

**Town of Farmville Planning Commission
Meeting Minutes
Town Council Chambers, Farmville, VA
Wednesday, July 26, 2017**

Members Present: Sherry Honeycutt, Abbey O'Connor, L. D. Phaup, Chuck Ross, John Miller
Jerry Davenport, Cameron Patterson, and Patrick Crute

Staff Present: Gerry Spates, Town Manager and Cindy Morris, Town Planner

Call Meeting To Order

Chairperson Sherry Honeycutt called the Planning Commission meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

Sherry Honeycutt stated that tonight's meeting is not a public hearing, but a time for listening and gathering information concerning the request to amend of all R-3 zoning (not just the Martin's site) by removing the density language as well as the other agenda items. Ms. Honeycutt stated that there is to be no engagement between the Planning Commission and the public nor the presenters and the public during this meeting. She encouraged the Planning Commission to keep their questions to the density issue and noted that the conditions specific to the project may come at a later date. The Planning Commission's vote tonight is to set the date for the public hearing regarding the zoning density change, with a recommended hearing date of August 21st, if that suits everyone.

Public Participation

Chairperson Honeycutt opened the public participation portion of the meeting.

Tom Dennison noted that the Martin properties combined on the corner is about a one-acre lot that is zoned R-3 and allows for 10 apartments per acre versus the 65 apartments that the Martin's want to build. Mr. Dennison also stated that this project would also require variances and possible rezoning. He also stated that this project appears to violate the height limitation. Other issues Mr. Dennison brought up include storm water retention, off-street parking and parking entrances and exits.

Jennifer Wall stated that she was speaking not as a professional but a citizen that drives through this intersection at least four (4) times per day and is concerned about this project creating even more of a bottle neck than what already exists. She stated that she is a proponent of a roundabout at this intersection. She feels parking should be considered first and foremost. She recognized Walk2Campus and how they have recognized and preserved the beauty of the historic district of the Town. Ms. Wall stated that the proposed complex is beautiful but is not appropriate for this location.

Matt King stated that Walk2Campus owns about 3,000 beds of student housing in eight (8) university towns. The business started here in Farmville thirteen years ago. Mr. King commented that he has been where the Martins and the developer are now in many towns, and it is not a pleasant place to be. The Martins have lived in and among the student neighborhood for a long time, and Mr. King noted that is not always an awesome place to be. Matt King stated that Walk2Campus is not opposed to this project. He stated that they do not mind the competition and feel the more students that live in Town will help businesses thrive. He stated that we are approaching that critical mass. Over the last five (5) years he has seen the spirit of the Town, Longwood and the private sector that he doesn't see replicated in other places. We are all in this together. Longwood is in a very competitive business. What is good for Longwood is good for the Town and what is good for the Town is the tax base. He ended by saying that it is important how we treat the Martins in this process and everyone needs to treat them fairly. Mr. King stated that clearly the increase density does favor Walk2Campus, however the tone is how this request is handled and that is just as important as the outcome.

Harlan Horton stated that he had a question about the process, but that the Planning Commission indicated at the beginning of the meeting that they will not respond to citizen questions. He stated his questions are related to what has been filed with the Town with respect to this project and the process and stated that he has asked several people and cannot get answers to his questions. He stated what has been proposed is completed out of scale with that corner. The lower density housing in R-3 across from Longwood is ideal and creates an ideal buffer from higher to lower density. Mr. Horton noted that the Town has had good planning.

Naomi Tsigaridas stated that people come to Farmville because it is historic and we market ourselves as historic Farmville. People visit Farmville for Green Front and High Bridge and enjoy Farmville's historic beauty. Having a 5-story building that appears that it could be at home in suburban area. This project does not fit this historic area. She questioned what message would be relayed about the system to business owners and homeowners if this density change were allowed. She noted that as we move forward it is important to consider and protect the historic nature of the Town because it cannot be reproduced.

Baxter Carter stated he has lived in three different homes on High Street. This project represents change and Farmville has always been changing over the years. He totally supports this project and feels it would be a positive change and will do wonders for the Town. He stated if you are not moving forward you are moving backward.

Jim Fauci had signed up to speak but declined stating most of his concerns had been addressed and also due to not being able to ask questions.

Ann Yoelin stated that this project is across the street from where she and her husband Adam live. Ms. Yoelin emphasized that they are not against Farmville growing and developing. The Martin's have lived in this neighborhood for over 30 years and have every right to request

proposal. She stated that she and her husband respectfully oppose the project as it is currently proposed. The density zoning restrictions are conducive to single family dwellings and low density rental units. We feel the current zoning maintains the neighborhood feel while preservation the historical value of the neighborhood and feels this leaves the door open for thoughtful and conservative development of the area. This zoning amendment would allow for 195 people and would forever change the footprint and historical character of this area. It is already a busy corner/intersection and this project would make it even busier. Ms. Yoelin state that if the amendment is approved it would set a precedence for other requests to tear down historic homes to build large apartment complexes.

Adam Yoelin stated that he first wished to apologize to those who were at the last Council meeting when this project was presented. Mr. Yoelin stated that the project was such a surprise; his emotions got the best of him. He stated that he is for growth and sound investments and believes that the Martin's project is an interesting investment opportunity. However, he is not sure if this project will increase or decrease his property value. He stated he is concerned about the roundabout study and how it fits in with the proposed complex. Mr. Yoelin stated that he is for a roundabout at this intersection and even created a web page heartofvirginiaroundabout.com. He stated that it is important for the community to see the parking plan for the project.

Joanne Weidinger stated that her concern with the project is the noise pollution that will be generated by the heating and cooling system.

Sherry Honeycutt thanked everyone that took time to come out this evening to speak.

Welcome New Members

Sherry Honeycutt welcomed and introduced the three new Planning Commissioners; Cameron Patterson, Jerry Davenport and Patrick Crute.

Approval of Minutes of April 26, 2017

On motion by John Miller, seconded by Abbey O'Connor and with all members voting "aye," the minutes of the April 26, 2017 meeting were approved.

Update Bylaws to Reflect Change in Membership

Sherry Honeycutt stated that since the Town Council amended the makeup of the Planning Commission to include at-large members, the Planning Commission bylaws needed to be amended to reflect this change. On motion by John Miller, seconded by L. D. Phaup and with all members present voting "aye," the bylaws were amended as presented.

Town Council accepts recommendation by Planning Commission on First Street Cottages

Sherry Honeycutt stated that the Town Council accepted the recommendation by the Planning Commission on the First Street Cottages and noted that this is an informational item only.

Request for Zoning Amendment to Residential R-3

Sherry Honeycutt stated that this is not a public hearing but a presentation regarding the zoning amendment request and the proposed project. She noted that the Planning Commissioner members are free to ask questions of the presenters.

A presentation was then given by Bobby Martin (owner), Mike Kelley (developer with Kelley Properties) and Chris Phillips (with Thompson and Litton) regarding Bobby and Sherry Martin's request to remove the density language from the Residential R-3 zoning ordinance to allow for the construction of a 195 bed student housing complex at the corner of High and Appomattox Streets.

Mike Kelley stated that he has been a developer in North Carolina for over 35 years and understands that the land is precious and the input is important and the previous comments were heard. He noted that he will continue to meet with the community residents wherever and that the line of communication is always open. Mr. Kelley commented that he is a developer that listens to the community.

Mike Kelley read an email, in part, that came from Longwood University, President Taylor Reveley, which President Reveley stated that it is good for public understanding, as the Town's review process plays out, to be clear about the independence of the project; and in that regard, Longwood is neither opposed or a champion. President Reveley stated that a mix of private student housing is a vitally important tax base for the community.

Chris Phillips then presented information about Thompson & Litton, and stated that he is the project manager for this project. Mr. Phillips noted that the plans presented are conceptual and preliminary thoughts on how to use the property. Thompson & Litton has been working with Longwood for over 30 years. The Martin's own their home of residence and three (3) other homes as rental units on this corner that together is about one acre. It is currently zoned Residential R-3 and is on the corner where R-3, R-3A (encompassing the University triangle) and R1A zones come together. Across the street from the Martin's are university buildings that include some residential buildings that have bed counts ranging from 181 to 199 and are close in scale with the Martin proposed project. A survey has been completed by Thompson & Litton and the property has 1.197 acres in all. The building footprint is approximately 19,000 SF and that detailing of the design becomes very crucial as it relates to both residential and the institutional neighbors. Mr. Phillips noted that the proposed setbacks for the project meet the current zoning requirements.

