

## **Gastonia Planning Commission January 4<sup>th</sup>, 2024 Meeting Minutes**

---

The Gastonia Planning Commission meeting opened at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, January 4, 2024, in the Council Chambers at City Hall, 181 S. South Street of Gastonia, NC.

Present: Chair Kristie Ferguson and Commissioners Rodney Armstrong, Megan Chapman, Anthony Gallant, Carl Harris and Chad Ghorley

Absent: Commissioners Jim Stewart and Glen Silverman

Staff Members Present: Charles Graham, Quentin McPhatter, Jason Thompson, Maddy Gates, Jalen Nash, Jordan Tubbs, Cory Steiss, Keith Lineberger, and Amber Bridges

### **Item 1a: Role Call / Sound Check**

Chair Kristie Ferguson noted the absence of Commissioner Stewart and Commissioner Silverman and declared a quorum for the meeting.

### **Item 1b: Calls/Contacts to Planning Commission Members**

Chair Ferguson received one contact. None of the other Commissioners received any contacts.

### **Item 1d: Approval of December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023 Meeting Minutes**

Commissioner Ghorley made a motion to adopt the December 7<sup>th</sup> minutes as presented and Commissioner Harris seconded the motion. The motion unanimously passed (5-0).

### **Item 2: Public Hearing (Continued) – Prime Gastonia; 2024 Redbud Drive (File #202300272)**

Subject hearing involves a request to rezone a portion of tax parcel 148683 for approximately 8.64 acres from RS-12 (Single-family Residential, minimum 12,000 sq. ft. lots) to O-1 CD (Office – Conditional District). The subject property is located east of the S. New Hope Road and Redbud Drive intersection and is owned by New Hope Baptist Church.

Chair Ferguson recognized Jason Thompson, Planning Director, for staff presentation. Mr. Thompson noted that this item was continued from the December 7<sup>th</sup> Planning Commission meeting. He explained the reasons for continuing were due to additional traffic information that was needed from the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) on the Traffic Technical Memorandum (TTM). Cory Steiss, City Traffic Engineer, presented the results from NCDOT, which included all previous recommendations from City staff. Mr. Steiss noted that the required improvements were an eastbound right turn lane into the site, and two exit lanes. He added that no additional improvements have been included from NCDOT. Mr. Steiss noted that NCDOT and the City did not support a connection through the adjoining church property.

With no questions for staff, Chair Ferguson recognized Brett Massey, 3335 Misty Hollow Court, Graham, NC. Mr. Massey stated that the current site plan includes the TTM recommendations and noted that it is the same plan from last month.

Chair Ferguson recognized Brandon McKoy, 4524 Rillview Court, Gastonia, NC. Mr. McKoy shared that he is the pastor of New Hope Baptist Church, which is the entity selling the land to Prime Independent Living. Mr. McKoy discussed the traffic concerns from the December Planning Commission meeting. He indicated that the church is going to have to sell their property regardless of this rezoning decision. Mr. McKoy lastly shared that he believes there is a great need for senior housing in Gastonia and that he was in support of the proposed development.

Chair Ferguson recognized Karen Bicknase, 673 Tryon Place, Gastonia, NC. Ms. Bicknase shared that she owns a home directly across from the subject property. She stated she is in favor of the rezoning request and believes it is a good project. She shared concerns with the proposed site access being located between Pamela and Helen. She suggested a traffic light would be safer at this location but that she was in support regardless.

Chair Ferguson recognized Eric Elliot, 410 Deerwood Drive, Gastonia, NC. Mr. Elliot shared that he was disappointed that the proposed development only has one road connection on Redbud Drive, and not on S. New Hope Road. He shared concerns for traffic and safety out of this development and out of Pamela Street. Mr. Elliot stated he liked the project but wanted better traffic safety mitigations to be required. He shared that he believes the developer is not paying the full cost of development and is instead passing it on to the general public. Mr. Elliot discussed several other developments in Gastonia and related problems of congestion on major thoroughfares. Lastly, he asked that the developer make the project safer for existing Gastonia residents.

