



Planning Commission Minutes

City of Rock Hill

August 4, 2020

A public hearing of the Planning Commission was held on Tuesday, August 4, 2020, at 6 p.m. electronically via the Zoom teleconference platform in response to Rock Hill City Council's emergency ordinance in response to the COVID-19 pandemic situation.

MEMBERS PRESENT Duane Christopher, Gladys Robinson, Justin Smith, Shelly Goodner, Nathan Mallard

MEMBERS ABSENT Randy Graham, Keith Martens

STAFF PRESENT Eric Hawkins, Dennis Fields, Leah Youngblood, Bill Meyer, Janice Miller

In the absence of Chair Randy Graham, Vice-Chair Christopher presided over the meeting. He made specific mention of the recent passing of Mr. Robert Moody, Senior Planner with the Catawba Regional COG and former City of Rock Hill staff member to the Planning Commission.

Staff member, Eric Hawkins, Planner III, noted agenda item 5 had been withdrawn by the applicant, and that agenda item 6 was being deferred by staff until the September 1 public hearing.

1. Approval of minutes of the July 7, 2020, meeting.

Commissioner Nathan Mallard made a motion to approve the minutes from the July 7, 2020, meeting. Commissioner Justin Smith seconded. Vice-Chair Christopher polled the Commissioners, and the motion passed unanimously by a vote of 5-0 (Graham and Martens absent).

PUBLIC HEARING ITEMS

2. Hold public hearing and consider a recommendation to City Council on petition M-2020-17 by J M Cope Investments (Andrew Cope) and Tartan Residential, LLC, (Jeff Carroll) to rezone approximately 7.70 acres at 199 S Cherry Road, 972 Constitution Boulevard, and adjacent right-of-way from Industry General (IG) to Master Planned-Commercial (MP-C) and Master Planned-Residential (MP-R). Tax parcel 598-03-01-001.

Commissioner Smith recused from the item, citing a conflict of interest.

Staff member Dennis Fields, Planner II, presented the staff report and provided a presentation detailing this project and the next item (M-2020-18) submitted by the applicant.

Vice-Chair Christopher asked if this was part of the opportunity zone program currently administered by the federal government. Mr. Fields stated this was and that the applicant could further explain the process.

Mr. Andrew Cope, J M Cope Construction, applicant, 1069 Bayshore Drive, provided the goal to reuse the existing 1940s American Legion building and preserve the history of the property. He noted they would be repainting the exterior, replacing the roof, and reconfiguring the windows on the exterior, and were planning to expose the bowed rafters within the interior. He noted the area market could accept more apartments being more urban in nature, but that parking limitations would restrict the amount of retail that could go on the site so storage was being considered instead.

Mr. Jeff Carroll, Tartan Residential LLC, 4301 Horseshoe Bend Drive, Matthews, NC, applicant, provided a brief overview of the apartment project, specifically noting that energy efficiency was key to providing a quality workforce housing. He outlined the income standards required for residency and provided information on an incentive program directed towards students attending York Tech and Winthrop University. He also provided a more in-depth explanation of the opportunity zone program used to attract additional investors.

Ms. Melinda Woodhurst, 2752 Bonnybrook Circle, director of the Veterans Affairs for York County, spoke in support of the project, noting specifically the need to provide housing for veterans transitioning from military to civilian life, especially those having disabilities of their own or within their own families Mr. Carroll added Tartan Residential LLC had been working with Ms. Woodhurst to reach the veteran community and noted 10% of the housing for both projects would be reserved for veterans.

Vice-Chair Christopher asked if any concerns were raised by attendees of the neighborhood meeting. Mr. Fields stated there was one person who asked several questions about the moratorium for storage facilities but mostly just wanted more information about the project.

Vice-Chair Christopher asked which moratorium they were referring to, for apartments or storage facilities. Mr. Fields stated storage facilities.

Vice-Chair Christopher observed the desire for apartments to be located within an area that was walkable and accessible to services, noting this area did not appear to have a lot of retail and would still require automobile use by residents. Mr. Fields noted the project was located near bus transportation, Winthrop, and the Knowledge Park area, which would provide services as it was built out.

