

**WASHINGTON COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
REZONING PUBLIC INPUT MEETING
March 21, 2022**

The Washington County Planning Commission held a rezoning public input meeting on Monday, March 21, 2022 at 6:30 p.m. at the Washington County Circuit Court House, Court Room 1, 24 Summit Avenue, Hagerstown, MD.

Planning Commission members present were: Clint Wiley, Chairman, Teresa Shank, Robert Goetz, Jr., Jeff Semler, Dennis Reeder and Ex-officio County Commissioner Randall Wagner. Staff members present were: Washington County Department of Planning & Zoning: Jill Baker, Director and Debra Eckard, Administrative Assistant.

CALL TO ORDER

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Staff Presentation

Ms. Baker presented a proposed map amendment to apply a Rural Business floating zone district to 65.37 acres of land located at 19223 Manor Church Road. The parcel is currently improved with an historic single-family home that has been renovated to operate as a Bed & Breakfast, a tenant house and several small outbuildings associated with the original farm. The applicant would like to establish an agritourism resort including a spa facility, a 60-seat restaurant, a renovated bed and breakfast including three (3) guest suites, an estate house with two (2) guest suites, seven (7) new cottages, a guest check-in office, two (2) larger guest houses containing four (4) guest suites each and various recreational activities. Ms. Baker noted there are four specific criteria that the property must meet in order to be eligible to receive the RB floating zone designation as follows:

- 1) The property must be located outside any designated growth area
- 2) The property must have safe and usable road frontage that meets the standards under the "Policy for Determining Adequacy of Existing Roads"
- 3) The property must adequately address on-site facilities to address sewage disposal, water supply, store water management, etc.
- 4) The property may not be incompatible with existing land uses, cultural or historic resources, or agricultural preservation efforts in the vicinity of the proposed district.

Staff has reviewed the application and found that these basic criteria have been met. The Planning Commission and the Board of County Commissioners are required, in their deliberations, to consider these criteria as listed in Section 5E.6 of the Washington County Zoning Ordinance.

Ms. Baker explained that the RB floating zone is not like the typical zoning districts. She noted that the use that is approved per the site plan that has been submitted, is the specific use that is approved for that site.

Applicant's Presentation

Mr. Bill Erskine, represented the applicant Brandon Green. He stated that during the time period from 2004 to 2020, Mr. Green was a part owner of Stoney Creek Farm with two other business partners. During this time period, Mr. Green did not own controlling interest in the bed and breakfast or the banquet and event center. On October 26, 2020, Mr. Green bought out his partners' interest in Stoney Creek Farm, thereby making him the sole manager and owner of the B&B and the banquet and event center. Mr. Erskine noted that the present application is not the same as the previous application submitted in 2020. The previous application was withdrawn by the applicant in January 2021. He briefly explained the efforts by Mr. Green to work with his neighbors and the immediate community to discuss his proposed plans. Through these discussions, Mr. Green learned that his immediate neighbors were opposed to the large, outdoor social events being held at the reception and banquet facility due to the noise and the volume of traffic created by these events.

Mr. Erskine expressed his belief that several aspects of the application have been misconstrued and people have been misinformed of details related to the new application. He noted that if this application is approved, the B&B and banquet and event center will be discontinued. He also noted that the event center currently is approved with no limits on the size or frequency of events that can be held. If the application is approved, Stoney Creek Farm would become a boutique, agritourism destination resort. Mr. Erskine believes this would be a less intensive use by eliminating the noise caused by large outdoor social gatherings and the large volume of traffic generated by large gatherings. Mr. Erskine clarified that the new

application does not propose a hotel or a restaurant, spa or gym for the general public; use of these facilities would be limited to registered guests only. Mr. Erskine noted that any violation of these restrictions would be considered a zoning violation and would be punishable by a \$1000 fine for each day the violation persists.

Mr. Erskine stated that the approval of this application would provide recreational and agritourism opportunities for the rural area of the County. It would support the farming community while also serving the needs of rural residents by providing employment opportunities including approximately 10 full-time hospitality jobs. In addition, this application would return the agricultural uses to Stoney Creek Farm by re-establishing apple and peach orchards and creating new vegetable gardens, vineyards and hay fields. Mr. Erskine displayed a copy of the preliminary site plan for the proposed project. The application proposes the renovation of the main farmhouse, which would reduce the number of guest suites from 5 to 3, the renovation of an existing estate house to create 2 guest suites, construction of 7 cottages, restoration of the existing barn to be used as a dining hall, construction of a spa facility, construction of a new orchard house adjacent to the proposed orchard which would consist of 4 suites, and a new meadow house which would consist of 4 suites. Other renovations would include the restoration of an historic spring house, new walkways, new parking areas, and walking trails. All amenities would be available to registered guests only. Dark sky compliant lighting fixtures would be utilized throughout the property to eliminate light pollution. A modern, centralized on-site septic system and modern storm water management facility utilizing environmentally safe design would be provided. Ingress and egress to the site would be provided by an existing driveway.

