

Gastonia Planning Commission
September 5, 2019 Minutes

Chairperson Goode declared a quorum and the Gastonia Planning Commission meeting opened at 5:31 pm on Thursday, September 5, 2019, in the Council Chamber at City Hall.

Present: Commissioners Rodney Armstrong, Jerry Fleeman, Kristie Ferguson, Anthony Gallant, Pamela Goode, Bob Cinq-Mars, and Jim Stewart

Absent: None

Staff Members Present: Charles Graham, Assistant City Attorney; Quentin McPhatter, Assistant City Manager; Jason Thompson, Planning Director; Jana McMakin, Senior Planner; and Chrystal Howard, Secretary

Mr. Thompson announced that the Proposed West Franklin New Redevelopment Area Plan was pulled from the agenda and will be heard at the October 3, 2019 Gastonia Planning Commission meeting. Notifications will be mailed.

Item 1a: Role Call / Sound Check

Item 1b: Calls/Contacts to Planning Commission Members

Commissioner Cinq-Mars stated he received one contact. The remaining commissioners stated there were no contacts.

Item 1c: Approval of August 8, 2019 Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Fleeman made the motion to approve the August 8, 2019 minutes as written and Commissioner Stewart seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved (7-0).

Chairperson Goode explained the rules of procedure and time limitations.

Item 2: Public Hearing – Ai Nguyen (File # 9291)

Subject hearing involves a request to rezone approximately 0.42 acres from O-1 (Office District) to UMU (Urban Mixed Use District). The subject property is located at 109 E. Third Avenue. The property is owned by Gaston Co Interfaith HS NTWK Inc.

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

Ms. McMakin began by providing the site description and background. The zoning map was displayed. Ms. McMakin stated the applicant, owner of Chic Nail Spa, is requesting this rezoning because of his need to expand. The applicant met with the Technical Review Committee (TRC) to discuss any improvements needed to be met for ADA accessibility. The subject property is vacant. The Future Land Use Map in the 2025 Comprehensive Plans shows office center along E. Third Avenue. Ms. McMakin gave a description of adjoining properties and zoning. The rezoning to the UMU district would also allow for a variety of uses including office or residential. Given the current zoning surrounding the subject property as well as the existing mixture of residential, professional services, institutional, and offices, staff recommended approval of the request as presented. No questions were asked by the Commissioners.

Chairperson Goode recognized Mr. Ai Nguyen, 310 S York Street of Gastonia, NC. Mr. Nguyen is the applicant and he stated the reason for this request was his need to expand the business. This location will provide an additional 800 square feet and is a good opportunity. No questions were asked by the Commissioners.

Commissioner Cinq-Mars made a motion to approve the request as presented with the statement of consistency and reasonableness and Commissioner Stewart seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved (7-0).

Item 3: Public Hearing – Southwood Realty Co. (File # 9292)

Subject hearing involves a request to rezone approximately 9.11 acres from RS-12 (Residential District, minimum 12,000 sq. ft. lots) to RMF CD (Residential Multi-family Conditional District). The subject property is located on the east side of Armstrong Park Road at the intersection of Hollybrook Avenue and Bradford Heights Road. The property is owned by Southwood Realty Co.

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Chairperson Goode opened the public hearing and recognized Mr. Jason Thompson, AICP, Planning Director for the purpose of staff presentation.

Ms. McMakin shared a tax record update on the current owner. She provided the background and proposed zoning action. The subject property is comprised of two (2) lots currently wooded, vacant, and zoned RS-12 (Single Family Residential District, minimum 12,000 sq. ft. lots). Ms. McMakin described adjoining properties and zoning / land use trends. The request is to rezone to build a multi-family development to be known as "Seasons of Gastonia." The applicant has included a conceptual site plan and architectural elevations of the proposed buildings, garages, and swimming pool/clubhouse area. Ms. McMakin displayed the proposed plans and elevations. The request includes four three-story buildings comprised of 54 one-bedroom units and 72 two bedroom units for a total of 126 units. Proposed driveways are shown on Armstrong Park Road and Bradford Heights Road. Staff compiled five proposed zoning conditions for consideration. The Future Land Use Map adopted as part of the 2025 Comprehensive Plan indicates residential land use to be appropriate for this area. Staff recommended approval of the request as presented.