Vice-Chair Christopher noted public transportation was a benefit for the residents. Mr. Carroll noted the idea was to develop projects near a school, and have services located within ½ to 1 mile.

Vice-Chair Christopher asked if a grocery store was located nearby. Mr. Fields stated Earth Fare was the closest grocery store and that it was understood that it may be reopening soon.

There were no further questions or discussion by the Commission.

Commissioner Mallard made the motion to recommend to City Council approval of Master Planned-Commercial (MP-C) and Master Planned-Residential (MP-R) as presented by staff, adding he thought the applicants had presented a great plan. Commissioner Goodner seconded. Vice-Chair Christopher polled the commissioners and the motion passed unanimously by a vote of 4-0 (Smith recused, Graham and Martens absent).

Commissioner Smith rejoined the public hearing.

3. Hold public hearing and consider a recommendation to City Council on petition M-2020-18 by Tartan Residential LLC (Jeff Carroll) to rezone approximately 30.10 acres at 610 & 620 S Anderson Road, 800 Cowan Road, 1182 Princeton Road, and adjacent right-of-way from Single-Family Residential-3 (SF-3) to Master Planned-Residential (MP-R). Tax parcels 628-09-05-001, -002, & -008, and 628-17-02-001.

Staff member Dennis Fields, Planner II, presented the staff report.

Vice-Chair Christopher stated he was familiar with the property but noted there would still have to be maintenance done even if the wooded natural buffer area were to remain as proposed. Commissioner Smith asked if the recommendation on the project coming back to the Planning Commission for further review should be included in the motion to recommend approval. Mr. Fields stated this would be best, but that the applicants were planning to make several changes

before this went to City Council. Vice-Chair Christopher clarified these changes dealt with the multiuse trail proposed, further noting the trail would provide better access to the nearby grocery store.

Vice-Chair Christopher commented the plan presented was a good one and stated he hoped they could work with the county on the conservation areas.

Mr. Frank Myers, 1071 Christopher Circle, representing Spencer Estates Neighborhood Association, stated the association was opposed as there were a number of flooding issues within the area of Prince Lane and Princeton Road. He noted the inadequate drainage system and that the neighborhood would oppose any plan that did not address stormwater mitigation.

Commissioner Smith asked if the developer was willing to address the neighborhood's concerns as this was an issue that would occur more often as development happened throughout the City. Mr. Fields stated the developer was not required to rectify existing issues but they were required to develop in a manner that would not increase runoff. He stated the flooding was a known problem and there were several things that could be done to mitigate the issue for the existing neighborhood.

Commissioner Smith asked where this project fell within the flood prone areas. Mr. Fields stated this was known as a bad area for flooding and was 29th on the City's Capital Improvements Projects list. He added this road was a South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) owned road, so work could not proceed without their permission and funding. He stated that the developers could do something to help fix several issues, even though these were outside of their private property.

Mr. Jeff Carroll, Tartan Residential LLC, 4301 Horseshoe Bend Drive, Matthews, NC, applicant, stated he and the project engineer, Mr. Michael Lash, had met with Mr. Myers and several of the other residents and walked the property to see what could be done. He reiterated they did not want to add to the flooding issues with the new development, adding there were several narrow culverts located above an effective drainage level that could be lowered to help with drainage. He stated they would be happy to help resolve the flooding issues as reasonably as possible, and would be able to do more if City and state funds became available.

Mr. Michael Lash, 1104 Cindy Carr Drive, Matthews, NC, project engineer, presented several solutions, including catch basins being cleared, culverts redesigned with additional piping to move water quicker, and other improvements that could be done in partnership with individual property owners. He added the water would still have to travel through the wooded area along the same track as current before moving forward to the creek.

Vice-Chair Christopher asked the approximate rainfall within an hour to create the flooding in the existing resident's back yards. Mr. Lash stated that, although the calculations were detailed and involved downstream results, based on his calculations about 9" an hour. He added this was not frequent but adequate stormwater facilities were needed to alleviate flooding issues.

Commissioner Smith asked staff if there were any discourse even if the developer were to put mitigation efforts in place, the flooding got worse. Mr. Fields stated all plans would be reviewed so that any issues would be identified before any issues arose during development.

