

PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

MONDAY, MAY 22, 2017

(Immediately following the Public Hearing held at 5:30 pm)

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairperson Connor Boyle, Vice-Chairperson Matthew Vincent, Elizabeth Shay, Eric Woolridge and Becky Gosky

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT: Jane Shook, Director of Planning and Inspections, Christy Turner, Senior Planner, Marty Little, Planner and Marlene Crosby, Board Secretary

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Boyle called the meeting to order at 5:47 p.m.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Member Woolridge made a motion, seconded by Member Gosky to move agenda item six, Case PL00282-022317 Courtyard by Marriott Conditional District Zoning Map Amendment Modification to item four on the agenda.

Vote: Aye – All
Nay – None

The motion passed.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Member Gosky made a motion, seconded by Vice-Chairperson Vincent to approve the April 24, 2017 Planning Commission meeting minutes as written.

Vote: Aye – All
Nay – None

The motion passed.

CASE PL00282-02317 COURTYARD BY MARRIOTT CONDITIONAL DISTRICT ZONING MAP AMENDMENT MODIFICATION

David McLamb with Boone Hospitality Associates II, LLC has filed a Planning Permit Application for a Conditional District Zoning Map Amendment Modification to modify the conditions to the existing Conditional District Zoning Map approval to allow the Courtyard by Marriott located at 1050 Highway 105 to illuminate the sign on the eastern side of the building. The approval currently has the following condition which would have to be modified in order to allow the sign to be lighted:

Bollard type (low profile) lighting is to be used as much as possible. Pole/carriage lights are to be kept at a minimum. No exterior lights on the building higher than the first floor. The building will not be “uplighted”. On the back and two ends of the building, no lights will be installed above first floor and no grounds lights shining up will be installed. The Highway 105 elevation facing the street can be lighted per the developer’s and architect’s discretion, within the requirements of the UDO. The architect and engineer will continue to develop the site lighting plans to minimize off site light pollution. “Low to the ground” lighting options under consideration are recessed lights in retaining and courtyard walls, bollard lighting, and low landscape lights.

Ms. Jane Shook, Director of Planning and Inspections presented this case as outlined in the meeting packet. Ms. Shook explained that at the last Planning Commission meeting the decision was made by the Commission to table this till this meeting. She reminded the Commission that one of the reasons to table this case at the last meeting was because some of the Commission members wanted to drive by the hotel to review the current signage. It was noted that at the last meeting there was discussion on an alternative solution to the signage, if the applicant would like to move forward on it. Ms. Shook added that the Commission would need to make a recommendation on the current request.

Discussion ensued on the attached sign. Member Woolridge asked why the sign has to be lit from within and he suggested down lighting for the sign. It was noted that a projecting sign would be allowed on the building per the ordinance. Ms. Shook noted that the attached sign would have to be removed to add a projecting sign because they are at their limit for signage.

Ms. Shook further explained the conditions placed on the signage. She said the sign can be lit on the front of the building but not on the side of the building.

Chairperson Boyle said that he did drive by the hotel and he could see the signage on the building and he did not feel like the sign needed to be lighted.

Chairperson Boyle said the members of the neighborhood that live in the house right beside the hotel did not attend last month's meeting. Mr. McLamb said the owners of the rental house next door supported having a lighted sign on the building.

Chairperson Boyle said he felt like the members of the neighborhood that did attend last month's meeting would not be able to see the lighted sign from behind the hotel. Ms. Shook noted that the members of the neighborhood that live behind the hotel noted that you would be able to see the lighted sign as you enter their neighborhood.

Mr. David McLamb one of the owners of the Courtyard by Marriott spoke on this case.

Mr. McLamb explained his concern for their hotel guests to turn safely into the parking lot. Mr. McLamb brought in video which showed a vehicle driving down Hwy 105 from Blowing Rock Road into the entrance of the hotel.

Mr. McLamb said if they used a freestanding sign, their customers would be past the entrance of the hotel by the time they saw the freestanding sign which would focus their customers on the freestanding sign rather than the entrance into the hotel.

