



**Town of Weaverville
Minutes**

**Special Called Joint Meeting of Town Council and Planning and Zoning Board
Tuesday, December 12, 2019 – Town Hall**

The Town Council and Planning and Zoning Board for the Town of Weaverville met for a Special Called Joint Meeting on Tuesday, December 12, 2019, at 6:00 p.m. in Council Chambers within Weaverville Town Hall at 30 South Main Street, Weaverville, North Carolina.

Council members present: Mayor Al Root, Vice Mayor/Councilmember Doug Jackson, Councilmembers Patrick Fitzsimmons and Andrew Nagle. Councilmembers Dottie Sherrill and Jeff McKenna were absent.

Planning and Zoning Board members present: Chairman Gary Burge, Vice Chairman Catherine Cordell, Board Members: Peter Stanz, John Chase and Steve Warren, Alternate Board Member Rachel Brunson. Alternate Member Tom Balestrieri was absent.

Staff present: Town Manager Selena Coffey, Town Attorney Jennifer Jackson, Town Planner James Eller, and Town Clerk Derek Huninghake

1. Call to Order

Mayor Root called the meeting to order on behalf of Town Council at 6:00pm.

Chairman Gary Burge called the meeting to order on behalf of the Planning and Zoning Board at 6:00pm.

Mayor Root opened the meeting by noting that this Special Called Joint meeting is for Town Council to receive feedback from the Planning and Zoning Board on what they see as the top priorities and concerns in the Town, what their role is and how it can better serve Town Council and discuss the possibility of creating a new R-4 zoning district. Mayor Root mentioned that the approved 2020 Town Council meeting schedule includes a joint meeting every four months which will be beneficial for both boards to be on the same page.

2. Discussion

Mr. Stanz commented that he doesn't feel they have done a lot of planning, but instead more reacting and would like them to have the power to do more planning. He also wonders how the P&Z Board could assist staff in getting more top priority items to the top of the list. He understands there is a balance between the volunteer board trying to help staff and not getting in the way. He has thought for a long time that mixed use was the number one priority, but believes it has been pushed back down the list to allow for affordable housing. He spoke with Town Manager Coffey about the community center project and if affordable housing is that important then why don't we talk with developers about giving them extra funds to help with affordable housing.

Vice Mayor Jackson noted that he would like the P&Z Board to look into issues that were developed on the strategic plan like mixed-use housing and provide input to Town Council on where they see trends going in five or ten years. He believes the board being involved in more long term strategic planning would be beneficial.

Mr. Burge agreed with Vice Mayor Jackson's suggestion and mentioned that the P&Z Board follows the priority list that they wanted to address like affordable housing and then next mixed use housing, when they aren't working on text amendments and zoning changes. He believes their main responsibility is to the Town citizens with regards to

what Weaverville will be like in five or ten years, so as an advisory board he would like the ability to provide Town Council with input on issues that could be addressed by changes in zoning laws and subdivision regulations.

Councilmember Nagle wondered if there was a job description for the roles of the P&Z Board and if there were any limitations to what the board couldn't do. Town Attorney Jackson mentioned that at the last joint meeting they discussed what the law and ordinances allow the board to do and the duties assigned by Town Council through ordinances. She noted that there aren't any limitations to what the P&Z Board does as an advisory board. Town Planner Eller mentioned that state legislature allow Town Council to delegate the authority to approve subdivision plans to the P&Z Board, but that has not been done in Weaverville. Councilmember Nagle then noted that it would be a great idea to broaden the scope of responsibilities of the P&Z Board and not just for specific projects.

Mayor Root mentioned that at the end of the day the elected officials are the ones that will be held responsible for the decision, but the ability for the P&Z Board to offer their advice in a detailed way lets them see things that Town Council might not. He knows there are items that have to go before the P&Z Board before Town Council can do anything and believes that if there is a desire on the P&Z Board to go a different direction then Town Council wants to hear that feedback.

