

Town of Bloomsburg
Special Planning Commission Meeting Minutes
May 5, 2010 – 6:30 PM
Town Hall, Council Chambers

Chairperson Susan McGarry called the meeting to order at 6:30 P.M. Present were members Gregg Wirth, Bill Brobst, Barry Thorne, Alex Dubil, Mike Mertz and Warren Faust, Town Planner Bob Aungst, Code Enforcement Officer Ed Fegley and Administrative Assistant Christine Meeker.

ZONING AMENDMENT DISCUSSION – BLOOMSBURG MILLS PROPERTY

At the April 22, 2010 Planning Commission meeting, Matt Zoppetti and Sante D’Ambrosio proposed changing the zoning in the area of the former Bloomsburg Mills from I-P District to the following: zone 1.527 acre’s on the north side of Sixth Street between Jefferson and West Streets Residential-Urban for the development of a light residential housing component, possibly townhouse units. Leave 4.029 acre’s zoned Industrial-Park for permitted uses and zone 6.95 acres Commercial to allow for mixed use, commercial, residential and high density housing. It was suggested by a member of the Planning Commission that the C-R District requirements would also work well with the applicant’s proposal.

The proposal that was submitted to the Planning Commission on May 4, 2010 proposes to change a 8.477 acre portion of the property from Market Street west to C-R District and leave the 3.23 acre portion that is located at the far west end along Railroad Street to remain I-P District. The applicant also proposes to amend the text of the ordinance to include medical offices and medical/dental clinics, continuing/care retirement community, nursing homes and day care facilities as permitted uses and to allow by special exception; communication towers/antennas, hotels and motels and drive-in and drive through servicing uses.

Bill Brobst questioned the applicant as to why the delineation line between C-R and I-P Districts is running through a portion of the warehouse located at the west end of the parcel. Mr. Zoppetti indicated that a straight line between the districts is better than “zig zagging” around building’s. Mr. Brobst also questioned why the applicant opted to change the 1.527 acre parcel on the north side of Sixth Street between Jefferson and West Streets that was zoned R-U to C-R. Mr. Zoppetti stated that the C-R District allows for the housing component which was originally discussed but also permits a wider array of uses.

Mr. Zoppetti introduced Rich Kisner of the Columbia County Housing Authority, Mr. Kisner stated that representatives from the CCHA had toured the site and are extremely interested in a housing project at this location, however, he indicated that the site is to large for one specific use so the C-R District’s mixed uses are a perfect fit. The revenue from commercial use on the first floor allows for affordable housing to be established on the second and third floors. Mr. Kisner indicated that some of the existing buildings do have a re-use potential, possibly loft type apartments. Susan McGarry questioned whether the land would be owned by the CCHA or their affiliates or leased and would it be taxable. Mr. Kisner stated that usually the land is leased, and it is taxable but on a different scale.

Town Planner Bob Aungst questioned Mr. Kisner on how competitive the funding market is for this type of project and he also requested that he explain exactly what "affordable housing" is. Mr. Kisner stated that affordable housing looks at the local median income range of its potential tenants. High end housing use's a formula of greater than 115 % of the local median, medium housing use 80% and senior housing looks a 60% local median. In most of these cases senior residents are the target for these types of projects. Mr. Kisner indicated that funding is very competitive and that the next available funding round would open December 15, 2010. Mr. Aungst questioned Mr. Kisner on a timeframe for a commitment by the CCHA. Mr. Kisner indicated that the CCHA is definitely serious about a project at this location and that the town, county and state should all be at the table on this project. Mr. Kisner indicated that it would be at least six months before a formal commitment could be made.

Gregg Wirth pointed out that with the addition of the text changes the proposal on the table has changed substantially from the April 22nd submission. He also questioned Mr. Zoppetti on the "back-up plan" which included a student housing component that was outlined at the last meeting, and he questioned what is to stop the applicant from just using the "back-up" plan from the get go. Mr. Zoppetti indicated that he was 99% sure that the senior living proposal would fly and that the student component was not needed. Mr. Zoppetti stated that maybe a new district should be developed such has a C-R-1 District that would allow for all the use's that he has outlined but with student housing removed as a use altogether. Bob Aungst stated that Mr. Zoppetti was now headed in the right direction for this project, and he cautioned the commission that if they are waiting for an industrial use to show up, they may be waiting a long time.

Following further discussion it is the general consensus of the commission for the developer to draft the language for a new zoning district to be named Business-Campus One that would include all the permitted uses of the current C-R District with the exclusion of student housing. Plus include medical offices and medical/dental clinics, continuing/care retirement community, nursing homes and day care facilities as permitted uses and to allow by special exception; communication towers/antennas, hotels/ motels and drive-in and drive through servicing uses. The applicant was instructed to submit this proposal by the May 13th planning deadline or sooner and it will be placed on the May 27, 2010 Planning Commission agenda for possible recommendation.

Being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:23 PM.

Notes taken by Christine Meeker