



**MINUTES
PLANNING COMMISSION
TOWN OF WARRENTON**

**December 20, 2016
7:00 PM**

The regular meeting of the Town of Warrenton Planning Commission (PC) convened on Tuesday, December 20, 2016 at 7:00 PM in the Municipal Building.

The following members were present: Dr. John Harre, Chair; Ms. Susan Helander, Vice-Chair; Mr. Ali Zarabi; Mr. John Kip; Ms. Christine Dingus; Mr. Jeremy Downs; Mr. Brett Hamby, Town Council Liaison; and Mr. Whitson Robinson, Town Attorney. Ms. Brandie Schaeffer, Director of Planning and Community Development represented staff. Ms. Anna Maas and Mr. Lowell Nevill were absent.

Dr. Harre called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM and a quorum was determined.

Approval of Minutes

Dr. Harre asked if anyone had changes for the November 15, 2016 Meeting minutes. Mr. Kip made motion to approve November 15, 2016 minutes as submitted. Mr. Zarabi addressed the Chairman to share a conversation he had with Mr. Mike Forsten and Ms. Schaeffer after the PC meeting concluded on November 15, 2016. Mr. Forsten confirmed Old Town Athletic Club (OTAC) parking lots would have vehicular connectivity, which he views as encouraging and worth noting. Ms. Helander seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously (6-0-2 Maas and Nevill absent).

Work Session

- a. **Special Use Permit (SUP) 2016-05 – Saint James’ Episcopal Church, Central Business District.** The request, per Article 3-4.11.3 of the Zoning Ordinance, is to continue use of the school and build an additional building behind the Church located at 73 Culpeper Street. The plans submitted show a new 10,000 square foot two-story building located adjacent to the existing building and the rear parking lot. The parcel is zoned Central Business District and the Comprehensive Plan identifies the property as Central Business District on the Future Land Use map. GPIN: 6984-33-7061-000; 6984-32-8993-000; and 6984-32-7819-000.

Ms. Schaeffer told the PC about the new work session format for application review. Explaining how she will provide a cover memorandum outlining the key items for each application along with copy of application for the initial review. The new format is to avoid work sessions feeling like public hearings and allow interaction between PC and applicants. The table has been set in front to encourage conversation and providing feedback. Ms. Schaeffer said she would present formal staff reports and presentations at public hearings. She asked the PC indulge the new process tonight then determine if changes are necessary moving forward.

Ms. Schaeffer asked the PC to refer to their packet containing a memorandum for SUP 2016-05. Ms. Helander appreciates knowing when an application before them is under review by the Architectural Review Board (ARB) and finds the ARB minutes helpful. Ms. Schaeffer commented she would be providing feedback from the PC meeting to the ARB on December 22, 2016 because they have expressed the need for PC feedback when an application involves land use requirements. The SUP is being reviewed for PC approval before going back to the ARB for final COA. Ms. Schaeffer will serve as a liaison between the PC and ARB, especially with applications involving both boards.

Ms. Schaeffer introduced Mr. James Carson, Carson Land Consultants, LLC, representing applicant. Mr. Carson stated he found this process very helpful, as it can be difficult to obtain feedback at public hearings. Referring to the site plan shown on the monitors, Mr. Carson said the SUP application is to operate a school in a new building to be constructed adjacent to where the school is currently held in the church's facilities. The church would like space returned for church functions. The actual operation and student population of the school will not change. While the application is mainly for a SUP to operate a school, it does contain a site improvement proposal to relocate the existing exit onto South Third Street to align with East Franklin Street. This would result in improving egress and flow of vehicles. In addition to improving student drop off and pick up, relocating the exit will simplify emergency access to property.

Mr. Carson asked PC if they had any comments. Mr. Kip asked what type of push back has been received from neighbors. Mr. Carson replied that ironically the push back has been related to having The Wort Hog Brewery located across the street from the school, which is not something they can fix other than improving traffic flow and parking issues expressed by Claire's at the Depot. Mr. Kip asked if recreation space would be available. Mr. Carson said they have some space available next to the school in addition to renting outdoor space from Chilton House.

Ms. Dingus asked if there was any anticipation for the building being used as anything other than a school or for any other activity held there. Ms. Stacey Irvin, Head of St. James Episcopal School, responded they had to scale back some of the existing building's community use. The Jewish Community used to store their formation materials there before having to utilize another resource. One of the commitments is to allow the community use for activities, such as support groups, which supports the mission. Ms. Dingus asked if she saw any future expansion of the school with Ms. Irvin replying not for this campus.

Dr. Harre asked about the current traffic pattern and how it would change. Mr. Carson referred to the site plan to describe current and proposed drop off and pick up of students. Changes will allow more cars onsite along by providing the ability to have two cars side-by-side similar to Highland School. Ms. Helander commented on the changes to Third Street and proposed one-way change to Beckham Street. Mr. Carson noted how the current exit in front of Claire's on Third Street would be closed when relocating to align with Franklin Street.

Ms. Dingus asked for their anticipated start date for this project and timeline. Rev. Ben Maas said they have been working with Mr. Carson to get drawings submitted this summer and would like groundbreaking in September, 2017. Ms. Dingus replied this would allow time to observe how The Wort Hog Brewery functions once operational.