Discussion ensued on being able to see the sign on the hotel as vehicles come down Hwy 105 Extension before the stop light at Blowing Rock Road. Mr. McLamb said the sign needs to be seen from this vantage point so the out of town guests can be able to anticipate the traffic lane that they need to travel in to get to the hotel.

Vice-Chair Vincent noted that the first thing he saw in the video was the porte-cochere and questions why an attached sign could not be placed on it. Mr. McLamb stated that by the time someone really noticed the porte-cochere that they were already too close to the entrance.

Discussion ensued on allowing the attached sign to be lit and the potential light pollution from it. Mr. McLamb talked about the berm and the 15 foot trees behind the hotel that the members of the neighborhood wanted as a buffer between their neighborhood and the hotel. Mr. McLamb said to be a good neighbor, when they built the hotel, they made the berm four feet higher and five feet higher trees than the Town requested.

The Planning Commission Members Woolridge, Gosky, Shay and Vice-Chairperson Vincent each expressed their thoughts and they were in agreement that a down lighted sign was more appropriate than an internally lighted sign on the building.

Chairperson Boyle said that he is in favor of whatever would create the least light pollution but he does not feel like it is a necessity at this time for the sign to be lighted. He said he is inclined to honor the conditions for the sign that were originally placed on it. He further explained that as he drove up Wintergreen Lane he could see the sign and he would be able to see it more quickly, if it was lighted.

The Planning Commission asked Mr. McLamb if he would be agreement to a sign lighted with down lights. Mr. McLamb suggested using channel letters in the sign which would provide less light overall. He explained that the channel letters are contained within a lighted box with in each letter. Mr. McLamb noted that the current sign containing the Courtyard by Marriott shield would have to be replace sometime in the future to reflect the new branding for the chain which is just the words Courtyard by Marriott.

Discussion ensued on channel letter lighting versus down lighting of the sign. Vice-Chairperson Vincent asked Mr. McLamb if the channel letter lighting created less light pollution than the down lighting of the sign. Mr. McLamb said yes and they would be lighting just the letters of the sign with channel-type lettering.

Chairperson Boyle asked Mr. McLamb if he was going to use a timer for the lights to come on in the sign. Mr. McLamb said traditionally you would leave the sign on all the time but he could go to a timer system, if needed. Mr. McLamb noted that he would prefer to leave the lighted sign on all the time so the customers that are arriving late could see the sign.

Discussion ensued on the safety of the customers at the hotel. Member Gosky said she felt that they need some type of sign lighting for safety purposes. Member Woolridge talked about denying this request because he didn't feel that the applicant was in support of a down lighted sign on the building. He also suggested recommending to Council that if the applicant chose to re-apply to encourage them to go with a down lighted sign.

Discussion ensued regarding the previous requests and the length of time it took for the original approval and the difference between the request, a sign with channel letters and a sign lit with external down lighting.

Mr. McLamb showed the Planning Commission members a photo of the hotel taken by a professional photographer that shows the sign.

Discussion ensued on the sign being larger. Ms. Christy Turner, Senior Planner explained the limitation of the sign. She said it depends on how much linear frontage and square footage they have, when it is calculated. Member Woolridge asked Mr. McLamb if he would be in agreement to make the sign with channeled letters no larger than the current sign. Mr. McLamb agreed.

Member Woolridge asked the Staff for their opinion on lighted signs. Ms. Turner said that more and more cities are going with externally lighted signs, especially with down lighted signs. She further explained that channel-lit signs are internally illuminated and the UDO does allow this type of lighting.

Discussion ensued on having a photo-metric lighting plan. Ms. Shook said the Staff would accept this type of plan to review. Ms. Turner added that the UDO Article 26 limits sign lighting to 11 watts per bulb.

