

Planning and Zoning Commission Meeting

A meeting of the Pocomoke City Planning and Zoning Commission was held in the Council Chambers at City Hall on Wednesday, October 16, 2019. The meeting was called to order at 5:12 PM.

Present: Chairman: Alex Kagan
Commissioners: Steven Mills, Ryan Hurley, Rebecca Skorobatsch, Kyle Pilchard
Director of Planning: Dan Brandewie
City Clerk: Michelle Beckett-El Soloh
Interim City Manager: David J. Deutsch
Councilmember: Diane Downing

Approval of Minutes from September 18, 2019:

Motion to approve of the minutes of August 21, 2019 (Skorobatsch, Mills passed) at 5:14PM

Acclamation: Mills-aye, Hurley-aye, Kagan-aye, Skorobatsch-aye, Kyle Pilchard-aye; none opposed, motion carried.

Motion to approve of the minutes of September 18, 2019 (Mills, Pilchard passed) at 5:16PM.

Acclamation: Mills-aye, Hurley-aye, Kagan-aye, Skorobatsch-aye, Kyle Pilchard-aye; none opposed, motion carried.

Zoning Code Update (Discussion-Review of draft materials to be provided). a.R-2 Zoning Text Amendment to allow two-family and multi-family uses:

A notebook was provided to Commissioners last month. It contained the Zoning Ordinance that is online and the Comprehensive Plan from 2014. There are additional handouts tonight that update 3 Zoning Map Amendments that modify occupying residential upper floors B1 District, R-2 rear-yard setbacks and new home occupation standards. The changes have not been presented to Council yet but they were reviewed by this Commission and recommended for approval earlier this year. There is a Council Work Session scheduled on October 28, 2019 to review these draft changes. The Comprehensive Plan was formerly a 6-year review cycle. That has been changed to a 10-year review cycle. Pocomoke City's 10-year review will be due in 2025. We are due for a 5-year review and report. Commissioner Kyle Pilchard commented on the Snow Hill Revitalization Plan. It has a lot of good recommendations that the City may want to review. One good idea was tax incentives for new downtown businesses and properties.

R-2 Zoning Text and Map Amendments

Mr. Brandewie discussed the issue of older areas of the City and redevelopment. A redevelopment map was originally drawn up by a consultant back in 2015. He had proposed two overlay districts. One overlay was recommended for deletion. It was for larger, more complex projects. The City doesn't see the need for that at this time but there may be an issue of allowing more flexibility with larger and sometimes historic structures in our core area. One suggested redevelopment boundary could be the historic district boundary, recognized by the federal government. This is a non-regulatory boundary and it runs from Front Street to the river and then to 10th Street. The document outlines the intent and several purposes for that area under that redevelopment zone under 238-98. It allows the Commission to permit small scale commercial, service and retail business. Residential types permitted under the new overlay are: single family detached, two-family, multi-family, townhouse, apartments and accessory dwelling units. Development standards give the Commission a lot of flexibility in allowing changes in width and yard requirements and setbacks. Compatibility requirements under 230-102 are outlined. Lighting, sidewalks, landscaping, alleys and parking are required to be shown on a preliminary plan. 230-103 establishes the Commission has to authorize and approve a plan. 230-104 states a 14-day news posting and public notice

to be given. 231-105 states that appeals must be taken to the Board of Zoning Appeals. Staff is working out what issues should go before the Commission and before the Council.

Commissioner Kagan asked if we allow two-family and multi-family structures, would the Commission be required to say how it is brought up to code in the Historic District. Some of the buildings are in such bad shape, can they even be brought up to a building or historic code? Planning Director Brandewie said it would be up to the Council or Commissioners to decide if a structure should be demolished or renovated. Commissioner Pilchard wanted to know if any of the empty buildings are currently up for purchase. Planning Director Brandewie said there are currently several that are available through County tax sale. Commissioner Kagan said the City could take control of the remaining properties and make a collective decision about what to do with the land. Planning Director Brandewie mentioned that last summer the City put eight vacant lots up for sale. It was a successful endeavor as they were for the most part purchased by private individuals. That is a viable option for the City to acquire older properties at tax sale, obtain community block grants to fix them up and put back on the market; or work with nonprofits who have a different purpose other than single-family residences in mind.

Mr. Brandewie commented that In the absence of the City stepping forward, this process gives the Planning Commissioners review authority and the ability to do something different other than single-family dwellings which, as of now, is the only dwelling type allowed under R-2 zoning. Commissioner Kagan said he would like to see other building types other than apartments being permitted. Commissioner Pilchard said public hearings and specific language is necessary. He would also like to see tax incentives offered for single-family home ownership. Lowes and other local companies could donate tools for community improvements. Planning Director Brandewie said the Commission can establish notification requirements, limit the size of the district, limit the family-size of the dwelling or limit it to accessory dwelling units.

Commissioner Kagan said he would like to see a map and pin-point where the most vacant and dilapidated buildings are located and see if there are highly concentrated areas to concentrate on first. Commissioner Skorobatsch said she would also like to see more home ownership encouraged. Rental properties usually do the bare minimum for upkeep and do not add to curb appeal of a community. Commissioner Kagan said it is also important to preserve and maintain older and historic houses. Planning Director Brandewie said the City is likely to adopt the 2018 International Property Maintenance Standards. The City has already adopted the 2015 International Building Code Standards. It is a 3-year cycle for updates. The last update will give the City additional tools for code enforcement. The City would be able to address those issues after adoption of the ordinance. The City has recently had a conversation with the Fire Chief. Mr. Gladding stated that they will be moving forward on conducting a controlled burn at 415 Oxford Street and the house on Bonneville Ave, then 618 Clarke Ave and finally the 4th St property. The coordination with fire marshall, other fire departments, utility and other property owners is in process. Commissioner Pilchard asked about businesses with residential 2nd floors, under the current B1 Codes, it only allows owner occupation but under the revised Code it will allow rental of that space. Planning Director Brandewie answered yes, that Code requirement will allow rental of 2nd floor residential areas.

Commissioner Skorobatsch asked if there is anything that can be done to facilitate installation of sidewalks that connect Old Virginia Rd with the schools. She has mentioned the problem before and now a student has been hit by a car. Planning Director Brandewie mentioned that speed limit signs were put up but then apparently challenged by the by the County. Mr. Brandewie also said that a Safe Routes for Schools grant was applied for and we are waiting to hear on that application.

Motion to adjourn meeting (Skorobatsch, Pilchard passed) @ 6:PM

Acclamation: Mills-aye, Hurley-aye, Kagan-aye, Skorobatsch-aye, Kyle Pilchard-aye; none opposed, motion carried.

Approved: K.M. Beckett-El Soloh / City Clerk