Commissioner Smith asked Mr. Myers if he had any kind of comfort level with the developer's statement they were willing to help alleviate the current issues, and that the developer could not make things worse for the existing neighborhood, given that the City may not be able to do any improvement in the area within a short time frame. Mr. Myers stated that as long as there was some type of plan in place, but the neighborhood did not want to wait 10 years for the City to fix the issue.

Commissioner Smith further asked Mr. Myers if the neighborhood would be okay with the developer moving forward if they were willing to help alleviate issues, knowing they could not make the issue worse. Mr. Myers replied that he would be okay with this but asked if Commissioner Smith would be okay if his crawlspace flooded on a regular basis. Commissioner Smith stated he was currently experiencing the same issues with his neighborhood. Mr. Myers added that SCDOT put the pipes in when Princeton Place was built and felt the developer was able to get away with creating the current issue.

At 7:37 p.m., Planning & Zoning Manager Leah Youngblood noted that Vice-Chair Christopher had lost connection to the meeting. Commissioner Smith, as the next senior member, assumed the role of Chair.

Mr. Thomas Speers, 1144 Princeton Road, stated he had seen floodwater going into a neighbor's vents and that he had experienced 2' of flooding in his own backyard.

Ms. Toni Caudle, 1005 Prince Lane, spoke in opposition to the request, noting specifically the road that would be placed to the rear of her property, and the traffic and noise generated. Mr. Fields stated there would be a 150' undisturbed property behind her property to the project.

At 7:44 p.m., Vice-Chair Christopher rejoined the meeting.

Ms. Caudle stated there would still be traffic and noise, stating the road could have gone in the other direction away from her property. Mr. Fields stated other routes had been explored but it was difficult to make a connection to Cowan Farm Road.

Mr. Carroll stated he and Mr. Lash had scaled the distance between Ms. Caudle's property and the project, and that the distance calculated was 245' plus 150' wooded buffer. He added the buffer on the other side was approximately 700'.

Vice-Chair Christopher stated the Terms & Conditions document submitted stated the wooded area would not be developed under the proposed zoning, but if the current zoning remained, a developer could come in and clear the property for new development. Ms. Caudle stated she did not believe anyone would develop that area anyway due to the flooding issues, but she believed the residents were not listened to regardless.

Mrs. Rhonda Lynch, 1249 Christopher Circle, asked if a left turn signal would be added to the light at Princeton Road and Anderson to relieve congestion. Mr. Fields stated this could be looked into and discussed with SCDOT. He stated he would contact Mrs. Lynch about this question. Mrs. Lynch added there was a blind spot in that area and there was a potential for accidents.

Commissioner Mallard asked if approved as recommended, would City Council hold a public hearing as well. Mr. Fields stated there would not, but that Council watched the Planning Commission meeting as its public hearing, and that there would be two separate readings before the final decision was made. Mr. Eric Hawkins, Planner III, stated citizens were welcome to contact their Council member and the Mayor to make comments.

Commissioner Smith made the motion to recommend to City Council approval of Master Planned-Residential (MP-R) zoning as presented by staff, adding that this recommendation should be subject to staff comments regarding adding language to the terms and conditions document about the multiuse trail Commissioner Mallard seconded.

Commissioner Smith commented that he took exception to the comment that the meetings did not matter and citizens were not listened to as these types of issues would come up as property was developed. He noted that while developers were not required to fix an existing problem, this developer was trying to make the situation better for the current residents in an effort to be a good neighbor.

Vice-Chair Christopher commented this was a difficult site to develop but that the current regulations should help alleviate issues of the past.

Vice-Chair Christopher polled the Commissioners, and the motion passed unanimously by a vote of 5-0 (Graham and Martens absent).

4. Hold public hearing and consider a recommendation to City Council on petition M-2020-19 by Flatiron Partners LLC (Hollis Fitch) to rezone approximately 21.92 acres at 140 & 1446 Russell Street, 522 & 530 Black Street, and adjacent right-of-way from Office and Institutional (OI) to Multi-Family Residential (MFR). Tax parcels 602-04-01-008, -009, & -015.