Mr. Erskine stated that only five single-vehicle accidents have been reported on Manor Church Road in the last 15 years. All of these accidents resulted in property damage only; no personal injuries occurred. None of the accidents occurred in the vicinity of the existing access drive to Stoney Creek Farm, were related to slow moving vehicles on the roadway (such as large farm equipment), were in any way related to the existing business operations at Stoney Creek Farm, or were alcohol related. The applicant is aware that traffic-related issues may be further evaluated at final site plan stage. The available water supply for the property has been evaluated and has been determined that the applicant's proposed use will have no detectable impact on the groundwater aquifer serving the property and the surrounding vicinity.

Public Comments

The following citizens were present at the meeting and provided their opinions and beliefs relative to the proposed request. The following is a **summary** of points of concern that were made in opposition to the request or points made in support of the request.

- Marquerite Klein – 19026 Manor Church Road, Boonsboro – Opposed
 - Previously failed business on the property
 - Lack of experience in hospitality to make this successful
 - No benefit to Washington County or Boonsboro
- Alice Backman – 19121 Manor Church Road, Boonsboro – Opposed
 - Disturbance of neighbors from large gatherings
 - Enforcement of limitations on banquet/event facility
- Christopher Klein – 19026 Manor Church Road, Boonsboro – Opposed
 - Lack of preservation of historic structures and character of the neighborhood
 - Not using local farmers for products used in the business
 - No improvements to driveway entrance for patrons or emergency vehicles
 - No support of businesses in Boonsboro
 - Failure to comply with County regulations
- Laura Watkins – 19255 Manor Church Road, Boonsboro – Opposed
 - Benefits to the community have been falsified or exaggerated
 - Loss of peace and tranquility in the neighborhood
- Carl Anderson – 7501 Overlook Drive, Boonsboro – Opposed
 - Lack of adequate road network – roads are too narrow and winding with sharp curves
 - Restaurant and spa facility will be open to general public
 - Needs to be located on a site with easier access to I-70 and better roads
- Jeff Scoggins – 19414 Manor Church Road, Boonsboro – Opposed
 - Negative effect on immediate neighbors
 - Too much traffic
 - No benefit to the immediate neighborhood
- Charles Wren – 7136 Wheeler Road, Boonsboro – Opposed

- Safety concerns for himself and his family due to the number of strangers that would be in the area.
- Tom Connelly – Representing the South County Preservation Society – 7523 Overlook Drive, Boonsboro – Opposed
 - Negative effects on natural resources, groundwater supply, agricultural land and animal habitats
 - The addition of the dining hall, spa and swimming pool has the potential to exceed the maximum daily requirement of 7,000 gallons of water
 - Failure of wells due to continuous use of groundwater, more sand and rock fragments would be present in the groundwater
 - Road network is insufficient to handle additional traffic, including large delivery trucks
 - Noise and light pollution from traffic and outdoor activities
- Julie Flaherty – 18929 Manor Church Road, Boonsboro – Opposed
 - A precedent will be set if this rezoning is approved that will affect lands that are being preserved.
 - Winding, hilly roads with one-lane bridges cannot handle additional traffic
 - Negative impact on groundwater
- Perlof Backman – 19121 Manor Church Road, Boonsboro – Opposed
 - Increase in traffic
 - Noise from outdoor events
 - Dangerous roads
- Thomas Sayers – 19108 Manor Church Road, Boonsboro – Opposed
 - Marketing of property contains untrue statements and exaggerations
 - Continuation of large events
- Daniel Koenig – 7620 Shady Lane, Boonsboro – Opposed
 - Dangerous road network, very narrow and not conducive to additional traffic and larger delivery trucks
 - Problem with water in the Boonsboro area
- Carla McAdams – 7523 Overlook Drive, Boonsboro – Opposed
 - Dangerous road conditions and dangerous entrance to Stoney Creek Farm
 - Noise from additional number of people
 - Additional structures that are proposed would be a dense development for the amount of acreage that is currently not in forest
 - Development will take away from the quiet, peaceful area
- Kristy Bowers – 19012 Manor Church Road, Boonsboro – Opposed
 - Project will take away from the beauty and peace of the area
 - Road issues and narrow entrance at Stoney Creek
 - Agrees with other comments opposing the proposed rezoning
- Brooke Evers – 18307 Manor Church Road, Boonsboro – Opposed
 - Dangerous road conditions, more accidents
 - Increase in traffic is a detriment
 - Lack of historic and environmental preservation of area
- Christopher Watkins – 19255 Manor Church Road, Boonsboro – Opposed
 - Noise from large outdoor events
 - Does not want commercialization of Manor Church Road
 - Concerned for safety of himself and his family
 - Roads inadequate for increased traffic
 - Disruption to area residents
- William Mcharay – 18932 Keedysville Road, Boonsboro – Opposed
 - Roads are inadequate, no proposal for improvements
 - Not compatible with surrounding area
 - New buildings would not be compatible with historic structures
 - Inconsistent with County's efforts to preserve agricultural land
- Brooks Long – 16328 Long Delite Lane, Williamsport – Support
 - Growth is necessary for the County
 - Need to look for other sources in order to make farms profitable
 - Exquisite property and seclusion makes this a prime location for people who are looking to get away from the City
 - A benefit to Washington County
- Sherry Olden, 7142 Wheeler Road, Boonsboro – Opposed
 - Noise from fireworks
 - Road network is inadequate

