

Gastonia Planning Commission
January 5, 2017

Chairperson Pamela Goode declared a quorum and the Gastonia Planning Commission meeting opened at 5:34 pm on Thursday, January 5, 2017, in the Council Chambers at City Hall.

Present: Commissioners Alec Long, Rodney Armstrong, Jerry Fleeman, Mark Epstein, Bob Cinq-Mars, Jim Stewart, Bob Biggerstaff, and Chairperson Pamela Goode.

Staff Members Present: Ash Smith, City Attorney; Jason Thompson, AICP, Planning Director; Jana McMakin, AICP, Planner II; and Chrystal Howard, Secretary.

Item 1a: Role Call / Sound Check

Item 1b: Calls/Contacts to Planning Commission Members

Commissioners stated there were no contacts.

Ash Smith, City Attorney introduced Mr. Charles Graham as the Assistant City Attorney. Mr. Graham practiced law in Gaston County for about 18 years and was recently the Town Manager for Ranlo, NC. Mr. Graham will be attending future Gastonia Planning Commission meetings.

Item 1c: Approval of December 8, 2016 Minutes

Commissioner Fleeman made a motion to approve the December minutes as written and Commissioner Stewart seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Chairperson Goode explained the rules of procedure and time limitations.

Item 2: Public Hearing – Joyce D. Jenkins (File # 8680)

Subject hearing involves rezoning approximately .69 acre from RS-12 (Residential District, minimum 12,000 sq. ft. lots) to C-2 (Highway Commercial District). The property is located at 2223 Union Road. The property is owned by Essie S. Davis Heirs c/o Joyce Jenkins.

Chairperson Goode opened the public hearing and recognized Jana McMakin, AICP, Planner II for the purpose of staff presentation.

Ms. McMakin stated that Ms. Joyce Jenkins, property owner and applicant, is present this evening to answer any questions even though she is struggling with laryngitis. Ms. McMakin stated that the property is located at 2223 Union Road. Ms. Jenkins is requesting the rezoning from RS-12 (Residential District, minimum 12,000 sq. ft. lots) to C-2 (Highway Commercial District). Ms. McMakin provided a summary of her meeting with Ms. Jenkins. The property consists of one single-family residence that has been vacant since 1993 according to the applicant. The property has an existing driveway located off of Union Road. Water and sewer is available and has an existing well house on the property.

On June 4, 2015, a rezoning to the C-2 CD (Highway Commercial Conditional District) was granted for the Lidl grocery store currently under construction. The parcel will include a grocery store, the stormwater detention area, and a possible future outparcel. The grocery store site is located west of the subject property. Located north of the subject property is the existing driveway used by the CVS on the corner and will also be used by the Lidl grocery store. To the immediate south of the subject property is Alliance Bank & Trust Co. zoned OLC (Office Light Commercial District). Across Union Road to the east is the mini-warehouse business zoned C-3 CD (General Commercial Conditional District). Several different non-residential uses surround the subject property. The subject property is projected as office use on the Future Land Use Map. The rezoning request can be considered reasonably consistent with adopted plans given that the Future Land Use Map designates the site for non-residential uses and the surrounding properties are zoned for commercial and light commercial uses. Therefore, staff recommends approval of the request as presented.

Statement of consistency and reasonableness: The proposed rezoning is consistent with the 2025 Plan and all other applicable plans, because it results in the potential development of a small residentially zoned site surrounding by non-residential zoning. The rezoning also is consistent with the mix of uses shown on the Future Land Use Plan for the E. Hudson Boulevard and Union Road intersection. The Planning Commission considers an affirmative vote to be reasonable and in the public's interest.

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Commissioner Epstein inquired about the decision to rezone to C-2 (Highway Commercial District). Ms. McMakin and Ms. Jenkins discussed the different uses. Because of the intense uses of C-3 (General Commercial District), Ms. Jenkins did not have an interest to pursuing it. Ms. Jenkins decided on the C-2 (Highway Commercial District) because of its location to the grocery store and it is consistent with what exists and already approved.

Discussion occurred regarding the rezoning of the grocery store and its storm water, as well as, the subject property. Ms. McMakin commented that the developing entity for the subject property is unknown. Once a developing entity is involved, the entity will have to retain their own stormwater and water and go through the Technical Review Committee to ensure requirements are met. Ms. McMakin stated that the 20,000 square feet impervious surface standard will have an impact on the subject property. No questions were asked by the board.

Commissioner Cinq-Mars made the motion to approve the rezoning request as presented and Commissioner Long seconded that motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Item 3: Public Hearing – Special Exception to the Flood Hazard Overlay (File # 8588)

Subject hearing involves a request for a special exception to the flood hazard overlay of the City of Gastonia. This project involves enhancement/restoration of approximately 400 linear feet of severely eroding bank along Armstrong Creek. The project includes property located at 2039 Linda Street. The property is owned by Edward Douglas and Martha S. Snavely.

Chairperson Goode opened the public hearing and recognized Tucker Johnson, PE, Assistant City Engineer for the purpose of staff presentation.

Mr. Johnson stated that this is a request for a special exception to deal with an eroding stream bank. This is a city project funded through the stormwater program. These stream bank improvements are to be made at 2039 Linda Street on Tributary D-4 (Armstrong Creek). This project will involve stabilization of approximately 120 linear feet of stream bank. Native plants and materials will be used instead of riprap. The improvements should stop the ongoing erosion and improve water quality. The goal is to maximize the use of native species to improve water quality. City staff has reviewed the flood study and agrees with the “zero rise” study; therefore, staff recommends approving this request for a special exception.