John Miller asked if the proposed footprint accommodates the roundabout. Mike Kelley responded that they have reached out to the Town as well as the engineer who conducted the intersection study and they have not objections to this concept.

Sherry Honeycutt inquired about the number of stories the building is proposed to have. Chris Phillips stated that the preliminary design shows a five (5) story structure. However, the site does slope up Appomattox Street and to be able to accommodate that slope the first floor will be situated 2 to 4 feet from the existing sidewalk level.

John Miller asked how much of the building will be residential versus parking. Mr. Phillips stated that currently there are no plans for parking in the proposed foot print.

Ms. Honeycutt asked if Thompson & Litton worked with the Town, Longwood and the citizens on the proposed design. Mr. Phillips stated that he has worked with Longwood for over three (3) years and this image has been in front of the administration at both the Longwood and the Town, but had not been in front of the public.

Chuck Ross stated that this property is located in an historic district and is on the historic registry of historic places and has many houses that are contributing structures to the historic district. Chuck Ross asked Chris Phillips if he was aware that removing the density restriction from the R-3 zone would affect much of the historic district and that there are ten (10) R-3 zones within the Town. Mr. Phillips stated that they were focused on this property. Dr. Ross stated that many people that own property in an R-3 district are probably unaware that this change will affect their property.

Sherry Honeycutt reminded everybody that the zoning ordinance amendment request would affect every R-3 zone in the Town not just this one parcel.

Jerry Davenport asked Chris Phillips if there were any alternative designs regarding height and size. Mr. Phillips stated this is a conceptual design at this time and construction documents are a long way from being produced. It was discussed that the number of beds (195) was determined because this is the number of beds that are needed to make the project financially feasible. It was noted that the 195 beds is tight, and they need to be aware of what the going rental rates are and those rates need to be competitive.

John Miller asked about parking space standards and calculations for spaces along with options for on and off-street parking. Chris Phillips stated that the intent is to comply with the requirements and that would be two (2) parking spaces per unit (which would be approximately 150 spaces). A multitude of options, both on-site and off-site, are being explored and Mr. Phillips noted that the nearby bus stop is a plus.

L.D. Phaup inquired if the building would only be used by students. Mike Kelley stated that due to the design of the building and its proximity to Longwood, the facility will lend itself to students. Security was discussed and Mr. Phillips stated that security of the building could be through a number of options, probably through a private contract, but in conjunction and in communication with Longwood University.

Abbey O'Connor asked about how the interior spaces would look and if there would be any public areas. Mike Kelley stated that on the first floor there would be a student center or common area for gathering and that the rest of the building would be living space. Each unit will have laundry facilities (washer/dryer) in each dorm room.

Chris Phillips addressed the storm water management plan. He stated that this is a tight site and does not lend itself to a retention pond so there will probably be an underground system to deal with both the quantity and quality of water. Mr. Phillips also stated that noise pollution is something that they will address and keep at a minimum. He noted that the heating and cooling systems will not generate as many decibels as Longwood University's science building, because it is a different type of building.

Mike Kelley Noted that there were many important items and questions that came up tonight and they are willing to meet with the citizens to answer questions in advance of the public hearings. Mr. Kelley wanted to assure everyone that they want to work together to address these questions.

Mr. Kelley noted that these units are turn-key. The owner will pay for the water, sewer, internet, kitchen appliances and the dorms will also be furnished. The student needs to show up with their suitcase. He stated that they want to make this facility as seamless as possible for the students.

Abbey O'Connor asked how the facility will be managed and if a neighbor has a problem, how would they get an issue resolved. Mike Kelley stated that there will be an on-site management office. Also, the students have a code of conduct they sign for Longwood and they plan to have a similar code of conduct for their residents that will compliment Longwood's.

