

**TOWN OF ABINGDON
PLANNING COMMISSION
MONDAY, JANUARY 28, 2019 – 5:30 PM
ARTHUR CAMPBELL MEETING ROOM – MUNICIPAL BUILDING**

A meeting of the Abingdon Planning Commission was held on Monday, January 28, 2019 at 5:30 pm in the Arthur Campbell Meeting Room.

A. Chairman Wayne Austin called the meeting to Order

B. Roll Call – Jason Boswell, Interim Director of Planning

Members Present:

Mr. Scott Wilson
Dr. H. Ramsey White, Jr.
Mr. Al Bradley
Mr. Kenneth Vittum
Mr. Kenny Shuman
Mr. Wayne Austin

Comprising a quorum of the Commission

Members Absent:

Mr. James Anderson

Administrative Staff Present:

Mr. Jason Boswell – Interim Director of Planning
Mrs. Janice Dornon – Administrative Assistant
Ms. Tonya Triplett – Community Relations Coordinator
Ms. Jayne Duehring – Director of Tourism
Ms. Cindy Patterson – Vice-Mayor
Mr. Nathan Berg – Comp Plan Steering Committee Member

Guests:

Mr. Mike Callahan – EPR Project Manager
Mr. Vlad Gavrilovic - Design & Planning

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Approval of Minutes: Regular Meeting, November 26, 2018

On motion of Mr. Shuman seconded by Mr. Wilson the minutes of November 26, 2018 were approved with correction.

The roll call vote was as follows:

Mr. Wilson	Aye
Dr. White	Aye
Mr. Bradley	Aye
Mr. Vittum	Aye
Mr. Shuman	Aye
Mr. Austin	Aye

Minutes for November 26, 2018 were approved as presented.

D. PUBLIC COMMENTS – NONE

E. CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS

1. Application for Certificate of Appropriateness; Colonial Square AVA LLC, 207 San Juan Drive, Ponte Beach, FL 32082; Owner. L.K. Addison, L.S.; Representative. COA to subdivide property into two parcels, 1) containing 4.523 acres, 2) and one containing 3.205 acres. They are proposing to demolish the western unit on parcel one and reconfigure the parking area on the northwest area of parcel two. A variance is being requested for sidewalks along Village Boulevard between shopping center entrances. Located at 845 Village Blvd, Abingdon, VA 24210. Tax Map No. (017-17-9)

Uwe Rothe of Rothe Architecture and Planning represented Addison Surveyors who is representing Chris White the property owner of 845 Village Blvd. The preliminary plat was to request to sub-divide the lot into two parcels. They would like to demolish two existing buildings and add an addition to the side of the building where the Family Dollar Store currently exists. The new addition will have the same green roof as the existing stores have in this complex.

A variance was proposed for the sidewalks located at 845 Village Road. Scott Wilson said that if the Planning Commission keeps giving variances for sidewalks the town will end up fronting the bill as other developments are proposed. Mr. Wilson made the point that if each new developments are asked to add the sidewalks that bit by bit we could have a connected, uniformed pedestrian walkway.

Staff will have to review the proposed addition on the submission of the final plat.

Mr. Shuman asked if the 21 additional parking spaces on the far side would be accessible from both the back and front of the complex. Mr. Rothe answered that there would not be access from the rear of the building; this would only be for service entries.

The board decided to vote on the preliminary plat and the variance for the sidewalks as two separate items.

On motion of Mr. Wilson, Seconded by Mr. Shuman, Planning Commission members recommended that the preliminary plat be approved as presented.

The roll call vote was as follows:

Mr. Wilson	Aye
Dr. White	Aye
Mr. Bradley	Aye
Mr. Vittum	Aye
Mr. Shuman	Aye
Mr. Austin	Aye

The COA for the preliminary plat was unanimously approved.

On motion of Mr. Shuman, Seconded by Mr. Bradley, Planning Commission members recommended that the Variance for the sidewalks be denied.

The roll call vote was as follows:

Mr. Wilson	Aye
Dr. White	Aye
Mr. Bradley	Aye
Mr. Vittum	Aye
Mr. Shuman	Aye
Mr. Austin	Aye

The board unanimously denied the variance for the sidewalks. .

F. DISCUSSION TOPIC:

Comprehensive Plan Kickoff: Mike Callahan and Vlad Gavrilovic represented EPR, (Engineering Planning Resources), at the Comp Plan Kickoff Meeting with the Planning Commission.

The EPR team members:

Mike Callahan – Project Manager specializes in land use, transportation planner, facilitator and public engagement

Vlad Gavrilovic – Principle in Charge, specializes in design and land use

Jessica Dimmick – Transportation planning and engineering

Jason Espie – Senior Planning Analyst

Wei He – Mapping and Planning Analyst

EPR's purpose will be to update the current Comp Plan. The new comp plan should be engaging and transparent. The plan should include updates to transportation, future land use maps, economic development and attract investors to fill vacant buildings on Main Street. Board would like to see a comp plan that is not outdated by the time it is completed.

