

**TOWN OF BLOOMSBURG
PLANNING COMMISSION
January 26, 2017**

Chairperson Rich Bogar called the meeting to order at 6:30 P.M. In attendance were Commission Members Mike Mertz, Ray Vought, Diane Levan, Joe Martarano and Ed Sabo. Also in attendance were Town Planner Bob Aungst, Code Enforcement Officer Kyle Bauman, and Administrative Assistant Christine Meeker.

Minutes from the December 22, 2016 meeting were approved with no corrections or additions.

ROBERT DWORSAK – LAND DEVELOPMENT – FRANKLIN AVENUE

Submission Date: January 26, 2017 – Ninety Day Deadline: April 21, 2017

Deadline for Action – Planning Commission by: March 23, 2017 – Council by: April 10, 2017

This plan is for the construction of a five (5) unit 119 by 24 townhouse style building, with a six (6) stall parking lot. The following modification and waiver have been requested:

On a motion by M. Mertz, seconded by R. Vought and voted on unanimously, the Commission recommends Council approve a modification from Section 22-607.2, parking stalls shall be 10 X 20, the applicant proposes 10 X 18.

On a motion by M. Mertz, seconded by R. Vought and voted on unanimously, the Commission recommends Council approve a waiver Section 22-702, no less than two monuments per lot shall be set. It is the developer's interpretation of the ordinance that this requirement is intended for newly created lots, this lot is an existing parcel.

MATT ZOPPETTI – LAND DEVELOPMENT – THE COURTYARD AT FIFTH STREET

Submission Date: January 26, 2017 – Ninety Day Deadline: April 21, 2017

Deadline for Action – Planning Commission by: March 23, 2017 – Council by: April 10, 2017

This plan is for the construction of an approximately 26,000 square foot, 50 unit building to be constructed at the corner of West Fifth and West Streets. Parking will be situated on the adjoining lot as per the developer's agreement. No action was taken at this time.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES CAMPUS OVERLAY DISTRICT

Matt Zoppetti opened the discussion by thanking the code office for their work on the definitions in the proposed ordinance and to explain that the uses allowed under the overlay would only be allowed in the HHSC District and not in any of the other I-P Districts. Mr. Zoppetti produced a map showing a possible layout of future buildings on the site, these building would include an 8,000 square foot gym/training area along with a women's center, transitional housing, counselling facilities, etc., all directed toward opioid rehab. Mr. Zoppetti noted that the transitional housing will be for rehab program patients only and note open to prison inmates.

Megan Fleetwood read from a prepared statement with regard to the struggle that her nephew faced with addiction and about the lack of rehab programing that was available to him. Unfortunately, her nephew died of an overdose before an open bed in a program could be found.

Columbia County District Attorney Tom Leipold addressed the Commission regarding the impact of the drug epidemic in the county. 60% of the inmates at the Columbia County Prison are there due to drug related crimes. The cost to the county is approximately 6 million dollars a year, approximately 2 billion is spent at the state level. Attorney Leipold stated that law enforcement tried to attack the problem at the supply line and that is not working, so we must attack the problem at the need level. This location is in a somewhat isolated area which is bordered by the flood wall, the

railroad and the river. Attorney Leipold stated that although it is in close proximity to the school if someone was to be caught in the “school zone” with narcotics, the punishment is double what it normally would be.

Robert Aungst questioned Attorney Leipold on how this facility will benefit the people from our immediate area when all data shows that patients respond better when they are placed in rehab away from their home community. Attorney Leipold stated that by placing people from outside our area in this facility it opens up beds in another facility for our residents.

Steve Coladonato questioned whether there is anywhere in town that this type of use is allowed. Kyle stated that there is not.

Toni Escobar-Brown stated that a lot of the addiction problems start with the opiate being given by prescription for a medical reason. It takes only three weeks for a person to become addicted, once the prescriptions are taken away the person then turns to illegal drugs. On average a person goes through rehab seven times.

Matt Munson owner of Crossfit Gym stated that the rehab failure rate is what it is due to lack of comprehensive programs that includes exercise, occupational therapy, etc.

Sandy Davis questioned whether this overlay would violate the Town’s Comprehensive Plan.

Attorney Rob Davidson stated that we must address the opiate problem with innovative ideas and the clustering of services such as proposed has already been established.

Chairman Rich Bogar asked every Commission Member for their thoughts on this request.

J. Martarano stated that he read the Comprehensive Plan and believes this does not follow it. He feels that the Commission needs to do their job and decide on what is good for the future of Bloomsburg.

D. Levan stated that this plan is only an overlay for the district and the proposed rehab facility will take a long time and have to jump a lot of hurdles to get established and if it does not fly, the I-P District regulations are still in effect.

M. Hatem had no comment.

M. Mertz stated that we are only voting on an overlay proposal and he is for any project that will increase the tax base and ease the tax burden on the current residents.

E. Sabo stated that he is not in favor of the proposal due the location in the flood plain and the amount of resources that will have to be used in the event of an emergency. In-patients will need a special facility to be relocated to in the event of a flood that could have the potential for displacement for an extended period of time.

R. Vought is not in favor of the proposal for reasons he has stated all along.

R. Bogar stated it is not compatible with the Comprehensive Plan, however, the plan does for future reference develop an eastern business campus that does allow for this type use. He went on to say that the Comprehensive Plan is only a guide and the rule of law is our ordinances. In considering the request, the Commission has three options, to deny the request, to approve the request, or pass it on to Council with the request that a public meeting be held involving all entities that have voiced either opposition or support.

D. Levan stated that the Commission needs to make a recommendation one way or the other. In the past, the Commission has criticized Council for not giving the Commission an opportunity to review or vote on an issue, now this is in our lap.

D. Levan made a motion to recommend Council approve the request for the Health and Human Services Campus (HHSC) District overlay, the motion was seconded by M. Mertz. R. Bogar called for discussion, R. Davidson stated for the record that J. Martarano and R. Vought should recuse themselves because they have shown bias against the proposal.

The vote was taken and the recommendation to Council to approve the Health and Human Services Campus (HHSC) District overlay was defeated on a vote of 4 to 3 with D. Levan, R. Bogar and M. Mertz voting "Yes" and E. Sabo, J. Martarano, M. Hatem and R. Vought voting "No".

Next workshop will be February 16th at 3:00 P.M. with R. Bogar, R. Vought and M. Hatem attending.

Being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:30 P.M.

Notes taken by Christine Meeker