Chairperson Goode recognized Mr. Chris Tomsic, 81 Chickwood Trail of Weaverville, NC. Mr. Tomsic is the Engineer of Record and is present to answer any questions. No questions were asked by the board.

Commissioner Cinq-Mars and Mr. Johnson discussed the stone wall added by a homeowner.

Mr. Tomsic commented that the intent is not to disturb any more land than necessary. Part of the process is utilizing materials onsite. Mr. Tomsic reiterated that native plants and materials will be used instead of riprap.

Commissioner Epstein made the motion to approve the special exception as presented and Commissioner Cinq-Mars seconded that motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Item 4: Public Hearing – Special Exception to the Flood Hazard Overlay (File # 8589)

Subject hearing involves a request for a special exception to the flood hazard overlay of the City of Gastonia. This project involves enhancement/restoration of approximately 300 linear feet of severely eroding stream and conveyance swale along Shoals Branch. The project includes property located at 1619 Ridgewood Drive, 2106 Kingtree Circle, and 1898 Lookout Lane. The property is owned by Phillip Dewayne and Sonya N. Wilson, Victoria Margarita Rivas and Carmen Rivas and Robinwood Village Community Association.

Chairperson Goode opened the public hearing and recognized Tucker Johnson, PE, Assistant City Engineer for the purpose of staff presentation.

Mr. Johnson stated that this is a request for a special exception and is similar to the previous special exception request. Mr. Johnson provided two pictures that illustrate the level of erosion. This restoration of approximately 200 feet of eroding stream and conveyance well will involve reshaping the banks. Native plants and materials will be used instead of riprap, including log veins and rock steps. Again, the improvements should stop the ongoing erosion and improve water

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quality. The goal is to maximize the use of native species to improve water quality. Stream bank improvements are to be made near 1619 Ridgewood Drive. City staff has reviewed the flood study and agrees with the “zero rise” study; therefore, staff recommends approving this request for a special exception.

Commissioner Cinq-Mars commented on the visual appearance at this location.

Commissioner Long and Mr. Johnson discussed how this project will be contracted through a City bid process to determine who will be completing the work.

Mr. Thompson stated that the soft armor approach and use of natural material is becoming increasingly popular of the past 10-15 years and has seen examples. Mr. Thompson gave examples of the benefit for a soft armor approach.

Further discussion ensued between Commissioner Cinq-Mars and Mr. Johnson.

Chairperson Goode recognized Ms. Mary R. Norris, 1207 Jackson Road of Gastonia, NC. Ms. Norris is Vice President of Property Matters Realty and is representing their client at Robinwood Village Community Association. On behalf of the members and board members of the Robinwood Village Community Association, she thanked the board for considering the special exception request. Ms. Norris stated that the Robinwood Village Board of Directors are in full support of this project. Ms. Norris would like confirmation that the cost will be funded by the City of Gastonia. Regarding the construction and access to the work site, Ms. Norris asked the board, if it is in their control, to have construction equipment enter the site from East Hudson Boulevard or provide the name of the person who is responsible to discuss entry to the site. Mr. Johnson commented that access appears to come from Ridgewood Drive and Ms. Norris said that access at Ridgewood is acceptable. Mr. Robert Cloninger, Storm Water Utility Administrator for the City of Gastonia, was recognized. Mr. Cloninger stated that the funding is from the Off Right-a-way Improvement account. The funding will address an exposed sewer line and the issue at 1619 Ridgewood Drive. Ms. Norris accepted the second answer. No questions were asked by the board.

Commissioner Cinq-Mars made the motion to approve the special exception as presented as presented and Commissioner Long seconded that motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Item 5: Preliminary Major Subdivision Plat – Cramer Estates (File # 8675)

Subject hearing involves Preliminary Major Subdivision Plat for DT Developing, LLC.

Chairperson Goode opened the public hearing and recognized Keith Lineberger, Land Development Project Manager for the purpose of staff presentation.

Mr. Johnson is presenting this item on behalf of Mr. Lineberger who is sick. Mr. Johnson stated that DT Developing, LLC has submitted a preliminary subdivision plat for their development to be known as Cramer Estates Subdivision. The property located in southeast Gastonia on Stroupe Road. The development will contain 58 single-family lots. The property is currently zoned as RS-12 (Residential 12,000 square foot lots District) and these are 90 feet wide lots. The property is located on both sides of Stroupe Road and the entrances are aligned directly across from one another. Public water and sewer will service the property and will be accessible. There will not be any offsite utility extensions to serve this subdivision. Staff has reviewed the plat and agree that this meets the subdivision ordinance; therefore, staff recommends approval as presented.

Discussion occurred between Commissioner Cinq-Mars and Mr. Johnson regarding the main sewer line along the creek that touches the property.

Commissioner Long made the motion to approve the preliminary major subdivision plat as presented and Commissioner Cinq-Mars seconded that motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Item 6: Other Business

No update on Council votes and no representative is needed for the January 20, 2017 City Council Meeting.

Mr. Thompson stated that staff is working on potential sign ordinance amendments.

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Brief discussion occurred on the low impact development and residential design standards. Staff continues to work on this process. Mr. Thompson is working the City Manager about potentially hiring a consultant with this process. Commissioner Cinq-Mars encouraged sidewalks to make a great looking development.

The next regular scheduled meeting to be held is on Thursday, February 9, 2017.

There being no other business, Chairperson Goode adjourned the meeting at 6:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chrystal Howard, Secretary

Bob Cinq-Mars, Vice-Chairperson