

TOWN OF ABINGDON  
 PLANNING COMMISSION AND TOWN COUNCIL  
 JOINT PUBLIC HEARING MEETING  
 DECEMBER 1, 2008 - 7:30 P.M.

The Town Of Abingdon Planning Commission and Abingdon Town Council held a joint public hearing at the regular meeting of the Abingdon Town Council Monday, December 1, 2008, at 7:30 P.M. The meeting was held in the Municipal Building, Council Chambers.

Mrs. Lois H. Humphreys, Mayor, call the meeting to order, welcoming Girl Scout Troop 115, Maggie Campell, Rebecca Kelly, Riley Sullivan, Erin Sullivan and Susan Sullivan, Trooper Leader, who recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Garrett Jackson called the roll for the Planning Commission.

ROLL CALL

Members Present:

Mr. Kenneth Shuman, Chairman  
 Mr. Matthew T. Bundy, Vice-Chairman  
 Mr. Gregory W. Kelly  
 Mrs. Cathy Lowe  
 Mr. Gary Kimbrell  
 Dr. Todd Pillion  
 Dr. H. Ramsey White, Jr.

Comprising a quorum of the Commission

Members Absent:

None

Administrative Staff:

Mrs. Lois H. Humphreys, Mayor  
 Mr. W. Garrett Jackson, Director of Planning/Zoning  
 Mr. Sean Taylor, Assistant Director of Planning/Zoning  
 Mr. Jim C. Smith, Director of Wastewater Operations/Town Engineer  
 Mrs. Deborah Icenhour, Town Attorney  
 Mrs. Cecile Rosenbaum, Town Clerk

Visitors:

Mr. Dexter Peltzer  
 Mr. Charlie Jessee  
 Mr. Walter Hite  
 Mr. Dyer Moss  
 Mr. Richard Neely  
 Mrs. Polly Wirt  
 Mr. James Counts  
 Mr. Jerry Eggers  
 Ms. Dene Peterson  
 Ms. Tammy Dee  
 Others

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(2) PUBLIC HEARING

**REQUEST FOR SPECIAL USE PERMIT - Senior Services Center, Inc. (Abingdon Senior Center dba Virginia Ballroom)**, application for Special Use Permit pursuant to Article 6, Section 6-2-2 and 6-2-3, Special Uses, of the Zoning Ordinance, in the R-3 Residential District, of the Town of Abingdon, to operate party houses and clubs. **Tax Map No. 5 (6) 1.**

Mr. Kenneth Shuman, Chairman of the Planning Commission, welcomed everyone and thanked them for their interest and participation in the decision making process of this public hearing. He explained that if there was anyone present to address the Planning Commission, they needed to approach the podium, giving their name and address, limiting their speaking time to five minutes, allowing the Planning Commission to ask questions. He further stated that he not only serves as Chairman of the Planning Commission but has also served as President of United Way of Washington County and the Senior Center is a United Way funded agency.

At this time, Mr. Jackson presided over the meeting, explaining that Mr. Dexter Peltzer, Executive Director, of the Senior Center located at 300 Senior Drive, had applied for a Special Use Permit to allow them to operate as a party house and club or lodge. Mr. Jackson further explained that the Senior Center was issued a Conditional Use Permit in April, 1977 for their previous location on Front Street. This allowed them to operate as a club or lodge, however, there is little indication that they were reissued approval upon their move to the current location and so if approved, this would clarify the situation. He explained the Senior Center is located in the R-3 Residential District which allows Clubs, lodges or party houses as special uses. **The Town of Abingdon Zoning Ordinance definition of club or lodge is any non-profit organization operated to provide facilities for dining, golf, tennis, swimming and/or other similar activities to its private self-perpetuating membership. The definition of party house is a place for the occasional service of meals to organized groups.** If a Special Use Permit is granted, the permit would allow the Senior Center to hold these organized groups and parties for groups.

Mr. Shuman opened the public hearing, asking if there was anyone to speak in favor of the Special Use Permit.

