

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, August 21, 2019. The meeting was called to order at 5:28 PM.

Present: Chairman: Alex Kagan-Not Present
Commissioners: Steven Mills, Ryan Hurley-Not Present,
Rebecca Skorobatsch, Kyle Pilchard
Director of Planning: Dan Brandewie
Councilmember: Diane Downing
City Clerk: Michelle Beckett-El Soloh

Approval of Minutes from July 17, 2019:

Motion to approve the minutes of July 17, 2019 with minor grammatical amendments (Skorobatsch, Pilchard passed) at 5:29PM.

Acclamation: Mills-aye, Hurley-not present, Kagan-not present, Scorobatsch-aye, Kyle Pilchard-aye; none opposed, motion carried.

Site Plan Review: New Warehouse for Hardwire Corporation-Preliminary Plan:

Tim Keller, Manager at Hardwire, said the site plans for Hardwire's new building were originally north to south. It is now east to west. This is predominately a grass area. Several new jobs are scheduled to come in. This addition would provide extra work space and storage. There will be an entrance just about where you see that it comes into the site. You can also go around the building. Storm water management facilities are shown as the small oblong shape that is parallel to the building. We are bringing the foundation up to 2' above the 100-year flood plain at elevation of 7.2' The other building is at the same elevation.

Planning Director Brandewie asked, how is the circulation pattern working in terms of truck traffic; are there semi-trucks backing into loading docks?

Tim Keller said most of our trucks come in straight. We have an entrance to our parking lot between the 2 buildings. We would maintain the same route. The area between the buildings is paved so trucks can come in, do a loop, and go out. No backing.

Shawn Taylor, with George E. Young said bigger trucks have trouble making a right-hand turn from Clarke Ave onto McMichael Ave. There are 2 large over-head doors on each end. Trucks can come straight in and straight out. There are 2 more overhead doors on the east side.

Planning Director Brandewie asked if there are any elevation drawings yet? If there is a certain quantity of fill brought in to the site, 600 cubic-yards, it might be necessary to apply for a variance to the flood plain. He asked how is the ground surface elevation compared to Cypress Park? The existing grade is probably 2 to 3' higher than Cypress Park. Planning Director Brandewie said he wasn't aware of any freeboard requirements. Freeboard is basically 1" above flood plain requirement elevation. You get more points and get a better flood insurance rate. He asked if Hardwire has explored any of the

enterprise zone tax credits?

Mr. Keller said they are an Enterprise Zone certified company. Planning Director Brandewie thought they were previously under that tax credit. If there is a commitment for creating jobs, there could be an additional state income tax credit. Planning Director Brandewie asked how many full-time employees they have? Mr. Keller answered 72 employees.

Commissioner Skorobatsch asked what timeline are they looking at? Mr. Taylor said they are looking to begin by the next quarter. Commissioner Skorobatsch readdressed traffic.

Mr. Keller explained that they don't ship a lot of product daily. They can store a lot of product in the yard, especially for bridgework. Pick up would be 1 truck per week.

Planning Director Brandewie asked them to expand on their product line. Mr. Keller explained they have 3 facilities in Pocomoke. Broad Street, which has just undergone a \$3M retrofit to manufacture their high tensile strength steel composite. They do bridge armor which is a type of sleeve that fits over cables that protects against blasts, fire, cutting and other security issues. They do a lot for New York City and are waiting for several contracts. The other locations do the armor for vehicles, body armor and military supplies.

Planning Director Brandewie asked if they are anticipating the need for rail service. He has seen a lot of improvements being made on railways in Pocomoke City. Mr. Keller said they have done large vehicles and that is certainly something they could do. Planning Director Brandewie asked if they anticipated any major changes that would have to come back to Planning & Zoning Commission? Mr. Keller said the only changes would be minor to water and sewer that won't involve the main on Clarke Ave.

Motion to approve preliminary site-plan as presented for Hardwire (Pilchard, Mills passed) at 5:48PM

Acclamation: Kagan-not present, Hurley-not present, Skorobatach-aye, Mills-aye, 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:

Tabled until next meeting. Planning Director Brandewie was not prepared to present anything on the R-2 zoning text amendments. Research is still needed on what was done before with the consultant. Basic concept was we have an R-2 zoning district that covers a large area of the city. It consists of older neighborhoods as large as well as newer subdivisions. The setbacks and yard requirements are just not a good fit for older existing buildings or lots. Separate buildings that were duplexes or multifamily buildings, once they're vacated, the R-2 zoning district does not allow multifamily dwelling units. This has presented a hardship for some of these buildings that are just sitting there vacant. There have been some requests to look at the zoning to see if we can accommodate re-use of existing large vacant buildings. The problem is that we can't just make one change because of the vast area it covers. The thought is that we create some type of overlay zone that would allow more flexibility in redevelopment of those areas. A consultant named Bob Johnson was working on some drafts back 2014 or 2015.

Monda Marsh, 1 2nd St, asked if any of the older R2 zoning requirements can be grandfathered in to preserve older, historic styles?

Planning Director Brandewie said, yes, we need to look at that language. It affects building additions or if the houses have burned down and whether they would be able to build back in the same footprint. It's important to maintain the fabric and characteristics of a neighborhood. There's room for changes to the zoning ordinances. Rebuilding has to match and fit in well and right now the zoning ordinance is overly restricted.

Commissioner Pilchard said you might have clarified this previously but currently the downtown businesses with second floors, are they zoned to have apartments above the businesses? Planning Director Brandewie said it is allowed under certain conditions. We actually have a draft ready for the Council that modifies some of those restrictions. Right now, it calls for the apartment to be owner-occupied. There are bedroom restrictions and parking restrictions as well. Other changes are for setback requirements. Current setback requirements are a 40' setback. That really impacts a lot of the new subdivisions. One recommendation was to change that to a 25' setback.

Planning Director Brandewie mentioned the need to start reviewing 2014 comprehensive plan. Commissioner Pilchard and I attended planning commission training workshop. We are at the five-year mark for a comprehensive plan. This handout is a guideline for what we need to start thinking about for the comprehensive plan update. The Maryland Department of Planning website might require something more formal than a five-year review. We need to look at goals and check those to see if they are still relevant.

Commissioner Pilchard said that through the Revitalization/Beautification Committee, they reached out to Snow Hill for a copy of their comprehensive plan. Snow Hill keeps records of their previous versions so if they need to reference something, they can refer to the older versions. The training class said this isn't something you want to make multiple, separate changes to. Planning Director Brandewie said if changes are necessary, it is necessary to give adequate public notice and have public hearings. The draft is sent to the State and the State has an opportunity to review it. It can be a lengthy process. The 2020 census will be out next year and we will have that to work with. It is recommended that we hire a consultant. We can do the review in house.

Next meeting is September 18, 2019 at 5:00PM.

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

Acclamation: Kagan-not present, Hurley-not present, Skorobatach-aye, Mills-aye, Pilchard-aye; none opposed, motion carried.

Approved: K.M. Beckett-EI Soloh
City Clerk