

Indian Head Planning Commission Meeting Minutes
Joint Meeting with the Indian Head Town Council
Indian Head Pavilion
October 18, 2017

Michael Pellegrino called the Planning Commission meeting to order at 7:00p.m. Members in attendance:

Michael Pellegrino, Chairman
Warren Bowie
Thomas Blake
Thomas Gordon
Mary Armstrong
Lynne Keenan, Base Liaison
Brandon Paulin, Mayor
Ron Sitoula, Ex-Officio/Vice Mayor
Curtis Smith, Councilman

Staff in attendance:
Ryan Hicks, Town Manager
Scott Longstreth, Zoning Administrator
Andrea Brady, Clerk

Approval of Meeting Minutes for August 20, 2017– Chairman Pellegrino requested a motion to adopt the minutes as presented. Warren Bowie made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Thomas Blake seconds the motion. Motion carried.

4640 Strauss Avenue: Shed – Mr. Longstreth reported that he stopped by 4640 Strauss Avenue to look at the proposed location for the shed and he didn't find any issues. Mr. Longstreth did suggest two conditions, the first being that the shed is to be no closer to the property line than the existing motel, and the second condition to maintain a minimum 25' clear access between the shed and the existing cinderblock building. Mr. Longstreth also explained that the shed is free standing, pre-built and it will be on a skid so it will be moveable. The shed will face the parking area with the side of the shed facing 210 which can be seen from the highway.

Mr. Bowie explained that the Zoning Ordinance requires brick or stone on buildings within the Highway Overlay Zone but that the ordinance also gives the Commission the authority to waive the requirement. The Commission discussed the reasoning for requiring brick and stone in the Highway Overlay which is because previous Planning Commission members and the Town Council did not want to see just any type of building along the 210 corridor. The Commission also discussed the shed that was approved for the State Farm office which does not have brick or stone.

Mr. Blake made a motion to approve the proposed shed with staff's suggested conditions and to waive the façade/material requirement. Ms. Armstrong seconds the motion.

Chairman Pellegrino brought up concern over the shed possibly blocking the egress window of the apartment unit next to it and the need to make sure the placement of the shed is in compliance with code. Mr. Longstreth stated that the end unit is actually an office with a door so the placement of the shed should not present an issue.

Chairman Pellegrino asked to amend Mr. Blake's motion to say that as part of the condition of approval it is contingent upon there being no violation by placing the shed near the window. Mr. Blake was in agreement with the amended motion. Ms. Armstrong seconds the amended motion. Motion carried.

Discussion of the Town Council's Vision for the Town: Prior to the meeting the Commission submitted a list of questions to discuss with the Town Council. Chairman Pellegrino gave some background on the purpose of asking to meet with the Town Council. The Commission is currently updating the Comprehensive Plan after completing their draft of the Zoning Ordinance which has been forwarded to the Town Council and it is the Commission's job to make sure both of those documents are in compliance. Chairman Pellegrino explained that it became apparent to the Commission that when making these decisions they could benefit from the Town Council's vision and input.

- What is the Council using as it plans for the future of the Town? i.e. Indian Head New Horizons, Economic Development Initiative 2001?

Mayor Paulin stated that the Council uses the Economic Development Strategy that was put together by Mr. Hodge as well as the ULI report, and some of the strategic initiatives listed in both documents have been completed. Vice Mayor Sitoula stated that the Council uses the draft 2016 Comprehensive Plan that the Commission is working on and the JLUS Study. Councilman Smith stated that the Council also uses the wealth of knowledge in the Zoning Ordinance. The Council uses all of these documents in combination with knowledge gained through relationships with other municipalities.

Councilman Smith asked to briefly discuss the rationale behind waiving the façade requirements in the Highway Overlay for the proposed shed and asked if the Commission felt further language needed to be added to the Zoning Ordinance. After discussion of the definition of what is considered a building and the need to be consistent with decision in the Highway Overlay, it was decided that requiring brick or stone on a shed may be extravagant and a change in wording or an exemption for accessory structures in the Highway Overlay should be included in the Zoning Ordinance. The Commission also agreed to start giving a statement to explain the reason for the waiver of the façade requirement for any approvals in the future.

- What is the Council's vision for Downtown Indian Head? Where is the downtown area located?

The Council considers the downtown area to be below the hill and uptown at the top of the hill. A map showing the downtown and uptown areas can be found in the Economic Development Strategy.

- What is the Council's view on changing the current commercial zoning on Rt. 210 to Town Center Mixed Use, (TCMX)? Does the Council endorse the development of mixed use buildings along Rt. 210 with commercial uses on the first floor and housing on upper floors?

