

Planning Board Meeting
10-12-15

6:30 pm
Council Chambers

Minutes & General Account

Planning Board Member Present: Art Wise, Chair; Sarah Glanville, Vice Chair; Kerry Miller, John Capes, Eddie Oakley, Steve Monroe, ETJ Representative

Staff Present: Chuck Smith, Carrie Spencer and Martha Wolfe

Visitors Present: Carol Brooks of the Jamestown News

1. Call to Order – Art Wise, Chair, called the meeting to order.
2. Approval of minutes from the September 14, 2015 meeting – Kerry Miller made a motion to approve the minutes from the September 14, 2015 meeting as amended. John Capes made a second to the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote.
3. Continued discussion on the sign ordinance – Spencer shared that she is in the process of determining which signs are in compliance and which are not. She has been looking at existing sandwich board signs. The sandwich board signs are intended for pedestrian traffic not vehicular traffic. Sandwich board signs also need to be taken in at the close of the business day. When businesses are using sandwich board signs for vehicular traffic, she is notifying the business and giving them time to replace or come into compliance. Spencer is working with current businesses to come up with alternatives to the improper use of sandwich board signs.

Spencer said she followed up on the Food Lion sign. The management company said they will redo the landscaping around the existing sign first. Then they will re-do the existing sign to bring it into compliance. The management company will give Spencer a schedule. She will continue to follow up.

Spencer reported that the Town Manager designed a downtown business banner that includes some parking direction where appropriate. The Town is in the process of installing the large “P” signs to help the public identify the public parking areas. (3 along Ragsdale & 3 along Gannaway)

Spencer said Oakdale Methodist Church is replacing the face of their sign. Therefore, to conform to the Town’s ordinance, the height of the sign will be lowered. The Town’s sign ordinance stated if a non-conforming sign is replaced, the Town Planner has the authority to require the sign be brought into compliance with the sign regulations.

Spencer stated she has set up her schedule to allow Monday afternoons as the time she takes down signs. (snipes signs and yard signs) These are signs attached to poles and illegal yard signs. Spencer said the Town does allow for real estate open house and yard sale signs to go up Friday afternoons and to be taken down by Monday afternoon. (or the Town will pick up)

4. Continued discussion of Parking & Traffic concerns – The first solution to parking is to make sure people are aware of where the Town has public parking. Spencer said the Town is currently installing the larger “P” signs at the public parking sites to help the public identify the parking areas.

The Town created a public parking map. Spencer will update the parking map possibly to add business addresses as a point of reference. Staff may also hand these maps out to the local businesses for circulation to their customers.

Spencer stated that she is working on an inventory of parking spaces for businesses. Capes commented it is a shame to see cars getting towed when right down the street is public parking. Anything we can do to draw attention to the public parking areas would be a positive.

Art Wise asked if there was a formula on how much land is required to build X amount of parking spaces. Spencer said the Victoria Transport Policy states in general, an acre yields between 100 – 150 parking spaces. Wise stated should the Town consider buying ½ an acre of land behind the Post Office (where parking was originally supposed to be) to have enough room for 30 spaces.

Spencer said she would like to do an inventory of the parking needs of the businesses and where current public parking is located. We can then determine what the short fall is and where it is located. Then list what the options are: such as 1) Town sign agreement with Food Lion for public parking lot 2) Individual businesses sign agreement with Food Lion to satisfy their individual parking requirements 3) do a better map, etc.

Spencer said there are a couple of businesses that haven't satisfied their basic parking requirements. She is in the process of compiling a list of these businesses. Capes asked the Town Manager about the Town owned property located behind Wells Fargo. He knows the Town has investigated this possibility before however, could we try again. The Town Manager said we haven't spoken with them recently.

Miller said before the Town spends money he would like to feel comfortable that people are going to walk a block and half. Smith said one thing about the Town owned property behind Wells Fargo is the distance. He is not sure people would use parking there and walk to their destination. The piece of property is landlocked.

Spencer said the Main St. area is walkable. However, Jamestown residents are not accustomed to the city atmosphere where you park and walk. She read from the Greenburgh Study which states; *that Main Street/Jamestown was built as a major traffic corridor it was never designed with the pedestrian in mind. While the brick sidewalks downtown make it more walkable most customers still prefer to park in front of a business rather than walk from surrounding parking lots. The highway traffic makes pedestrian crossing difficult. Due to the difficulty in pedestrian crossing, the downtown is functioning as small retailing nodes rather than a unified shopping area. A study of Main Street as a transportation corridor to see if it can be changed in speed and design with a goal to make it a more complete street.*

The Planning Board discussed effects the By-pass might have on Main Street traffic. The goal is to improve Main Street so that it becomes a destination location. A traffic count study is underway but we don't have the numbers yet. Main Street is classified as a major thoroughfare.

