

TOWN OF ABINGDON
PLANNING COMMISSION
WORK SESSION MEETING
SEPTEMBER 17, 2014 – 5:30 P.M.

The Work Session meeting of the Abingdon Planning Commission was held Wednesday, September 17, 2014 at 5:30 p.m. The meeting was held in the Municipal Building, Colonel Arthur Campbell room.

Mr. Matthew T. Bundy, Chairman, called the meeting to order. Mr. Sean Taylor called the roll.

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Mr. Matthew T. Bundy, Chairman
Mr. Wayne Austin, Vice Chairman
Mr. Gregory W. Kelly, Secretary
Mr. Wayne Craig
Ms. Maggie Costello

Members Arriving Late: Mr. Rick Humphreys
Mr. Langley Shazor

Comprising a quorum of the Commission

Members Absent: None

Administrative Staff: Mr. Sean Taylor, Assistant Town Planner
Mrs. Deborah Icenhour, Town Attorney
Mr. John Dew, Director of Public Services and Construction
Mr. C. J. McGlothlin, Code Enforcement Officer
Mrs. Jenny Carlisle, Administrative Assistant; Planning and Public Works

Visitors: Ms. Evelyn Slone

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(2) Presentation: Mixed-Use Infill and Development Plan; Evelyn Slone, Hill Studios.

Ms. Slone presented Planning Commission members with an update to the Mixed-Use Infill Development plan. She stated that the reason for the project is to increase economic infill and development/redevelopment opportunities. The Town established a management team with representatives from businesses, tourism, planning, and Abingdon Main Street to help identify priority areas, primarily in downtown, but on the peripheries as well. One area they focused on was West Main Street around Remsburg Drive. Another is the Park Street area from Pecan to Court Streets. The Elm Street warehouses have potential for housing and commercial growth, and Russell Road where the flea markets are could use attention because it is a primary gateway into the town. They conducted a survey of customers in downtown to see what people wanted to see. The results said that what people really want is a Farmers Market expansion, as there are currently 150 vendors on the waiting list, more housing options in downtown, more activities, and improved public spaces. People would also like

Amtrak passenger rail service. One business owner specified that it is not about driving around, there needs to be feet on the street; a reason for people to stop and walk around. This includes more restaurants, more business diversity, perhaps a parking garage, and larger green spaces to host downtown events.

The presentation continued with topics covering walkability and pedestrian safety in the Park Street area, linking the Creeper trail with the urban trail, moving the distribution portion of the Post Office to the outskirts of the town, bringing in a boutique hotel where the Post Office is currently located, and upper story housing on West Main Street.

She summarized that phase 1 of the Main Street project should be the Villiage Green, which would organize parking. Phase 2 would be pedestrian walkways from Wall Street to Village Green and enhancement of building rears. Phase 3 would be infill development for new buildings and businesses. Phase 4 would be the Depot area and the boutique hotel. This project would require \$11 million in public investment and \$18 million in private investment.

For the Park Street Arts and Craft District, phase 1 would be pedestrian improvements which could be accomplished by obtaining transportation fund credits. Phase 2 would be obtaining historic tax credits for renovation of the old jail to artisan studios or guest condos. Phase 3 would be additional outdoor venue space and a parking garage next to East Main. This project would require \$1.4 million in pedestrian improvements and \$9.5 million in private investment.

For the Russell Road area, the needs are “greening up,” enhancement for building fronts, and to move the Post Office closer to Porterfield Highway.

The last area focused on is Elm Street, which has potential to add residential housing facilities and a wellness facility, in addition to greening of the corridor, and a small business retail space.

The items that need to take place are additional coordination with West Main Street property owners, a more in depth study of the current housing situation, and grant applications.

Mr. Kelly mentioned the benefits of holding a joint meeting between the Planning Commission and Town Council to discuss if this is this really what the Town wants to do, put together a priority list, and then pursue grant funding.

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(3) Discussions: VDOT report summary.

Mr. Craig provided a summary of a report from VDOT regarding exit 17. He summarized that significant intersection improvements can be made by making simple lane changes however, VDOT would like to wait until funding takes place for a new proposed project before attending to exit 17. This project could be completed within 6 years and have major implications for the town.

With regards to the exit 19 big box plan, Mr. Kelly mentioned that the town currently has adequate sewer capacity to handle the proposed development which includes a big box store, a hotel, 2 - 3 restaurants, and a small retail component, but that the town will also be hit with traffic, fire, and police enforcement. He stated that in other localities in Virginia, municipalities have had legislation passed to gain zoning and subdivision authority within a certain area outside their corporate limits. This can be

accomplished by amending the town charter. Mr. Craig stated that the town should have a copy of the traffic impact study since the town will be absorbing traffic from the project. The discussion continued.

Another topic of discussion with VDOT was the potential realignment of the Porterfield Highway and West Main Street intersection and the Jonesborough Road and West Main Street intersection.

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After further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 7:31 p.m.

Matthew T. Bundy, Chairman

Gregory W. Kelly, Secretary