

Minutes of a regular meeting of the Marion Planning Commission held in Council Chambers at the Municipal Building on June 13, 2016 at 5:15 pm.

CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Cameron Wolfe called the meeting to order.

INVOCATION: Mr. Hicks rendered the invocation.

VISITORS: None

PRESENT: Chairman Cameron Wolfe, Vice-Chairman Bob Ramsey, Jim Barker, Ben Reedy, Alice Freeman (arriving late) and Dan Surface Planning Commission Members, Town Engineer/Zoning Administrator Cecil Hicks, Town Manager Bill Rush, Engineer's Assistant/IT Coordinator Todd Long and Deputy Clerk Anita Catron.

ABSENT: Trey White

DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM: The meeting was called to order, and with 5 voting members present, the Commission has a quorum.

MINUTES: Upon motion of Mr. Reedy, seconded Mr. Surface and a vote of 5 AYES and 0 NOES, the minutes of the meeting held April 11, 2016 were approved as written. (There was no meeting in May). Messrs Wolfe, Ramsey, Barker, Surface and Reedy, voted affirmatively.

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY: No Report.

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEES: No Report.

REPORT OF SPECIAL COMMITTEES: No Report.

REVIEW OF THE TOWN CODE: ACCUMULATIONS ON PREMISES: Chairman Wolfe asked Mr. Hicks to review this item. Mr. Hicks stated it is unusual for Planning Commission to have a request for this type item. However, Town Council would like Planning Commission to review this. He informed members that Mr. Rush and Mr. Long were here to discuss this item with them. He then asked Mr. Rush and Mr. Long to proceed with the review. Mr. Rush stated that for the last 3 years the issues of blight, property maintenance and other issues have been reviewed only sporadically. To do this more thoroughly would require a full-time inspector. Town Council has requested Planning Commission Members review these issues and offer solutions for guidance. Mr. Rush would like changes to be made to the Town Code to include a clear definition for property maintenance. Chairman Wolfe stated if changes are made to the Town Code a Public Hearing will have to be set. Mr. Rush informed members that at least 84 houses located within the Town Corporation Limits that need to be torn down due to these types of issues. He stated that Mr. Long has been working on these issues for a long time, and invited him to share with members his perspective. Mr. Long informed members he has sent out thirteen letters to homeowners or landlords recently with nothing accomplished. He also has citizens call and complain about these issues. He has tried to enforce the Town Code and has taken some property owners to court. The neighbors will not come to court, but would like for the issues to be addressed. The judge in this matter has indicated to Mr. Long there needs to be a more concise definition in the Town Code for "Junk Accumulation". Mr. Long would also like to include over-growth and building maintenance in the definition. If these issues are not addressed, blight will occur. With a Property Maintenance Code in place, we could enforce these issues in court. Discussion ensued. Mr. Rush stated there are several vacant properties that need to be brought up to at least a section eight status. For now they are dealing with residential properties, but will also start to review commercial properties. One option would be for the town crews to clean up these properties and charge the owners for this, including personnel time cost and benefit packages cost for the employees that did the work, and for equipment used. Mr. Rush explained we would have the option of putting a lien against the property if necessary, to receive payment. Another option would be for property owners that qualify to apply for grants and other programs to help with the clean up. Discussion ensued. Members would like to understand the notification process involved for the public to be aware of the ordinance and how best to handle this notice. Members also suggest checking with other localities for wording they use in the code that allows them to enforce these issues. Mr. Rush stated a list of properties will be given out at each town council

meeting. He feels these problems need to be fixed this summer if possible, and would like for Planning Commission Members to work on this along with Town Council. He plans to send this to the Ordinance Committee by September and have a Public Hearing be set for October. Mr. Long stated he would like as much help as possible to have a code in place allowing him to enforce this. He will be sending out information by e-mail to members to keep them up to date with what he needs and information that he gathers from other localities. Mrs. Freeman suggested he contact Town of Wytheville as they seem to have a good ordinance. Mr. Rush requested for Planning Commission to meet once a month for the next three months for discussion on these issues and to form guidelines to be put in place.

With no additional comments or questions, Chairman Wolfe stated the next Planning Commission meeting will be July 11, 2016 at 5:15pm.

Upon motion of Mrs. Freeman, seconded by Mr. Ramsey and a vote of 6 AYES and 0 NOES, the meeting was adjourned.

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Chairman

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Secretary