

## Minutes

### Walkersville Planning Commission Meeting

December 14, 2021

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

#### 1. Minutes

**Member Gilbert made a motion, seconded by Member Brady, to approve the minutes of the November 9, 2021 meeting. The motion passed on a vote of 5-0-1 (Winch abstained).**

#### 2. Comprehensive Plan Update Discussion

Planner Hauver said that there were a number of items/issues that might be addressed in the updated Comprehensive Plan, about which she wanted direction from the Commission.

##### 1) Senior Center

Member Gilbert advocated for the concept of a senior center to be included in the Plan. He feels this is an unmet need in the community and a worthwhile investment. He noted that Thurmont has the ideal building for a senior center (located at 806 E. Main Street). Seniors in Walkersville use the second-floor meeting room in Town Hall but it is not ideal in terms of accessibility and functionality and the space is shared with other users. Mr. Gilbert said that the ideal center would be on ground level, with multiple rooms of various sizes (one large meeting room and smaller rooms for smaller meetings or functions). The Whitmore-Zimmerman is not air conditioned, has high ceilings, and would be a shared space. He suggested that it be located on the Walker Farm, noting that the Town already owns it. Planner Hauver noted that it could be represented with a symbol as a planned facility which does not anchor the location of the facility to a particular spot on the property.

**After discussion, the consensus of the Commission was to add a symbol for a senior center on the Walker Farm on the Plan map. Member Kuster also mentioned relocating Crum Road on the Walker Farm, so that the outlet on 194 is opposite Nicodemus Road rather than the current location.**

##### 2) Walker Farm

With regard to planning other uses on the Walker Farm, Member Winch noted that the Town did not battle over it just to develop it. The Town needs to promote agriculture, since this is what the Town is all about. He would like to promote agri-tourism uses such as breweries and wineries. He also highlighted that Walkers Overlook is a great business and would be affected by development of the property.

Chairman Ennis said that the Commission has expressed support for agriculture, recreation and agri-tourism uses on the site. He also would like the Town to study the feasibility of locating another Town well on the property. Member Winch said that studies done in the past said that there was not a suitable supply on that property.

Member Kuster agreed about promoting agri-tourism uses. He did not feel that a senior center on the Walker Farm would have much of an impact on the use of the property.

##### 3) Parks

**After a discussion about park land needs, the consensus of the Commission was to add a park symbol on the Walker Farm, possibly for passive recreation.**

Member Santullo advocated for a park symbol along the Monocacy River on the Century Center property. He noted that the property is unique. The rail line and the proposed bike trail go through the property. He noted the beauty of the river and the area's desirability for fishing, canoeing, and kayaking. He mentioned that State grants might be available to make that area into a park. Mr. Ennis said that the property would need to be developed for it to be dedicated as a park, which might not happen in the near future. Mr. Kuster expressed his support and Mr. Brady noted that the road system already provides access.

***The consensus of the Commission was to add a park symbol in the floodplain area of the Century Center property (now owned by Nathan Frederick Farming & Leasing LLC).***

4) Rail-Trail / Pennsylvania Avenue

Planner Hauver noted that Frederick County is planning a bike trail within the railroad right-of-way and wanted to confirm that Commission members would like to see that designated on the Transportation Plan. Member Winch asked whether it would affect the Walkersville Southern Railroad operations and she noted that the uses are compatible, since the trail will be alongside the tracks. Chairman Ennis wondered how the trail would get across the Monocacy River or MD 26. It was noted that the trail would connect parts of the Town.

Planner Hauver also presented Commissioner Bailey's idea to consider the potential of the area around the rail trail, Pennsylvania Avenue, and the railroad station as a commercial hub. There are a number of challenges in the area due to existing land uses and physical constraints. The County's feasibility study for the rail trail showed the trail diverting from the railroad due to these constraints. She suggested that the Commission consider recommending that a small area plan be developed, to consider the land ownership, land use, zoning and transportation challenges and evaluate the area's development potential. Mr. Kuster supported the idea, and noted the challenges presented by land ownership and redeveloping the old cannery. Mr. Winch said that he thought food trucks could serve area visitors, and that the older buildings might be use.