Commissioner Cinq-Mars inquired about a storm water plan. Ms. McMakin stated an above ground was not shown and the applicant will have to meet storm water regulations. Mr. Thompson explained that storm water management is a base requirement under the city ordinance but not required to show at this stage. Brief discussion ensued. No further questions were asked by the Commissioners.

Chairperson Goode recognized Mr. William Ratchford, 3005 Laurie Court of Gastonia, NC. Mr. Ratchford is representing Southwood Realty Co. and Tri Real Estate of Gastonia. He provided the company background. He stated the character of the property should fit well with the surrounding area and provided examples of nearby buildings. He provided a description of the exteriors and building layouts. Mr. Ratchford stated the club house will provide a fitness center, leasing area and equipment room for pool operation. The complex will consist of 1 and 2 bedroom units and the area will be fenced on all sides, but not gated. He also talked about saving as many trees as possible and rental range. He shared neighborhood discussion. Lastly, he commented that the property will have Type 2 Stormwater as an open pond on the south side or under the parking lot.

Mr. Thompson explained how preserving trees can count toward a required buffer.

No questions were asked by the Commissioners.

Chairperson Goode recognized Mr. Jeff Ledford, 807 Jamestown Drive of Gastonia, NC. He did not anything further to add and no questions were asked by the Commissioners.

Commissioner Cinq-Mars gave a description of the property and surrounding area. He stated saving trees as much as possible will be an asset.

Commissioner Cinq-Mars made a motion to approve the request as presented with the statement of consistency and reasonableness and Commissioner Stewart seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved (7-0).

Item 4: Other Business

Mr. Thompson reiterated that the Proposed West Franklin New Redevelopment Area Plan was pulled from the agenda and will be heard at the next Gastonia Planning Commission meeting. Notifications will be mailed.

Due to the groundbreaking ceremony for the FUSE project being held at 5:00 p.m. on Thursday, October 3rd, the Commissioners discussed changing the next Planning Commission meeting to Wednesday, October 2nd. Commissioner Fleeman made a motion to change the next Gastonia Planning Commission meeting from Thursday, October 3rd to Wednesday, October 2nd at 5:30 p.m. and Commissioner Gallant seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved (7-0).

Presentation on Opportunity Zones and New Market Tax Credits

Mr. McPhatter started his presentation by commenting on current City of Gastonia's growth conditions coming from Charlotte. He compared economic development and its programs to a toolbox to utilize for future development projects. He explained three related tools of economic

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development; New Market Tax Credit (NMTC) Program, Opportunity Zone, and Urban Redevelopment Plan. Mr. McPhatter explained NMTC as a federal funding program that is encouraged to facilitate development in distressed areas and allow developers to access financing below market rate. He displayed a map showing areas not eligible, eligible, and severely distressed that qualify for the use of NMTC funding. He shared an example of Gold Belt Complex as a NMTC funded project. The next tool explained was the Opportunity Zone (OZ) Program as a new tax incentive program in unrealized capital gains and it promotes investment in economically distressed communities. This initiative resulted from the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017. Mr. McPhatter displayed a flow chart to show how the program initiated, as well as a timeline of benefits and requirements. Gaston County has nine OZ and six OZ are within the City of Gastonia and he displayed a map showing the locations. He displayed Center City Crossing development as an example of an OZ project. The last tool explained was Urban Redevelopment Zone with the intent to leverage private investment. Mr. McPhatter commented on the intent of the Urban Redevelopment Law authorized by the State of North Carolina. He stated that the Urban Redevelopment Area is being redefined to meet State Law criteria of at least 51% structures blighted. Mr. McPhatter shared the redevelopment area in the City of Greenville downtown as an example. Brief discussion ensued on the different zones for the NMTC and OZ and specific locations considered eligible or not eligible for NMTC and OZ.

Update on Council Votes

Mr. Thompson stated two amendments to the Unified Development Ordinance - File # 9290 and File # 9283, were presented at the August 20th City Council meeting. City Council approved both items.

Mr. Thompson stated the next item to work on is the amendments to the multi-family regulations, such as urban apartment complex projects. Areas for discussion are downtown within the Central Business District (CBD), Urban Mixed Use District (UMU) and older corridors.

Representative for September 17th City Council Meeting (if needed)

Chairperson Goode stated no representative is needed.

There being no further business, Chairperson Goode adjourned the meeting at 6:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chrystal Howard, Secretary

Pam Goode, Chairperson