Planning Board Minutes
Community Building 223 E. Bay Street
February 15, 2024
6:00 P.M.

Members Present:	Sue Hodgin, Will Hewett, Fred Fiss, Roy Pender, Scott Jones, Dick Sloan, Donnie Joyner, and Kevin Locklin (remote)
Members Absent:	None
Staff Present:	Mo Meehan, City Planner Tanya Shannon, Deputy Clerk ChyAnn Ketchum, Director of Communications/PIO
Board of Aldermen Liaisons:	Rebecca Kelley and Frank Lai

A. Chair Sue Hodgin called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

B. Mr. Scott Jones gave the Invocation.

C. Chair Hodgin led the Pledge of Allegiance.

D. Motion to approve the January 18, 2024, Meeting Minutes by Vice-Chair Hewett and second by Mr. Sloan. ***Unanimous vote; Motion carried.***

E. **Approval of the Agenda**: Chair Hodgin requested a Motion to approve the agenda with an amendment requested By Mr. Fiss to include a discussion on consideration to rezone the Entrance Corridor to BD under New Business, item (2). Motion to approve by Vice-Chair Hewett and seconded by Mr. Sloan. ***Unanimous Vote; Motion Carried.***

F. **Public Comment**: None

G. **Old Business:**

1. **<u>Southport Local Historic District Design Standards - Discussion with the Historic Preservation Commission.</u>**

Planner Meehan provided some background on the Southport Historic Preservation Commission (HPC). The HPC was established on September 8, 2023. They have regularly met to establish the Southport Local Historic District Goals, Policy and Procedures, and Design Standards. Any development within the local historic district must comply with the Commission's standards, which the Board of Aldermen approves. The Commission's design standards ensure fairness and equality in the review of projects. Before a landmark or district can be designated, the Commission must adopt design standards, and changes to the exterior appearance of landmarks and properties in local historic districts can be regulated.

Mr. Josh Cline McGee and Ms. Joanne Wesson, members of the Historic Preservation Commission, were introduced at the meeting. They explained that much thought and time had been put into the design standards. They described the role of the Commission as one that encourages and promotes the preservation and protection of the city's historical value.

During the discussion, Mr. Pender inquired about the roof standards. Ms. Wesson responded by stating that the objective was to maintain the current standards. She explained that they had compared the standards with other areas and decided not to burden the homeowners by using expensive materials. The goal is to retain the look of the area. Mr. McGee stated that the guidelines were intended to remain unchanged, but if any applicant wished to make a change, they would have to seek approval from the committee. Scott Jones mentioned that the HPC has a maximum of 180 days to review. Ms. Meehan explained that if the application must be reviewed or changed by the state and is considered a landmark, it must be sent to the state for review, and feedback will be given. Mr. Jones pointed out that six months seems like a long time. Ms. Meehan clarified that the average review time would not be that long. Mr. Chris Jones asked if the nine board members would continue, to which Ms. Meehan replied that it was similar to other boards with term limits. Mr. Fiss said he supports the HPC and restores many older homes in the district as a builder. He said he views it as restoration, but people often want to add more windows to his projects, and the standards may prohibit it. He said he has never restored a house where the owner may want something different. He supports the document but is concerned with hardships and affordability. He said, however, that it would be on a case-by-case basis. Mr. Chris Jones asked where the language in the ordinances came from. Mr. McGee said they had reviewed it over 12 months, looking at Beauford, Wilmington, Asheville, and other areas, and pulled relevant things to Southport. The guidelines were not copied verbatim but were used as a reference.

2. **<u>Southport Local Historic District Design Standards- Recommendation</u>**

Chair Hodgin expressed her appreciation for the productive discussion and thanked the members of the Historic Preservation Commission for their valuable input. She acknowledged the dedication of the Commission members, many of whom have extensive experience in preservation. Overall, Chair Hodgin emphasized the Commission's good fortune in having such committed and knowledgeable members.

Chair Hodgin mentioned that the ordinances are not absolute and can be modified as we gain knowledge of best practices and observe trending patterns in similar municipalities. Similar to the UDO, the Design Standards will require continuous advice and revision as we move forward. While changes and refinements can be made as necessary, it's crucial to start somewhere. She then asked the Board if they had any suggestions or recommendations they would like to send back to the Commission for consideration. Finally, she asked the Board if they would like to vote on a recommendation to the Board of Aldermen.