***The consensus of the Commission was to recommend a small area plan be done for the area. Member Brady suggested that a consultant be hired to conduct the study. It was noted that there would be time to conduct a study before the trail was in place, perhaps even 5 to 10 years.***

Commissioner McNiesh said that Commissioner Bailey had been in touch with County transportation planners and that the plan is for the trail to be built in a shorter timeframe than the Commission was considering. Staff will follow up with the County staff.

5) East Frederick Street

Planner Hauver suggested that the Plan include recommendations for improvements to the pedestrian experience and streetscape and consideration of zoning changes in the area of East Frederick Street. The B-2 zoning in the area would allow properties to be developed with uses that are more oriented to vehicular traffic rather than pedestrians. Mr. Ennis mentioned the opportunities to introduce traffic calming measures to slow down the traffic coming from MD 194. The need for a safer pedestrian crossing of MD 194 was also noted.

***The consensus of the Commission was to recommend that the Plan include recommendations regarding the East Frederick Street area zoning, road design and pedestrian ways.***

6) Walkers Village Center / MD 194 Commercial area

Planner Hauver reviewed issues related to the Walkers Village Center. Member Winch emphasized the importance of the center to the Town's economic viability. Member Brady thought the Town should be creative with regard to taxes over the next 20 years to promote

those use of the unused spaces. He feels the owner and any potential owners need an incentive to use or redevelop the unused buildings and empty spaces. Member Ennis said that the Town has worked with the owner over the last few years to amend the sign regulations and subdivide off the two story building.

***The consensus of the Commission was to add to the Plan a recommendation that the Walkers Village Center property be identified as a focus for economic development.***

#### 7) Other topics

Planner Hauver said that she would be adding text regarding solar installations, housing, residential development standards, commercial zoning districts, Old Town Mixed Use overlay, Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System permit, and the APFO amendments voted on earlier.

Member Brady reviewed a number of issues including transportation recommendations (Dublin Road realignment, Richard Winn Lane realignment), the agricultural preservation designations for the various preservation programs, updates to the road network, the Town boundary shown on the map, and symbol sizes and designs on the map.

Mr. Brady also noted that the Town is getting boxed in by agricultural preservation. The Commission needs to consider areas for residential development in the long term. He noted the history of the Town as an industrial center to serve area farmers. Agricultural preservation prevents development in perpetuity. Very few properties are being considered for residential development. He suggested that the entire M. Staley property be considered for residential development -- high density residential on the south side of Glade Creek and low density residential to on the north side of Glade Creek and including a recommendation to extend a road out to Devilbiss Bridge Road.

Mr. Brady also said the Lonza property would be a good place for in-town solar.

### 3. Public Comments

Commissioner Mary Ann Brodie-Ennis said that Frederick County has a number of passive parks along the river and that the Town should consider acquiring a small piece of property for that purpose, as suggested by Mr. Santullo. She also suggested that one reason to plan a park on the Walker Farm is to provide park land on the other side of MD 194 to serve residents on that side of the highway. It is an issue of park equity.

Mr. Mike Staley distributed a letter citing reasons to designate the north side of his property low density residential.

Mr. Kuster noted that the consensus of the Commission was that the northern part of his property would be developed later than the southern part. Mr. Staley emphasized that he would like to

Mr. Tom Gilbert noted that this was his last meeting serving on the Commission as the Commissioner-liaison, that he would be passing the baton to Commissioner McNiesh. He expressed his appreciation for the work of the Commission.

***Member Winch made a motion, seconded by Member Brady, to change the meeting time of the Planning Commission meetings to 7 pm. The motion passed on a vote of 6-0.***

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan J. Hauver