Mr. Zarabi asked Mr. Carson what he thought were his biggest challenges preventing him from meeting the threshold he envisions. Mr. Carson responded COA so their client can proceed with

finalizing site plans. Mr. Zarabi asked if they would be vacating the whole existing building. Ms. Schaeffer responded the Pre-School would remain on the First Floor as you enter the building with Kindergarten in the basement while First to Fifth Grades on the Second Floor would move to the new building. Ms. Irvin added they would effectively be relocating five classrooms to the new building featuring wheel chair accessibility, ADA compliant bathrooms, and a music facility large enough for their choir and bell choir. Mr. Zarabi hoped there would be greater use of the church and asked Mr. Carson the amount of intensity increase he anticipated. Mr. Carson responded the school would be net zero and referred to The Rev. Maas for church use. The Rev. Maas stated he foresees limited additional intensity of 10% for both the school and church.

Mr. Downs said he has driven by the church's parking lot during off hours and noticed others using the parking lot. He asked if they were pursuing liability or after-hours usage. Mr. Carson said being good neighbors they have not done anything nor do they plan to close the parking lot although they did receive a comment suggesting the addition of lighting to avoid a liability issue.

Mr. Kip asked about the age range of students. Ms. Irvin replied ages 2½ to 5 years old for Pre-School then ages 5 to 11 years old for First to Fifth Grade. Dr. Harre asked if there were plans to include additional lighting to the parking lot. Mr. Carson said the church has not yet addressed the lighting or additional costs. Rev. Maas said the new signs noting parking times for school and church services helps to eliminate any parking problems. The applicants responded to various other questions. Rev. Maas said the plan was for school operations to move into the new facility then renovations to the existing building would occur over summer break with completion of parking lot and site last or at least that is the plan for now. Mr. Carson commented he appreciates receiving useful feedback and likes this new format even if the process takes an additional month, but he sees it as a much more productive process.

Comments from the Staff

Ms. Schaeffer introduced Ms. Susannah Smith, CFM, ASLA stating she was hired last October by the Town Manager. Ms. Smith said she provides consultant services two days a week and the Town Manager along with the PC were interested in the status of used car lots since there is a perception that they were growing or possibly getting out of hand. There were also a question about previous SUPs that had been granted and whether requirements were being met. She said she also works in the Town of Haymarket where they were having similar issues with car lots. Having formerly worked in Franklin County, she found the Motor Vehicle Dealer Board (MVDB) representatives were very eager to work with Zoning Departments in areas of enforcement.

Dealing with cases of grandfathered businesses, the Town has set up a structure to document what was there when the business was sold to a new owner to show what the business is permitted to do and no more. The Town has sent out Notices of Violation (NOV) and has received good compliance from many of the businesses. The minimum requirement from the MVDB to have an active license is ten cars. Therefore, if a business has five cars it is out of compliance. The minimum of ten spots applies even to those grandfathered. Some locations are so small the business is really stretching it to have at least one handicapped parking spot and two customer parking spots, which is a state requirement. The Town has instituted the sharing of information with the MVDB. Copies of what is permitted is shared and the MVDB shares information they collect, which has led to the discovery of a few car lots the Town was not aware were operating. Also sharing information with the Tax Office to ensure taxes are being paid on vehicles sales.

Mr. Zarabi asked what actions could be taken for those businesses out of compliance. Ms. Smith explained sending copies of the zoning violation letters to the MVDB that enables the agency to rescind the license and no longer be able to sell cars in Virginia. This cooperative arrangement has helped tremendously in being able to get compliance quickly and without escalation. He asked additional questions concerning the number of used car lots and if there were too many used car lots operating in the Town. Ms. Smith said there are currently twenty individual auto dealers in the Town.

Mr. Zarabi inquired if the Town was looking to curb the number of used auto dealers. Ms. Schaeffer said the Town is not and the ordinance does not dictate the number of businesses. Staff is reviewing businesses to confirm they are compliant with what was granted with the SUP. If a business is not compliant then notice is provided to the business and the opportunity to make corrections. If a business is not able or willing to make corrections then the SUP would be revoked for non-compliance. This is a concerted effort on a subject the Town has received numerous complaints from concerned citizens, Planning Commissioners, and elected officials. Ms. Schaeffer explained details of the newly implemented process to ensure used car businesses adhere to SUP conditions of approval. Ms. Helander expressed her gratitude on handling this issue.

Ms. Harris provided an update on the Walkability Audits and referred to the map in the packet with dates and times for the five walks. She encouraged sharing of the information with individuals interested in participating. Information has been shared with individuals active in the disability community, schools and Chamber of Commerce in addition to staff, PC, and Town Council members.

Ms. Schaeffer stated Ms Helander and Ms. Maas have signed up for the 89th Annual Certified Planning Commissioner training and encourages others to take advantage of this training that the Town pays for as part of PC service. She also advised the PC to prepare for a busy new year with applications for St. James Episcopal Church, Walker Drive, 97 Culpeper Street Chilton House, and others. Ms. Schaeffer noted tonight was Dr. Harre's last night on the PC and presented a proclamation from the Mayor that describes the various positions held and expresses appreciation for his service on the PC since January 1993.

Comments from the Commission

Dr. Harre thanked everyone for their dedication and commented on the PC having a great staff to work with, noting it has been a treat working with Ms. Harris and Ms. Schaeffer.

Meeting adjourned at 8:00 PM.

Minutes submitted by Karen Kowalski.

Minutes were approved on January 17, 2017.