The proposed comp plan will have 8 phases: 1) Project kickoff, 2) Website and survey, 3) Analysis, 4) Vision & Goals, 5) Policy Reviews, 6) Land Use & Transportation, 7) Update, and 8) Documentation.

EPR's initial observation of Abingdon is that it is Historical, Cultural, has Natural Resources and has invested in connecting assets such as Barter Theatre and the Creeper Trail.

Mr. Gavrilovic told the board that the state requires an update to the comp plan every five years and that they should be looking at a long-term vision for the town, something they would like to leave for their children and grandchildren. It has been six years since the towns last comp plan update.

The plan will be broken down into two separate parts, 1) Public - Infrastructure and investments, 2) Private – Land Use and Transportation.

Nathan Berg, a member of the Comp Plan Steering Committee commented that people in their 30's are looking to settle down in small towns like Abingdon and that the town needs to increase amenities to attract a younger demographic that would want to live and raise their families in a small town while working remotely and/or commuting to larger cities. People with families prefer the small town atmosphere.

During the town tour, someone made the comment that if you build a better quality of life people will want to visit.

Mr. Bradley stated that Abingdon's economy rise and fall was with the destruction of the coal industry in the area, something that the town is still recovering from.

Mr. Wilson said that a traffic engineer needs to be brought in to look at the traffic light patterns, that some are not changing appropriately.

Mr. Vittum said that the comp plan needs to be amended to add road projects. He also pointed out the current town hall needs to have more functionality, and the town shop will not be adequate in the next 20 years. The current Police Department building is much larger than what is needed. The comp plan should include a look at all town assets and liabilities to see how to rectify the current shortage of office space at the town hall. He also would like to see all Historic properties brought up to current code standards and find the best possible use for those properties.

Mr. Callahan asked the board for their input on the following questions:

1) What do you value most about Abingdon that should not change?

Board response: Historic Preservation, driving force to bring in tourist, and being able to walk around in the Historic District.

2) What town accomplishments since 2013 are you most proud of?

Board response: Demolition of old hospital and replacing the lot with the K-VA-T Corporate Office Building, introduction of the January Jams and the Thursday Jams, good commitment to recreational opportunities such as the Coomes Center and various public use playing fields and that the town is well kept and clean. Tourism has increased meal and lodging taxes.

3) How can this plan help the Town reach its full potential and thrive?

Board response: Create walking trails. Mr. Shuman said to keep in mind that with the Sports Complex that the fields on Russell Road may be developed for a different use.

4) What is the biggest challenge that needs to be addressed?

Board response: How to attract business to fill vacant building along Main Street. Improve local economy. Remove old dying trees and replant to preserve the green spaces in the town. Would like to have more walkable trails around town in order to connect Historic District such as the Urban Trail. Build a sidewalk on Walden Road to the high school on Thompson Drive so that students could walk to school.

The board would like the Comp Plan to have an implementation section that sets attainable, realistic goals that could be useful and memorable.

During this kickoff Vlad Garvilovic collect the themes from the board members questions and answers, listed below are the responses:

1. Protect Historic District.
2. Challenge of Property Maintenance & Blight.
3. Maintain the quality and availability of recreational opportunities.
4. Bolstering local economy.
5. Low cost of living.

6. Need to increase amenities for remote workers and entrepreneurs.
7. Growth of truck traffic (enforcement).
8. Small town atmosphere.
9. Proud of Food City headquarters going into hospital site.
10. Optimize signal timing.
11. Value of events and music programs.
12. Need more specificity in Comp Plan-need actions and implementation-time schedule for actions.
13. Need to begin replacing mature trees before they die.
14. Success of pedestrian improvements on Cummings Street-need sidewalk on Walden Road to High School.
15. Need new pipeline transportation projects in Plan.
16. Look at Town Facilities-Town Hall-Town Shop-Police Department.

Mr. Callahan encourage everyone to visit the EnvisionAbingdon.com website and to take the citizen survey that would go live on Tuesday, January 29, 2019. Updates to the comp plan will greatly be influenced by comments from the public.

G. UPDATES FROM STAFF AND PLANNING COMMISSION MEMBERS

H. ADJOURN

On motion of Dr. White, Seconded by Mr. Shuman, recommended the meeting be adjourned with no further business to address

The roll call vote was as follows:

Mr. Wilson	Aye
Dr. White	Aye
Mr. Bradley	Aye
Mr. Vittum	Aye
Mr. Shuman	Aye
Mr. Austin	Aye

Adjourn Time: 6:41 P.M.


Wayne Austin, Chairman


Kenneth Vittum, Secretary

Next regularly scheduled meeting will be February 25, 2019 at 5:30 pm in the Arthur Campbell Room, 1st floor of the Town Municipal Building.