

Town of Blowing Rock

Planning Board

Minutes

Thursday, September 19th, 2024

The Blowing Rock Planning and Zoning Board met on Thursday, September 19th, 2024 for their regularly scheduled meeting. Members present were Chairman Bill McCarter, Tom Barrett, Chris Squires, Brooks Mayson, Lindsay Cook, Steven Cohen, GK Naquin 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

An amendment was made to add a discussion of bylaws to the agenda after “Other Business”. *Then a motion was made by Member Chris Squires to approve the agenda, seconded by Member Steve Cohen. All members in favor.*

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by Member Steve Cohen, seconded by Member Chris Squires. All members in favor.

The board discussed procedures and bylaws for the Planning Board with Mr. Rothrock and agreed on a few changes for how they would proceed with each meeting.

1. Downtown Standard Recommendations

Mr. Rothrock presented the staff report for the Downtown Standard Recommendations. A subcommittee was put together that included four Planning Board members, two Town Council members and three members of the community. The subcommittee has put a lot of effort and thought into these standards and wanted to really understand the relationship of the landscape and building height which is what they focused on first. This information and recommendation presented today is only the beginning of more recommendations to come.

It was decided that East and West Main Street are different from each other and will develop differently so they need to be considered separately. There will be a Town Center East and a Town Center West as well as a Town Center Sunset zone.

Member Chris Squires, the Chair of the Downtown Subcommittee stated that what is being presented today is not comprehensive of what they intend to do, this is just the first piece. The group wanted to get something done and get the process started for approval. There are still discussions about material and appearance but have primarily discussed dimensions – building heights and setback requirements, which is what is being discussed tonight.

Member Squires said that the committee is fortunate to have a variety of people with different experience, passion and points of view. We all want to maintain the character of Blowing Rock and help it continue to thrive. Although there are many different backgrounds and views, there is a general goal in common, but because there are so many different views, not every recommendation is accepted by every member of the subcommittee.

One topic that was discussed heavily was the building height for Town Center East. Everyone mutually agreed on a 5-foot setback but the height was where there were disagreements. The decided height was 30 feet, but it was suggested that there be height variation in adjacent buildings. The intent was for the variance to go down and not up. The max height will be 30 feet, but an adjacent property should have a variable height not exceeding 30 feet.

Member Steve Cohen noted that Mr. John Winkler obtained measurements of all the buildings in the Town Center and there are two buildings on East Main Street that are just shy of 30 feet.

The committee decided that no wall measured from the bottom of the grade to the top of the roof can exceed 45 feet. No building facing Main Street should exceed 35 feet. If you are in Central Business on Main Street, they can not exceed 35 feet from the entrance on Main Street.

Member GK Naquin stated that he understands this is not a complete project but wants to know how each step will look and what the complete project will look like.

It was explained that building heights and setbacks were the larger areas of concern. They will discuss other aspects later. There will be separate submittals to the Town Council each time there is a recommendation. If the Town Council approves this recommendation, it will be adopted, and they will approve/deny each submittal separately.

Member GK Naquin asked about the verbiage of “local area” in relation to the type of stone used in the materials for buildings. He stated that it was an undefined term and would need to be clarified that the stone did not need to be quarried locally but just look like a stone local to this area.

Member Brooks Mayson asked about Appendix B and the graphic provided. He noted it represents a very flat lot which is not always the case in Blowing Rock. Mr. Rothrock suggested expanding the graphics and diagrams in Appendix B. The text drives the clarification more than the pictures, but we can include better pictures.

Member GK Naquin asked about shallow lots on Sunset Drive. He wondered how much building area would be left with a 15-foot setback. He specifically pointed out the two lots on the corner of Sunset Drive and Ransom Street. Mr. Rothrock answered that the setback there today is 15 feet and is still 15 feet with these recommendations today. He did point out that it is unique where the sidewalk is not on the back of the curb like other places, but they could keep the existing footprint and if they wanted to go up a story, they would need to meet the 15 foot setback requirement.

Member GK Naquin asked about outdoor seating in the 25-foot setback on Town Center West. Kevin said a temporary structure would be fine but anything permanent would need to meet the 15-foot setback.

Member Brooks Mayson asked about Appendix 10C and why it was removed. He wanted to know if anyone had considered for it to include native plants. Member Chris Squires said this was something to be looked at later.

Chairman McCarter invited anyone from the audience to speak.

Mr. Rothrock answered specific questions in relation to specific properties and how they would be affected by these recommendations.

Member Chris Squires made a motion to recommend approval of these recommendations subject to clarifying the language about stone. This was seconded by Steve Cohen. All members in favor.

2. Bylaws Discussion

Mr. Rothrock and the board agreed to make some changes to the bylaws for the Planning Board. The main part of the amendments were to the bylaws under “Meetings”. All speakers will be given 3 minutes and will need to come to the podium for the benefit of the minutes for the meeting. The board will try to go over this information at the beginning of every meeting. There will also some changes to the order of the meetings.

A motion was made by Steve Cohen, seconded by Tom Barrett. All members in favor.

Meeting adjourned at 6:50 p.m.

Chairman, Bill McCarter

Support Specialist, Taylor Miller