

LANCASTER COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

Minutes

May 15, 2014

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Lancaster County Planning Commission was called to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Board meeting room of the Lancaster County Administration Building, Lancaster, Virginia.

Present were David Jones, Chairman, Robert Smart, Vice Chairman, Tara Booth, David Chupp, and Glenn Pinn. Ty Brent and Steve Sorensen were absent.

Also present were William R. Lee, Board of Supervisors Representative, Don Gill, Planning/Land Use Director, Anne and Charlie Costello, Audrey Thomasson and others.

Mr. Jones asked if there were any corrections or additions to the minutes of the April 17, 2014 meeting.

Mr. Jones moved to approve the April 17, 2014 minutes as submitted. **VOTE: 5-0.**

DISCUSSION ITEM #1

ZONING ORDINANCE ARTICLE 10 – HISTORIC RESOURCES

Mr. Jones asked Mr. Gill to present the issue.

Mr. Gill stated that a local historic resources and zoning district dates back as early as 1970 and the current ordinance and zoning district was created in 1993 and revised in 1999. He stated that Supervisor Jenkins, the former Board representative to the Planning Commission, had requested that the Planning Commission review Article 10 as time permitted and revise as necessary.

Mr. Gill stated that currently, there are only ten parcels in the County, which have the local Historic Resources Overlay Zoning (nine parcels associated with the Foundation for Historic Christ Church and one parcel at the “Edgely” farm off Courthouse Road). He stated that there are numerous other structures that are listed on the National and/or State Register of Historic Places, but the parcels in which they are located are not under the local Historic Resources Overlay Zoning. He stated that the reason that keeps coming up as to why some of those parcels have not requested the local Historic Resources Overlay Zoning is that the local standards and requirements are too strict.

Mr. Gill stated that around 2005, a community meeting was held at Trinity Church in the Lancaster Courthouse village area to ask those community residents if they would like to have the Historic Resources Overlay Zoning for this obviously historic village area. He stated that the overwhelming response was that they could not realistically maintain their homes with the many strict standards and requirements outlined in Article 10. He stated that a similar, informal request was recently made to the residents in the historic village of Morattico with the same resounding response. He stated that as a result, Article 10 must be revised to make the local Historic Resources Overlay Zoning more attractive to our many historic villages.

Mr. Gill stated that it may be prudent for the Historic Resources Commission to review Article 10 as well, if not first, but that group is currently one member short and prospective appointees are hard to find, so the review will begin with the Planning Commission. He stated that Mr. Lee is the Board representative to the Historic Resources Commission as well.

Mr. Gill stated that this initial discussion is intended for staff to get an impression of how the Planning Commission feels about Article 10. He stated that after the Planning Commission meeting, he intends to seek assistance from the State Historic Resources Office as well. He stated that there is no deadline for this revision.

Mr. Gill stated that the Edgely property was recently sold and the new owners want to do some improvements to the property. He stated that one of the requirements of the ordinance is a certificate of appropriateness from the Historic Resources Commission. He stated that the Historic Resources Commission would need to review the new owner's plans.

Mr. Jones asked for clarification between the different historic resources bodies.

Mr. Gill replied that specific structures could be designated under the state or national historic designation. He stated that parcels of land are designated under the County's ordinance and it is an overlay zoning district. He stated that the requirements of the County's ordinance relate to structures on the parcels.

Mr. Jones asked if the County's regulations were equal to or more than the state's regulations.

Mr. Gill replied yes.

Mr. Jones asked if a property could just be under the County's designation and not the state or national registry.

Mr. Gill replied yes.

Mr. Jones asked if there was an advantage for the property owner to seek the County's designation.

Mr. Gill replied he did not know of any advantage and did not believe there was a tax advantage either. He stated that it was more of a way to preserve the historic character of a property.

Mr. Jones stated that it was more of a legacy.

Mr. Lee asked about the County having the same requirements as the state.

Mr. Gill referred to the state's standards of rehabilitation guidelines and stated that it was comparable to the County's ordinance.

Mr. Lee stated that a property owner could qualify for the state registry, but not the County's.

Mr. Gill stated that was correct.

