

NORTH EAST PLANNING COMMISSION
North East Town Hall Meeting Room
106 South Main Street, North East, Maryland 21901
Tuesday, May 2, 2017
7:00 PM

Chairman Mark Dobbins called the meeting to order at 7:03 PM. Present included Eric Braley, Valerie Combs, Michael Nair and Judy Duffy. Also present were Melissa Cook-Mackenzie, Town Administrator, Betsy Vennell, Director of Planning and Lisa Rhoades, Planning and Zoning Assistant.

-MINUTES-

April 4, 2017 Meeting Minutes.

The Planning Commission accepted the minutes as presented.

Ms. Duffy made a motion to accept the April 4, 2017 meeting minutes as presented. Ms. Combs seconded the motion and the motion was approved by all.

-NEW BUSINESS-

Case A-2017-02-SE: Special Exception application from North East United Methodist Church, 308 South Main Street, North East, Maryland 21901, also found on Tax Map 401: Parcel 0315. Applicant proposes to replace existing sign with an electronic signs. The North East Planning Commission will hear this Case in order to form a recommendation to the Board of Appeals, who will hear this Case May 25, 2017.

Mr. Jeff Gillespe, the applicant, 99 Cherry Lane, Perryville, Maryland and Ms. Laura Young, 62 North East Isle Drive, North East, Maryland represented the North East United Methodist Church.

Ms. Young displayed an image of the existing message board sign and an image of the proposed electronic message board sign. The proposed sign does not have the capability of displaying graphic elements, therefore, will only display lettering. The purpose of the new sign is to advertise the topic of the Pastor's weekly sermon and to advertise special events. Ms. Young explained that church holds events like the free soup dinners. Ms. Young added that the North East United Methodist Church holds drug and alcohol recovery meetings and inquired if there would be an issue advertising these meetings. The Planning Commission stated no. Ms. Young reported that many local residents are unaware of the events and their desire is to inform the public. In addition, messages regarding the church Pre-school program would be able to be posted. Ms. Young reported the sign can be changed from inside of the Church.

Ms. Young reported that the Church is aware that residential properties are within close proximity to the proposed sign and said it is not their intent to bother any of the neighbors with a bright flashy sign. The displayed messages would be

displayed for 30 to 50 seconds before changing to the next message. The colors will vary but Ms. Young stated they want the sign to be easy to read.

Mr. Nair inquired if the sign company has reviewed the electronic message board sign regulations and inquired if the applicants were aware of the message time restrictions and brightness restrictions. Mr. Gillespe and Ms. Young concurred they have reviewed the regulations as well as the sign company who was hired to construct the proposed sign. Ms. Young added that she felt the regulations for an Electronic Message and Reader Board signs were very reasonable.

Chairman Dobbins inquired if the top of the proposed sign was going to be back-lit. Ms. Young replied no. Commissioner Braley expressed concern regarding the lumens or brightness of the sign, and verified whether the sign will be lit in accordance with our regulations. Mrs. Vennell referenced the North East Zoning Ordinance *Section 7-23 Electronic Message Signs and Reader Board Signs, Paragraph 1 (d), (e) and (f)*:

d. Electronic Message Signs and Reader Board Signs shall be equipped with an automatic dimming photocell which adjusts the display's brightness based on ambient light conditions.

e. The brightness levels of an electronic or reader board sign shall not increase by more than 0.3 foot candles (or 3.23 lumens per square meter or lux) (over ambient levels), measured within 100 feet of the sign.

f. Electronic Message Signs and Reader Board Signs located on a lot adjacent to any residential dwelling(s) shall be turned off between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. Time and temperature displays are permitted 24 hours per day.

Mrs. Vennell stated if the town receives a complaint with regards to the brightness of the sign or messages changing too quickly, the planning office would call the property owner to attempt to resolve. Ms. Young stated the letters on the current sign are approximately 4 inches in height and are proposed at approximately 5 inches in height on the new sign. Ms. Young added there is a feature that gives the option to have 10 inch height letters, however they will most likely not use this option often as it only allows a very short message.

Mr. Nair inquired if Mr. Gillespe and Ms. Young might consider shorter hours of operation for the electronic message board sign, such as 7am to 9 pm. Mr. Gillespe and Ms. Young concurred that these hours would be fine and reasonable. Ms. Young reported the installation of the sign may be as early as the beginning of summer if approval is granted for the Special Exception.

Ms. Combs made a motion for recommendation of Case A-2017-02-SE with the following conditions:

1. Letter from Mrs. Vennell dated April 12, 2017 to the North East Planning Commission and the North East Board of Appeals.
2. The hours of operation for the proposed Electronic Message Reader Board sign be limited to 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Mr. Nair seconded the motion and was approved by all.

-OLD BUSINESS-

None.

-REPORTS-

Annexation

Mrs. Vennell reported that the Planning Commission will be hearing about an Annexation, subject property is the Pat's Pizza on Route 40. Mrs. Vennell reported that the Zoning Ordinance states that the Planning Commission can make recommendations to the Mayor and Commissions regarding annexation. Mrs. Vennell briefly explained how a property becomes eligible for annexation and the process.

Jacob Tome School

Mrs. Vennell reported that a Special Exception application has been received for the Jacob Tome School for the use of a school with addition of a new gymnasium. A portion of this property is within town limits and a portion of the property is out of town limits. Mrs. Vennell reported the Planning Commission will review the Concept Site plan during the meeting. Comments from the Town's Engineer will be forwarded to the Planning Commission.

Mrs. Cook-Mackenzie explained that when the school was built in 1971 a Special Exception was not required at that time because the majority of the school was outside of the corporate limit of the town.

510 South Main Street-Liquor License

Mrs. Vennell reported that an application was received from the Cecil County Liquor Board for 510 South Main Street for a Beer, Wine and Liquor License. Mrs. Vennell reported that the previously approved Liquor License in 2006 was for Beer & Wine. Mrs. Vennell reported that the Planning Office has not received a commercial occupation application, therefore, does not know what type of restaurant is being proposed for the subject property. Ms. Combs stated the Planning Commission would not be able to make any determination without having a clear picture of what type of establishment is proposed. Ms. Combs stated she specifically remembers not approving a Beer, Wine & Liquor License for the prior establishment because at that time the Planning Commission did not feel it was appropriate within the Village Commercial District.

Chairman Dobbins stated if the Planning Commission does not know what is being proposed for this business we cannot make a determination on the liquor license application.

Mrs. Cook-Mackenzie stated as the Zoning Administrator she is advising the Planning Commission to only approve a Beer and Wine License as she does not feel a Beer, Wine & Liquor License is appropriate for the Village Commercial District. The intent of the Village Commercial District was to have businesses in operation during normal daytime business hours and the neighborhood return to residential in the evening.

Route 272 Bridge over Amtrak

Mrs. Cook-Mackenzie reported a notice to proceed with the bridge has been signed and we should see some activity on the bridge soon.

North East Library

Mrs. Cook-Mackenzie reported the library will be selecting an architect and designer soon. It will most likely be fall or winter before the Planning Commission will see any submittals for the proposed library.

-MISCELLANEOUS-

None.

-COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC-

None.

-NEXT MEETING-

Next meeting June 6, 2017.

-ADJOURNMENT-

With no further business, Ms. Combs made a motion to adjourn at 7.49 p.m. Ms. Duffy seconded the motion and the motion was approved by all.

Respectfully submitted:

Attest:

Lisa Rhoades
Planning and Zoning Assistant

Mark Dobbins
Chairman