

MINUTES
TOWNSEND MUNICIPAL PLANNING COMMISSION
DECEMBER 10, 2015

Members Present

Sandy Headrick, Chair.
Michael Talley, Mayor
Rob Webb, V. Chair.
Steve Fillmore, Sec.
Becky Headrick

Members Absent

Alicia McClary

Others Present

Andy Morton
Don Headrick

ETDD Staff Representative: Joe Barrett

CALL TO ORDER AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chairman Headrick called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M. on December 10, 2015 at the city hall. The minutes from the last regular monthly meeting in November were reviewed by the members. After review, a motion was made by Steve Fillmore and seconded by Rob Webb to approve the November 12, 2015 Planning Commission Minutes as written. The motion passed unanimously.

REPORTS FROM BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Mayor Talley reported that the vacancy on the planning commission has not been filled yet, but he has spoken to some potential members. Mayor Talley urged those present to contact him if they had someone in mind to fill the vacancy on the planning commission.

Board of Commissioners did not pass the landscaping ordinance at the last meeting, but the ordinance is in the process of being revised.

Mayor Talley reported that the recommended Stormwater Ordinance will be considered on first reading on December 16, 2015. The public hearing will be held on the second reading.

NEW BUSINESS:

DISCUSS CHURCH SIGNAGE REQUIREMENTS

Staff confirmed property on both sides of Bethel Church Road is owned by the church and had researched church signage standards in other communities around the region in response to the church signage issue last month. Many communities permit church signage in residential districts at a maximum square footage between 20 to 40 square feet. The commission discussed standards for church signage and the different standards that could be applied differently from the current requirements. The existing church signage in Townsend is much smaller than the permissible 128 square foot maximum in the B-1 District. The church in question is located within a residential district with a permissible 32-square foot maximum. The commission discussed various maximum square footage limits specifically for church signage, standards for churches along U. S. 321, and standards specifically for all churches. Following this discussion, the consensus of the planning commission was not to change the current standards at this time.

DISCUSS STREET DESIGN OPTIONS

Staff discussed the work that was sponsored by the University of Tennessee and the Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) resulting in different street designs for Townsend. Staff distributed an outline for the three different street designs that were prepared by the Little River Design Team in April of last year. The three design options were:

- Planted Median with Outer Bike Lane
- Centered Bicycle Lane Design
- Center Turn Lane with Outside Bike Lanes

The design team had prepared these designs along U. S. 321 from Wears Valley Road to Old Tuckaleechee Road. The handouts for members were part of a presentation that was given last year, but outline the street options for members. This is an issue that the planning commission has shown interest in pursuing, but not necessarily the specific street options that were presented. The planning commission can review and decide on transportation improvements that the city may want to pursue at a later date. Staff will provide maps of the three different street designs and a base map where the commission can propose these improvements. These maps can then be revised by GIS at a later date to afford more professional maps. The first priority should be to decide on more specific transportation improvements for Townsend. Staff can contact the RPO Coordinator, Don Brown from ETDD, to meet and discuss with the planning commission and possibly the board of commissioners also at a later date, if the commission is interested. The consensus of the members was to pursue finalizing proposed transportation improvements and discussing funding opportunities with the RPO Coordinator at a later date. Staff will provide maps at more suitable scale at the next meeting. No action taken at this time.

OLD BUSINESS:

REVIEW COMMERCIAL POLICIES OF LAND USE PLAN

Staff provided members with revised commercial policies for review. These policies will be contained in the revised Townsend Land Use & Transportation Policy Plan, 2010 and relate to physical development. The existing commercial policies within the adopted land use plan contain some commercial policies that can be revised and additional commercial policies added to the plan. At the last meeting, the commission had directed staff to research definitions of the “Rural Mountain Theme” and the “East Tennessee Appalachian Character” that is noted in the policies. The definition of these two themes can vary dramatically, depending on the individual perspective and source. Staff recommended not specifically defining these terms primarily due to being limited by the definition itself. The terms may have different meanings to different people including the current commissioners and future commissioners. More flexibility may be afforded in reviewing future development proposals by not defining the terms. The commission reviewed the proposed commercial policies of the land use plan. Staff informed members of the adoption process and possible timeframe. After further discussion, a motion was made by Mayor Talley and seconded by Rob Webb to set a public hearing, affording at least thirty days’ notice, for consideration of incorporation of the commercial policies into an amended Townsend Land Use & Transportation Policy Plan. The motion passed unanimously. Staff will send a public notice to the City Recorder to schedule a public hearing at the February regular monthly meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS:

The commission discussed the possibility of a streamlined process for minor plat review. There were some provisions from the county that were cited. Staff stated that some communities allow administrative review by staff. There are provisions in the state enabling legislation¹ that allows planning commissions to authorize this type of review, if local action is taken. Typically, a plat is submitted to staff, plat is reviewed by staff, confirmation is provided that the plat meets all requirements, and the secretary is contacted and signs off on the plat outside of the regular planning commission meeting. Staff generally provides a status report at the next regular planning commission meeting if an administrative review has occurred. After further discussion, a motion was made by Sandy Headrick and seconded by Steve Fillmore to authorize the planning staff to conduct in-house administrative reviews for minor plats. The motion passed unanimously.

Don Headrick was present to discuss the site plan requirements applicable to a proposed expansion of the Highland Manor Inn. The zoning requires a site plan be approved by the planning commission if involving over 400 square feet or ten percent (10%) of the building area of the renovated building. The proposal was discussed with the planning commission. No action needed at this time.

STATUS REPORTS:

Information for a Multi Modal grant was discussed. Staff had received notice for this grant last month on October 19, 2015. The deadline for the application is next month. Since there are currently no specific transportation proposals for the city, this is an opportunity to thoroughly consider desired transportation improvements for the city and submit detailed proposals during the next grant cycle.

At 7:40 PM, with no further business the meeting was adjourned.

Secretary

Date

¹ TCA 13-4-302(a)