

**REGULAR MEETING OF
LURAY PLANNING COMMISSION
APRIL 15, 2015**

The Luray Planning Commission met on Tuesday, April 15, 2015 at 7:00 p.m. in regular session. The meeting was held in the Luray Town Council Chambers at 45 East Main Street, Luray, Virginia at which time there were present the following:

Commissioners Present:

Ronald Good
Mark Malone
Brian Sours
Grace Nowak
John Shaffer

Absent: Traci Dickson

Others Present:

Ligon Webb, Town Planner
Charlie Hoke, Town Manager
Michael Weaver
Burt Wishman

The meeting was called to order by Chairman, Ronald Good, at 7:00 p.m. and everyone joined in the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag.

Commissioner Good stated we will welcome our new member, William Fisher next month.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

One correction was made to the minutes of March 10, 2015. On page 2, third paragraph should read:” basically your assessment is going to be held at the pre-improvement value.” A motion was made by Commissioner Shaffer that the minutes of the March 10, 2015 Regular Meeting be approved as corrected and motion was seconded by Commissioner Nowak, with the vote as follows: YEA: Commissioners Good, Malone, Sours, Nowak, and Shaffer.

Approved 5-0

LURAY MEADOWS SITE PLAN

Commissioner Good stated we have some plans for the Luray Meadows project. We have talked about this several times before. The site plan is mainly for our information. Mr. Webb stated since the site plan has already been platted, the site plan is generally administrative but they wanted to bring it before you to show you the profiles of the actual construction of the units themselves. In another one we have the actual road going in. They had a meeting today to discuss the particulars with the access easements and I think we are pretty clear on that. If you

MINUTES
APRIL 15, 2015
PAGE 2

put these two together you can see the actual first phase of this property. Racey Engineering has provided us with a complete set of the engineering sheets that we received about a week ago and this is a large document that has all the different profiles, engineering, road design criteria and all these things. We are going through and making comments and will go back and forth for another few weeks with revisions we made. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask.

Commissioner Malone asked is there the likelihood that this project is going to go forward. Mr. Whisman stated we are moving forward. We just had the pre-bid meeting today and have been coordinating with the seller's attorney to start orchestrating the acquisition of the property and started working with our lenders. Being a non-profit, we are not abundant with capital so we are using grant funds for the acquisition of the property along with the low income housing tax credits and some other funding for the complete development. A big step internally is simply getting the budgets back, and getting the board approval on the budgets.

One concern was this property being removed from downtown and folks who live there may not have transportation to and from. Is there any other kind of grants that you can get that would have anything to do with that. Mr. Wishman stated we are working very closely with some other towns and localities in the greater northern Shenandoah area and work very closely with the Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Commission to help put things like that together.

POTENTIAL BLIGHT ORDINANCE AND OPTIONS

Mr. Webb stated that he had done some research regarding "spot blight abatement" that could potentially be applied here in Luray. He stated he went down through the Code and worked his way through what the town could do. Basically, the Town has to be willing to buy the building and then try to sell it to a third party. A lot of these places are so run down that they are assessed at almost nothing. A question was asked if you get to buy it for what it's assessed at or what the guy tells you he wants to sell it for? Mr. Hoke stated eminent domain is not very popular and I don't think we will have enough votes to take these properties. There's really not enough money in the reserves to go around and buy these blight facilities. There are options we can look at from other states that have incentives such as increased tax rates if your building has boarded up windows and increase tax rates if it's a vacant building. Just encourage folks to go ahead and do renovations or conduct the sale and you can be exempt from that additional tax rate if you are actively trying to sell the building for no more than 25% of the assessed value. There are ordinances out there in the surrounding states, but because this is a Dillon state, we'll have to draft something and get the tourism industry to sign off on it and get enough people's interest so we can take it to the town council and then the state. We need something that will be a working document that we can encourage people to do renovations or sell the building. Just about every town has blighted buildings but we are not a large enough locality to have significant funds to purchase blighted buildings and tear them down and put it up for sale for redevelopment. We

MINUTES
APRIL 15, 2015
PAGE 3

should take another angle at this and see if we can come up with something that the people can support. Virginia is conservative and no one wants to force them to do anything. We could take the middle of the road. I think this is an opportune time to do it. Since LDI seems to be getting back on their feet, they have some plans and it's a common topic of discussion of the community. Mr. Webb stated the frustrating point is we know that there are people out there who want to get hold of these buildings and is offering really good prices. For some reason the sellers are not motivated.

Mr. Webb stated Section 15.2-900 or 15.2-115 provide tools for razing blighted buildings without using eminent domain. We need to revisit these sections on nuisance from blighted property as defined. The other option is put together something that could be supported that maybe other towns could at least penalize these desires. Maybe put a little more financial pressure on some of these vacant owners to either fix the property or sell it. Our biggest problem right now is the ones that are actually in danger. Our first step will be to look at the nuisance ordinance and let's move on the two or three that are dangerous at this point. He will report back on the nuisance work next month.

REVIEW OF FORTHCOMING SPECIAL USE PERMIT REQUEST

Mr. Webb stated the way it was presented to him a few months ago was they were going to store a few personal cars there. Then we rode by it and it was an office, a fence and about two dozen cars there that I think the bank had repossessed. He didn't get the impression that it was going to be a commercial place. They are talking about possibly having auctions there to sell these vehicles that they have been acquiring. It would require a special use permit. He didn't see a problem with it. The problem was it became a pretty large operation that was obviously business and we didn't get a complaint from the neighbors but it was just obvious and people just asked about it and we told them we really don't see a problem with it. It's actually a pretty decent place for something like that but they would need to come in and get a special use permit. They did fill out the paper work and once I told them the fee, I haven't heard from them. The big thing is the neighbors should be afforded the opportunity to have a say. We need to learn more about it. We'll see if they come back. Until they get a special use permit they really can't operate.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:50 P.M.

Ligon Webb
Town Planner

ATTEST:
