

City of Petersburg
Planning Commission Meeting
July 1, 2020

Minutes

The City of Petersburg Planning Commission meeting held on Wednesday July 1, 2020 virtually and at 101 E Washington Street, Petersburg, VA 23803, was called to order by the Chair, Mrs. Tammy Alexander at 6:13 PM. A roll call was completed by Mr. Reginald Tabor.

Members Present:

Ms. Tammy Alexander, Chair
Ms. Marie Vargo
Mr. Thomas Hairston
Mr. Michael Edwards
Mr. Fenton Bland, Vice Chair

Members Absent:

Dr. Conrad Gillam
Mr. William Irvin
Dr. James Norman

A Quorum was established by the Chair.

Others Present: Mr. Reginald Tabor, Ms. Michelle Murrills, Mr. Parmeet Soin, Mr. Bob Jenkins, Mr. Bruce Donald, Mrs. Kelsey Gail, Mr. James Gail, Ms. Katherine Charbonneau, Mr. Thomas Lewis, Ms. Vicky McCall, Ms. Ricia Stebbins, Mr. Darrin White, Mr. Thomas Heinemann, Mr. Avram Fechter, Ms. Louise Lockett Gordon, Ms. Heather Barrar.

Adoption of the Agenda:

Chair Alexander stated that she understood that there were some changes that needed to be made to the agenda. There was a nomination for a recording secretary, Ms. Michelle Murrills, and it was decided to put that under new business.

Vice Chair Bland moved approval of the Agenda as amended.

Mr. Edwards seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Minutes:

Mr. Edwards moved approval of the Minutes from the June 3, 2020 meeting; Vice Chair Bland seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Public Information Period:

Chair Alexander opened the Public Information Period to anyone who wished to speak on an item not on the agenda. With no one wanting to speak, the Chair moved on and the Public Information Period was closed.

Public Hearings:

Chair Alexander read the notice of a public hearing as follows: #20RAZ-PUD-01, A request of SC Maplewood Ave., LLC, Mark Baker, to rezone 607 High Street, T.P. 01-01700017, formerly the site of the High Street United Methodist Church, from R-3, Two-Family Residence district to PUD, Planned Unit Development. The Rezoning is requested to permit a mixed-use development that would include multi-family residential and commercial uses.

Mr. Reginald Tabor, Interim Director of Planning and Community Development for the City of Petersburg greeted the Planning Commissioners and stated: this is a request from SC Maplewood Ave., LLC, to rezone the former site of High Street United Methodist Church to permit a mixed-use development that would include multifamily and commercial use. As required by code, signs were posted June 17, 2020, and ads were placed in the newspaper on June 17, 2020 and June 24, 2020. Also 27 adjacent property notifications were sent out on June 24, 2020. The current zoning of the property is R-3, two family residents, and the proposed rezoning is for PUD-Planned Unit development. The site is 1.09 acres and the parcel number is 0101700017. The parcel is on the North Central side of the city. In the vicinity of the parcel to the West is 719 High Street which has 3 dwelling units, 714 High Street which has 8 dwelling units, and 225 South St which has 10 units. To the South of the parcel, 607 Commerce St. has 63 dwelling units, and to the East, 526 High Street has 9 units and 420 High Street has 36 units. The Zoning for 719 High Street is R-3, 714 High Street is B-2, 225 South St. is B-2, 607 Commerce St. is R-5, 526 High St. is PUD, and 420 High St. is PUD. The adjacent properties, across the street and down the street are R-3. The Future Land Use Plan shows that the recommended future land use is residential.

Mr. Tabor then stated the staff findings and recommendations.

Staff Findings:

The proposed rezoning will not impact the public welfare of either the neighborhood or the City as the proposed reuse of the property for the conversion to up to 24 dwelling units is a reasonable density and provides for density that are compatible with other uses in the area/neighborhood.

Off-street parking is provided on the current property for each of the proposed uses minimizing significant impacts related to traffic or parking in the neighborhood.

The proposed rezoning and reuse of the structure would prevent any further deterioration of a historically significant structure and removes the potential for the unoccupied building to be placed on the city's "Blight List."

The request will provide for new, unique, and desirable market rate housing options to the City of Petersburg and help to support a range of housing options in the neighborhood.

The proposed Phase I use of the sanctuary with as event space, yoga studio, or potential church would serve the community and provide access for the public to enjoy the historically significant building.