- Mary Ellen Waltemire, 11320 Manse Road, Hagerstown – Support
 - Impressed by the unique vision for an agritourism resort in the community
 - Will serve the needs of the rural area and County
 - Will support local farming community and local tourism opportunities
 - Provides substantial environmental protection and enhancements on an historic property
- Zachary Verges, 19322 Manor Church Road, Boonsboro - Opposed
 - Agree with all comments in opposition to the request
 - Lack of preservation of natural resources, wildlife, etc.
 - If approved, this would set a harmful precedent for other Washington County properties zoned Environmental Conservation
 - Safety of family, property and wildlife
 - Dangerous road conditions, major increase in traffic
 - Does not meet the definition of preservation or conservation
- Justin Keadle – 7345 Wheeler Road, Boonsboro – Opposed
 - Accidents due to road inadequacy
 - Land surrounding Stoney Creek Farm is preserved by Rural Legacy easements
- Michele Rosenfeld – Representing South County Preservation Society – 1 Research Court, Suite 450, Rockville, MD - Opposed
 - Fails to satisfy zoning standards
 - No safe and usable road access, inadequate sight distance
 - Inadequate sewage disposal, not shown on site plan and no file with the Health Department
 - Supply of well water is not adequately addressed
 - Intensity of proposed use is understated
 - Proposed use undermines County preservation goals
 - Other uses that are permitted by right in the RB zone could occur on the site without County review
- Gary Candelaria – 124 E Main Street, Sharpsburg, MD – Opposed
 - Agrees with other comments made in opposition to the request
 - Not a viable project due to location, inadequacy of access by emergency vehicles, inadequacy of roads for large delivery trucks,
- Steve Lawhead – 400 Beaver Creek Road, Hagerstown – Support
 - Proposed plans could improve the intermittent stream that is on the property
 - Plans would benefit the environmental aspects of the property
- Caroline Zabrocky, 18823 Manor Church Road, Boonsboro – Opposed
 - Agrees with other comments made in opposition
 - Negative impacts will affect the solitude, privacy and peaceful neighborhood
 - Land values would decrease and taxes would increase
 - Traffic, noise, trash, and dirt from events being held every weekend
- Max Sempowski – 18631 Manor Church Road, Boonsboro – Opposed
 - Safety concerns
 - Environmental and historic preservation issues
- Craig Boss – 18408 Manor Church Road, Boonsboro – Opposed
 - Agrees with other comments made in opposition
- Steven Stitely – 246 North Potomac Street, Hagerstown – Support
 - Promotes growth for the County
- Dan Spedden, President of the Washington County Visitors and Convention Bureau – 16 Public Square, Hagerstown – Support
 - Provides a heritage, tourist opportunity in a setting that compliments a visitor's reasons for coming to the County
 - Promotes agritourism, which is an asset to the County
 - Upscale lodging is in demand in our County
- Todd Spires, 19307 Manor Church Road, Boonsboro – Opposed
 - No residents on Manor Church Road are in support of the proposed change
 - Not compatible with neighborhood
- Michelle Kimble, PO Box 57, Boonsboro – Support
 - Promotes tourism
 - Would give tourists a place to stay in Boonsboro in a beautiful setting
- Ron Humbel, representing Boonsboro Planning & Development Commission - 20626 Wilderness Run Road, Boonsboro – Support
 - Economic, positive development for Boonsboro
- Terri Hollingshead – 107 S Main Street, Boonsboro – Support
 - Positive influence on businesses and the community

