

WASHINGTON COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

February 2, 2015

The Washington County Planning Commission held its regular meeting on Monday, February 2, 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, David Kline, and Ex-officio Leroy E. Myers, Jr.. Staff members present were: Washington County Department of Planning & Zoning Jill Baker, Chief Planner and Debra Eckard, Administrative Assistant; and Washington County Department of Plan Review & Permitting - Tim Lung, Chief Planner.

CALL TO ORDER

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

The Chairman announced that the agenda item for the Rural Business Rezoning has been removed from this evening's agenda.

MINUTES

Motion and Vote: Commissioner Myers made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 5, 2015 meeting minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Wiley and unanimously approved.

OTHER BUSINESS

Staff Report Discussion

Mr. Lung reported that the County will be conducting a major software upgrade of its Permits Plus automated permit and plan review processing system which is used for tracking projects. This also serves as a portal for the public to access information on plat and permit submittals made to the County. The upgraded software will make the system more user-friendly and provide more flexibility in the way reports are designed and the tracking of projects. Staff is seeking the Commission's input relative to information that members would like to have on the staff reports for ease in reviewing plans.

Discussion and Comments: Mr. Reiber expressed his opinion that information is not always provided to determine if all regulations are being met, if staff is recommending approval or disapproval of a project, or other concerns that the staff may have on the project.

Commissioner Myers expressed his concern with regard to the timing and dissemination of information to the public through the Permits Plus system. He believes that the contractor and developer have the right to some level of confidentiality up to a certain time in the process. Ms. Baker stated that the Public Information Act is the guidance that is followed by the County and she believes this issue needs to be addressed with the County Attorney's Office. There was a brief discussion with regard to information that is currently available to the public through the Permits Plus system and when information should be released to the public. Staff will follow-up with the County Attorney's Office.

It was determined that Commission members would like the staff report to include any items that have not been addressed to the satisfaction of the approving agencies and a statement indicating that the plan complies with all regulations.

There was a brief discussion regarding agency approvals and when projects are presented to the Planning Commission. Mr. Wiley stated that the Commission, in the past, has approved plans with contingencies and given staff the authority for final approval of a project. This is generally done when staff believes no major issues will arise. Mr. Lung noted that the Planning Commission established a policy whereby on time sensitive projects the Commission would consider scheduling a special meeting to approve a project.

There was a brief discussion regarding the Development Advisory Committee (DAC), why it was established, and the role it plays in the development review process. There was a discussion with regard to how the DAC has changed over time and projects that no longer need to go before the DAC. Mr. Reiber asked that the Planning Commission's policy for staff approval of projects be sent to all members.

Comprehensive Plan Update

Ms. Baker gave a brief update on the Comprehensive Plan. Staff has been researching public engagement tools that are available to get the public involved and interested in this project. Many of these tools are quite expensive, ranging in price from \$7,000 to \$20,000. Staff has decided to take the initiative to design a website with assistance from personnel in the County's Information Technologies department. Staff has been working to finalize the Stakeholder's list as well as reviewing and evaluating the previous recommendations of the SWOT Analysis. There was a brief discussion with regard to engaging citizens and government officials from each of the municipalities. Ms. Baker noted that staff has contacted the Board of Education's Director of Secondary Education to engage students in this process. Presentations are being planned for 7th and 10th grade social studies and government classes in April and May.

throughout Washington County schools. Presentations are also planned for the Fall semester at Hagerstown Community College.

Ms. Baker presented the idea of appointing a citizen's advisory committee to help with review of the document and make recommendations. All members present believe that appointing a separate group implies an authority that does not exist and they do not want an advisory committee.

Ms. Baker announced that a lunch meeting with the Board of County Commissioners has been scheduled on February 24th at 1:00 p.m. in the Department of Planning & Zoning's conference room. This meeting is intended to brief the County Commissioners on plans for the Comprehensive Plan update and the upcoming kick-off events. Planning Commission members are invited to attend.

Ms. Baker announced that the annual Home Show will be held on March 20th and 21st in the Hagerstown Community College ARCC building. Washington County will have 4 booths set up. The Department of Planning & Zoning is planning to distribute postcards informing citizens of the Comp Plan Update as well as asking citizens to complete a brief survey. There was a brief discussion relative to the types of social media that will be used throughout this process.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Wiley made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:15 p.m. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Myers and so ordered by the Chairman.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

1. Monday, March 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