The request is driven by the need to rehabilitate and reuse an existing structure located in an R-3, Two-Family Residence District. The PUD district has been designated to provide for flexibility in the redevelopment of historically significant buildings that could not otherwise be achieved under the constraints of existing traditional zoning classifications. The rezoning of the property would allow the building to be repurposed in a way that acknowledges its historical significance which is otherwise prohibited by the current zoning classification.

Chair Alexander then called for the applicant to respond.

Mr. Baker, along with Mr. Parmeet Sooin (the prospective owner), then made their own presentation about why they wanted the zoning to change from R3 to PUD on 607 High Street, the original High Street Methodist Church building. The building is a significant part of the neighborhood fabric. It was originally built in 1844 and therefore it is a historic building. It's our understanding that in recent years there's been some level of concerns in the community, certainly some advocacy surrounding the condition of the property and its potential for deterioration. There has been some speculation about how it might be saved for use and I think that is in line with this request. The property meets the standards for consideration and reading from the PUD section it possesses a historical character that is of importance to the community which will be preserved and protected. It is a large building that has a significant cost related to its continued upkeep. Overtime it has fallen into disrepair to some extent, at the same time no occupancy of the building has been achieved under the R3 regulations. That has led to prolonged vacancy. Those two factors have made it a challenge to maintain the structure, it has put it risk for further degradation of its physical condition. To achieve that goal, the property would be redeveloped in up to two phases; Important, **up to two phases**, but would not necessarily be two phases. Phase one would be 10 to 14 dwelling units located on

the ground floor and within the rear addition. The sanctuary, which is located above the ground floor, will be used as an event space, a yoga studio, a church, or similar use. Phase two would convert the sanctuary to dwelling units for a total of not more than 24 units. In terms of parking, on-street parking meeting the current zoning requirements, and we need to stress the normal zoning requirements would be met both in phase one and phase two. This would be designed to meet normal zoning code requirements. Satisfactory access to that parking would be provided with the final configuration, which we will determine through the site plan review process with the city, as noted there is an existing drive and also there is also future potential to the rear. I want to thank you for my time and consideration. We welcome any questions you might have (Parmeet Soin is also on the call).

Commission Discussion:

Commissioner Hairiston had a question about what the timeline for construction would be; 12-18 months for the first phase. He was also worried about how it was going to look when done.

Chair Alexander wanted to know how long the building had been vacant and what the plans were for the windows.

Mr. Parmeet Soin stated that it has been vacant at least since 2004. And the windows that you see on the main floor, they will be maintained as is.

Commissioner Vargo had a question about the parking access and if there were any plan to improve it.

Mark Baker state that there is opportunity towards the rear with potential to have access to Gilliam Street. Although there will only be 31 parking spots no matter where the entrance is.

Public Comment: Speakers both in favor and opposition

Bob Jenkins of 561 High Street spoke in favor of the application because he believes that it is a good idea to rehabilitate that church and it is a great thing for the neighborhood. He is concerned about the property and whether there is enough room back behind there for 31 parking spaces plus the easements to get into the back. He spoke in opposition to phase two, he was worried that sanctuary and the neighborhood would both be drastically changed.

Bruce Donald of 533 High Street spoke in favor of phase one but in opposition phase two. He was also worried about whether there was enough space for the parking.

Kelsey Gail and James Gail of 271 High St and Catherine Charboneau and Thomas Lewis of 249 High St, together, spoke in favor as it would allow for the historical accuracy of the external portion of that building without anyone knowing that there are apartments inside especially if

the original windows are maintained. They also spoke in favor of the cost and that they thought it would bring more military families into Petersburg since there is not enough apartments for rent.

Vicky McCall of 604 High Street is in favor of the first phase but is in opposition to the second phase because she is afraid she will not have access to the parking right in front of her house. Since she is handicapped that is something that is important to her.

Ricia Stebbins of 610 High Street spoke in favor of the application because it would mean that the church is being maintained. She spoke in opposition to the idea of allowing any type of event into the event space. She wanted restrictions put in place so that we do not end up with something that is not reasonable for this setting.

Darrin White of 625 High Street spoke in opposition because he believes that his property value will decline and that more people on High Street would cause more traffic problems.

Chair Alexander asked if there was a way, we could make a designated space for handicapped people on High Street. Several letters were sent in and one of the questions was...is there going to be on-site management of these apartments?

Mr. Parmeet Soin stated that there will be a management company, but perhaps not an on-site management company.

