

Morgan County Planning Commission

Minutes
Regular Meeting
January 28, 2016
7:00 p.m.

PRESENT: Brian Lehman, John McMahon, Joe Cardwell, Scott Campbell, Dennis Myers, Wes Holt, Starr Sheppard, Connie Booth, Faye Craft, Maryann Dartnell
ALSO PRESENT: Chuck Jarrell, Tara Cooner, members of the public

PUBLIC HEARING

ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS:

Brian Lehman welcomed everyone to the January 2016 Planning Commission meeting.

I. Officer Elections

a. Chairman

Mr. Jarrell asked for nominations for the position of Chairman.

Mr. McMahon nominated Brian Lehman for Chairman.

Ms. Craft seconded the nomination.

There were no other nominations.

Vote: 9:0 The vote was unanimous to appoint Mr. Lehman as Chairman. Mr. Lehman abstained from the vote.

The meeting was turned over to the Chairman.

b. Vice Chairman

The Chairman asked for nominations for the position of Vice-Chairman.

Mr. Cardwell nominated Connie Booth for Vice-Chairman.

Ms. Craft seconded the nomination.

There were no other nominations.

Vote: 8:0 The vote was unanimous to appoint Ms. Booth as Vice-Chairman. Ms. Booth abstained from the vote.

c. Secretary

The Chairman asked for nominations for the position of Secretary.

Ms. Booth nominated Tara Cooner.

Mr. Cardwell seconded the nomination.

There were no other nominations.

Vote: 9:0 The vote was unanimous to appoint Ms. Cooner as Secretary.

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II. Acceptance of Minutes from November 13, 2015 work session.

Motion: Ms. Booth made a motion to approve the November 13, 2015 Minutes as presented.

Second: Mr. McMahon

Vote: 4:0 The vote to approve the November 13, 2015 Minutes as presented was unanimous. Ms. Craft, Mr. Cardwell, Mr. Campbell, Ms. Sheppard and Ms. Dartnell abstained from the vote.

III. Acceptance of Minutes from November 19, 2015 regular meeting.

Motion: Ms. Booth made a motion to approve the November 19, 2015 Minutes as presented.

Second: Mr. Holt

Vote: 7:0 The vote to approve the November 19, 2015 Minutes as presented was unanimous. Mr. Campbell and Ms. Dartnell abstained from the vote.

IV. Staff Report on prior zoning actions.

Mr. Jarrell reported that the Board of Commissioners had approved all prior zoning actions.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

There is no unfinished business.

NEW BUSINESS:

- I. Buckhead Baptist Church is requesting Conditional Use approval to construct a youth center at 1051 Parks Mill Road, Buckhead, Georgia, 30625 (Tax Parcels 052A-033B, 052A-034, 052A-035 & 052A-039).

Mr. Jarrell presented the staff report and explained the history of the church. He showed aerials and a site plan that depicted where the proposed 60' x 80' building would be placed on the property. He reminded the Planning Commission to review the criteria for allowing a conditional use.

John Milford (Double Bridges Road), Contractor, stated that the proposed building was to be used for the Awana youth program. He explained that the church did not intend to have a kitchen in the new building. He also noted that no new parking spaces were expected to be needed except for an additional handicapped space. The Planning Commission asked about the construction of the building. Mr. Milford confirmed that it would be steel construction on a slab with hardiboard siding to match the existing church. He also confirmed that the lot was fairly flat and would not require much disturbance.

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Dennis Garner, Pastor, stated that the church is growing and the space was needed for the Awana program. The Planning Commission asked him to explain what the program entailed and he complied. The Planning Commission asked if the building would have classrooms and the pastor said that it would be one large space without classrooms.

No one spoke in opposition to the application.

Motion: Ms. Booth made a motion to recommend approval of the conditional use application for Buckhead Baptist Church to build a youth center.

Second: Ms. Sheppard

Vote: 9:0 The vote to recommend approval of the conditional use application was unanimous.

Mr. Campbell asked Ms. Booth if she would like to amend her motion to include language regarding the proposed variance. She responded that she would not.

- II. Buckhead Baptist Church is requesting a variance to the front setback required for a religious institution for property at 1051 Parks Mill Road, Buckhead, Georgia, 30625 (Tax Parcels 052A-033B, 052A-034, 052A-035 & 052A-039).

Mr. Jarrell presented the staff report and explained that the original proposal from the church had placed the youth center building 17' from the property line, which would require a 33' variance. He also explained the options given to the church by staff, which included making the building smaller, moving it back to require a smaller variance, or turning the building sideways. The church chose to request a smaller variance, which would be 13' when the building was moved to the 50' rear setback. Mr. Jarrell also showed that the railroad right-of-way was the property line. He reminded the Planning Commission to review the criteria for allowing a variance. The Planning Commission discussed the proximity of the church buildings to the sidewalk and the property lines, noting that the railroad right-of-way creates a visual setback that is further back than the actual property line. They also discussed the orientation of the existing buildings and the disruption of harmony that the turned building would create.

John Milford, Contractor, answered questions related to drainage and how each option would affect potential catch basins.

Dennis Garner, Pastor, confirmed that the church had reviewed the possible options and preferred the option with the 13' variance, due to the way the building would work with the property and the parking lot. He also stated that the church intended to match the exterior of the new building to the existing church as much as possible, specifically noting the rooflines and columns.

The Chairman again reminded the Planning Commission to review the criteria for approving a variance, and especially noted criterion H, which related to granting minimum variances. Ms. Booth stated that the church should not be penalized because zoning was enacted after the church was situated, and because the railroad had

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established such a large right-of-way. She reviewed each of the criteria and concluded that criterion H did not pertain to the application due to the historic nature of church, which was not responsible for modern regulations or easements. She stated that the new building should appear cohesive with the existing structures. The Planning Commission debated the historic nature and unique placement of the church versus the criteria for approving a variance. They discussed the odd shape of the property, noting that it was exacerbated by the railroad right-of-way, and whether the 13' variance maintained the visual orientation of the original buildings. Ms. Booth reiterated that unique properties deserve unique consideration. The Planning Commission stated concerns regarding the how the width of the proposed building would affect aesthetics and whether allowing the maximum variance would ignore the regulations.

Motion: Ms. Booth made a motion to recommend approval of a 33' variance (as shown in the church's original submission) based on the historic and unique properties of the church.

Second: Mr. Holt

Vote: 2:7 The vote to recommend approval of a 33' variance did not pass.

Motion: Mr. Cardwell made a motion to recommend approval of a 13' variance which maintained the 50' rear setback, based on criterion H, the unique circumstances of the railroad right-of-way, and the historic nature of the property.

Second: Ms. Craft

Vote: 7:2 The vote to recommend approval of a 13' variance was approved. Ms. Booth and Mr. Holt dissented.

The Chairman welcomed Maryann Dartnell to the Planning Commission as the new representative for the City of Rutledge. He also noted that meetings related to the approaching Comprehensive Plan update were taking place and encouraged the Planning Commission and members of the public present to participate. Ms. Booth stated that the City of Madison will be starting Comprehensive Plan meetings soon as well.

ADJOURNMENT

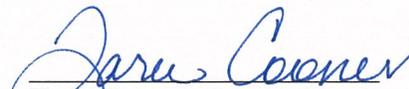
The Chairman called for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Motion: Ms. Craft made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Second: Mr. Cardwell

Vote: 9:0 The meeting was adjourned.


Brian Lehman, Chairman


Tara Cooner, Secretary

Date 3/24/16

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