

MINUTES OF THE
SUMMERFIELD ZONING BOARD
SUMMERFIELD COMMUNITY CENTER
September 27, 2010

NOTE: The official minutes are a CD recording of the meeting. The following is a summary of the events of the meeting.

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 by Nancy Hess

INTRODUCTIONS:

Nancy Hess, Chair
Dick Feulner, Vice-Chair
Trudy Whitacre
Rich Lovett
Kathy Rooney

Will Rozelle, for Town Attorney
Chris Anderson, Planner
Carrie Spencer, Clerk to the Board

No alternates present.

CONSENT AGENDA:

Feulner made a motion to approve the agenda as proposed, Lovett seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Feulner made a motion to approve the minutes from the August 23, 2010 meeting as written, Lovett seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS:

A. Ordinance Text Amendment #2010-01-TA

Anderson stated that tonight's meeting is more of a workshop, and not a public hearing. He stated that Town Council considered the Zoning Board proposal for signage at their last meeting and, after lengthy discussion, leaned toward something more like the current Food Lion sign (200 sq ft and 30 ft tall). He added that the Food Lion sign was installed prior to the Scenic Corridor ordinance, which includes much smaller sign size specifications. Anderson went over the 4 options presented in the staff report, adding a fifth option to remove the Scenic corridor overlay with regard to signage.

Feulner felt that it is not the town's place to dictate such specifications as outlined in Option 3.

Anderson clarified that building areas in Option 4 refer to gross square footage.

Hess read Comprehensive Plan objectives that refer to signage (Policy 1.2: OUTSIDE LIGHTING AND SIGNAGE shall be understated and attractive. Commercial SIGNAGE should be effective in creating an awareness of area businesses, not because of its height and size, but rather due to its appealing, uncluttered design) and suggested the Town Council seems to be ignoring it. Rozelle stated that the council has expressed appreciation for the Zoning Board's work on the issue and did not want to make a decision before asking the Zoning Board to review it again.

Rooney made a motion to offer Option 2 (original Zoning Board proposal) back to council. Hess seconded.

Feulner suggested that removing the Scenic Corridor district would make matters worse.

In answer to a question, Anderson clarified that council does understand the Zoning Board's original proposal.

Hess expressed concern that the Comprehensive Plan is new and seems to be challenged so soon, and that the signage issue seems to be driven by just one business.

Terry Mclean, speaking from the audience, suggested that for large shopping centers it is better to identify the shopping center itself on the signage, rather than individual businesses. She added that people know what is located within the centers, which are known by their titles like Oak Ridge Commons or Friendly Center, both with relatively small signs. She reminded the board that three years had been spent creating the Comprehensive Plan.

There was a question of the Comprehensive Plan's effectiveness and if people will bother using it if we change it so soon.

Anderson asked the board to think about all the properties that could be affected by the ordinance amendment, stating that there are 13 properties just between Auburn Rd and the southern intersection of Summerfield Rd and Hwy 220N that could potentially have signs.

There was a question of existing signage, and whether it would have to conform if the Hwy 220N widening caused it to be replaced. Anderson stated that a legal nonconforming sign may be allowed to be reinstalled to the same specifications, and Hess referred to ordinance that does require nonconforming signs to be reconstructed to correct standards when relocated.

Hess objected to removing Scenic Corridor guidelines as Hwy 220N is the primary scenic entrance to the town, adding that those guidelines address many aspects of development like architectural standards. Anderson confirmed that the resolution that limits commercial development along Hwy 220N refers to the area between (the intersection of Hwy 220 and Scalesville Rd) and (the intersection of Hwy 220 and Hwy 150). He also confirmed that residential zoning districts would not be included in the sign ordinance change and would continue to fall under guidelines of other ordinance such as Scenic Corridor.

There was some discussion about landscaping and its role in signage, and about the DOT having begun demolition of some houses within the new Hwy 220N right of way.

Lovett expressed concern over changing a section of ordinance to address an individual request, only to begin a total ordinance rewrite that could create a situation with a variety of sign types from before and after a new ordinance is adopted. There was more discussion about the timing of this sign ordinance change in the face of a pending total ordinance rewrite. Feulner stated that the Zoning Board would not be considering this text amendment if Town Council had not asked them to, adding that the board's proposal is trying to reach a compromise that would be supported by the Comprehensive Plan.

Feulner made a friendly amendment to the motion that offers more information to help explain the Zoning Board recommendation:

- The Comprehensive Plan does not support the proposal that the Town Council asked the Zoning Board to review.
- Town Council's recommended proposal would impact 13 businesses in the area that could potentially enlarge their existing signs.

Rooney and Hess accepted the amendment, and the motion passed unanimously.

Hess stated that the current Realtors' Task Force on signage wants consistency of off-premise signage among jurisdictions, including a suggestion to allow such signage from Friday noon to Monday noon. There was discussion about other jurisdictions being very strict about signage and very restrictive of off-premise signage.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Anderson asked the board to refer to the Comprehensive Plan in making motions for public hearings, passing out a list of the 12 Common Objectives of the plan.

There was discussion about individual property rights and safety issues, and using the Purpose Statement of the development ordinance, as reasons for a motion and Rozelle stated he will do some research on the question.

Anderson informed the board that the 2 rezoning cases they heard at their last meeting were approved by the Town Council.

Anderson stated that the October Zoning Board agenda will include the Jordan Lake Stream Buffer ordinance, and 3 members of the board stated they may not be available for that meeting. Anderson informed the board that Carrie Reeves has other commitments that prevent her from sitting on the board for a year, and there was concern that there would be a quorum for future meetings. Spencer will contact the board members to confirm their ability for all meetings through the end of the year.

Anderson asked for board members that would be interested in serving on an interview committee for potential Zoning Board candidates and Feulner stated he would.

Lovett made a motion to adjourn, Feulner seconded, and the meeting adjourned at 8:14.

Nancy Hess, Chair

Carrie Spencer, Clerk to the Board