposed uses on properties zoned RB. A section has been added to the text to deal with changes in land use in the RB district. Ms. Baker reminded Commission members that the RB zone is a use specific zone. Any changes in the land use would need to be determined as a minor change or a major change by the Planning Commission, which will then determine the need for a public hearing. Ms. Baker then described the processes for a minor change and a major change that the applicant would need to follow.

Consensus: The Planning Commission will seek [from the Board of County Commissioners] the authority to approve Rural Business rezoning applications and recommended proposed language for an appeal process before the proposed text amendment is taken back to the Board of County Commissioners.

Comprehensive Plan Update

Ms. Baker noted that staff will be presenting updates, seeking input and disseminating information for members each month on the Comprehensive Plan Update. She presented a DRAFT time schedule for completing the Plan. Ms. Baker briefly explained the tasks that staff will accomplish throughout the Comp Plan process. She noted there are several issues that are required by law to be included in the Plan. Ms. Baker stated that she will provide [via e-mail] a list of links to websites that may be helpful to members throughout the Comp Plan process. Mr. Bowen expressed his opinion that a GIS person being present in Workshop meetings was very helpful in the past and would like staff to provide a GIS person during upcoming Workshops. Mr. Reiber requested that hardcopies of the State requirements be made available to members.

Consensus: Planning Commission members discussed dates and times for Workshop meetings. By consensus, they decided that Workshops for the Comp Plan would be held on Wednesday afternoons.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Wiley made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:20 p.m. The motion was seconded by Mr. Bowen and so ordered by the Chairman.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

1. Monday, February 2, 2015, 7:00 p.m., Washington County Planning Commission regular meeting, Washington County Administration Building, 100 West Washington Street, Room 255, Hagerstown, Maryland

Respectfully submitted,



Terry Reiber, Chairman