

Town of Blowing Rock
Planning Board
Minutes
Thursday, October 24th, 2024

The Blowing Rock Planning and Zoning Board met on Thursday, October 24th, 2024 for their regularly scheduled meeting. Members present were Chairman Bill McCarter, Tom Barrett, Chris Squires, Brooks Mayson, Lindsay Cook, Steven Cohen, and Woody Hubbard. Staff members present were Planning Director Kevin Rothrock, Zoning Officer Brian Johnson and Taylor Miller.

Meeting called to order at 5:31 p.m.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Member Chris Squires made a motion to approve the agenda, seconded by Steve Cohen. All members in favor.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Steve Cohen made a motion to approve September 19th, 2024 minutes with a correction in wording regarding building heights on page 2, seconded by Chris Squires. All members in favor.

1. Conditional Zoning Permit # 2024 – 03 Pine & Laurel Townhomes

Director Kevin Rothrock presented the staff report. The applicant is proposing 8 townhomes on the lot. It was previously approved for townhomes, then changed to a hotel which was also approved. They are now presenting the townhomes again. The building meets all required setbacks. The building's height is limited to 30 feet for the parts that are close to the street on the Pine Street and Laurel Lane sides. As the building steps back from each street toward the center, they are allowed to stagger the building height which they have done and is just under 40 feet at its highest point. Underground utilities have already been installed. The parking lot is one way., Come in on Pine Street and exit out on Laurel Lane. They are required to provide 15 parking spaces, and they are providing all 15. There are six one-bedroom town homes and two two-bedroom townhomes. They will collect garbage in rollouts and the town will pick it up.

There was a neighborhood meeting held two weeks prior to this planning board meeting and the applicant was still comfortable moving forward.

Chairman McCarter asked why the exit was so wide for the parking lot. Mr. Rothrock informed him it was for a fire apparatus turning radius.

Mr. Steve Cohen asked about the stone on the bottom of the building. Mr. Rothrock noted it was cultured stone.

Mr. Brooks Mayson asked if the height of these buildings would be compliant with the new recommendations that the Planning Board saw at the previous meeting. Mr. Rothrock said it meets the current standard and the application was in place before the adoption of the new draft ordinance, so they fall under the old rules.

Mr. Mike Trew with Municipal Engineering introduced himself. He explained the history of the applicant starting out with town homes, switching gears to a hotel and gaining approval for the hotel project. They began construction and then decided to switch back to town homes which is why they are going through the approval process again. Sewer and storm water detention have already been installed. All the infrastructure is there except for one retaining wall, they will have to build that.

Mr. Steven Cohen asked if you would be able to see this proposed building from Main Street. Mr. Trew stated he didn't think so. The elevation of this lot is below Main Street and the building in front of it is close to 40-feet.

Mr. Bill Dixon with Appalachian Architecture said he could answer any questions of building materials or finishes or units if there are any questions.

Mr. Woody Hubbard asked about the patio enclosure – how tall would it be and what materials would be used? Mr. Dixon said it would be about 4-feet tall and would be pressure treated wood and painted.

Mr. Steve Cohen asked about the type of material used on the window overhangs. Mr. Dixon said they were requesting a dark bronze metal.

Mrs. Lindsay Cook asked if the buyers for the homes would have a say in the exterior look of the home. Mr. Dixon said no, what they have presented is what the exterior will look like.

Mr. Chris Squires made a motion to recommend approval as the application was presented, seconded by Mr. Steven Cohen. All members in favor.

OLD BUSINESS

Chairman McCarter stated there was a citizen who wanted to make a comment.

Gigi Poole, lives at 147 Dogwood Lane and has for 12 years. She noted that at the August State of the Town Meeting, Mr. Shane Fox mentioned the Downtown Development Subcommittee. He said the subcommittee would make recommendations to the planning board. She asked Mr. Fox when there would be time for public input. He said there would be time for it and that he felt like the changes were minor. She addressed the board and asked what information the public has of this subcommittee, what it's recommendations are and what the planning board has recommended to approve.

Gigi Poole stated that the changes being made to downtown do not only affect the property owners in downtown. She said it affects the character of the town. She wants to know how much public input was allowed or encouraged. She said the Planning Board has an incredible amount of power and has been charged with this decision.

She stated the most important thing is that community understanding and building community support is key for any major town initiative such as this one. She stated with previous projects there has been plenty of public input and there has not been any with this proposal except for a small paragraph on page 7 in the paper.

Mr. Rothrock addressed Mrs. Poole by saying we have met every requirement for notice. We sent notice to well over 100 members of the community including properties adjacent to it. This work was picked up from the work that was done 6 years ago. There has been a lot of thought put into this process. He invited the public to come a speak about it. It was advertised for planning board and there wasn't anyone who came to speak about it. He acknowledged there were about 12 or 14 people who reached out who had received the notice, and he sent them a copy of the ordinance and explained the information.

Mr. Rothrock explained in detail to Mrs. Poole the changes that are being recommended to the Town Council. He reiterated the information is out there and this process has not been secretive.

Mr. Tom Barrett stated that he is on planning board but is also on the subcommittee and it is a lot of work. The subcommittee is made up of a lot of different people, they are very diverse and have a lot of different backgrounds. He noted they try to post the agenda and info regarding the meeting on his website for the civic association. All the subcommittee meetings are public and there's been a handful of people from the public attending the meetings over the last 6 months. He said transparency is critical and getting the message out can be hard because there isn't always a lot of attendance to the planning board or town council meetings. It's hard to get the public interested in what is being talked about. He said he knows that because he didn't get involved until he sat in the position of a board member. He encouraged neighbors to attend the meetings and get involved. He also mentioned that rumors can be problematic too. People hear things and then they become rumors and people may not know exactly what is being proposed.

Mr. Rothrock provided Mrs. Poole with a copy of the draft ordinance.

Meeting adjourned at 6:18 p.m.

Chairman Bill McCarter

Support Specialist Taylor Miller