

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, February 19, 2020. The meeting was called to order at 5:21 PM.

Present: Commissioners: Alex Kagan, Steven Mills, Ryan Hurley, Rebecca Skorobatsch
Director of Planning: Dan Brandewie
City Clerk: Michelle Beckett-EI Soloh
Councilmember: Diane Downing

Not Present: Alex Kagan, Ryan Hurley

Approval of Minutes from January 15, 2020:

Motion to approve of the minutes of January 15, 2020 with one amendment to add Woodland Manor (Mills, Skorobatsch passed) at 5:24PM

Acclamation: Mills-aye, Pilchard-abstained, Scorobatsch-aye; 1 abstained, none opposed, motion carried.

Site Plan Review: Rear Addition to Medical Office at 1604 Market St. Dr. Sarad Baral offices.

Pocomoke City, MD. Frank Hawk (applicant): Mr. Frank Hawk is here representing Dr. Baral's office for the proposed addition to the office building. It is a 20'x40' addition to the back of the office. It currently has 3 offices and 1 exam room. This space will allow for handicapped updated to the restroom. The original building is old enough so that it meets handicapped access requirements but this will allow for 1 bathroom that is fully handicapped accessible. The addition is one story. The existing site plan is from when Dr. Schumaker owned the building. Dr. Baral has not made any updates to the building or parking lot. Someone hit the building with their car so this addition will allow us to repair the brick façade and change the color without having to find matching brick color. Commissioner Skorobatsch asked if once the addition is added on, will there still be enough parking? Mr. Hawk said there are 8 spaces required and there are 19 existing spaces. Planning Director Brandewie said the parking requirement calls for 8 spaces per provider. Commissioner Skorobatsch pointed out that if there are other LIPs (Licensed Independent Practitioner) in the office who see patients, spaces will have to be calculated for them too. Mr. Hawk said there is available overflow parking besides the 19 spaces. Currently, there is 1 doctor and 1 nurse practitioner and they do not see patients on the same days. Mr. Hawk said currently both doors open inward, they will be changed to outward opening doors. Handicapped parking spaces are located by the front door and there are actually 3 spaces. There is a 4' walkway down the side of the building and parking does not encroach on the walkway.

Motion to approve 20'x40' addition to medical office at 1604 Market St as presented (Pilchard, Mills passed at 5:25PM

Acclamation: Mills-aye, Pilchard-aye, Scorobatsch-aye; none opposed, motion carried.

Zoning Code Update.

a. R-2 Zoning Text amendment to allow two-family and multi-family uses in Overlay Zone.
Review of Map Showing Abandoned Vacant Blighted Properties. Discussion continued:

Planning Director Dan Brandewie said he has been looking at ways to encourage reinvestment into the community. This example is from Salisbury, MD. Salisbury offers a conversion tax payment to convert a rental into owner-occupied uses. A single-family dwelling has been used exclusively as a rental for at least 3 years immediately prior to the purchase by the applicant. It will be used as an owner-occupied. It has to be occupied within one year. There is a 5-year exception of property taxes. On the 6th year taxes go back up. Commissioner Skorobatsch asked what Salisbury's intent was. Were they having problems with vacant properties? Planning Director Brandewie said he isn't sure of the exact reason but suspects the reason is the same as ours. The renter percentage is 46% of residences. He will find out if it has been successful, has it made a difference and has the City seen positive results. Commissioner Pilchard has been reviewing a program in Nebraska. That program seems more like something that needs to be done at the state level but a City could do parts of it. Someone who purchases a home is more invested in a town than a renter. He wanted to know what happens if the property is sold. Planning Director said it can be sold but has to be sold to a single-family occupant or they would lose their tax exemption. Most cities have a rental registration program so they would know that it was being rented. Commissioner Pilchard said tax breaks could be given to someone who purchases a property and fixes it up and sells it. Planning Director Brandewie said Cambridge also has a couple programs. One incentive was for seniors and retirees who purchase properties to receive tax breaks. Commissioner Pilchard asked if the City purchased properties at tax sale and then lease or sell them with conditions. Planning Director Brandewie said that has been done in the past. Properties were sold but did not have improvement comply conditions on them. If anyone knows of any programs, now is the time to bring it to the attention of the Council at the beginning of fiscal year budget. Commissioner Pilchard said if the city does buy tax sale properties, they could be renovated by the city and sold or leased to a nonprofit who could manage it. Some properties have been vacant since he was a teenager. Planning Director Brandewie said there are 2 large properties that would make great additions to the neighborhood. As Commissioner Kagan shared, homeowners don't necessarily want to see rentals going up in homeowner neighborhoods. Commissioner Skorobatsch said it's a lot harder to get money to rehab a property. Most of the time they are going off of 1st time homeowner loans. Planning Director Brandewie said he has had 2 or 3 calls about reusing houses in the older part of the community in the R2 District as a two-family unit. They were told to bring it in front of the Board of Appeals. Commissioner Pilchard said with the R2 Zoning change, would the space above businesses be able to be renovated into apartments? Planning Director Brandewie said, yes, that is part of the changes that are pending.

Comprehensive Plan 5-year Review (Discussion):

Nothing to report.

Motion to adjourn meeting (Pilchard, Mills passed) at 6:00PM

Acclamation: Mills-aye, Pilchard-aye, Scorobatsch-aye; none opposed, motion carried.

Approved: K.M. Beckett-El Soloh

City Clerk