- The boutique and spa environment would lessen the noise and traffic impacts to the neighborhood.
- Dianna Crisa, 6906 Mariah Furnace Road, Boonsboro – Support
 - Great addition to the community
 - Boost to the economy in Boonsboro
 - Bring tourism to County parks like the Antietam Battlefield
- Susan Hanson – 507 Brookridge Drive, Boonsboro – Support
 - Stoney Creek would provide a quaint, quiet, secluded escape for tourists
 - There is a lot of misconception about the proposed project – it will not be a luxury hotel, it will not be a restaurant, it will not be an event facility
 - Many of the people who drive aggressively on the roads are residents of the community, not out-of-town visitors
 - Protection and improvement of structures and the property
 - Promote tourism to Boonsboro, Antietam Battlefield, etc.
- Travis Riner – 141 Monument Drive, Boonsboro – Support
 - This will be an exclusive, high-end resort
 - Promote economic development and provide new jobs
 - Will alleviate the noise and traffic from large events
- Marilee Kerns – 5 Stouffer Avenue, Boonsboro – Support
 - Unique, creative concept
 - Good contribution to the County
- Anthony Nally – 110 David Drive, Boonsboro – Support
 - New design would be a benefit to the community and would be a good fit
- Ray Hanson, member of the Boonsboro Economic Development Commission - 507 Brookridge Drive, Boonsboro – Support
 - Agri-tourism, upscale venue that will bring jobs to South County, increase tourism
 - No massive increase in traffic
- Kelsey Corder – 360 Bernice Drive, Hedgesville, WV – Support
 - Students could partner with Stoney Creek for educational experiences in marketing, farming, etc.
- Laura Martin – 13004 Hoosier Court, Hagerstown – Support
 - Unique resort
 - Stimulate economy
 - Provide jobs
 - Promote tourism
 - Promotes a non-traditional experience, farm-to-table food options, and one-of-a-kind memories
- Robert Watkins – 19552 Mill Pointe Road, Boonsboro – Support
 - Good for the County
- Neal Beard – 19405 True Grace Lane, Boonsboro – Support
 - Visitors will respect the road network and the neighborhood
- Steven Schutte, 836 Armstrong Avenue, Hagerstown – Support
 - A smaller, boutique setting would be better than event center to alleviate noise concerns
 - A unique and different experience than other counties
 - Promotes tourism and economic development
- David Kempton – 19223 Manor Church Road, Boonsboro – Support
 - Preservation of the property has already occurred and will continue
 - Taxes from operating the resort would increase and benefit the residents of the County
 - Adequacy of the roads were previously addressed when the event and banquet facility use was approved. Visitors to the area drive slowly, it is the residents that speed on the roadways.
- Rev. Crimmon Luna, 19223 Manor Church Road, Boonsboro - Support
 - Agrees with all comments in support of the request
 - Misinformation has been expressed by many opposing the request
- Rich Daughtridge – 20411 Jefferson Boulevard, Hagerstown – Support
 - Appreciates the investment made by Mr. Green in the community
 - Would be a huge asset to the community
 - Great opportunity for the County to grow and expand
- Sue Wade – 18325 Manor Church Road, Boonsboro – Opposed
 - Agrees with all comments in opposition to the request
 - Inadequacy of roads

- David Wade – 18325 Manor Church Road, Boonsboro – Opposed
 - Use common sense when rendering a decision
- Brenda Cauffman-Walton – 7148 Wheeler Road, Boonsboro – Opposed
 - Agrees with all comments previously stated in opposition to the request
 - Major concern is the road network
- Kelsi Palmer – 11206 Hollywood Road, Hagerstown – Support
 - Believes that people are hearing but not listening to the proposal; for example, the proposal is for a boutique, not a luxury hotel, etc.
 - Good for the County

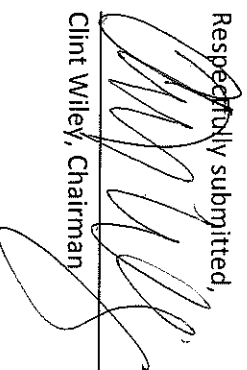
Applicant's Rebuttal

Mr. Erskine stated that if the rezoning application is not approved, the applicant can continue using the event and banquet facility as previously approved. He reiterated that the septic system would be located entirely on this property as shown on the preliminary concept plan that was submitted with the application. Mr. Erskine noted that vehicles would arrive and depart the resort at staggered intervals; thereby making the proposed use more desirable. In rebuttal to comments made regarding a change of use on the site, he cited Zoning Ordinance Section 5E.6e which states, "approval of RB district shall only be for the uses identified on the application and on the preliminary site plan". The use cannot be changed without the submittal of a new application and site plan, which would require zoning approval. Mr. Erskine clarified that the RB floating zone is subject to a preliminary site plan approval. In accordance with Section 27.4 of the Zoning Ordinance, the Board of County Commissioners have the authority to impose additional conditions and restrictions upon the use to ensure the business operates in an appropriate manner.

ADJOURNMENT

The Chairman adjourned the meeting at 10:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Clint Wiley, Chairman