MINUTES OF THE
SUMMERFIELD ZONING BOARD
SUMMERFIELD COMMUNITY CENTER
July 26, 2010
7:00 P.M. Public Hearing

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 7:05 pm by Nancy Hess.

INTRODUCTIONS:

Nancy Hess, Chair
Dick Feulner, Vice-Chair
Trudy Whitacre
Ken Dunham
Alternates Present: Kathy Rooney
Rich Lovett
Will Rozelle, for Town Attorney
Chris Anderson, Planner
Carrie Spencer, Clerk to the Board

CONSENT AGENDA:

Feulner made a motion to approve the consent agenda, Lovett seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.
Feulner made a motion to approve the minutes of the May 24, 2010 meeting, Lovett seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS:

A. Ordinance Text Amendment: Sign Ordinance

Anderson presented the text amendment, reminding the board that the town council requested the ordinance review/revision. He explained that tonight's meeting would be a discussion forum, with a public hearing during next month's board. He added that he had narrowed the sign ordinance down to 3 different considerations: the locations where the ordinances would apply, the height of signage (currently 6ft maximum), and the size of signs (currently maximum 50sf).

Wendy Golden, 7551 NC Hwy 68 N, owner of Golden Antiques and Treasures stated that the current signage is not working for them as it is too small and too far back from the highway to be noticed by cars traveling at a speed limit of 55 MPH. They added that Summerfield Square has no overall identifying sign for the shopping center. They want all 12 businesses currently there (14 potential) to benefit from sign ordinance changes. She added that they have several events on the weekends and need better signage to advertise them. She quoted APA language that states that on a road with 55 mph speed limit, signs need to be 250sf in area to be noticed. She added that when DOT expands the highway and adds a 4ft fence along the right of way, the signage would be even harder to see. She added that they have just signed an agreement with a furniture outlet store that will be located in the back of the building and will also have signage needs. She added that over 68 vendors in the building will benefit from better signage.

Rozelle confirmed that it is appropriate to welcome comments from the audience, including board alternates.

Dunham referenced the Comprehensive Plan sections that address signage, adding that the board should use the plan as a guide in considering signage. Dunham asked about footnote "c" and Anderson pointed

to 6-5 “Development entrances”. He suggested that all specific signage references appear in Article 6, instead of just in those sections (e.g. scenic corridor standards).
Lovett expressed concern that Hwy 220 can still be a scenic corridor once the road is widened and DOT fencing installed. Anderson displayed the two DOT fence design options that have been presented for the right of way. The highway plan is for a limited access 4-lane highway with a 10/12 foot wide divider of concrete and grass. The town is considering supplementing the cost of a better fence design. The work is scheduled to begin in April 2012, and take at least 2 years.
DOT has been questioned about the fence, as well as access to an underpass they are building, and are set in their plans.
There was discussion about the appearance of the sign in the DOT fence posters. There was discussion about the chart of other town ordinances.
The Food Lion sign was installed at its size and height despite the requirements of the ordinance. Purgason’s and Dollar General signs are also out of compliance but were installed before the ordinance was adopted. Another nonconforming sign is at the shopping center just below Purgason’s.
Golden stated that Dollar General is looking for property to move to.
Anderson stated that a combination of sign size and height is desirable. Hess referenced the Hwy 68 scenic corridor south of I40, heading toward High Point. Dunham stated he had worked with sign ordinances that balanced number and size of signs with amount of street frontage, balanced height with setback, and specified monument designs for attractiveness.
Dunham suggested that Dollar General is not taking advantage of the ability to install a sign on the outside of the building.
Rooney suggested the size of the sign change with the length of frontage.
Hess suggested the board consider properties with commercial zoning, but not yet built up (e.g. Hwy 150 at Brookbank).
Hess pointed out that part of the problem with the Dollar General shopping center is that there is no unified sign for the property. Dunham suggested the Goldens be sure to have the permission of the landlord for any sign they want to build.
Feulner pointed out Friendly Shopping Center as an example of signage in a scenic area.
There was discussion about listing all businesses on a sign and the sign at Big Lots was referenced as undesirable and too hard to read. Alternately, there was discussion about ensuring signs properly advertise the businesses so that they want to locate there. Lovett suggested that the Dollar General property is handicapped by the fact that the building is already in place rather than being constructed with better signage to begin with.
There was discussion about having different ordinances for attached shopping centers–vs. - freestanding businesses. Hess suggested that unified signs for attached shopping centers include the name of the shopping center in the largest text, branding the property as a shopping center rather than an individual business.
It was agreed that the ordinance cannot specify the content of signs, just size and location. There was a suggestion to offer a sign size bonus for more appealing building configurations and designs.
Golden stated he had spent 9 months working on the building, and signage will make or break them as a business. Anderson explained that the ordinance does allow temporary signs for events. Golden pointed out details on their proposed sign design and explained that, once outside the right of way and Duke Power easement, their sign would have to be set back as far back as the Cash point’s site. Feulner pointed out that the smaller text proposed for the other businesses would not be visible from the road, and it is likely included on the sign design just to appease them.
There was discussion about the potential for DOT to reduce access points as they widen the road since they have done that in the past.
There was discussion about incentives for certain building configurations and designs. There was discussion about how to calculate sign size with road frontage. The ordinance currently allows the same

