

TOWN OF ABINGDON
PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
FEBRUARY 27, 2012 - 5:30 P.M.

The regular meeting of the Abingdon Planning Commission was held Monday, February 27, 2012, at 5:30 P.M. The meeting was held in the Municipal Building, Council Chambers.

Dr. H. Ramsey White, Chairman, called the meeting to order. Mr. Garrett Jackson called the roll.

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Dr. H. Ramsey White, Chairman
Mr. Robert M. Howard
Mr. Mathew T. Bundy
Mr. Kenneth Shuman
Mr. Gary Kimbrell

Comprising a quorum of the Commission

Members Absent: Ms. Francine Ivery, Vice-Chairman
Mr. Gregory W. Kelly

Administrative Staff: Mr. W. Garrett Jackson, Assistant Town Manager
Director of Planning/Zoning
Mr. Sean Taylor, Assistant Director of Planning/Zoning (Absent)
Mrs. Deborah Icenhour, Town Attorney
Mr. Kevin Sigmon, Town Arborist

Visitors: Mr. Michael Wartella
Mrs. Susan Howard, Advance Abingdon

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(2) Approval of Minutes: Regular Meeting, January 23, 2012

Mr. Shuman made a motion that the minutes of the regular meeting, January 23, 2012 be approved as presented. Mr. Howard seconded the motion.

VOTE:

Mr. Shuman Aye
Mr. Kimbrell Aye
Mr. Howard Aye
Mr. Bundy Abstained
Dr. White Aye

The motion passed.

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**(3) DISCUSSION - Main Street Park Plan
(Mrs. Susan Howard, Advance Abingdon)**

Mr. Jackson explained that this is a project that the Main Street Design Program has been pursuing. He introduced Mrs. Susan Howard, Director, Advance Abingdon, who gave an explanation of the design for the proposed park.

The proposed park was designed by Graham Landscape Architect, with the park being designed to be a family oriented area. The park will replace the existing park located on West Main Street, between Oasis Day Spa and Brandywine Antiques and is designed to have an open center lawn surrounded by a hard surfaced walking path. There will be an outside painted mural on the side of Brandywine Antiques structure; a movie area will be located on the left side of the park, two pergola areas, concrete wall panels, bike racks, seating areas and restrooms. There will be two play areas; one of the areas being a play court to include fountain and slide with spiral mountain, the other play area will have a tunnel with giant's causeway. Trees will be planted along the street. Mrs. Howard stated that the approximate cost of the proposed park is \$350,000.00 and hopefully, will be completed by 2013. The Town of Abingdon helped finance the cost of design work and a Downtown Improvement Grant in the amount of \$25,000 has been awarded by the Downtown of Housing and Community Development, to be used for this project. She further stated that fund raising projects are being planned and it is anticipated that a lot of the work will be done in-house.

There was no action required to be taken by the Planning Commission on this discussion.

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**(4) DISCUSSION - Review Street Tree Plan
(Mr. Kevin Sigmon, Abingdon Town Arborist)**

Mr. Kevin Sigmon, Abingdon Town Arborist, explained that this is the second time the Tree Commission has anticipated planting trees along Main Street, between Cummings Street and Russell Road. He presented the most recent updated tree plan which has been approved by the Tree Commission.

Mr. Sigmon stated that some of the plan is already in progress. In designing this plan several items had to be taken into consideration, due to the property along the sidewalks on Main Street offering very limited space with a lot of obstacles in the way. The plan was designed with the idea to use a variety of plantings that were not too large but something appropriate for the limited space to work with, something that is not a large growing tree.

In this planting design, it is proposed to use above ground tree planters approximately 3 feet to 4 feet in diameter. The exposure to elements of the weather was considered in selecting the variety of plants to be planted. The two varieties selected is a combination of Winter Berry Deciduous Holly Shrub (*Ilex verticillata*) (male and female species for germination) which will have red berries in the winter time, with growth of 6 feet to 10 feet in height, also, a type of flowering Cherry (*Prunus x yedoensis* "Snow Fountain") which provides white spring time blooms, with growth being no more than 10 feet tall. These were selected, trying to create an environment where the plants will last as long as possible and cause no interference with existing structures. They will be located at the "X-Out Areas" with the parallel parking along Main Street where they will not interfere with parking.

