

BANNER ELK PLANNING BOARD MEETING
MONDAY, 04 FEBRUARY 2019
MINUTES

Members Present: Aaron Barlow, Allen Bolick, Jacki Lecka, Martha Laura Miller, Meredith Olan, Joel Owen, Penny VonCanon

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

Chairman Joel Owen called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm. Mr. Owen opened with the pledge of allegiance to the flag.

Consideration of the January 2019 Minutes

Penny VonCanon motioned to approve the minutes for the January 2019 meeting as submitted. Aaron Barlow seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous and the motion carried.

New Business

Discussion Only – Continuation of Master Streetscape Plan

Zoning Administrator Cheryl Buchanan introduced this topic. Ms. Buchanan told the Board that she had entertained a request from a property owner for a multifamily development about 800 yards outside the town limits. The property owner is petitioning the Town for annexation and the topic of sidewalks came up during the conversation. In looking at the ordinance, the two references to sidewalk requirements plainly refer to The Master Streetscape Plan which was adopted in 1999. The property in question falls outside of the Master Streetscape Plan, but aligns with the Banner Elk Land Use Plan's vision for future expansion of the Town in that direction. Ms. Buchanan indicated that each Board member should have had a copy in their packet and she referenced the map which illustrated 4 different phases to the master plan. Phase I is 90% complete and lacks one piece of property to be finished. Phase II is at 100% completion. Phase III is about 95% complete. Phase IV is most likely 80% complete. There are some major projects on the horizon that will have significant impact on the Town but are not included in this plan. Additionally, Ms. Buchanan introduced a copy of the Historic Banner Elk School's Plan for parking, sidewalks and a through road that would connect with the dead end of Culver Street. Ms. Buchanan explained that there is also an existing right-of-way that could potentially travel through the Park and was a scenario that happened a long time ago, before the addition was added to the Park. Allen Bolick supplied the plan and spoke about several plans they have in regards to this plan.

Ms. Buchanan's question to the Board is do we continue to expand the sidewalk system where we can, and if so, where exactly do we concentrate our efforts. Ms. Buchanan said that she had invited Phil Trew, Director of Planning for the High Country Council of Government (HCOG), Region D in Boone to speak on this matter. Mr. Trew also brought David Graham, Transportation Planner with Region D, HCOG.

Mr. Trew began by introducing the Pedestrian Plan adopted by the Town in 2009, ten years after The Master Streetscape Plan. His recommendations were as follows:

1. The Master Streetscape Plan is 20 years old and not as comprehensive as the 2009 Pedestrian Plan;
2. Commercial Development can be required to put in sidewalks, as well as the possibility for multifamily and major subdivisions without referencing a plan;
3. Mr. Trew suggested that an ordinance change that references the Pedestrian Plan as opposed to the Master Streetscape Plan could be in order;
4. Mr. Trew told the Board that the HCOG still has the GIS files produced in the Pedestrian Plan and would be willing to clean them up to reflect what has actually been built to date, for a fee;
5. Mr. Trew said that the sidewalks reference a standard but he's not sure what that is. Ms. Buchanan stated that they are minimum DOT standards;
6. Mr. Trew suggested we be specific to what we require for sidewalks. For instance, to be built from property line to property line, and where specifically;
7. There is money available with NCDOT to update the Pedestrian Plan if the Town chose that course of action;
8. Although the Town does not have to reference a plan, the Pedestrian Plan has value;
9. It could be possible to blend the two plans.

Ms. Buchanan asked the Board to consider what happens when Highway 184 is widened, as per the State's Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). If we require sidewalks along Highway 184 and then they widen it, what happens to all the work that might be completed. Mr. Trew spoke to this by saying that if the NCDOT comes along and takes out the sidewalks, they would be required to put them back. Mr. Graham stated that this is a ways off; that the widening of Highway 184 is not slated to begin the right-of-way work until 2029. Ms. Buchanan brought up the topic of road expansion in our area and mentioned that the four lane is now coming into Spruce Pine and that the surveying for the next leg of that plan is up to Ingalls. As she understands it, the plan is to come up to the top of Three Mile where it connects with Highway 221. Additionally, the widening of Highway 221 stopped at the entrance to Baxters in North Cove, but is planned to come on up the mountain and continue into Boone. Ms. Buchanan said that the Town needs to look ahead to what we will do with all the extra traffic, as this plan will bring more people to the area. Mr. Graham confirmed that although a long way off, this is true. Ms. Buchanan reminded the Board that the Town does have a Thoroughfare Plan to take additional traffic around Banner Elk. Mr. Graham confirmed this was true, the chose route is along the western edge of town.

Chairman Owen said that while the brick sidewalks are great and has its place in the Heritage Overlay District, it may not be the best material to use the farther out of Town it goes. Chairman Owen suggested that we look at concrete or asphalt as an alternative surface. There was further discussion among the members as to which works best, sidewalks or Greenway trails, since there are areas in Town where sidewalks are not feasible.

Phil Trew suggested that the Town may want to first look at updating the maps to the current location of all the amenities and then have another meeting to determine the best course of action.

Meredith Olan motioned to amend the ordinance to reference the Pedestrian Plan instead of the Master Streetscape Plan since it is ten (10) years up to date, and to engage the professional services of the HCOG to update the maps in the Pedestrian Plan to reflect the current status of the infrastructure. Martha Laura Miller seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous and the motion carried. A request to call for a Public Hearing will be made to Town Council at their next scheduled meeting.

With no further business, Martha Laura Miller moved to adjourn with a second by Penny VonCanon. The vote was unanimous and the meeting came to an end at 7:34 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Cheryl Buchanan, Zoning Administrator, Town of Banner Elk