Commissioner Ghorley asked staff if additional right-of-way on Redbud Drive was required for this project. Mr. Thompson replied “Yes”, explaining that it would be for a future roadway plan. Mr.

## **Gastonia Planning Commission January 4<sup>th</sup>, 2024 Meeting Minutes**

---

Thompson also responded to a previous comment regarding Pamela Street. He shared that the driveway access for this development could not be moved closer to the S. New Hope-Redbud intersection because NCDOT has proximity requirements, and this location was too close.

Mr. Massey approached for a rebuttal regarding traffic and safety concerns. He stated that this project is compliant with all City and State traffic requirements and that they will continue to pursue a safe development. Commissioner Ghorley asked Mr. Massey when construction would start and be completed. Mr. Massey replied that the intent is to start construction by the first quarter of the following year and that it takes 18-months to complete. Mr. Massey also noted that current plan is only for the purposes of Planning Commission and that a full site plan review still needs to be submitted.

Commissioner Ghorley made a motion to close the public hearing and Commissioner Gallant seconded the motion. The motion to close the public hearing was unanimously approved (6-0). Commissioner Ghorley discussed traffic concerns and the required mitigations, stating that the board should trust the recommendations from the City Traffic Engineer and NCDOT. He shared that he was in favor of the project and noted that it was a needed use in Gastonia. Commissioner Gallant agreed with Commissioner Ghorley and shared he was also in favor of the project. Commissioner Chapman asked for clarification on the final report from NCDOT. Commissioner Harris stated that the report had been completed and that NCDOT had no other traffic mitigations beyond what the City had already required. Assistant City Attorney, Charles Graham, explained the authority between the City and NCDOT on traffic matters.

With no further discussion, Commissioner Chapman made a motion to approve the request as presented with the statement of consistency and reasonableness. Commissioner Gallant seconded the motion. With no discussion, the motion to approve the request as presented was unanimously passed (6-0).

### **Item 3: Public Hearing – Shannon Bradley Townhomes (File #202300400)**

Subject hearing involves a request to rezone approximately 21.14 acres from RS-12 (Single-family Residential, minimum 12,000 sq. ft. lots) and RS-8 (Single-family Residential) to PD-RRDD (Planned Development – Revised Residential Development District). The subject property is located west of Shannon Bradley Road, adjacent to Northwynn Road and Colebrook Drive and is owned by Judy Ramkissoon.

Chair Ferguson recognized Jason Thompson, Planning Director, for staff presentation. The zoning map was displayed. Mr. Thompson stated the request was for 131 townhomes, 12 front loaded and the rest are rear loaded. He explained the provisions in the code which allow for front loaded townhomes in cases where the existing topography or wetlands on a site, would make a rear lane difficult to construct. He shared that a Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) is required for this project but has not yet been done. Mr. Thompson discussed the surrounding context of the property which was primarily residential with some industrial to the north. The site plan was displayed. Mr. Thompson stated that although the 2025 Future Land Use Map indicated industrial uses for the subject property, staff felt a residential use would be more compatible with the existing area. The proposed conceptual elevations were presented. He stated staff is recommending approval as presented.

With there being no questions for staff, Chair Ferguson recognized Nolan Groce, 1213 W. Morehead Street (Suite 450) Charlotte, NC. Mr. Groce shared that he was representing the applicant, Oz Realty. He discussed the context of the site, including the two access points, the typical townhome product size, open space and tree save area. He shared the Future Land Use Map and stated that he believes a residential project would be less impactful than an industrial use at this location. He displayed the site plan and shared that open space and tree save area are being used as an additional buffer from existing single-family homes. Mr. Groce discussed stormwater control measures, buffers, elevations and architectural details. Lastly, he shared that they are committing to a two-story product, which he feels would be a better compliment to the adjoining neighborhood.