At the crosswalk near the "Hardware", plans include the location of two landscape islands, one on each side of the street. These landscape islands will be similar to those located at the Washington County Library and the Barter Theatre. Mr. Howard asked if any parking spaces would be eliminated due to the proposed landscape islands. Mr. Sigmon replied it was possible, but if so, no more than one or two spaces.

Mr. Sigmon complimented Graham Landscape Architects on their design of the proposed Main Street Park Plan. He stated sometime ago he had planted a Pecan tree behind the small sculpture in the existing park which he plans to relocate to another area. It will be replaced with another tree in the design presented by Graham Landscape Architects.

There will also be a variety of trees planted throughout this same tree plan area, with some to be planted on private properties. Some of the created sites for the tree plantings include the Municipal Parking Lot area, along Wall Street, along Remsburg Drive and along the front of the new proposed park.

Mr. Sigmon further explained that there are plans to re-open three tree spaces located in sidewalks which have been filled in. These spaces are located near the U. S. Federal Building. A variety of suitable plants will be located in these areas also.

There was no action required to be taken by the Planning Commission on this discussion.

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(5) **DISCUSSION - Watauga Medical Group, 300 Valley Street, N.E.**

Dr. White asked Mr. Garrett Jackson to read aloud a memorandum regarding the Watauga Medical Group, as follows:

NOTE: The following is an update to the members on the issue of Watauga Medical Group, which has been the subject of many rumors and discussion in the community in the past few months.

As has been discussed in a previous Planning Commission meeting and as many of you are aware, staff was confronted with a business license in October 2011, concerning a medical practice (GP) which would also serve as a clinic for those addicted to narcotics to receive treatment in the form of Suboxone, a Schedule III drug (ex: Sched I= LSD, Non-med Cocaine; Sched II= Vicotin, Loratab, Methadone; Sched III= Valium, Xanax) which is more effective at fighting addiction and is itself, not addictive. As a point of fact, Suboxone can be prescribed by any doctor currently practicing in Abingdon and has been prescribed by a number of existing practices for several years now.

The doctors at Watauga Medical Group all have the proper licensing, both State and Federal, and comply with all laws, as far as we are able to ascertain, in regard to the prescribing of Suboxone and the use of therapy in the treatment of narcotics addiction. No drugs, to our knowledge or to the knowledge of the Town Police Drug Task Force, are being dispensed on the site. Because Suboxone is a Schedule III, the rules governing "Methadone Clinics" do not apply, which would include that they cannot be located within a .5-mile from a licensed daycare, preschool or school.

In addition and in regard to the "Safe House" you've no doubt heard about, is coincidental to the site and not a planned addition to the clinic. Ms. Icenhour, Town Attorney; Marion Watts, Building Inspector; and I met with one of the volunteers at the house to research the use. The structure is being used for abused women, who also are recovering from drug addiction. They are not treated at the clinic for any drug addiction. The organization, "Hannah's House", a nationwide organization providing protection for women in such situations and providing a non-drug therapeutic method of counseling, has operated on Brice Lane near South Holston Lake for years, before they recently lost the site due to their lease expiring.

In terms of zoning, that particular sub-district of the Old & Historic District allows for single family residents only, but a portion of the Code of Virginia (15.2-2291) (attached) ties our hands which says that "zoning ordinances shall view such uses, as long as fewer than 8 individuals, with a certified supervisor are occupying the structure for the purpose of "treatment", as a Single Family Structure. **The only issue staff has found at this time is that of a building code issue.** Because the house is connected to the medical office, fire walls must be installed in order to separate the two. The property owner, medical group and Hannah's House must prepare the buildings for fire suppression either by firewall separation or a state-of-the-art fire suppression system.

Mrs. Deborah Icenhour, Town Attorney, advised that after reviewing all parts of the Code, all licenses required have been issued. She stated that an inquiry had been made to the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services that licenses such businesses. If proper certification has not been applied she will be notified soon.

She passed along information obtained from Dr. John Dreyzehner, Health Commissioner for the State of Tennessee, formerly with Cumberland Plateau Community Services District and a former resident of Washington County, who commented on the need for such clinics in this area.

Dr. White reminded the Planning Commission members there was no action that could be taken by the Planning Commission on this matter.

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(6) Review of Comprehensive Plan

There was no discussion regarding this item.

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(7) Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Session

There was no discussion regarding this item.

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There being no further business, a motion was made and duly seconded that the meeting be adjourned, with unanimous approval. The meeting was adjourned.

H. Ramsey White, Chairman

Gregory W. Kelly, Secretary