

WASHINGTON COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
March 2, 2015

The Washington County Planning Commission held its regular meeting on Monday, March 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, Drew Bowen, Dennis Reeder, David Kline, and Ex-officio Leroy E. Myers, Jr. Staff members present were: Washington County Department of Planning & Zoning - Stephen Goodrich, Director; Jill Baker, Chief Planner; and Debra Eckard, Administrative Assistant; Washington County Department of Plan Review & Permitting – Terry Irwin, Deputy Director; Tim Lung, Chief Planner; and Cody Shaw, Senior 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 February 2, 2015 meeting minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Wiley and unanimously approved.

SITE PLANS

Rubble Site 2 (SP-15-007)

Mr. Shaw presented for review and approval a site plan for a proposed solar power generation field on the existing rubble landfill site located along the west side of Kemps Mill Road. This will be phase 2; phase 1 was presented and approved by the Planning Commission on December 1, 2014. The leased site is approximately 11 acres in size and is currently zoned EC – Environmental Conservation. There will be no employees; however, a daily service vehicle will check the site. Forest Conservation Ordinance requirements are being addressed via an easement on 2.25 acres of existing forest on site. Storm water discharge will be directed to an existing storm water management pond on site. Staff has no objection to the plan; however, staff is asking that the Planning Commission grant staff the authority to approve the plan after all agency approvals have been obtained.

Motion and Vote: Mr. Reeder made a motion to approve the site plan contingent upon approvals from all reviewing agencies. The motion was seconded by Mr. Wiley and unanimously approved.

FOREST CONSERVATION

Seneca Ridge

Mr. Lung presented a request from Renn Engineering, Inc. on behalf of the Homeowner's Association (HOA) for Seneca Ridge located off of Maugans Avenue just west of I-81. Seneca Ridge is an established residential development with a mix of existing single family dwellings, townhouses and proposed apartment units. The overall plan for Seneca Ridge was approved in 2003; and as part of the plan a Forest Conservation Easement was established on site with nine afforestation planting areas for a total of 8.4 acres scattered throughout the development. The Homeowner's Association is requesting that a portion of the previously approved Forest Conservation Easement planting areas be eliminated including a .68 acre and .12 acre area. Mr. Lung noted that the HOA is proposing to use these areas for additional residential amenities, which include an additional play area and a gazebo/patio area. The Zoning Ordinance establishes setbacks for play areas in developments which will apply to the new play area; there are no setback requirements for the gazebo/patio area. A scaled drawing will be required to insure that the setbacks for the play area are met per the Zoning Ordinance. The Homeowner's Association notified all adjoining property owners with regard to the proposed changes and received no comments or objections. Mr. Lung stated that when a Forest Conservation Easement area is eliminated it must be replaced or mitigated for in some other manner per guidelines established in the Forest Conservation Ordinance (FCO). The Forest Conservation Ordinance provides a list of mitigation priorities, the last of which is the payment-in-lieu of planting. The HOA is proposing to use the payment-in-lieu method to mitigate for the areas that are being eliminated and have provided a detailed justification explaining why this method has been chosen. Staff does not take exception to the request. Mr. Lung asked that if this request is approved, a condition be placed on the approval that supplemental planting be required to bring the existing Forest Conservation Easement areas up to standard. He explained that some of the original plantings did not survive beyond the two year inspection period due to being mowed or trampled down.

Discussion and Comments: There was a brief discussion regarding Staff's request for supplemental planting. It was noted that trees did not survive after the two year inspection period due to residents mowing them down or being trampled by children playing in those areas. There was a discussion with regard to the trees being replaced by nursery stock rather than whips or seedlings.

Motion and Vote: Mr. Wiley made a motion to approve the request to vacate the proposed Forest Conservation Easement areas as presented contingent upon the HOA providing supplemental plantings [using nursery stock trees] to meet FCO specifications in the existing Forest Conservation areas. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Myers and unanimously approved.

OTHER BUSINESS**Comprehensive Plan Update**

Ms. Baker gave a brief update on the Comprehensive Plan. She reported that the luncheon held on February 24th with the Planning Commission, Board of County Commissioners and Planning staff went very well and thanked the members that were able to participate. Staff is finishing the SWOT [Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities, Threats] Analysis and anticipates presenting the findings to the Planning Commission next month. Background studies are being developed in order to provide trends and analysis of previous history. Staff is working with the County's PR office to begin the public engagement process, including handouts for the Home Show scheduled on March 21st and 22nd. Due to the development of a new website for the County, a website devoted only to the Comprehensive Plan has not been approved. A subpage from the Planning Department's website will be developed and should be ready sometime in April. Staff has made contact with some of the public schools to schedule presentations to students in 7th and 10th grades; we will continue contacting the remaining public and private schools this week. Workshops for the Planning Commission should begin in late Spring or early Summer.

Discussion and Comments: There were brief discussions regarding population changes and growth and development throughout the County.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Wiley made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:45 p.m. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Myers and so ordered by the Chairman.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

1. Monday, April 6, 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