

Minutes
Walkersville Planning Commission Meeting
March 23, 2021

Commission Chairman David Ennis called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. with members Dick Brady, Ray Santullo, Mike Kuster, Tom Gilbert, and Russ Winch present. Also present was Town Planner Susan Hauver and Town Commissioner Mary Ann Brodie-Ennis. Member Michelle Doster was absent. The meeting was also live-streamed on the Town's Facebook page.

1. Minutes

Member Brady made a motion, seconded by Member Winch, to approve the minutes of the February 23, 2021 meeting and the March 9, 2021 workshop. The motion passed on a vote of 6-0.

2. Comprehensive Plan Update discussion

Planner Hauver reviewed the agricultural properties discussed at the workshop on the 9th. She also mentioned that Josh Reeder representing the DeCaro property, was in attendance and would be prepared to discuss his family's interest in developing that property.

Chairman David Ennis asked each member to provide feedback on the development requests presented at the last meeting.

Member Gilbert said he does not have a position. No one that he talks to is in favor of growth. He and his family are from Walkersville and like the small town. He noted that growth can be important. While he does not have strong feelings either way, he would like to hear a response from residents.

Member Kuster noted the need for housing, but his greatest concern is having the needed infrastructure in place. He noted that more development puts additional pressure on the schools and roads, causing overcrowding and traffic congestion.

Member Santullo said they need to hear from residents. He would like to see more analysis as to the acreage available for development and receive more public feedback. He hears "no growth" from citizens.

Member Brady emphasized that their job is planning, and planning to do nothing is not planning. He feels the Comprehensive Plan should offer some possibilities of growth, to prevent decline. He noted that facilities never get built before they are needed. He said that their job as Planning Commission members is to understand the problems when planning for growth. He said that the zoning map is the means of implementing the Comprehensive Plan. Properties could be planned for development without being zoned, to allow growth to be controlled.

Member Winch said that the resident survey indicated that citizens are opposed to growth. As a planner, one option for the community is no growth. He disagrees with the premise that if the town doesn't grow, it dies. He is opposed to widening MD 194 as it will further divide the town geographically. He said that growth does not bring a benefit to the town; rather, it brings greater expenses. He is more interested in getting businesses in the shopping center and hopes the town makes a concerted effort in economic development.

Chairman Ennis said that the town needs to plan for some moderate growth. He would like to see alternative types of housing that are suited to seniors and also affordable housing. He also said that the schools can get overcrowded by growth outside of town but within the school district boundaries. He noted that issues with MD 194 need to be addressed by the State Highway Administration. He also mentioned the need to plan for bikeways.

Member Gilbert noted the need for the town to plan for projects required under our MS4 (Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System) permit. He was surprised to learn what the State requirements are in that area.

Mr. Josh Reeder spoke on behalf of his uncle, Jeff DeCaro, trustee of the DeCaro property located on the west side of MD 194 opposite Challedon Drive. He said that the family members are brainstorming about the potential use of the property and they are considering conducting a market analysis. They would be willing to work in partnership with the town to consider residential and commercial development alternatives.

Mr. Jeremy Holder of Ausherman Development, discussed the benefits of residential growth to the towns of Sharpsburg and Boonsboro.

Member Brady noted that Discovery was developed outside Town limits in the 1970s, and that Glade Valley Farms could be developed at the Town's periphery in the future without being within the Town limits. He feels that providing development opportunities within Town will put off the possibility of development occurring outside, but adjacent to the Town.

Commissioner Mary Ann Brodie-Ennis thanked Commission members for their insights as well as for helping her to understand the planning process. She noted her support for affordable housing and the agricultural buffer around the Town.

3. Announcements

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan J. Hauver