Staff member, Eric Hawkins, Planner III, presented the staff report.

Vice-Chair Christopher asked for clarification that the Commission was not being asked to approve the site plan presented, only the rezoning. Mr. Hawkins stated this was correct, that the Commission would be reviewing the major site plan later if the rezoning is approved. Mr. Hawkins noted that this particular site plan would need to be revised because it did not meet the City's standards.

Vice-Chair Christopher asked if it would be wise for the applicant to submit a more suitable site plan to City Council for the rezoning. Mr. Hawkins stated this would be best.

Commissioner Smith stated his concern over making a recommendation to Council on a project with density and scale out of line with the City's regulations, asking if this was the most appropriate zoning for this site. Mr. Hawkins stated staff felt it was, especially as the former school site was already developed, had been vacant for years, and the proposed development would encourage productive use of the site. He added staff's main concern was that the scale of the project needed to be sensitive to the existing residential uses surrounding the property.

Commissioner Robinson expressed her concerns over the project, noting the Friendship Apartments and smaller multifamily development nearby, adding that the proposed density would strain the community with respect to the increased traffic and lack of a traffic signal at Saluda Street or Heckle Boulevard. She also asked that any developer of this property take into account the history and importance of the former Edgewood Elementary School to the area and place a marker of some sort due to its role in African-American and Rock Hill history.

Mr. Hollis Fitch, Flatiron Partners LLC, 1714 East Boulevard, Charlotte, applicant, provided an overview of the project, specifically noting that they were developing affordable housing units in the City of Rock Hill, including Waterford Terrace. He stated he had spoken with Councilmember Nikita Jackson about the project, who expressed the need for a grocery store in the area. Mr. Fitch stated retailers were more likely to go into place where there was an existing population that could sustain businesses. He added this site was an infill project that met public policy objectives, and that while large for this particular area, they had to look at the cost versus the location versus the density. In response to Commissioner Robinson's comment, he noted they would not be able to save the school building itself. He added a traffic impact study could not be done until school was in session and that this might prove to be difficult with the current COVID-19 situation. He stated this project would be similar to the Waterford Terrace project.

Commissioner Robinson stated that while she would have loved for the building to be saved, she knew this was unlikely, adding she would like the developers to work with the community to place a marker or panel detailing the history of the school which opened in 1956, adding she was one of the first students to attend as a first grader. Mr. Fitch stated his company had done markers for other projects and would be happy to do so in this instance as well.

Vice-Chair Christopher asked Mr. Fitch if he would still be interested in the project if it was

required to lower the density. Mr. Fitch stated there was some room to reduce in scale and that the current figures indicated 12 units per acre, while City code allowed for 20 units per acre. He noted they could change the position of some of the buildings, but that it was more cost-effective to construct fewer 3-story buildings than additional 2-story buildings.

Commissioner Smith presented the motion to recommend to City Council approval of Multi-Family Residential (MFR) zoning. Vice-Chair Christopher seconded.

Commissioner Smith reiterated his struggle with multifamily projects considered in the past and the scope of this project, specifically noting concern that the development would not meet the goals of the City's Comprehensive Plan objectives. Mr. Hawkins stated that it's a balancing act with all of the criteria in play, and some are more important sometimes in certain places. With this site, the need for additional housing and activity in support of the commercial goals for this part of town outweighs some of the other criteria that aren't fully met. Staff feels that while it may not necessarily meet all of the criteria, it meets some overriding goals that are important to the community.

Mr. Bill Meyer, Planning & Development Director, stated that it's a fairly debatable issue and people will have differing opinions on which of the goals are most important. What makes this case different is that it's a publicly-owned redevelopment site that needs to be put into productive use. Mr. Meyer added that if this was a greenfield site, staff may not be able to support it.

Commissioner Smith commented that single-family residential could be built instead. Mr. Meyer stated the costs involved with redevelopment would make single-family difficult and that's why staff has suggested that it might be something between single-family and the full-blown multi-family complex that is proposed.

Commissioner Robinson stated her concern that due to the COVID-19 situation, there may have been residents of the area who were not comfortable attending meetings and coming out to speak. She added concerns there had been no comments from the adjacent neighbors, especially the neighborhood association, which she stated she knew was quite active.