Mr. Joyner and some board members have requested additional time to review the HPC design standards and express their concerns to Ms. Meehan. The board agreed to table a recommendation to the Board of Aldermen on the standards until a further review is conducted.

3. **<u>Text Amendment- Section 3.9.B.5 Setback Exceptions and Encroachments</u>**

Ms. Meehan gave an overview of the proposed amendment. She explained that Cameron Smith's request to amend the Unified Development Ordinance Section 3.9.B. was submitted and presented to the Planning Board on September 21, 2023.

On November 16, 2023, the Planning Board made a decision to recommend the denial of a Unified Development Ordinance Amendment to Section 3.9.B Setback Exceptions and Encroachments. This amendment would have allowed HVAC, generators, and similar equipment to encroach up to 48 inches into a required setback. However, the staff presented another option that could be considered. This alternative allowed a 42-inch encroachment, not more than 24 inches from the property line. During the regular meeting on February 8, 2024, the Board of Aldermen voted to send the text amendment back to the Planning Board. Ms. Meehan updated the presentation and presented more options.

In the discussion, Mr. Fiss expressed his desire to hear a definitive answer from the Fire Chief or Marshall regarding safety hazards. Vice-Chair Hewett agreed that the issue of 24 inches was a safety concern. Mr. Scott Jones inquired about the number of houses with this issue, stating that most houses do not block houses on both sides. He suggested that there should be access on both sides of the house, not just one block. Chair Hodgin reiterated that the builders wanted to build a bigger house on a smaller lot, and it was the builder's responsibility to think outside the box. Ms. Hodgin requested documentation and clearance on space safety, noting that the non-conforming lots were mainly the problem. She suggested splitting the issue between the conforming and non-conforming lots and have a discussion on possibly a 4' encroachment allowance for mechanicals (on conforming lots), but not closer than 3' (or even 4') to the property line; this would allow for shrubbery for noise- and aesthetics-considerations. Ms. Meehan reminded everyone to be aware that some non-conforming lots have 6-foot setbacks.

Chair Hodgin proposed that the staff be provided with suggestions for rewrites and asked to prepare them for next month's meeting. She also recommended that the possibility of granting a 4-foot encroachment allowance for mechanicals on conforming lots be discussed while ensuring they are not placed closer than 3 or 4 feet to the property line. This would allow for shrubbery to be planted to address noise and aesthetic concerns.

The consensus was to establish a Review Committee for the non-conforming lots. Vice-Chair Hewett, Mr. Locklin, and Mr. Fiss volunteered.

H. New Business

1. **<u>Planned Unit Development Rezoning and Master Development Plan- Turtle Bay</u>**

Ms. Meehan stated that on behalf of Turtle Bay at Southport, Jackson Starling, the applicant is requesting approval of a Master Development Plan and Rezoning from R-20/HC to Planned Unit Development (PUD). The Master Development plan proposes 100 single-family dwelling units on an approximately 54-acre parcel of land located on NC 87. A portion of the northern boundary is within Brunswick County Jurisdiction. A petition for annexation has been submitted and will follow the affirmative recommendation to the Board of Aldermen.

Most of the property falls within the medium suitability land classification on the Land Suitability Analysis Map of the CAMA Land Use Plan. A portion is classified as low suitability due to the proximity of wetlands on site. The future land use map designation is low-density residential and heavy commercial. Low-density residential designation allows a variety of single-family uses with a density of 2/3 units per acre. Ms. Meehan said the staff also requested an amendment to the future land use map to designate the entire property as low-density residential.

Mr. Jackson Starling, PE, with East Coast Engineering, P.C., gave a PowerPoint presentation on the proposed PUD. After the presentation, the board members had some questions and expressed specific concerns.

Mr. Fiss questioned if the same builders, "Premier Homes," are the same builders building the "Home Place" development. Mr. Starling said that it was. Mr. Fiss stated that that plat was clear-cut. Mr. Starling noted that the property was in the county, that he would have a tree mitigation plan for this project, and that they intended to preserve as many trees as possible.