Mr. Smart stated that after reading the ordinance, it was obvious to him why citizens would decline the Historic Overlay Designation. He stated that he only saw economic disincentives. He suggested that the state be consulted about recommendations of how historical properties could be maintained at a lower cost. He stated that he had spoken with people who were doing preservation work on Historic Christ Church and he was astounded at the expense.

Mr. Jones stated that he could not imagine the County is any more restrictive than Williamsburg. He stated that it would be interesting to know what other nearby localities were doing with their historic areas.

Mr. Jones stated that he had worked on historic buildings and knew that it could be very costly.

Mr. Smart stated that the Lancaster Courthouse Village has some areas of tourist interest like the blacksmith shop and the old jail. He stated that, in the future, the area might support a small interpretive center and gift shop.

Mr. Jones stated that property owner's rights need to be considered as well. He stated that people want the protection of the property, but not always the hindrances.

Mr. Chupp asked what had the Historic Resources Commission done since the ordinance passed in 1993.

Mr. Gill stated that he was not the staff liaison to the Historic Resources Commission and could not properly answer that question.

Mr. Chupp referred to the historic buildings in the courthouse area and asked why they were not in the historical registry.

Mr. Jones replied because it was too restrictive.

Mr. Chupp stated that trying to get whole villages to sign up for the historic overlay seems virtually impossible. He asked what percentage of homes and buildings in the courthouse area or Morattico have any real historic value.

Mr. Gill stated that he would guess the percentage would be low.

Mr. Chupp stated that a better solution might be to concentrate on individual historic properties.

Mr. Gill stated that proposing the idea in a village community meeting can give individuals a chance to seek the historic overlay zoning for their individual property if they desired.

Mr. Jones suggested that Mr. Gill look at Urbanna's historic ordinance. He stated that his company did work on some historic buildings there and did not remember the town being overly restrictive.

Mr. Jones stated that a lot of the areas such as landscaping could be under the zoning administrator's purview.

Mr. Lee stated that if he had attended the community meeting, he would have thought that it was no value to him as a property owner, but would be a value to the County. He stated that to make it more attractive to property owners, there needs to be better incentives.

Mr. Chupp stated that the designation would add value to the real estate.

Mr. Smart stated that they would probably not be successful in getting large numbers of homeowners to agree to join the Historic Overlay District. He stated that he thought they would accomplish more by focusing on specific structures.

Mr. Lee stated that he was curious if there was any special zoning for the historic Heathsville area.

Mr. Jones stated that he thought when Kilmarnock designated the Steptoe's District, they just did it and did not ask anyone.

Mr. Smart stated that he liked the idea of trying to get more information from other localities and the state.

Mr. Costello stated that historical sites lend themselves to tourism.

Mr. Jones agreed.

Mr. Jones asked Mr. Gill to check with other localities on how they handle their historic buildings and areas.

Mr. Chupp suggested a speaker.

Mr. Lee stated that after reviewing the Historic Resources Commission's responsibilities, he thought that the Commission needed to become active again.

Mr. Gill stated that the Historic Resources Commission had not met in a long time and they needed to meet to review the proposed Edgely plans.

Mr. Jones stated that they would revisit the issue again at the July meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS

- **Planning Commission Elections**

Mr. Gill stated that Article II of the By-Laws of the Lancaster County Planning Commission requires the election of a Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Secretary at the May meeting each year. He stated that the current officers are as follows: Chairman-David Jones, Vice-Chairman-Robert Smart and Secretary-Crystal Whay.

Mr. Smart nominated David Jones to be Chairman. There were no other nominations. **VOTE: 5-0.**

Mr. Smart nominated Tara Booth to be Vice-Chairman. Mr. Chupp stated that he would like to be considered for Vice-Chairman. There were no other nominations. Tara Booth was elected as Vice-Chairman. **VOTE: 4-1.**

Mr. Jones nominated Crystal Whay to be Secretary. There were no other nominations. **VOTE: 5-0.**

- **No June Meeting**

Mr. Gill reminded the Commission members that there would be no Planning Commission meeting in June.

ADJOURNMENT

The May 15, 2014 regular meeting of the Lancaster County Planning Commission was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

