

PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
November 5, 2012
Work Session

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr. Wilson
Mr. Griffith
Mr. Jones
Mr. Searce
Mrs. Evans
Mr. Jennings
Mr. Laramore

MEMBERS ABSENT

STAFF

Earl B. Reynolds, Jr.
Ken Gillie
Christy Taylor
Clarke Whitfield
David Parrish

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Searce at 3:00 p.m.

I. ITEMS NOT FOR PUBLIC HEARING

- 1. Request to amend Chapter 41 entitled "Zoning Ordinance" of the Code of the City of Danville, Virginia, 1986 as amended, more specifically to add Article 3.V entitled "RD-O River District Overlay" to establish boundaries and design guidelines for the River District.**

The Guidelines shall include the following:

- 1.1 Purpose
- 1.2. *The River District Design Commission*
- 1.3. *Historic Properties within the District*
- 1.4. *Non-Historic Properties within the District*
- 1.5. *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*
- 1.6. *Procedure for Obtaining a Certificate of Appropriateness*
- 1.7. *Routine Maintenance*
- [*2.0 Design Principles for Successful Downtowns*](#)
- 2.1 *Urban Design Principles*
- 2.2 *New and Infill Building Design Principles*
- 2.3 *Pedestrian Priority*
- [*3.0 Guidelines for Historic Buildings in the River District*](#)
- 3.1. *Introduction*
- 3.2. *General Guidelines*
- 3.3. *Criteria for Restoration/Renovation vs. Demolition*
- 3.4. *Commercial Buildings*
- 3.5. *Industrial Buildings*
- 3.6. *Civic/Institutional Buildings*
- 3.7. *Recommended*
- 3.8. *Not Allowed*
- 3.9. *Routine Maintenance*
- 3.10. *Certificate of Appropriateness Required*
- [*4.0 Guidelines for New Buildings in the River District*](#)
- 4.1. *Purpose*
- 4.2. *Allowed Uses*

- 4.3. *New Building Types*
- 4.4. *Architectural and Site Guidelines for Large Buildings*
- 4.5. *Architectural and Site Guidelines for Small Buildings*
- 4.6. *Routine Maintenance*
- 4.7. *Certificate of Appropriateness Required*
- 5.0 *Site Design Guidelines*
- 5.1 *Purpose*
- 5.2. *Site Guidelines*
- 5.3. *Routine Maintenance*
- 5.4. *Certificate of Appropriateness Required*
- 6.0 *Sidewalk and Outdoor Dining and Outdoor Display Design Guidelines*
- 6.1. *Purpose*
- 6.2. *Sidewalk Dining*
- 6.3. *Outdoor Dining on Private Property*
- 6.4. *Outdoor Display Guidelines*
- 6.5. *Routine Maintenance*
- 6.6. *Certificate of Appropriateness Required*
- 7.0 *Sign Guidelines*
- 7.1. *Purpose*
- 7.2. *Commercial Signs*
- 7.3. *Existing Signs*
- 7.4. *Awnings & Canopies*
- 7.5. *Banners*
- 7.6. *Wayfinding Signage*
- 7.7. *Routine Maintenance*
- 7.8. *Certificate of Appropriateness Required*
- 8.0 *Streetscape and Open Space Guidelines*
- 8.1. *Streetscape Guidelines*
- 8.2. *Streetscape Recommendations*
- 8.3. *Routine Maintenance*
- 8.4. *Certificate of Appropriateness Required*
- 8.5. *Public Open Space Guidelines*
- 8.6. *Open Space Recommendations*
- 8.7 *Certificate of Appropriateness Required*

The boundaries include all properties within the area bounded by and within the following:

Beginning on the south side of Riverside Drive at the Farrar Street overpass, and then along the south side of Riverside Drive to the Norfolk and Southern Rail Road Bridge, thence south along the west side of the Rail Road tracks to the north side of Monument Street, then along the north side of Monument Street to the west side of Newton Street, including 501 and 503 Newton Street, thence along the west side of Newton Street to the north side of Dame Street, thence along the north side of Dame Street to the north side of Wilson Street, thence along the north side of Wilson Street, to Jefferson Avenue including the property at 257 Jefferson Avenue, thence along the rear property lines of lots on the north side of Jefferson Avenue crossing Patton Street, along the rear of the lots fronting the west side of Patton Street to 747 Main Street, thence crossing Main Street including up to 730 Main Street, thence extending west to the include the east side of Spring Street, thence north to South Ridge Street, including all properties along the north side of South Ridge Street to High Street, including all properties on the east side of High Street to the north side of Floyd

Street, thence along the north side of Floyd Street to the east side of Poplar Street, thence along the east side of Poplar Street, to Union Street Bridge Road, crossing the Dan River, then extending along the rear property lines of Farrar Street to the intersection of Riverside Drive.

