

BANNER ELK PLANNING BOARD MEETING
MONDAY, 31 AUGUST 2015
MINUTES

Members Present: Allen Bolick, Will Mauney, Martha Laura Miller, Meredith Olan, Joel Owen, Penny VonCanon

Staff Present: Zoning Administrator Cheryl Buchanan, Rick Owen, Town Manager

Others Present: Rebecca Bolick, Lauren Foster, Ginger Hansen, Fred Schmitt, Charles B. VonCanon, Jr.

Chairman Joel Owen called the meeting to order at 6:01 pm. The Chairman opened with the pledge of allegiance to the flag and noted that there was a quorum present.

Consideration of the August 03, 2015 Minutes

Chairman Owen asked if anyone had changes to the minutes from August 3rd. Meredith Olan moved to approve the minutes as submitted. Penny VonCanon seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous and the motion carried.

Signs – Lees-McRae College request for an Electronic Changeable Copy Sign

After months of discussion about this topic, Zoning Administrator Cheryl Buchanan stated that the representative of the Company could not produce a demonstration on the brightness of the electronic sign. Ms. Buchanan had researched other ordinances in North Carolina and other cities across the United States as a potential reference, but this is all the information she could provide.

Martha Laura Miller said she was not able to attend the last meeting, but was glad that this had not progressed rapidly since it gave her more time to think about the proposed changes to the ordinance. After careful thought, she said she felt that Lees-McRae College could make a better sign with the ordinance as it is currently and that she was not in favor of adding electronic changeable copy signs to the ordinance.

Penny VonCanon said that initially she was considering the changes to the ordinance, but that she had done a lot of travelling this month and had reconsidered. She confirmed that there are no electronic signs in Blowing Rock and she felt that Banner Elk was not quite ready for them either. Penny mentioned the letter from Eric King and she read a paragraph he had written about our town being out of the “normal business area” and she felt this was not the normal area for these type of signs. Penny VonCanon also mentioned that she had spoken to her brother at Sullivan’s Isle and he told her they had been talking about it for some time but had not allowed them. Mrs. VonCanon mentioned that her brother lived in a resort area like Banner Elk.

Allen Bolick said that he could not understand why the Board did not feel this proposed electronic sign was better; that he felt this was the trend of the future. If he was LMC, this is what he would want. Mr. Bolick said he was in support of changing the ordinance to allow this type of sign.

Will Mauney said that he agreed with the majority that he did not want to see “Gatlinburg” in Banner Elk.

Meredith Olan said that she felt LMC could manage the manpower to change the sign with the number of interns they have there.

Ginger Hansen asked if it would be acceptable for her to speak and perhaps provide a different perspective. Chairman Owen recognized Ginger Hansen and allowed her to speak. Mrs. Hansen said she thanked the Board for the consideration of their project and she would have liked to been able to provide more visual information. Mrs. Hansen stated that they chose this company in Virginia because of the quality of their product. Ginger said she had gathered feedback from lots of sources and she felt that this would be a good tool to help the college get their message out. Ginger said she still wants to have the town consider a new sign and they would go back to the drawing board.

Penny VonCanon moved to approve their original sign design with changeable copy in a glass case where it could not be tampered with and external lighting. Martha Laura Miller seconded. The vote was Will Mauney, Joel Owen, Penny VonCanon, Meredith Olan, and Martha Laura Miller for and Allen Bolick against. The motion carried.

Ms. Buchanan said she would like to see the new sign design before it’s made. Ginger Hansen agreed.

Rezoning the Banner Elk Volunteer Fire Department to Civic Zoning District

Zoning Administrator Cheryl Buchanan said that in the last Town Council meeting, Town Attorney Four Eggers said he would suggest that the town identify a second property that could be rezoned along with the Historic Banner Elk School site so that it did not appear that the Town had written a zoning district just for themselves. Ms. Buchanan stated that the Fire Department is a civic use and that this new zoning could benefit them as well. The Fire Department has been talking about relocating to a newer site and should they do that, they could then use the old site for more uses than the current zoning. Ms. Buchanan said this was a win-win situation for everyone.

Ms. Buchanan said she had spoken with Fred Shrader, current Chief of the Department, and he thought that the Board would probably be agreeable to the new zoning district. Joel Owen asked if the Rescue Squad could have this new zoning to which Ms. Buchanan answered it could. Martha Laura Miller asked how the new zoning district could be better than the Medical/Educational zoning. Ms. Buchanan said that under the current zoning the historic elementary school could only operate as an incubator, but this new zoning district could allow

for more commercial uses and the same would be available to the BEVFD should they ever decide to sell the building.

Meredith Olan moved to recommend approving rezoning of the Banner Elk Volunteer Fire Department to the Civic Zoning District (CZD) as consistent with the definition created for that zoning district being as the Fire Department is a civic organization and in keeping with the Land Use Plan. Penny VonCanon seconded. The vote was unanimous and the motion carried.

With no further business, Meredith Olan moved to adjourn. Martha Laura Miller seconded. All were in agreement and the meeting came to a close at 6:35 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Cheryl Buchanan, Zoning Administrator