The tax base was discussed and Mike Kelly stated that the tax base will increase from what is there now, but at this time it is hard to estimate what that dollar amount will be. Demand for this type of housing was discussed. Ms. O'Connor noted that over the years many student housing projects have been built. Mr. Kelley noted that one thing that will drive the demand for this type of student housing is its proximity to Longwood University. Ms. O'Connor stated that she did not think Longwood would allow students to move off campus if they have empty dorm rooms. Mr. Kelley noted that when he talked to President Reveley they talked about this project and he did not think that the addition of 195 beds would overbuild the market. Chuck Ross offered a comment that last spring, at the budget and finance committee forum at Longwood University, it was noted the Longwood had 400 empty beds of on campus housing. This would accommodate taking one of the high rise dorms offline for renovation. Other apartments that are currently under construction were discussed. Ms. Honeycutt stated that they would not be investing the amount of money into a project like this if it were not a viable project.

Chuck Ross stated that one of the joys of being a resident of Farmville is walking up High Street and seeing Longwood on one side of the street and historic houses on the other side. Dr. Ross stated that this project has a bigger impact than just this one site and this one project.

Chuck Ross asked about the authorization of the public hearing and if the Planning Commission could vote not to hold one. Gerry Spates stated that the Planning commission is required by law to hold a public hearing to hear citizen comments. Mr. Spates also stated that after the public hearing is held the Planning Commission can vote “yes” or “no” to amend the R-3 zone.

Patrick Crute stated for clarification that the question is not whether to hold a public hearing or not, but rather to vote on when to hold public hearing.

John Miller motioned, seconded by Abbey O’Connor to hold a public hearing on August 23rd, to hear citizen comments on a zoning ordinance amendment request from Robert and Sherry Martin to amend Section 29-148 (a) of the Residential District R-3 Zone - removing the density language to allow the construction of a student housing complex at the corner of High and Appomattox Streets. Sherry Honeycutt called for discussion and there was discussion about having the public hearing on August 21st instead of August 23rd. John Miller rescinded his motion. On motion by Cameron Patterson, seconded by Jerry Davenport the vote carried with seven(7) “ayes” (Sherry Honeycutt, Cameron Patterson, L. D. Phaup, Abbey O’Connor, Jerry Davenport, Patrick Crute, John Miller) and one “nay” (Chuck Ross) to hold a public hearing on Monday, August 21, 2017 at 6:00 PM to hear citizen comments on a zoning ordinance amendment request from Robert and Sherry Martin to amend Section 29-148 (a) of the Residential District R-3 Zone - removing the density language to allow the construction of a student housing complex at the corner of High and Appomattox Streets.

Chuck Ross asked Cindy Morris if all residents in an R-3 zone will be notified of the Public Hearing. Ms. Morris stated that notices are sent directly to adjacent property owners and/or neighborhoods on rezoning and conditional use permits but not for zoning amendments. It was noted that the public hearing notice will be advertised twice in the newspaper, it will be posted the Town’s bulletin boards and well as on the Town’s website and face book. L.D. Phaup noted that it is also important for those property owners adjacent to R-3 to be aware of this potential amendment as well.

Comprehensive Plan Update

Sherry noted that everyone should have received a draft copy of the comprehensive plan update and that the planning commission needs to authorize a public hearing. On motion by Cameron Patterson, seconded by Abbey O’Connor and with all members present voting “aye” the Planning Commission will hold a public hearing on Wednesday, September 27, 2017 at 6:30 PM.

Locality Visitation

The Planning Commission had indicated an interest in visiting another jurisdiction similar in nature to Farmville in order to gain insight and ideas as it relates to planning. Sherry Honeycutt stated that the Planning Commissioners had been polled and the Commission will be visiting the Town of Ashland on August 17th. Further details about the departure and meeting time will be forthcoming.

Meeting Dates

Sherry Honeycutt stated that the meeting dates are listed in the packet and noted that the Planning Commission bylaws state the meetings will be held on the fourth Wednesday of each month. Ms. Honeycutt noted that three (3) of the dates listed fall on the fifth Wednesday of the month. These dates have been advertised. Ms. Honeycutt asked if anyone had any issue with keeping these dates as publicized. On motion by Cameron Patterson, seconded by Chuck Ross and with all members present voting “aye,” the Planning Commission dates will remain as presented.

On motion by Abbey O’Connor, seconded by Chuck Ross and with all members present voting “aye” the meeting adjourned at 8:50 PM.

Sherry Honeycutt, Chairperson

Charles Ross, Secretary