

**WASHINGTON COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
February 5, 2024**

The Washington County Planning Commission held its regular monthly meeting on Monday, February 5, 2024 at 6:00 p.m. at the Washington County Administrative Complex, 100 W. Washington Street, Room 2000, Hagerstown, MD.

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

In the absence of the Chairman and the Vice Chairman, Mr. Semler called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

Planning Commission members present were: Jeff Semler, Denny Reeder, Terrie Shank, BJ Goetz (arrived at 6:20 pm) and Ex-officio County Commissioner Randy Wagner. Staff members present were: Washington County Department of Planning & Zoning: Jill, Baker, Director; Jennifer Kinzer, Deputy Director; Travis Allen, Senior Planner; Misty Wagner-Grillo, Planner; Scott Stotelmyer, Planner; and Debra Eckard, Administrative Assistant.

REGULAR MEETING

NEW BUSINESS

MINUTES

Motion and Vote: Ms. Shank made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 8, 2024 meeting as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Reeder and unanimously approved.

MODIFICATIONS

Washington County Public Works [OM-23-017]

Ms. Wagner-Grillo presented a modification request for the partial relief of the stream buffer requirements per the Subdivision Ordinance (Article IV, Section 409). The property is located in Regional Park on Mt. Aetna Road and is currently zoned RT (Residential, Transition). The County is proposing the construction of two miles of all-purpose trails. These trails will be a mix of gravel and paved pathways. A field analysis and investigation were conducted of the entire property which revealed no established defined channels nor did the base flow indicate any seasonal stream events to warrant the level of protection required in the Subdivision Ordinance. The Soil Conservation District has reviewed all materials submitted for the project and has no objection to the modification.

Motion and Vote: Mr. Reeder made a motion to approve the modification request as presented. The motion was seconded by Ms. Shank and unanimously approved.

SITE PLANS

North End Storage [SP-23-033]

Mr. Stotelmyer presented for review and approval a site plan to add new storage units to an existing site located at 19729 Longmeadow Road. There will be one access point from Longmeadow Road. Parking required is five spaces and nine spaces will be provided. There will be no water or sewer service on the site. Hours of operation will be 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. Lighting will be building mounted. No additional signage is proposed. Forest Conservation requirements will be met by an on-site easement. All agency approvals have been received with the exception of Washington County Engineering Department.

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

Meritus School of Osteopathic Medicine Graduate Student Housing [SP-23-034]

Mr. Stotelmyer presented for review and approval a site plan for proposed student housing to support the adjacent Meritus School of Osteopathic Medicine. The property is located at 19153 Innovation Drive and is currently zoned RS (Residential Suburban and ORI (Office, Research & Industry). Two access points will be provided to the site – one from Mt. Aetna Road and one from Anatomy Way. Public water will be provided by the City of Hagerstown. Lighting will be pole mounted and building mounted. Proposed

parking is 523 spaces for the housing units and community center. The following agency approvals have **not** been received: Washington County Health Department, Forest Conservation, City of Hagerstown Water and Sewer Departments, and the Soil Conservation District. The developer is seeking conditional approval from the Planning Commission pending all agency approvals.

A representative from Meritus was present at the meeting. He explained that it is their goal to have housing available when the school opens next year. The developer wishes to begin grading on the property during the month of February in order to meet deadlines for the housing to be completed on time. Mr. Scott Bert of HRG (the consultant) stated that no grading will begin before agency approvals have been received.

Ms. Shank asked if housing will be completed in phases. Mr. Bert stated the first phase will consist of three buildings totaling approximately 140 units. The developer is proposing to have 90 of those units ready for the opening of the school in 2025. Two hundred additional buildings would be constructed in the second phase of the project starting in 2025.

Motion and Vote: Mr. Reeder made a motion to approve the site plan contingent upon receiving all agency approvals. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Wagner and unanimously approved.

OTHER BUSINESS

Update of Projects Initialized

Ms. Kinzer provided a written report for land development plan review projects initialized during the month of December (a total of 37 projects) which included four preliminary/final plats and five site plans.

Proposed Text Amendment

Ms. Baker explained in Article 23 of the Zoning Ordinance "Exemptions and Modifications" that high-density warehouses are exempt from height limitations and there is no definition in the Zoning Ordinance for high-density warehouses. A company recently approached the County about constructing a high-density warehouse that would exceed the 75-foot height limitation within the zoning district where a parcel of land is located that the company is interested in purchasing. The average height of warehouses in the County is 40-feet. Ms. Baker explained that she has contacted Emergency Services and learned that the highest ladder apparatus available in the County is 100-feet in length. This does not account for the angle at which the ladder is extended which limits the height to 75-feet. Staff is proposing a text amendment to remove the exemption from the Zoning Ordinance. Developers could file an appeal with the Board of Appeals if the height within the zoning district is insufficient for their proposed project.

Staff is proposing to present this amendment at the March 4th meeting during a public input meeting. Staff will be seeking the Planning Commission's recommendation that evening as well.

Comprehensive Plan Update

Ms. Baker noted that staff continues to review comments received from stakeholders. A workshop has been scheduled for next week. Commission members should review the comments staff previously sent prior to the workshop.

Ms. Baker stated that one of the most common topics among comments received is the need for more affordable/workforce housing. Comments related to this topic include the need for higher densities, concerns regarding water and sewer infrastructure, traffic concerns, and environmental concerns.


UPCOMING MEETINGS

1. Washington County Planning Commission workshop meeting February 12, 2024, 4 pm
2. Washington County Planning Commission regular meeting, March 4, 2024 at 6 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Shank made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:05. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Wagner and so ordered by Mr. Semler.

Respectfully submitted,



Jeff Semler