Mr. Peltzer, 900 Sawgrass Circle, Abingdon, Virginia 24211, explained that it might be helpful to talk about a big picture philosophy of the Senior Center. First of all, the center is a Senior Center with a plan to develop new programs and activities. The current programs and activities have more than tripled under new management, however, it is apparent that additional finances are needed to continue expanding these services, including Meals On Wheels, Nutritional Programs, the first Alzheimer Daycare in the area, and the Alzheimer and Dementia Support Groups. In order to help these programs financially, it was the desire of the Senior Center to finish off the ball room, approximately 7,000 square feet, hoping for the opportunity to have a multi-purpose café and catering services available. This would only be an expansion in order to raise money for the center. Mr. Peltzer stated that first, it is requested that the center be allowed to be used as a party house, allowing catering services, and second, it is requested that the Senior Center be allowed to be used as a club. The Senior Center was classified as a club in 1977 but would like to re-formalize it as a club at the new address. All money taken in that comes from the Virginia Ball Room Café supports the Meals on Wheels Program, costing approximately \$50, 000 to \$60,000 per year. Total funding received for this is approximately \$870.00 from People, Inc.

The first initiative is to develop new programs and being fiscally responsible. Ninety-five percent (95) of the participants are senior citizens. This also provides the opportunity at the center for sharing and volunteering.

Mr. Peltzer read a letter from Tom Casteel, Director of Washington County, stating the importance of the Senior Center, with encouragement for the need of this request, stating that it was imperative to have the availability of this facility, along with the support from several mentioned groups who use the center. Some of

the mentioned groups include the Historical Society, VFW, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Disabled American Veterans, Civitans, Shriners, Rotary of Washington County, Special Ed Department of Washington County, Democratic Party, Republican Party, Department of Social Services, We Help Others Group, Lunch Bunch, Presbyterian Women's Circles, First Baptist Church Group, United Methodist Church Groups, United Way Board and Committees, Newcomers Group, Lopez & Associates, Jay Lyn Corporation, Church of the Nazarene, Virginia Department of Transportation, (two) Swim Clubs, Retired Teachers Association, Ageless Angels, United Federal Workers, the Library's, A Tiskit A Tasket Book Club and many others. Mr. Peltzer encouraged contact with any of these groups, emphasizing that the center's goal is to make the Senior Center an enjoyable environment for the community. The membership fee for an individual is \$10.00 per year; membership fee for a group is \$25.00 per year.

Mr. Shuman asked if there was anyone to speak in opposition of the Special Use Permit, or if there were questions for Mr. Peltzer.

Several concerned citizens spoke in favor of granting the Special Use Permit including Mr. Charlie Jessee, Mr. Walter Hite, Mr. Dyer Moss, Mr. Richard Neely and Ms. Tammy Dee, who is employed by the Senior Center, as well as an Emergency Medical Technician with Washington County Life Saving Crew.

Mrs. Polly Wirt, Mr. James Counts and Mr. Jerry Eggers each spoke, stating they were very much opposed to granting the Special Use Permit, for several reasons, one reason being that they were opposed to the sale and serving of alcoholic beverages.

Mr. Peltzer explained that regarding the Senior Center's funding, sixty percent (60%) of their funding is received from the United Way, Washington County and the Town of Abingdon, and it is the Senior Center's desire to raise the remaining amount on their own. He stated that he has heard many misrepresentations regarding the issue of alcohol, further stating that the Senior Center will serve no alcohol at any of center's programs or activities, nor will they have any employee serving alcohol at any time.

Mr. Peltzer stated there will be private parties such as wedding receptions, etc., when alcohol will be served with the private party providing their own bartender, which will require their own alcohol license from the Alcohol Beverage Board, therefore, assuming responsibility through the Alcohol Beverage License. The Senior Center will verify each license and or permit making sure the party is in compliance.

Mr. Morgan asked Mr. Peltzer if there was absolutely no plan or intention to ever apply for a alcohol license for the Senior Center and Peltzer replied "no sir".

Mr. Morgan asked what steps were being taken to make sure that emergency vehicles could be available to the area, when needed. Mr. Peltzer stated that a new sign will be put in place, designating parking for the Senior Center and Abingdon Green, along with a new sidewalk for the convenience of getting to and from each of the areas.

After a lengthy discussion, Mr. Kimbrell made a motion that the Planning Commission recommend that the Town Council approve the application for Special Use Permit for Party House and for Private Club, provided the Senior Center does not engage in applying for or selling alcoholic beverages at any of the Senior Center functions and that the restaurant facility located there, would be strictly for membership and immediate guests of members. Dr. White seconded the motion, with unanimous approval.

VOTE:

Mr. Kimbrell	Aye
Dr. White	Aye
Mr. Kelly	Aye
Mrs. Lowe	Aye
Dr. Pillion	Aye

Mr. Bundy  
Mr. Shuman

Aye  
Aye

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With no further business to include the Planning Commission, the Planning Commission was adjourned.

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Kenneth Shuman, Chairman

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Gregory W. Kelly, Secretary