

Minutes

Walkersville Planning Commission Workshop

July 13, 2021

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

Chairman Ennis announced that the purpose of the workshop was to consider property owner requests for amendments to the Town Comprehensive Plan.

1. Property Owner Request: Staley, W/S Glade Road, between Main Street extended and Devilbiss Bridge Road (115 acres, request for High Density Residential south of Glade Creek and Low Density Residential north of Glade Creek)

Planner Hauver presented the request. Mr. Staley, the property owner, declined to speak.

Member Brady noted that the 29 acre area on the south side of Glade Creek would probably only net 15 acres of developable land once the floodplain was taken out. He would support that area being designated High Density Residential and zoned R-4. He doesn't see a reason to change the Ag designation on the 86 acres north of the creek at this time.

Members Kuster, Gilbert and Ennis agreed with Mr. Brady, with Mr. Ennis noting that the 86 acres is disconnected from other developments. Mr. Gilbert noted that Glade Creek establishes a development boundary.

Member Winch said that he would be opposed to changing the designation of any property to residential category.

Member Santullo said that he would not support changing the 86 acres, and is not sure about the 29 acres to the south.

Member Doster said that she would support the change on the south side of Glade Creek, from LI to HDR. She is up in the air about the remaining 86 acres. She felt that the owner might be concerned that developing the southern portion would not be feasible without developing the north side.

2. Property Owner Request: Delaplaine, N/S MD 26, between MD 194 and Crum Road (706 acres, Request for Ag/Mixed Use—from Ag Buffer to a development category)

Planner Hauver presented the request. Ms. Tracie Claybaugh represented the property owner, Jim Delaplaine. She said they would like the property to remain in the Walkersville growth area. They would like the property be designated for a mix of agriculture and mixed use development (high and low density residential, commercial, industrial, office). The property is large and unique.

Member Brady noted that Israel Creek represents a natural demarcation line between development and agriculture. He doesn't see the Town permitting or annexing east of Israel Creek.

Member Kuster agreed with Mr. Brady, noting that developing the whole property would create an island of agricultural preservation.

Member Santullo expressed some openness to developing the area bounded by MD 194, MD 26 and Israel Creek.

Member Winch noted that he spoke out against the development of this property before the County Planning Commission and County Commissioners in 2010, when the County Plan was under consideration. He noted the lack of road improvements in the area, and the resulting domino effect of allowing one property to be developed.

Member Doster agreed with Mr. Brady's comments, and noted that developing the area east of Israel Creek would burden Town facilities.

Member Gilbert agreed with Ms. Doster, Mr. Kuster and Mr. Brady.

Chairman Ennis said he does not oppose expansion of the Town. He would like to see a more concrete proposal. He would not support something of the magnitude of this whole property.

3. Property Owner Request: Bowers; W/S Fountain Rock Road, S/S Biggs Ford Rd (107 acres, from Ag Buffer/Light Industrial to residential)

Planner Hauver presented the request. Mr. Dave Bowers spoke on behalf of the property owners, who are his grandparents. The family wants to be part of the conversation of the Comprehensive Plan. He noted their property's proximity to the Town boundary and water and sewer lines. He would like to see the entire property designated Low Density Residential. He noted that a highway interchange at Biggs Ford Road and U.S. 15 is planned.

Member Winch voiced his opposition to the request.

Member Ennis said that he was interested in the trail proposed to extend through this property and might be interested in a park associated with the trail. He would be receptive to LDR, if the floodplain were used as a park.

Member Kuster cited concerns about traffic.

Member Santullo also expressed concerns about traffic. The Staley property would make more sense to be developed than something further out.

Member Doster said she is in favor of slow intelligent growth. She loves the small town and agricultural uses. She would be concerned about houses adjoining the proposed solar farm on the north side of Biggs Ford Road.

4. Property Owner Request: Stone; NW corner of Fountain Rock Road and MD 194 (100 acres, Request for change from Ag Rural to a mixed residential category)

Planner Hauver presented the request.

Mr. Jeremy Holder of Ausherman development introduced the following members of his team: Darby Jones representing property owner Audrey Stone, Eric Sotor of Rodgers & Associates, and attorneys April Dixon and Bruce Dean. Mr. Holder said that they would like the density permitted under the Medium Density Residential category, but would propose a new mixed density zoning category similar to Frederick City's PND District. They would like to include multiple housing product types on the property, for a total of 275 to 325 units.

Ms. Jones read a letter from Mrs. Stone.

Mr. Holder said he would like to have Commission members tour the Kellerton development in Frederick, which Ausherman is currently developing.

Member Kuster said he would prefer the property stay in agricultural use. He does see the development of this property as an opportunity to get some amenities. Schools, traffic and roads are issues. He would be opposed to straight R-3 zoning.

Mr. Soter said that traffic was a complex issue that would have to be analyzed later in the process. He said that the development would serve as a major gateway to the Town.

Member Santullo agreed with Mrs. Stone's description of the property as the crown jewel of Walkersville, noting the beautiful view of the farm against the mountains.

Member Brady said that the development would be a unique opportunity for the Town. He would like to explore the possibility more. He noted that this property owner seems the most ready to move forward. The Town has suffered waiting for MD 194 to be dualized. He doesn't have an answer yet as to what the property should be, but he would like a better gateway to the Town than Discovery.

Member Gilbert did not think this property had the same qualities as the farms on which Kellerton is located.

Member Winch reminded the members that development of farms in around town is only going to happen if the Town approves it. It is not inevitably going to happen.

Member Doster noted her position of growth that fits with the vision of the Comprehensive Plan.

Member Ennis said that he felt that some growth would be okay. He is a proponent of slow, smart growth. He wants what is best for the tax base and Town. His mind is not made up and he would be open to touring Kellerton.

Commission members discussed the Kellerton tour and agreed to scheduling it.

Mr. Mike Staley, 100 Main Street, questioned use of Glade Creek as a development boundary on his property. Development jumped Glade Creek at Parkside and Creekside Park. He also noted that his property has access on Devilbiss Bridge Road.

Town Commissioner Mary Ann Brodie-Ennis said that if the Stone property is developed, it would be a great place to add a town park.

5. Announcements

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan J. Hauver