

**Denton Planning Commission**

**Minutes**

**Town of Denton**

**September 24, 2019**

**Planning Commission Members:**

Doris Walls, Chairperson\*

William Quick\*

Sue Cruickshank\*\*

Joseph Mayer, Jr.\*

Lauren Shilling\*\*\*

Stephen Mead\*

\* Those Present

\*\* Excused

\*\*\* Absent

**Visitors:**

Peter Johnston

**Recording:**

Don Mulrine, Jr.

## PROCEEDINGS

### **Call to Order:**

The Planning Commission Meeting was called to order by Chairperson Walls at 6:01 p.m., on September 24, 2019, at the Denton Town Office and followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

### **Approval of Minutes:**

The August 27, 2019, Planning Commission Meeting minutes were reviewed and approved unanimously as submitted.

**Introductions** – Chairperson Walls introduced the new Alternate Member, Stephen Mead, and the new Town Planner Consultant, Peter Johnston.

**Old Business #1 – Other:** None.

**New Business #1 – 2010 Comprehensive Plan Update:** The discussion included the prior Town survey for the preparation of the existing 2010 Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Mulrine provided the Planning Commission with a brief overview of the Town retaining Peter Johnston to implement the update to the 2010 Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Johnston's prior history with the Town and experience with the Eastern Shore will benefit the Town in developing and improving the update to the existing Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Johnston launched his discussion with the Planning Commission Members with their current employment and employment location.

Mr. Johnston initiated the discussion of the existing Comprehensive Plan and the basis for the development was green field development. There were numerous annexations for potential development and growth.

The focus on the update of the 2010 Comprehensive Plan should be infill redevelopment and new development within the existing Town boundary. There are two basic drivers for the

Comprehensive Plan, the Land Use Article and the Town Government and constituents and their fiscal responsibility.

Mr. Johnston evaluated the assessed value of the property and land in 2010 vs. 2017. The result was a decrease in value of 2.6%. What are the issues of the loss of value of property and land? How can Town Government address these issues? As we update the Comprehensive Plan, these issues can be addressed in the goals and objectives of the Town.

What can the Town implement in the Comprehensive Plan to address the underutilized and vacant areas of the Town that will improve the property value and quality of life for the community?

The Town of Denton is the population center of Caroline County and is 15% of the assessed value for the County.

During the ten-year period of 2000-2010, the Town's growth rate was 4%. This was 1/3 of the population growth of the entire County. The State's population estimates for Denton and the entire Eastern Shore are showing a minimal growth rate for the next 20 years.

After evaluating the housing needs for the community, today's society has changed from purchasing the large-scale homes on the large lots to small scale homes. There are more renters as opposed to homeowners.

When evaluating the infill redevelopment in a community, replacement of roads, water, and sewer lines need to be a proponent of the value of the development project. In order for the Town to progress, the goals and objectives need to change to provide a sustainable community. The Town does not want to remain in the past patterns of the neighborhood development and community development which is not cost effective. While updating the Comprehensive Plan, we need to think forward and plan for the future generations and become cost effective for the Town Government to provide Town services and infrastructure in a sustainable way.

Vice Chairperson Quick is disappointed with the Caroline County Economic Development and its inability to attract new businesses to Denton. In order to attract good businesses, Denton needs to retain an attractive environment.

Mr. Johnston noted Denton currently is approximately 30% of the commercial floor areas and 15% of the industrial floor areas for Caroline County. During the Comprehensive Plan update, the Planning Commission needs to review the Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations to evaluate how these items are an impediment to small businesses and large businesses. In reviewing the affordability of housing, the cost of development is a factor. Other items to be considered while reviewing the Comprehensive Plan include the Town's assets, liabilities, and opportunities.

Mr. Mulrine discussed the fiber optics that have been installed in parts of the town.

Mr. Johnston suggested writing the 2010 Comprehensive Plan update and the Planning Commission reviewing the draft prior to sending out a survey to the community. As the Planning Commission reviews the draft, a list of questions for the survey can be developed. The survey can be posted on Survey Monkey and hard copies mailed to the community. The Planning Commission concurred with this approach to the update of the Comprehensive Plan.

**New Business #2 – Trees** – Vice Chairperson Quick distributed pictures of trees trimmed by Asplundh under contract with Delmarva Power in the Denton Historic District. Trees are cut away from the power lines by Asplundh. The pictures of the Sycamore tree at 117 South Fifth Avenue is located at Vice Chairperson Quick's residence which is in the Historic District. This Sycamore tree replaced an old Sycamore tree that had been cut down prior to his purchase of the property. Asplundh was scheduled to cut his trees away from the power lines but was stopped. Asplundh sent their expert for concerned citizens to his home, and the tree was trimmed without cutting out the large L shape that is shown in the other tree pictures. The primary power lines could have a coating which would diminish the requirement for trimming. Asplundh could trim the tree away from the power lines without cutting out a large L shape, but it takes a little longer

to trim. Some of the trees are left in a dangerous condition after being cut away from the power lines. Part of the charm of Denton is the Historic District and the older homes along Fifth Avenue.

Vice Chairperson Quick would like this item in the Historic District addressed in the next Comprehensive Plan. There was no notice given prior to the tree trimming.

Mr. Johnston recommended an inventory of the street trees with power lines. Street trees are important to the character and quality of life for our community. Street trees modify the temperature on a sidewalk for pedestrians and provide shade. The Town could create an urban Forestry Plan to discuss the preservation of the trees with Delmarva Power. The Town Council could request the preservation of the urban canopy trees and present their case to Delmarva Power since these trees are an important asset to the community.

Vice Chairperson Quick motioned to request that the Government Relations Representative attend the next Planning Commission Meeting to discuss the Town's trees.

Commissioner Mead seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Chairperson Walls has contacted Cracker Barrel, Cheddars, and IHOP about bringing their restaurants to Denton.

Commissioner Mayer suggested changing the Zoning Code to allow more mixed-use areas.

Mr. Johnston suggested changing the Zoning Code to allow the Planning Commission more flexibility with approvals on development projects.

**Staff Item #1 – Other:** Staff requested any updates to the Planning Commission Members list.

**Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 7:13 p.m.