Mrs. Cordell mentioned that this was where the P&Z Board gets stuck, since Town Council does the future plan and gives them their list of top priorities. They look at their role as this is what Town Council wants, so they don't think they are able to come back to Council and tell them this doesn't work. Instead they look at the list and wonder how they can make it work. Mayor Root noted that in terms of prioritization, the difference between item one, two and three isn't that important.

Councilmember Fitzsimmons noted that they will always welcome recommendations since often they recognize the problem, but don't know the answer and look for the P&Z Board for some input.

Mr. Stanz mentioned that the top two priorities on the list are affordable housing and mixed use developments. It seems to him that affordable housing came to the P&Z Board from Town Council and they wonder how that is important to Weaverville and where it is coming from. As for mixed uses the P&Z Board brought that to Town Council, since there were places where developers told them they couldn't do that. But they aren't able to go back to the developer and tell them that they are able to do something else.

Councilmember Fitzsimmons noted that it comes from the fact that the average price of homes are higher in Weaverville than in Asheville and the average age is rising every year as well, since younger families can't afford to live here. For the future of the Town this won't work and we are trying to find a way for younger families to move to Weaverville.

Mrs. Cordell noted that they discovered that high density doesn't mean affordable housing, since they have allowed developments to be different than the standards were so they could have high density, but the homes were still around \$500,000. The original affordable housing was probably R-3, but that district allows manufactured homes which not everyone wants, but do we have a place for this to be. Also, they have approved more apartments recently, however they received an email about the apartment costs increasing 5% each year. She believes that it is nice that we are looking at affordable housing, but where we sit now we have done our best job of letting it come to us like Lillie Farm. The Town of Weaverville isn't able to manage affordable housing to make sure the owners live in the homes for 15 years and not sell to make a profit.

Councilmember Fitzsimmons mentioned that most of the affordable housing developments intend to be apartments opposed to housing developments, since we aren't able to require developers to build houses at a certain price. He noted that the Town doesn't have the ability to manage these sites, but wonders what we can do to partner with Mountain Housing Opportunities or Habitat for Humanity to find ways for us to be more attractive for these developments.

Mrs. Cordell commented that she really doesn't want to see a new R district for high density or affordable housing, since we are managing it well and need to wait for it to come to us one step at a time. She said that people are parking on sidewalks when setbacks are reduced and their garages are full, due to density.

Councilmember Fitzsimmons noted that denser zoning is not only for affordable houses, but infill properties in the heart of Town would allow for people to drive less and walk to more businesses. Mrs. Cordell agreed with pursuing the infill properties.

Mayor Root mentioned that this could have been a misimpression that Town Council had given them. It may well be that the R-4 district could be good for affordable housing and could add other benefits. Mr. Burge noted that the general feeling is that if they create R-4 with high density and smaller lots than this would become default for single family construction in Weaverville.

Vice Mayor Jackson commented that Town Manager Coffey had gotten some statistics on rental costs in Weaverville compare to Asheville and it appeared that our costs were cheaper than Asheville. Town Planner Eller noted that he provided information related to a study done related to Asheville, and it showed that our citizens make more money and our rent costs less. Town Manager Coffey mentioned that the key clarification is that the numbers didn't match the narrative and we had to back into the formula. Town Planner Eller added that the information was obtained from the American Community Survey that was conducted in 2017 and the City of Asheville had commissioned a Bowen Report that gives them information that is two years newer, so that is as close as we could get to making the numbers match.

Mr. Warren mentioned that one thing that was brought up at their last board meeting was the fact that they don't have all the answers and it might be helpful to get some outside experts that understand the housing industry to give us a tutorial, rather than try to answer the dilemma on their own. Mayor Root wonders if it would be better for those folks to meet with the P&Z Board or have a workshop with Town Council included as well. He would like us to be more proactive in reaching out them for more help on possible grants and other possibilities.

Councilmember Nagle mentioned that Town Council asked about creating R-4 thinking that this could help affordable housing, but what we are really trying to figure out is how we can get younger families with lower incomes to be able to move to Weaverville.

