

Minutes of a regular meeting of the Marion Planning Commission held in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building on July 12, 2021 at 5:15 pm.

**CALL TO ORDER:** Chairman Wolfe.

**VISITORS:** None.

**PRESENT:** Chairman Cameron Wolfe, Vice-Chairperson Kimberly Austin, Bob Ramsey, Trey White, Alice Freeman and Ben Reedy Planning Commission Members; Town Manager/Zoning Administrator Bill Rush, Police Chief John Clair, Economic Development Director Ken Heath, Deputy Clerk Anita Catron, Town Attorney Mark Fenyk and Smyth County News Representative Stephanie Porter-Nichols.

**ABSENT:** Jim Barker

**DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM:** As the meeting was called to order with 6 voting members present, the Commission has a quorum.

**ELECTION OF OFFICERS:** Due to COVID-19 restrictions still in place, officer elections could not be held in April 2021.

Chairman Wolfe opened the floor to nominations for Chairman of the Board. Upon motion of Mr. White, seconded by Mr. Ramsey and with no other nominations and a vote of 5 AYES, 0 NOES and 1 ABSTENTATION (Wolfe), Cameron Wolfe was re-elected to serve as Chairman of the Board. Chairman Wolfe opened the floor to nominations for Vice-Chairman of the Board. Upon motion of Mrs. Freeman, seconded by Mr. White and with no other nominations and a vote of 5 AYES, and 0 NOES and 1 ABSTENTATION (Austin), Kimberley Austin was re-elected to serve as Vice-Chairperson.

**MINUTES:** Upon motion of Mrs. Freeman, seconded by Mrs. Austin and a vote of 6 AYES and 0 NOES, the minutes of the meeting held September 14, 2020 were approved as written. Messrs Wolfe, Ramsey, Freeman, Austin, White and Reedy voted affirmatively.

**PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS:** None.

**DISCUSSION OF OLD BUSINESS:** Chairman Wolfe asked Mr. Rush to review these.

**EMMAUS MEDICAL CLINIC REQUEST:** Mr. Rush stated this request had been withdrawn.

**REQUEST TO REZONE AND VACATE PROPERTY LINES TRACT 152-34-28, 29, 30 MT ROGERS**

**COMMUNITY SERVICES BOARD:** Mr. Rush requested Chairman Wolfe to review this item.

Mr. Wolfe stated the original intent had been for a 10 bed unit for women. Due to circumstances funding for the project has been lost. However, they are still requesting to have the property lines vacated and the property rezoned to Medical Arts (MA) for future use.

Chief Clair had sent an e-mail regarding the possible use of this property, Mr. Rush asked for his comments on this. Chief Clair stated he has no objection to the Human Services concerns, but

depending on the type of use in the future for the property, there could be operational issues. Discussion ensued regarding those concerns.

Chairman Wolfe shared informational plans with members indicating Mt Rogers Community Services Board located on East Main Street has indicated a need for expansion. They have an option to purchase, subject to rezoning, property located on Cedar Street to renovate and move offices from East Main location to Cedar Street location. This would allow for more space at their current location for clients. The agency has indicated they would, at some point along with the current owners of the Cedar Street property, request a meeting with Planning Commission for a rezoning request of all this property. He inquired if Mt Rogers Community Services should ask that council wait and to hear both requests at the same time.

Mr. Rush indicated this would be a separate issue from Culbert Drive. He reminded members of the need for a recommendation to Town Council on the rezoning on Culbert Drive to allow for this to be closed in the records. Mrs. Freeman indicated that without knowing the intended use of the property, she could not recommend council to approve the rezone request for parcels 152-34, 28, 29 and 30 at this time. After discussion and upon motion of Mrs. Freeman, seconded by Mr. White and a vote of 5 AYES 0 NOES and 1 ABSTENTATION (Wolfe), planning commission recommendation to town council is to deny this request.

**DISCUSSION OF NEW BUSINESS:** Chairman Wolfe stated there are new items for discussion and requested Mr. Rush to proceed with these.

Mr. Rush stated that members have been dealing with Blight problems for a long time. He has asked Ken Heath to help with working on solutions for dealing with this problem. He asked for Mr. Heath to attend this meeting and discuss the process he is working on for dealing with this issue. Mr. Rush turned the meeting to Mr. Heath for discussion of the plans and information.

Mr. Heath reviewed the “BAUD” (Blighted, Abandoned, Underutilized and Derelict) properties plan, indicating he is motivated to work on this project as he feels it will help to make Marion a better place to live by addressing the needs of the community. There are several steps he has worked on for this endeavor, which he stated will take time to put into place. These include, defining the problems, doing a Comprehensive Housing Study to address the inventory and future needs not only for residential properties, but in the areas of commercial also. By including the commercial side, it will allow development for current business families and allow for recruiting new business to the area. This plan will allow for needed ordinance changes to be drafted and given to council for approval to include escalating penalties for vacant and unmaintained properties, building code reviews and enforcement. He requested members to review this plan and give suggestions and comments as they begin the development of this plan.

Mr. Rush thanked Mr. Heath for his quick action on this indicating he had already made much progress.

The next items were dealing with the Zoning Ordinance and Comprehensive Plan updates. Mr. Rush indicated these should continue as separate documents, but he would like to do updates together, as to

allow for changes and updates in both at the same time. Also noting areas and changes that need to be added in both as the two must work together for the town. This will necessitate monthly meetings over the next few months. He has asked Brian Reed to help in this process.

Members asked about the item SPERO Health listed on the agenda. Mr. Rush explained this agency is much like the Emmaus Medical Clinic request commissioners previously reviewed. He was contacted by a representative of SPERO and has discussed some of the things commissioners had ask of Emmaus representatives and SPERO had no problem with submitting requested information. He had inquired about being credentialed with Ballad Health, and was told they have no problem with that. Discussion ensued concerning this group. He has had no further communication with them to date.

Mr. Rush shared information with members concerning the VDOT Smart Scale Project which will affect the areas of Commerce Street, Pendleton Street and the curve on E Main Street. VDOT plans to have a meeting here at the Municipal Building.

With no further comments or questions, Chairman Wolfe stated the next meeting will be August 9, 2021 at 5:15PM.

Upon motion of Mr. Ramsey, seconded by Mrs. Freeman and a vote of 6 AYES and 0 NOES the meeting was adjourned at 6:25PM.

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Chairman

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Secretary