Commissioner Goodner asked if Commissioner Robinson knew of any opposition. Commissioner Robinson stated there were two families on Haynes Street that had been directly impacted by the virus, as well as the area being primarily senior residents. She added she was not ready to accept the comment that there was a lack of involvement or comment from the adjacent neighbors.

Vice-Chair Christopher recognized Mr. Fitch for further comment. Mr. Fitch stated Councilmember Jackson did receive some phone calls about the project, but that she did not indicate there had been any negative comments.

Commissioner Robinson reiterated that she didn't say there would necessarily be negative comments, just that she was surprised that there were no comments from the neighborhood. She doesn't want the Commission to have the perception that because no one showed up, no one cared, one way or the other.

Vice-Chair Christopher polled the Commissioners, and the motion carried by a vote of 4-1 with Commissioners Goodner, Mallard, Smith, and Christopher voting in favor and Commissioner Robinson voting in opposition (Graham and Martens absent).

5. Hold public hearing and consider a recommendation to City Council on petition M-2020-20 by Flatiron Partners LLC (Hollis Fitch) to rezone approximately 18.04 acres at 1032 & 1040 Springdale Road and one adjacent unaddressed parcel from Residential Conservation District I (RC-I) in York County to Multi-Family Residential (MFR). The

subject properties are proposed to be annexed into the City of Rock Hill. Tax parcels 698-00-00-003 & -004.

NOTE: This item has been withdrawn by the applicant.

Vice-Chair Christopher noted this item had been withdrawn by the applicant.

6. Hold public hearing and consider a recommendation to City Council on petition M-2020-21 by WRBR Limited LLC (Frankie Wright) to rezone approximately 1.75 acres at 2500 Ebenezer Road from Urban Development District (UD) in York County to Limited Commercial (LC). The subject property is proposed to be annexed into the City of Rock Hill. Tax parcel 591-00-00-003.

Vice-Chair Christopher noted this item had been deferred by staff and would be heard at the September 1 public hearing.

7. Hold public hearing and consider a recommendation to City Council on petition T-2020-04 by the Rock Hill City Manager to amend the Zoning Ordinance affecting Chapter 4: Land Use: Primary Uses; Chapter 6: Community Design Standards; Chapter 8: Development Standards; and Chapter 9: Site and Building Design Standards, in relation to multi-family residential standards.

Planning & Zoning Manager Leah Youngblood presented the staff report.

Commissioner Mallard made the motion to recommend to City Council approval of the amendments as presented by staff. Commissioner Smith seconded. Vice-Chair Christopher polled the Commissioners, and the motion carried unanimously by a vote of 5-0 (Graham and Martens absent).

NEW BUSINESS

8. Consideration of a request by Land Design Inc. for approval of road names in the Carolina Panthers Development Project. (Plan #20191405)

Planning & Zoning Manager Leah Youngblood presented the staff report.

Mr. Nate Doolittle, Land Design Inc, applicant's representative, 424 McDonald Avenue, Charlotte, was available to answer questions.

Commissioner Mallard made the motion to approve the road names as presented by staff. Commissioner Robinson seconded. Vice-Chair Christopher polled the Commissioners, and the motion carried unanimously by a vote of 5-0 (Graham and Martens absent).

9. Consider sponsorship of amendments to the Zoning Ordinance of the City of Rock Hill to make certain revisions to Chapter 4: Land Use: Primary Uses; Chapter 7: Construction Standards for Subdivisions, Public Improvements, and Site Infrastructure; and Chapter 8: Development Standards, in relation to parking standards, flood protection standards, extended hours restaurants serving alcohol, and special heavy industrial uses.

Planning & Zoning Manager Leah Youngblood presented the staff report. Vice-Chair Christopher reiterated the action before the Commission was to sponsor the amendments, not make a decision at this time.

Commissioner Mallard made the motion to sponsor the amendments as presented. Commissioner Goodner seconded. Vice-Chair Christopher polled the Commissioners, and the motion carried unanimously by a vote of 5-0 (Graham and Martens absent).

10. Other Business.

There was no other business to discuss.

11. Adjourn.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:07 p.m.