Miller stated a year or so ago, some of us attended a meeting at The Deck with a firm from Charlotte on paid parking. He asked if there was a way the Town could act as an intermediary to get the parties together to see if it would be a profitable venture for the landowner to put in a paid parking lot. (property behind the Post Office)

Other parking options discussed:

- Valet parking
- Availability of Post Office parking spaces in the evenings
- Existing businesses that do not have adequate parking, must enter a lease agreement for off-site parking to satisfy their parking requirement
- There have been 3 cases of pedestrians hit on Main Street

Spencer asked if there was a consensus of the Planning Board to make a suggestion to the Council that the Town take some public responsibility to help with the parking. In other words, the Town look into purchasing some property to provide for public parking. The Town Manager said there have been discussions with the Council regarding funding for the purchase of property for the use as public parking.

The Town Manager said we have previously looked into the paid parking meters. We researched the 2 hour parking meters on Ragsdale/Gannaway. The Sheriff's Department would not enforce this, so a town employee would have to check the vehicles for violations. The return of the investment to install the meters was extremely long term for the little we could charge for the amount of parking spaces we have. If we had a parking deck, you could generate some income, but in our situation it could be 10 – 20 years out to get a return. It is not realistic to spend \$300,000.00 - \$400,000.00 to purchase land to build parking and actually make any money.

Capes said he has been in Jamestown for 13 years. He remembers 10 years ago us talking about how nice it would be to have a vibrant downtown Main Street. We are at the point where we have that. He would like to keep it going in the right direction. We can get a bad reputation for towing. He would hate to see us undo what has transpired. He hates to see people getting towed.

Spencer brought up researching "sidewalk eating" ordinance. This allows dining located closer to the right away. It is allowed in areas 35 mph and under. Spencer said a speed test was just completed for Main Street. It feels as if vehicles are going fast but it turns out people are observing the speed limit.

The Town Manager said several years ago (2007-08) NCDOT looked at lowering the speed limit on Main Street to 25 mph. However, NCDOT did not recommend lowering it. Capes asked with the changes to Main Street since DOT last looked at it, would NCDOT support the lower speed limit now. The Town Manager said if the Council supports lowering the speed limit on Main St. there would be a better chance of a DOT positive recommendation.

The Town Manager said we have also been looking at E. Fork Rd.; making the speed limit 35 mph for all of E. Fork Rd. from Penny Rd. to Guilford Rd.

Capes stated he likes the recommendation to the Council to reduce the speed limit on Main Street from 35 mph to 25 mph. He then made this recommendation as a motion and added to reduce the speed limit on E. Fork Rd. to 35 mph from Penny Rd. to Guilford Rd. Glanville made a second to the motion.

Miller asked the purpose of lowering the speed limit on E. Fork Rd. The Town Manager said for safety purposes especially the “S” curve at the greenway trails and pedestrian crossing.

Wise stated we have a motion on the floor that the Planning Board recommend to the Town Council to request NCDOT to reduce the speed limit on Main Street to 25 mph and to reduce the speed limit on E. Fork Rd. (Penny Rd. to Guilford Rd.) to 35 mph. The motion passed by a majority vote with a 4 – 1 vote.

The Town Manager asked what limits the Planning Board would recommend the 25 mph be on Main Street. It was stated to use from Teague Street to Wade Street.

Oakley asked what the requirements for handicapped parking spaces are. Spencer said the requirement is 1 handicapped space for every 25 spaces. Spencer plans to see how many businesses are in compliance. The Guilford County Sheriff’s Department should give citations for parking in handicapped parking spaces.

Glanville spoke of the negativity of the “No Parking” signs in the downtown area. The “Way Finding” signage is of a more positive nature.

5. Public Comment Period – No one registered to speak.
6. Other Business – Spencer stated Steve Monroe, Art Wise, Martha Wolfe, Chuck Smith and Carol Brooks of the Jamestown News, attended a workshop put on by the A&T students in the Civic Center recently. The students were all seniors in the Landscape Design Major. They selected the Oakdale Mill Property as a class project to come up with ideas on ways to develop the Mill Property.

Last Friday, they did a community meeting to gather input on what people would like to see developed in this area. Steve Monroe said there seemed to be a passion to link the Mill Property to the downtown. Ideas included creating another area of restaurants and retail, to make Jamestown a destination. Ideas were to take advantage of the river & walkways.

Wise said the students are looking at all the Oakdale Mill Property from the Railroad tracks to Harvey Rd. Ideas were shops, walking trails, rebuilding the dam to allow for canoes & kayaks, parks and gardens. There is a lot of land involved. It has a lot of possibilities.

The Town Manager said the students would like to come to the December Planning Board meeting to give a presentation, if the timing works out. If not, we may provide a night for the students to give a community presentation.

Kerry Miller made a motion to adjourn. John Capes made a second to the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

The meeting ended at 7:45 pm.