Mr. Stanz reiterated his earlier statement that if Town Council really wants affordable housing then how much are they willing to invest to create affordable housing, if it is nothing then we shouldn't pursue it. He also noted that there isn't very much land left to develop, so we need to figure out what we want in those locations. Mayor Root disagreed on the topic of spending money and thinks there is a different way to look at it. He believes that we can channel it through zoning to make sure that things are setup correctly.

Mr. Warren commented that he doesn't know if there is a big demand for affordable housing. After all we are only a Town of 4,000 residents and if you go a 1 mile outside you are in the county, shouldn't the county offer affordable housing? Or why does the Town have to take on the task of creating affordable housing? He isn't in the private sector so he doesn't know if the housing market is pursuing these types of developments.

Mr. Burge noted that he has spoken with neighbors and citizens about affordable housing and they don't want \$250,000 homes coming into their neighborhood because it would lower the value of their property. Plus he spoke with a few developers and they don't want to build these types of developments either. He doesn't see a distressed economic area in Weaverville.

Town Planner Eller noted that most of the time affordable housing is found in multi-family configuration. As for Lillie Farm Cove like Mrs. Cordell brought up, it was approved in September 2016 with each unit being a single family home and 32 out of 46 were offered at affordable housing pricing levels. The Town has issued 196 permits from September and, to date, that equates to 16% of zoning permits issued to new single family construction have

gone to affordable housing. Mr. Eller noted that this was a Mountain Housing Opportunities project and they are obligated to operate under the terms of 80% of the income.

Councilmember Fitzsimmons noted that the desire is to have younger families in Weaverville besides just to diversify the age in Weaverville. We don't see a lot of kids around Weaverville that actually live in Town and we don't want to only have the older generation.

Councilmember Nagle noted that potentially there are other things that the Town could do like spend money on such as fiber optic technology, dog park, and community center to attract younger families to move here. Mr. Burge mentioned that true high speed internet would be an attraction as well as allowing the capability of free WiFi on Main Street. Mr. Stanz commented that zoning might not be the answer for attracting younger families to the area.

Mr. Burge mentioned that the P&Z Board is interested in mixed use, since it gives the Town more flexibility and could be a way to address affordable housing while having a business below that creates jobs. Councilmember Fitzsimmons noted that this is attractive and our downtown is booming, but there is no place to put them. However a mixed use development somewhere outside downtown might be desirable.

Councilmember Fitzsimmons mentioned that the issue of Airbnb growth in our Town will need to be addressed soon, as well as the possibility of allowing for tiny homes. It would be good if we can try and get out in front of this, instead of having to react when someone brings it up to us. Mr. Burge noted that they didn't consider accessory dwelling units like garage apartments, since the downside is that it encourages Airbnb's and could ruin the character of the Town of Weaverville.

3. Overview

Mayor Root mentioned that if he is hearing this correctly, Town Council doesn't want to task the P&Z Board with drafting an R-4 ordinance, but to broaden their scope of responsibility and for them to come back to Council and advise them on what to do. Mixed use is a very interesting topic and if P&Z Board wants to tackle this issue and bring back their suggestions to Council at an upcoming next meeting. He also noted that we start shifting away from affordable housing and to find ways to attract younger families.

Mr. Burge agreed with Mayor Root, since the possibilities are actually there to do something. The more we think about affordable housing then the less we will actually change anything because it would have unattainable consequences to the Town. He also introduced the Planning and Zoning Boards new alternate member, Rachael Bronson.

4. Adjournment.

Vice Mayor/Councilman Jackson made the motion to adjourn the Town Council meeting; Councilman Fitzsimmons seconded and all of Town Council voted to adjourn the Council's meeting at 7:26 p.m.

Board member Cordell made the motion to adjourn the meeting of the Planning and Zoning Board; Board member Stanz seconded and all Board members voted to adjourn the Board's meeting at 7:26 p.m.



DEREK K. HUNINGHAKE, Town Clerk



MAYOR ALLAN ROOT