Mayor Paulin stated that he is for changing the current zoning from commercial to TCMX. Mayor Paulin feels that TCMX zoning will allow flexibility and the ability for the developer to diversify. Mayor Paulin felt that keeping the area zoned as general commercial has not panned out so far and that the Council is considering a zoned approach to TCMX. Councilman Smith stated that the Council recently met with Mr. Longstreth to review the draft Zoning Ordinance and the Council's recommendations. Councilman Smith does see value in changing some of the Rt. 210 area to TCMX. Mayor Paulin stated that the Council would like to change the two larger parcels on 210 to TCMX. Vice Mayor Sitoula explained that the Council discussed a tiered approach to the TCMX zone and they have Mr. Longstreth putting together more information for their review, but the tiers could include certain incentives for commercial development. Mayor Paulin explained that his hesitation to require a certain percentage of commercial is the possibility of what happened on St. Patrick's Drive in Waldorf with vacant commercial under residential areas. Chairman Pellegrino gave his opinion that commercial doesn't have to mean a store. Chairman Pellegrino gave a couple of examples of what the commercial aspect could be including options such as assisted living or an art center. Chairman Pellegrino stated that the current TCMX zone has become no different than high density residential, and used differently, the TCMX zone could be a very powerful thing.

- What are the plans for increasing the geographic foot print of the Town by annexations?

Mr. Bowie gave the Council some background on prior Councils looking into annexation in the past that was not necessarily greeted with optimism by the homeowners due to concerns over paying Town taxes, even though the Council could have waived the taxes for the current owners and reinstate them at the time of the property selling. Mr. Bowie reminded Council of the saying, "If you're not growing, you're going". Mr. Bowie also mentioned the idea of annexing the Base. Ms. Keenan explained that if BRAC was to occur, the land would need to be cleaned which could be decades of environmentalists cleaning the area to be acceptable for the planned future use. Ms. Keenan also stated that the Base does not want BRAC and they are hoping for a long future. Town Manager Hicks discussed other areas that could be considered for annexation including the area down to Lower Wharf. Councilman Smith asked Mr. Longstreth to provide the Council with examples of annexations that have gone successfully or that have been met with resistance and the benefits of annexation.

- Does the Council have any plans to guide future land use and development decisions by getting input from Town residents? The Comprehensive Plan is to provide the basic policy framework to guide future land use and development. Shouldn't the Council provide input to help guide the Planning Commission in this endeavor?

Councilman Smith stated that the Council has notionally come up with reinstating the Economic Development Commission to get input from residents. Mr. Bowie informed that

Council that in the past the Council had working groups of citizens to get input. Councilman Smith explained that the ULI used similar methods and the Council will leverage those documents and they will utilize the EDC for residents input. Mr. Blake suggested that to have better inclusion of resident's input using a method similar to Mr. Bowie's suggestion would be the best way since the average resident finds it difficult to be part of a committee or commission. Mr. Blake also felt that would be a good outlet to show the work the Council is doing and share the documents such as the Economic Development Strategy and the ULI since a lot of people don't have the time to sit on the internet to go through the documents online. The Council agreed it would be beneficial to set something up to have the residents out to discuss the future of the Town, and they will work on setting a date.

- Is there a plan to try to lower the amount of available Section 8 housing to ensure that property/individual town taxes are being paid to the Town?

Town Manager Hicks explained that the Town cannot control the percentage of affordable housing because it is within the homeowner's rights to make it part of the program, but the Town does receive all taxes and the Town has code enforcement for the appearance of the properties. However, code enforcement can only make the properties meet minimum standards. Councilman Smith suggested that if the properties are becoming an issue the Town may need to find a way to raise the minimum standards. The Commission also has the authority to require developers to use better building materials for any future developments to help with the concern of deterioration with age.

- What is the Council's vision for the youth of the Town and what is the possibility of a youth facility?

Councilman Smith has suggested using the building at Mattingly Park as a community center since there doesn't seem to be much use from residents for the current business and the Council plans to look into what Town owned land is available for a community center. Town Manager Hicks has suggested that the Council look into acquiring the old Sheriff's Dept. building that sits on 5 acres of land. Mr. Blake encouraged the Council to pursue having a Town community center.

Mr. Gordon asked to discuss the Comprehensive Plan Introduction. Mr. Gordon's concern was that the State Vision was cut and pasted into the introduction and it seems to lay out how to put together a comprehensive plan when the introduction should set the tone of the rest of the Comprehensive Plan. Following discussion of the need to include the Visions into the introduction of the Comprehensive Plan, Mr. Longstreth suggested incorporating them by reference.

On behalf of Mr. Higdon, Chairman Pellegrino shared Mr. Higdon's suggestion that the Council and the Planning Commission do a tour of the properties to help with the vision for the Comprehensive Plan. The Council agreed it was prudent to do the tour. Town Manager Hicks will have the trolley available to take everyone around for the tour once the date has been set.

The Council reminded the Commission that the door is always open to speak with them. Mr. Pellegrino gave the Historic District as an example of a topic he may want to discuss with the Council since the Town will either need to put it into effect or remove it from the Comprehensive Plan.

Without further comment, Michael Pellegrino requested a motion to adjourn. Thomas Blake made a motion to adjourn. Warren Bowie seconds the motion. Motion carried. Michael Pellegrino adjourned the meeting at 8:24pm.

Submitted by:


Andrea Brady
Town Clerk

12/20/17
Date