

BANNER ELK PLANNING BOARD MEETING
MONDAY AUGUST 7, 2023
MINUTES

Members Present: Joel Owen, Melinda Eggers, Aaron Barlow, Jacki Lecka, and Penny VonCanon

Staff Present and Participating: Zoning Administrator Riley Pudney and Town Manager Rick Owen

Chairman Joel Owen called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm. A quorum was established, the Pledge of Allegiance was conducted, and the meeting was called to order.

Consideration of July 2023 Minutes

Chairman Joel Owen asked the Board to look at the June minutes and see if any adjustments needed to be made. With no questions or comments, Aaron Barlow motioned to approve the minutes and was seconded by Penny VonCanon. The motion passed unanimously.

Hampton Inn Preliminary Meeting

Zoning Administrator Riley Pudney introduced to the Board a new hotel project. She explained that currently, a hotel in the C-2 district under 35 feet does not require a Special Use Permit. This application is for a Hampton Inn 3-story hotel that sits 35 feet in height. The hotel is going next to the Lowe's Hardware parcel and is in the process of being annexed into Town. The developer is looking for preliminary approval for the project in order to close on the property. The developer has provided a site plan and renderings of the hotel. Landscaping plans will be submitted at a later date for the Planning Board to approve. The renderings show the colors and materials being proposed. A lighting plan and traffic study will also be provided before a zoning permit is issued.

Philip Cox, the developer of the project, presented the hotel to the Board. He explained that he was able to work within the requirements of the Town's ordinance. He also stated that he is working with the Town to find a well site on the property and that he does not plan to have large signs off of the building. He provided samples of the materials that will be used including bark siding and dark brick accents. He stated that it is a 3-story, 85 room Hampton Inn that will have the materials and architecture to match the area. Lastly, he informed the Board that he is expecting to have 10-15 full-time employees.

Chairman Joel Owen asked if the location on the parcel was intentional, as it sits so far back and parallel to the road. Mr. Cox stated that it was intentional and that they placed it in that location to be as efficient as possible. Chairman Joel Owen asked if there would be a bar inside the hotel. Mr. Cox explained that there would not be a bar as he did not think that it would suit the area and community. Aaron Barlow asked what the roof would be like. Mr. Cox explained that it was a membrane roof that would either be white or black in color. Chairman Joel Owen stated that that may be something they should consider having a different color roof.

Mark Mucci, a member of the public, asked Zoning Administrator Riley Pudney if the Stucco and cement board were approved materials. She answered that any materials for the final approval will have to meet the requirements of the ordinance and be approved by the Planning Board.

No other comments or questions were made from the Board. Jacki Lecka motioned to favorably recommend the project to move forward and was seconded by Melinda Eggers.

Subdivision Ordinance Amendment

Zoning Administrator Riley Pudney explained that the Town Attorney has updated the subdivision ordinance to change some technicalities within the ordinance such as dates and General Statutes. She further explained that the Board will need a motion to recommend the amendment to the Town Council for adoption. With no comments or questions, Aaron Barlow motioned to recommend the change to the Council and was seconded by Penny VonCanon. The motion carried unanimously.

C-3 Continued Discussion

Zoning Administrator Riley Pudney provided the Board with the minutes from the previous Council meeting where they heard more public comments regarding the C-3 district. The Council referred the discussion back to the Planning Board. She explained that the Board should consider what their goals were and if they wanted to continue the discussion of possibly changing the height or to not discuss it any further.

Chairman Joel Owen began by stating he did not think any amendments should be made to the C-2 district and that he was unsure if changes needed to be made at all. He cited the previous Hampton Inn discussion on how projects and buildings can be built within the confines of the existing ordinance.

Aaron Barlow agreed and further stated that the process of creating the C-3 district was rushed any further discussion or changes need to occur without time restraints. Jacki Lecka asked if the height was changed, would there be a way to confine that to outside of the Heritage Overlay District. Chairman Joel Owen answered by saying that C-2 or C-3 would not occur in the downtown areas or the Heritage Overlay district. Aaron Barlow stated that he believes the discussion should be tabled and discussed later down the road when they have had time to think about the possible changes.

Mark Mucci, the architect of the potential hotel, stated to the Board that he and the developer have operated in good faith and received no pushback until the Council meeting. He believes that the changes to a 4-story building are more in line with the Town ordinance and believes the Board should allow for a height change to four stories or 57 feet.

Chairman Joel Owen responded by stating that the Board had worked within the 30-day timeline that the developer put on them and provided an ordinance that would allow for his project to come to Banner Elk. After hearing the concerns of the public, the Council referred the ordinance back to them for more discussion. Chairman Joel Owen believes that the project is not just on Banner Elk and any future discussion will occur without time restraints.

The rest of the Board agreed to table the discussion for a future date.

Staff Update

Staff did not have an update for the Planning Board.

With no further comments or questions, Jacki Lecka motioned to adjourn the meeting and was seconded by Melinda Eggers. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 7:15 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Riley Pudney, Zoning Administrator and Clerk