Commissioner Harris asked Mr. Groce for additional details on the Type A buffer. Mr. Groce responded that it was a minimum of eight feet, but was not sure of the planting schedule. Commissioner Harris also asked about stormwater retention on site and asked if there was any wetland issues. Mr. Groce responded that stormwater at this point, is based upon a percentage of built upon area but stated that additional details are provided when they get into land development. Commissioner Ghorley asked if a neighborhood meeting was conducted and how many residents were in attendance. Mr. Groce replied “Yes” and shared that 5 residents were in attendance. Commissioner Ghorley asked what the concerns were and if any mitigations were provided as a result. Mr. Groce replied that general concerns were regarding traffic and access through Colebrook Drive. He shared that the Type A buffer was the only added mitigation from the neighborhood meeting. Additionally, Mr. Groce discussed the City wide paving project which added speed humps on Belfast Drive and Northwynn Road.

## **Gastonia Planning Commission January 4<sup>th</sup>, 2024 Meeting Minutes**

---

Commissioner Harris asked for clarification on the elevations and building materials. Mr. Groce responded that unit price points were also a concern at the neighborhood meeting and that they have conditioned to have the option for either vinyl or fiber cement siding. He added that masonry products will be provided on the fronts of the townhomes for each. He also shared that the elevations at this point are conceptual but the final product will be similar.

Chair Ferguson recognized Ravi Shankar, 7016 Tea Olive Road, Marvin, NC. Mr. Shankar stated he owned the property to the west and wanted to know how this development would connect to his property. Mr. Thompson replied that there is a proposed road connection to Mr. property.

Chair Ferguson recognized Connie Bratton, 3230 Northwynn Road, Gastonia, NC. Ms. Bratton shared that her house is adjacent to the subject property and that she has concerns about the effects of this development on her neighborhood. She stated she was worried about traffic and safety problems right next to her house. Ms. Bratton expressed concern for possible damage to her property during the construction phase as well as potential sewer and drainage issues. Mr. Thompson replied to Ms. Bratton stating that if issues arise during development, she can contact the City of Gastonia's engineering inspectors or the police. He also referenced drainage and sewer concerns by discussing the City's grading policy.

Chair Ferguson recognized Theresa Young, 673 Colebrook Drive, Gastonia, NC. Ms. Young shared that she attended the neighborhood meeting and that it went great. She stated her concerns were for traffic and safety on Colebrook Drive since there is no sidewalk in the neighborhood. Ms. Young asked what can be done to make the neighborhood safer from the increased traffic volume. In response to Ms. Young, Mr. Thompson reiterated that the developer will be required to produce a TIA and that the mitigations will have to be done. He also shared that there will be sidewalk internal to the site on new streets, but noted that developers are not required to add sidewalk to existing streets that are not within their property boundary. Commissioner Ghorley asked Mr. Thompson what the process would be to get sidewalk in existing neighborhoods. Mr. Thompson replied that the best course of action would be to contact staff.

Ms. Bratton approached to discuss a road that is behind her house, which connects to Shannon Bradley. She asked if that road can be used as an access to the site. Mr. Thompson noted that the road in question is a private road and could not be used as an access to the development. Commissioner Harris asked staff what the width requirement is for sidewalk on new developments. Mr. Groce responded that it depends on the typical cross section detail that is used. Mr. Thompson replied that it is 5-feet but noted that there are several typical cross section options to choose from depending on the project.

Commissioner Chapman made a motion to close the public hearing. Commissioner Ghorley seconded the motion. The motion to close the public hearing was unanimously passed (6-0). Chair Ferguson and Commissioner Ghorley discussed the TIA process and traffic mitigations. Commissioner Ghorley and Commissioner Gallant discussed the addition of sidewalk in existing neighborhoods and urged members of the public to reach out to staff for more information. Assistant City Attorney, Charles Graham, stated to the Commissioners and the members of the public in attendance, that the Planning Commission is considering land use. He discussed the City and State regulatory ordinances and statutes that will guide the rest of the development.

Commissioner Armstrong made a motion to approve the request as presented with the statement of consistency and reasonableness. Commissioner Chapman seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion to approve as presented was unanimously passed (6-0).