Chair Alexander closed the public hearing. Commissioner Edwards made a motion to accept the recommendations of staff as laid out with an additional #8, to add with staff's recommendation for an on-site management office. And he added five years for phase two.

Motion passed unanimously.

New business:

The nomination of Michelle Murrills as recording secretary. Motion was presented, seconded, and passed unanimously.

Old Business:

A. Proposal to develop city-owned properties in Ward 5

Mr. Heinemann and Mr. Fechter presented more about Eagles Landing. The set of 50 lots that are in negotiation in Ward 5.

Mr. Heineman stated that City Council came up with about five questions for the Planning Commission that needed to be addressed:

1. What are the commitments and promises to the city?
2. What is the fair market value of the homes once they are built and what they would be in 15 years?
3. Whether or not housing choice vouchers would be used?
4. What the impact would be on schools, public services, etc.?
5. Should The City do an RFP on the disposal of the properties?

Mr. Heinemann stated that his firm promised that they are going to be using higher end factory-built homes, modular type construction. They will set aside 10 lots for home ownership, the remaining 50 homes we would market as rent to own to working family's teachers first responder's military that sort of thing. Finally, have they have been working with the schools in the beginning of this year to enter into an MOU with the school system that would provide approximately \$10,000 per issuance of certificates of occupancy.

Mr. Fechter stated that Eagles Landing plans on doing a comprehensive revitalization of that portion of Ward 5. It's over 110 units and \$19,000,000 worth of investments and over \$1,000,000 of new capital contributions to the school system. He also stated that it would be hard to know what the market value would be after 15 years even with all the improvements.

Mr. Fechter stated that they would be taking housing choice vouchers from qualified residents.

Vice Chair Bland asked if they were going to have some ownership classes for the residents.

Mr. Heinemann said yes. He also stated that as to whether or not you would be better off having an RFP out, if there was an opportunity for the city to do an RFP on that, they would have done that but we're here, and we've put forward a good proposal.

Chair Alexander then asked if the commission had to vote on anything. Commissioner Hairston put forth a motion to say that the commissioners blessed the project and decided to send it back to City Council. Commissioner Vargo seconded it.

Commissioner Edwards also added to the recommendation a requirement that Eagles Landing hold home ownership and credit building classes.

Motion passed unanimously.

B. Comprehensive Plan Update Outline and Schedule.

Mr. Tabor quickly went through a schedule for the next Comprehensive Plan. He proposed that the City Plan would be done by June of 2021. The first half of the of Fiscal Year 20-21 would be devoted to studies and survey and the second half to probable future requirements. He also proposed that that there should be periodic reviews every three months, which would be open to the public, with a final submission to City Council and hopefully a complete adoption in June of 2021.

Motion moved by Commissioner Edwards and seconded by Vice Chair Bland. Motion passed unanimously.

C. Presentation: Comprehensive Plan: Transportation Element, Bike and Pedestrian Section

Ms. Louise Lockett Gordon, with Sports Backers, re-presented a presentation that was approved by the Planning Commission previously. She was asked to come back because there were so many new commissioners that it was felt that they needed to understand the transportation portion of the comprehensive plan better. This presentation was to go to City Council for approval on July 21st, 2020.

The Plan, as presented by Ms. Gordon, was developed by not only the City of Petersburg, but the Crater Health District, the Crater Planning District Commission, FOLAR or the Friends of the Lower Appomattox River, and Bike Walk RVA. There was a focus given on how people use the networks and what is needed to convince people to use these networks; including prioritizing most used routes, different types of bike/walking lanes as needed, as well as where to store your bike when one gets to their destination. Ms. Gordon also stated that they are working on connecting things such as the Ashland to Petersburg trail which terminates within The City and connects with the Appomattox River Trail that is currently being worked on. In Petersburg, the focus is on a network that connects people to destinations and not just random lines coming together. So there are three policy recommendations; one is to adopt the complete streets policy that was drafted in partnership with the national complete streets coalition, the second is just to amend the code that currently prohibits bicycling on the sidewalks, and the last one is just to develop an ordinance that requires walkways to be maintained whenever there are street closures because of construction. As already alluded to, the section was reviewed and recommended for approval to City Council and that will go to City Council July 21.

Announcements:

There were no announcements

Adjournment:

Meeting was adjourned 8:58 pm. Next meeting is at 6:00 pm on September 2nd.