FIRST MOTION AND VOTE: Member Woolridge made a motion, seconded by Member Gosky that the proposed amendment to the Town's zoning ordinance is consistent with the Town's Comprehensive Plan and other applicable adopted plans of the Town which relate to this application because the proposed amendment as agreed by the applicant includes a channel-lit sign to be no greater in size than the current sign and in the exact same location. The berm and vegetation has matured surrounding the adjacent neighborhood and will not adversely impact the neighborhood. It creates a safer entry into the Marriott by allowing guests to see the building location as they approach the structure.

Vote: Aye – (Gosky, Shay, Vincent, Woolridge)
Nay – (Boyle)

The motion passed.

Chairperson Boyle said he voted no for this request because he does not feel that it is necessary at this time and he wants to honor the original conditions of no up-lighting or lighting above the first floor.

SECOND MOTION AND VOTE: Member Woolridge made a motion, seconded by Member Gosky that the Planning Commission recommends approval to the proposed amendment to the Town's zoning ordinance and believe its approval is reasonable and in the public interest for the reasons previously stated.

Vote: Aye – (Gosky, Shay, Vincent, Woolridge)
Nay – (Boyle)

The motion passed.

CASE PL00481-050817 MANSA HOSPITALITY LLC – GENERAL USE REZONING

The Town of Boone has initiated a General Use Zoning Map Amendment to zone the remainder of the parcel owned by Mansa Hospitality LLC (2240 Blowing Rock Road; Watauga County PIN: 2819790873000) being brought into the Town's corporate limits through voluntary annexation. Proposed zoning includes: B3 General Business; Corridor District Overlay, Watershed Areas Critical Area (WS-IV-CA), Viewshed Overlay and Special Flood Hazard Area Overlay.

Ms. Shook said presented this case as outlined in the meeting packet.

There were no questions or comments on this case.

FIRST MOTION AND VOTE: Chairperson Boyle made a motion, seconded Member Shay that the proposed amendment to the Town's zoning ordinance is consistent with the Town's Comprehensive Plan and other applicable adopted plans of the Town which relate to this application because that zoning had been in effect previously.

Vote: Aye – All
Nay – None

The motion passed.

SECOND MOTION AND VOTE: Chairperson Boyle made a motion, seconded by Member Shay that the Planning Commission recommend to approve that the proposed amendment to the Town's zoning

ordinance and believe approval is reasonable and in the public interest because of the reasons previously stated.

Vote: Aye – All
Nay – None

The motion passed.

Chairperson Boyle called for a five-minute break at 6:53 p.m.

Chairperson Boyle reconvened the meeting at 6:58 p.m.

CASE PL00479-050817 EDUCATION DISTRICTS AND USES – UDO TEXT AMENDMENT

Request to modify UDO Article 14, 15, 16, 17, and 34 in regards to educational districts and uses. Amendment may also be made to other Articles to conform them to changes made in these Articles.

Ms. Shook explained that since the proposed text was created, she has learned that the university has expressed that they have some questions on it. She further explained that the Town wants to answer their questions before this case is reviewed by the Planning Commission. As a result, Ms. Shook said the Staff's recommendation is for this case to be tabled until a future meeting to allow Staff to have some additional time to meet with the university and the Town Attorney.

Motion:

Vice-Chairperson Vincent made a motion, seconded by Member Woolridge to table this case to a future Planning Commission meeting.

Vote: Aye – All
Nay – None

The motion passed.

OTHER MATTERS FROM BOARD MEMBERS OR STAFF

Ms. Shook noted that Member Woolridge's term will expire on June 30, 2017. Chairperson Boyle and Ms. Shook expressed their appreciation for Member Woolridge's contribution to the Town and Planning Commission.

Ms. Shook noted that there are two new Planning Commission members coming on board in July 2017.

ADJOURNMENT

Vice-Chairperson Vincent made a motion, seconded by Member Woolridge to adjourn the meeting at 7 p.m.

Vote: Aye – All
Nay – None

The motion passed.

Connor Boyle, Chairperson

Marlene Crosby, Board Secretary