

La Plata Planning Commission
Town Hall, La Plata, Maryland
Regular meeting
March 6, 2007, 7:00 PM

Present: Chairman Rich Gilpin, Keith A. Hettel, Mark Rose, Debra W. Posey, C. Keith Back – Commission members; Cathy Flerlage, Director of Planning and Zoning; Judith T. Frazier, Town Clerk (Due to Mr. Echols' absence, Ms. Posey had full voting rights.)

Town Staff: Steven F. Schroeder, Project Manager

Minutes:

Chairman Gilpin called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM and asked Mr. Back to lead the Commission and audience in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of February minutes

Mr. Back moved to approve the minutes of the February meeting. Ms. Posey seconded the motion and it passed by unanimous vote.

Public hearing: Ordinance 07-3: Board of Appeals – Notice of Hearings and Time Limitations

[A staff report dated March 6, 2007 was included in the Planning Commission's meeting packets.]

Chairman Gilpin called the hearing to order. Ms. Flerlage entered into the record the Certification of Publication that the notice of the hearing was properly advertised in the February 16, 2007, edition of the Maryland Independent newspaper, and briefly explained the proposed amendments covered in the ordinance.

Chairman Gilpin asked if anyone in the audience wished to speak regarding the ordinance. No one wished to speak.

There being no speakers, Chairman Gilpin closed the hearing at 7:07 PM.

Recommendation to Town Council on Ordinance 07-3

Mr. Rose moved to recommend that the Town Council adopt Ordinance 07-3. Ms. Posey seconded the motion and it passed by unanimous vote.

Special Exception for Senior Housing – recommendation for Hawthorne Greene Section 2

[A staff report dated March 6, 2007 was included in the Planning Commission's meeting packets.]

Ms. Flerlage provided a brief explanation, including how this petition relates to the time limitations amendment proposed by Ordinance 07-3, and noted that all items previously agreed upon with neighboring Quailwood Subdivision property owners are still listed as conditions on the plat of Hawthorne Greene Section 2.

Mr. Back moved to recommend to the Board of Appeals that the special exception be regranted. Mr. Hettel seconded and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

Final site development plan approval

High Road School

[A staff report dated March 6, 2007 was included in the Planning Commission's meeting packets.]

Ms. Flerlage advised that the project has received Design Review Board approval, the Board of Education has approved the bus transportation plan, and review comments made by the fire department have been incorporated. Regarding a question as to access by the fire department, Jim Lorenzi, of Lorenzi, Dodds and Gunnill, Inc., advised that the plan includes lettering on the pavement stating "No Parking – For Fire Department Access."

Mr. Rose moved to approve the final site development plan as presented. Mr. Hettel seconded and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

Howard Street – Facchina Office Building

[A staff report dated March 6, 2007 was included in the Planning Commission's meeting packets.]

Phil Mueller, Facchina Development, presented information regarding the final site development plan for the Facchina Office Building proposed to be constructed on Howard Street, including that Howard Street is to be widened to 26' as a tertiary street and that the project has received Design Review Board approval.

Ms. Flerlage advised that the fire department review is pending as Chief Shahan asked for additional review time, noting that the only issue is relocation of a fire hydrant. In response to Ms. Posey's question if this project had gone to the Water and Sewer Advisory Committee for review due to the this site flowing to the Centennial Street line, Ms. Flerlage responded that the Committee has worked on a preliminary districting plan which will identify to which direction properties flow. She further advised that Mr. Eckman is aware of all projects under review by her office.

Mr. Hettel moved to approve the final site development plan, pending final fire department review. Mr. Rose seconded and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

Walgreen's

[A staff report dated March 6, 2007 was included in the Planning Commission's meeting packets.]

Sean Frost, Bohler Engineering, presented information regarding the final site development plan for the Walgreen's proposed to be constructed at the southeast corner of Crain Highway and Hawthorne Drive (6300 Crain Highway), and answered questions posed by the Planning Commission.

Ms. Flerlage briefly discussed the staff report, noted that this project has received Design Review Board Approval, and advised that the fire department review is pending as Chief Shahan asked for additional review time, noting that the only issue is relocation of a fire hydrant.

Mr. Hettel moved to approve the final site development plan, pending final fire department review. Ms. Posey seconded and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

Other business

Discussion of text amendment: 191-25.4 Traditional Neighborhood Development

[A staff report explaining the proposed amendments was included in the Planning Commission's meeting packets.]

Ms. Flerlage explained the proposed amendments to the text regarding where within the Code is found the design criteria for standard Town thoroughfares, the Planning Commission's flexibility to consider and approve alternative thoroughfare designs, and allowing a principal building's front door to open onto a public green space. The Planning Commission agreed to support the amendments.

Baldus Banquet Hall

[A memorandum from Rick Baldus, dated February 28, 2007, an undated staff commentary, and two pertinent articles were included in the Planning Commission's meeting packets.]

Rick Baldus, of Baldus Real Estate, presented information regarding his proposal to create and lease out two banquet hall spaces, one larger than the other, in the Baldus Centre building, and the issue of not having the number of parking spaces this would need if the full amount of square footage for the banquet halls was occupied. Mr. Baldus suggested a self-imposed limit of a maximum of 136 people in the banquet hall.

During discussion, Ms. Flerlage suggested several options: (1) limit the number of people attending/using the banquet hall; (2) consider approval of a joint use arrangement but only lease the small banquet hall during the day; and (3) consider an amendment to the Code to provide for a parking waiver.

Following discussion, the Planning Commission asked Ms. Flerlage to provide language with more specific criteria and put this on the April agenda. They further agreed to send any suggestions on this topic to Ms. Flerlage or the Clerk.

Mark Rose reported he attended the Charles County Planning Commission's February 12 hearing regarding the Port Tobacco Watershed Restoration Action Strategy and noted he believed that the Planning Commission and the Town Council should hear the presentation and support it. This was to be put on the April agenda.

There being no further business, Mr. Back moved to adjourn at 8:31 PM. Mr. Rose seconded the motion and it carried.

Submitted by:

Judith T. Frazier
Town Clerk