### **Item 4: Public Hearing – Highland Townhomes (File #202300274)**

Subject hearing involves a request to rezone approximately 6.278 acres from RS-8 (Single-family Residential) to PD-RRDD (Planned Development – Revised Residential Development District). The subject property is located at 933 N. Highland Street and is owned by P&G Realty Solutions, LLC.

Chair Ferguson opened the public hearing and recognized Maddy Gates, Senior Planner, for the purpose of staff presentation. The zoning map was presented. Ms. Gates stated that the request was from RS-8 to PD-RRDD with the intent of developing 59 townhomes. She discussed the zoning map and the context of the existing area. Ms. Gates stated that it is a primarily single-family residential area but that infill and higher density development in the Highland neighborhood has been common over the past few years. The site plan was displayed. Ms. Gates discussed the access point off of N. Highland Street and required road improvements. She shared that the development was exempt from providing open space due to its proximity to the Erwin Center, which is a municipal park. The proposed elevations were displayed and Ms. Gates noted that the applicant has committed to provide a two-story product. Finally, she stated that the proposed development is consistent with the 2025 Future Land Use Map and that staff is recommending approval as presented.

## **Gastonia Planning Commission January 4<sup>th</sup>, 2024 Meeting Minutes**

---

Chair Ferguson recognized Graham Singer, 613 W. Worthington Avenue, Charlotte, NC. Mr. Singer shared that he was the applicant on the rezoning. He discussed that the project was exempt from providing open space but that they intend to construct the multi-use path located on site. He also discussed the tree save area, stormwater pond, and open space that was shown on the site plan. Mr. Singer shared that they are committing to an affordable two-story product with no vinyl. Lastly he mentioned that the development was not large enough to trigger a traffic study. Commissioner Harris asked Mr. Singer for clarification on the building materials. Mr. Singer responded that they are proposed with fiber cement siding, brick or stone, and metal trim. Commissioner Harris asked what materials the multi-use path would be constructed with. Mr. Singer replied that they are considering a payment-in-lieu option but that it would be made with asphalt. Commissioner Harris asked what the community response to the project was. Mr. Singer responded that it was a mixed response and that there were concerns regarding traffic, crime, density, and stormwater issues. He continued by stating that the building foot prints were increased which brought the density ratio down. In response to the concerns of stormwater and crime, Mr. Graham also noted that they have sufficient stormwater detention allocated and that the townhomes are for-sale products.

Chair Ferguson recognized Bill Blalock, Charlotte, NC. Mr. Blalock shared that he was in support of the project and believes it would be a great addition to the community.

Chair Ferguson recognized Carlos Caroll, Charlotte, NC. Mr. Caroll shared that he was in favor of the project and believes it would increase the property values in the area.

Chair Ferguson recognized Dan Berovides, 716 Wood Lily Drive, Belmont, NC. Mr. Berovides shared that he was the current property owner and is in support of the project. He shared that he felt townhomes fit better at this location compared to apartment, which they considered. He discussed home ownership in Gaston County and stated he believes this project has a better impact on the community.

Chair Ferguson recognized Jacqueline Ramseur 1229 N. Highland St., Gastonia, NC. Ms. Ramseur shared that her property is directly north of the rezoning site and that she is in opposition of the petition. She expressed concerns with stormwater, wildlife, crime, and sewer issues. Ms. Ramseur stated that the proposed subject property is very valuable to the existing community and she fears the character of the neighborhood will be ruined. She also expressed concern for existing flooding and sewer issues, stating more density will only make it worse. Ms. Ramseur discussed the extension of N. Highland Street which would take her property and the development only having one access. Lastly, she shared that the Highland neighborhood is an older neighborhood and she feels the proposed project does not fit.