size sign on any frontage. It was suggested that an algorithm be written that addresses all factors such as lot frontage.

Anderson listed potential options as keeping the ordinance as is and allowing changes as variances, and modifying the ordinance with sign size bonuses and algorithms.

Dunham suggested businesses who do not use wall signs facing the road, get credit toward free standing sign size (up to a maximum).

Hess suggested the board make individual comments to wrap up the meeting:

Dunham:
Proposed sign area of double the existing ordinance is good.
Bonuses for sign size with a maximum are good.
Proposed height is good and should specify from the crown of the road.

Feulner: (concur with Dunham)

Hess:
Like to see a different ordinance for Highway Business than for Shopping Center.
Offer bonuses for designs with interior parking, not parallel to the highway.
Want to keep standards in line with Comp Plan.
Ordinance should also consider unified developments as they also have multiple businesses.

Whitacre:
Like development plans with parking in center and horse shoe shape.
Like the idea of a bonus for not using wall signs, or for large number of businesses.
Still need a maximum size and 2 signs are acceptable.
It's important for the signs to be unified but to be seen.
Owners should specify sign content.
We should keep with the Comp Plan.

Lovett:
Agree with bonus for not using wall signs, but only granted through a variance process.
Guidelines for variances should be clear and well established.
There should be a bonus for not using available multiple road frontages.
Like subdued, commercial standards of Hilton Head and would like to see their ordinance for multiple businesses.
Safety should be considered with sign size, using industry research for guidelines.

Rooney:
Bonus for unused available wall area is good.
She has had a large sign at her business for many years and it hasn't done her much good; businesses are responsible for advertising their businesses, with signs used for people to find them.
Some additional factors such as a second sign should be allowed for development size.

Dunham:
Consider a bonus square footage for attractive monument signs, in keeping with Comp Plan guidelines.

Anderson confirmed that only the sign face contributes to the area maximum, not the frame and other structure of the sign.

Hess read a letter from the Greensboro Realtors Association into the record (copy attached). She stated that TREBIC is starting a small town committee, using changes that Greensboro made to their sign ordinance. Their first meeting is Wed night at the Allen Tate office in Oak Ridge.

OTHER BUSINESS:
Anderson stated that there are two rezoning cases that have open houses next week, and will be on the August agenda and explained where the properties are.
Dunham shared a publication that suggested emails are read into the record of a meeting or hearing. Rozelle stated that emails could not be read into the record for quasi-judicial hearings.

Dick Feulner made a motion to adjourn and Ken Dunham seconded. The motion passed unanimously and the meeting adjourned at 9:23.

_____ _____

Nancy Hess, Chair Carrie Spencer, Clerk to the Board