Vice-Chair Hewett asked about the possibility of constructing an additional roadway that would connect to the Walmart intersection. The new road would provide an alternative entrance and exit with a stoplight. Mr. Starling explained that Sandy Lane was considered an option for this project. However, it was found that some constraints made it less optimal. These constraints include the existing wetlands, the width of the existing right-of-way along Sandy Lane (which is only 30ft, so it doesn't give as much space for other utilities if needed), and it wouldn't be the best entrance for grand landscaping.

Mr. Joyner raised concerns about the traffic pattern from Jabbertown Road onto Highway 87. Mr. Starling explained that the traffic design would be changed to a right-out-only approach from Jabbertown Road. Mr. Joyner then clarified that there would also be no left turn permitted from Highway 87 onto Jabbertown Road. Mr. Starling confirmed that this was the proposed plan from the Department of Transportation. Mr. Joyner and Mr. Pender expressed their concerns that this would create problems for the residents of Jabbertown Road and Ace Hardware, as they would not be able to turn left onto Jabbertown Road. They recommended that the City discuss the design plan with the Department of Transportation immediately.

Mr. Scott Jones asked about the number of homes that would be constructed if the development remained an R-20 district. Chair Hodgin noted that with the proposal to rezone from R20 to PUD – makes sense because at R20, approx. 78 units could be built, with a requirement for only a bit over an acre of open space; with PUD rezoning, they're proposing 100 units, but TEN-plus acres of open space – way more than what's required by the R-20 zoning. Their proposed open space acreage meets our requirements for contiguous areas; it allows for walking paths and a park throughout the community, and connectivity and a sense of neighborhood are goals for the city. Chair Hodgin confirmed with Ms. Meehan that the plan meets all requirements of the Unified Development Ordinance. Mr. Starling noted that he understands the issues with the DOT traffic pattern changes. He said it is not a part of their project, and it is not related to anything that they are able to change as their entrance is proposed south of the Jabbertown Rd: entrance and exit.

It was the consensus of the Board to table the submitted Turtle Bay PUD Application, Rezoning, and Master Development Plan for additional consideration and/or Staff comments for return to us at our March 2024 Meeting. A motion was made by Mr. Scott Jones to table until the next meeting and seconded by Vice-Chair Hewett. ***Unanimous Vote; Motion Carried.***

2. **Discussion of Expansion of the City's Business District**

Mr. Fiss would like to consider a potential business district expansion going up to Walgreens and across the street on the Bald Head Island LLC property across from the Truist Bank. He noted that many people agree that the entry corridor of the city should be streamlined compared to highway commercial, where a potential large hotel may be built. He wants to see the Highway Commercial begin on the other side of the 211/ 87 intersection stop light.

Ms. Meehan explained that going through a potential rezoning like this would be initiated by the city and go through the same zoning process as all others. Staff would notify all the property owners in the potential areas of consideration for rezone by staff and then bring them to the Planning Board for review and recommendation to the Board of Aldermen. There will be public hearings as usual. Chair Hodgin noted there would need to be a boundary for where the proposed extended Business would end. Ms. Meehan said that she would need some direction from the Board on where it should stop and end. Ms. Meehan said she would look into the surrounding Highway Commercial area, review the property values, and bring information back to the Board. Mr. Fiss noted that these factors should also be considered with the Hwy 211 road widening project and the broad changes coming to the intersection at Robert Ruark. There will be more discussion in future meetings.

I. Other Business:

Chair Hodgin provided an update on the Sign Review Committee and informed everyone that they will present a complete report to the Board at the upcoming March Meeting. She also mentioned that the Steering Committee for the Comprehensive Plan has finalized the Member's Roster. The first meeting is scheduled to take place on March 15th. Additionally, Ms. Meehan shared that the city website now has a Comprehensive Plan webpage that includes information and updates.

J. Announcements:

Chair Hodgin expressed gratitude towards all the volunteers and presenters for their contribution towards Black History Month.

With no further business, Chair Hodgin asked for a Motion to adjourn the meeting.

Adjourn:

Vice-Chair Hewet made a Motion to adjourn and, seconded by Mr. Sloan. **Unanimous Vote; Motion Carried. —8:23 p.m.**

X

Lawrence Ashley

Chair

x

Tori Deviney

City Clerk

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