Chair Ferguson recognized Donald Ramseur Jr., 1229 N. Highland St., Gastonia, NC. Mr. Ramseur shared that the existing neighborhood was established in 1957. He discussed the quality of the neighborhood in terms of the residents and history and stated it needed to be preserved. He shared concerns regarding the removal of the trees and wildlife, traffic, buffers, and stormwater. He stated the natural buffer shown on the site plan was insufficient and that 59 townhomes did not work in this area. Mr. Ramseur discussed the extension of N. Highland Street and the potential increase in traffic. He shared that he was in opposition of the petition and believed the proposed development was not consistent with the existing community.

Chair Ferguson recognized Clinton Feemster, 1226 N. Highland St., Gastonia, NC. Mr. Feemster shared that he was in opposition of the petition. He expressed concern that the applicants are not from Gastonia and do not understand the community. Mr. Feemster stated that residents of the Highland neighborhood moved there because of its single-family residential zoning and argued that townhomes do not fit. He discussed that the neighborhood meeting was not conducted well and that the applicant held individual conversations rather than an open dialogue with everyone. Mr. Feemster stated the Highland neighborhood is historic but that that was not taken into consideration. He expressed concern with a changing neighborhood, safety issues, traffic, and high density. Mr. Feemster stated he was in opposition of the townhome request and believed the land should remain zoned for single-family homes.

Chair Ferguson recognized Feemster, 1226 N. Highland St., Gastonia, NC. Ms. Feemster stated she was in opposition of the townhome project. She shared concerns of townhomes not fitting in the area and fear of the neighborhood changing.

Mr. Graham approached for a rebuttal. In response to concerns for N. Highland Street, he shared that there are no intentions to extend it. He also shared that stormwater will be reviewed further and that the developer will have to comply with all stormwater requirements. Commissioner Harris asked Mr. Graham where the neighborhood meeting was held. Mr. Graham responded that it was held on-site and that he felt it went well. Commissioner Harris asked Mr. Graham if he was familiar with the Highland

## **Gastonia Planning Commission January 4<sup>th</sup>, 2024 Meeting Minutes**

---

Neighborhood Association. Mr. Graham replied that he was not aware. Commissioner Ghorley asked the applicant if he had considered developing by-right in RS-8. Mr. Graham replied “Yes” but stated he thought the issue was new people in the neighborhood and not the selected land use. Commissioner Ghorley responded stating that he felt single-family residential fit better in this area. Commissioner Ghorley and Mr. Graham discussed by-right development options. Mr. Feemster approached to discuss the neighborhood meeting and shared that it was held individually. Mr. Thompson discussed the notification process for rezoning petitions and neighborhood meetings.

Commissioner Ghorley made a motion to close the public hearing and Commissioner Harris seconded the motion. The motion to close the public hearing was unanimously passed (6-0). Chair Ferguson asked Assistant City Attorney, Charles Graham, if the Planning Commission could require a specific format for neighborhood meetings. The Assistant City Attorney indicated that it currently follows what is written in the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) but that it can be revised if needed.

Commissioner Harris discussed that he felt a quality neighborhood meeting was not held and that it was unfair to the community. Commissioner Ghorley and Commissioner Gallant discussed the compatibility of townhomes in a single-family area and whether or not it was consistent. The Commissioners discussed the proposed density and the potential of development by-right. Commissioner Chapman stated she did not think the existing community would benefit from the change in zoning. Chair Ferguson discussed that there are a variety of uses in the Highland neighborhood and that it is not only single-family residential as it may look on the zoning map. She also discussed fair housing laws and guidelines.

Commissioner Gallant made a motion to deny the request as presented. Commissioner Chapman seconded the motion. The motion to deny the request as presented was voted 4-2. Commissioners Harris, Gallant, Armstrong and Chapman voted in favor of the motion to deny. Chair Ferguson and Commissioner Ghorley voted in opposition of the motion to deny. Due to a vote with less than  $\frac{3}{4}$  majority, the item will continue to the February 20<sup>th</sup> City Council meeting with a recommendation of denial from the Gastonia Planning Commission.

### **Item 5: Public Hearing – 423 Norment Street (File #202300411)**

Subject hearing involves a request to rezone approximately 0.24 acres from RS-8 (Single-family Residential) to RS-8 CD (Single-family Residential – Conditional District). The subject property is located at 423 Norment Avenue and is owned by Oak Island Services, LLC.

Chair Ferguson opened the public hearing and recognized Jordan Tubbs, Senior Planner, for the purpose of staff presentation. The zoning map was presented. Mr. Tubbs stated that the request was to RS-8 CD to allow for the construction of two single-family dwellings using the Revised Residential Development District standards. He shared that the two new dwellings are required to be rear loaded from a 20-foot access easement on N. Boyce Street. Mr. Tubbs discussed the zoning map and the proposed elevations. Lastly, he stated that the request was consistent with the 2025 Future Land Use Map and staff is recommending approval as presented.

Chair Ferguson recognized Ashley Cameron, 229 Village Glen Way Mount Holly, NC. Ms. Cameron stated the new lots are rear loaded due to the slope on Norment Street and a front driveway would be impractical. She shared that she was available for any questions. Commissioner Ghorley stated he likes the attached elevation and asked for clarification on the details. Ms. Cameron stated that it is a two-story, three-bedroom house.

Commissioner Armstrong made a motion to approve the request as presented with the statement of consistency and reasonableness. Commissioner Ghorley seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion to approve as presented was unanimously passed (6-0).

### **ITEM 6: Public Hearing – Unified Development Ordinance Amendment (File #202300503)**

Subject hearing involves a request to amend Section 7.1-1 Table of Uses, Section 7.3-1 Bulk and Use Chart, Section 8.1.5 Dwelling, Two Family, and Section 8.1.17 Single-Family Attached Development to the Unified Development Ordinance to revise the permitted uses and dimensional requirements for all applicable residential uses.

Chair Ferguson announced that the Gastonia City Council will hold a Public Hearing for the text amendment request at the January 16<sup>th</sup>, 2024 meeting.

Chair Ferguson opened the public hearing and recognized Jason Thompson, Planning Director, for the purpose of staff presentation. Mr. Thompson discussed the revision to the code is mainly to address missing middle housing, such as duplexes and infill development. He shared the changes for use by-

## **Gastonia Planning Commission January 4<sup>th</sup>, 2024 Meeting Minutes**

---

right options, dimensional standards, and the use table. Mr. Thompson explained that the code changes overtime as requests from the public change and that this amendment will be more user-friendly.

With no discussion, Commissioner Ghorley made a motion to recommend approval of the text amendment as presented. Commissioner Harris seconded the motion. The motion to recommend approval was unanimously passed (6-0).

### **Item 7: Approval of the 2024 GPC Public Hearing Schedule**

Chair Ferguson opened the public hearing and recognized Jordan Tubbs, Senior Planner, for the purpose of staff presentation. Mr. Tubbs discussed the proposed schedule for the 2024 Gastonia Planning Commission meeting and asked if there are any requested changes from the Commissioners. He noted that there is no meeting in July due to the July 4<sup>th</sup> holiday. Commissioner Ghorley asked staff if the Planning Commission will be holding a joint meeting with City Council. Mr. Thompson replied that staff is working on getting a training set up. Chair Ferguson asked if there is an attendance requirement for Commissioners. Mr. Thompson replied “Yes”, stating it is 60% attendance required.

Commissioner Ghorley made a motion to approve the 2024 GPC Public Hearing Schedule. Commissioner Harris seconded the motion. The motion to approve the 2024 GPC Public Hearing Schedule was approved (6-0).

### **Item 8: Other Business**

Commissioners discussed representation for the February 20<sup>th</sup> City Council meeting. Mr. Thompson discussed plans for updating the Gastonia Comprehensive Plan.

### **Item 9: Adjournment**

Chair Ferguson entertained a motion to adjourn the January 4<sup>th</sup> Planning Commission meeting. Commissioner Harris made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Commissioner Ghorley seconded the motion. The motion to adjourn was unanimously passed (6-0). The meeting adjourned at 8:28 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

---

Jalen Nash, Planning Technician

---

Kristie Ferguson, Chairwoman