Mr. Griffith stated I guess my first question would be for Clarke. Do the members have to be residents of the City of Danville?

Mr. Whitfield responded they would have to be residents of the City of Danville.

Mr. Griffith stated the Airport Commission is not necessarily made up of residents.

Mr. Whitfield stated that is correct, but that is by City Code. What the Code does is it gives one representative to Halifax, Pittsylvania County and then it talks about two pilots. That is set up by design to be a multi-jurisdictional committee of the City. This would be residents of the City much like the Planning Commission and the Commission of Architectural Review.

Mr. Griffith asked even though they are business owners or property owners if they don't live in the City they cannot serve on here?

Mr. Whitfield responded that is the way I would interpret it.

Mr. Scarce asked if they owned a business downtown that would not work either?

Mr. Griffith stated that is my concern.

Mr. Scarce asked could that be something that could be changed?

Mr. Whitfield responded that would be up to your recommendation and Council's approval.

Mr. Griffith stated I know a couple people who are business owners, property owners in the area that are not residents.

Mr. Whitfield stated you would need to make that recommendation and then Council would need to make that decision.

Ms. Platt stated I think what you need to consider in that regard is that sometimes it is hard to get enough design professionals. I know some cities will have architects, landscape design architects that don't live in the City to serve on the Committee.

There was discussion about the difficulty in getting qualified people to volunteer to serve and the potential business owners that would be willing to serve.

Mrs. Evans asked this will not be Commission of Architectural Review people rolling over into this new board?

Mr. Whitfield responded it is my understanding that this will be a separate seven member board. I guess if you are on the Commission of Architectural Review you can apply just like anybody else and you might or might not be selected. That would be up to Council. Council has an Appointment Committee which is made up of the Vice Mayor, whom is the

Chairman and two Council members at large. They go through all of the applications. They go through all of them and discuss them thoroughly. They have their own recommendation that is made at a Council Work Session. The entire Council as a whole discusses the proposed appointees before it finally goes to Council.

There was discussion about the Appointment Committee members.

Mr. Griffith asked of the members can we recommend to Council that four out of the seven people be business owners or property owners in the district?

Mr. Whitfield responded yes. You can pretty much recommend anything in those lines. I would give an explanation as to why you think that would be in Council's best interest. Council is relying on you all pretty heavily along with their homework.

Ms. Platt stated I am not sure that is good to say that X number of people have to be one thing or another. I think Council has great discretion in appointing people that they think are appropriate. If Council felt that four people in that category was appropriate they could, but what if you didn't have four people that were interested.

Mr. Griffith stated then you need to go recruit.

There was further discussion about the concerns about having members appointed that have vested interest in the district.

Mr. Gillie read the guidelines for the Commission of Architectural Review members and discussed how this could be reworded to satisfy the requirements.

Mr. Gillie stated I will play around with that section and I will email it to everybody. I think we can get some wording for that before the next meeting.

There was further discussion about the need of having design professionals on the board.

Mr. Griffith read *the purpose of the guidelines* in Section 1, page 2.

There was discussion about the importance of encouraging growth within the District rather than discouraging it by having flexibility within the restrictions.

Mr. Wilson asked do you think that the changes we are making right now still reach the goals of a downtown revitalization?

Ms. Platt responded yes I do. I am all in favor of being friendly to business. There is a balance that has to be struck between the economy and what is feasible and what preserves your buildings.

There was further discussion about the balance between restoration and adaptability.

Mr. Wilson asked do you see these guidelines becoming a model for some adjustments to the current design guidelines in the Old Westend?

Ms. Platt responded absolutely. The most important part is the two part approval process.

There was some discussion about the current problems with the Design Guidelines.

Mr. Griffith stated in Section 2, on page 6 under Section 2.1 *Fringe Areas* I am not real clear about that.

Ms. Platt stated strip development is obvious when you see it. It is what you often see between cities and suburbs. It is rather cheap single story buildings set way back from the road with as many and wide driveways as possible.

Mr. Griffith stated I was thinking of this in relation to Memorial Drive. We already have quite a bit of that with some of the businesses with parking in the front as you come along Memorial Drive.

Ms. Platt stated obviously that is going to be grandfathered in as long as they are still active. We hope that it gets redeveloped with a really good use. You are going to need those kinds of uses but they don't have to look that way. I tried to show some pictures of how you can do that and still make it attractive. Basically you put in sidewalks, put the parking to the side and the rear, move the buildings up closer to the front, and that there is a pedestrian connection between the sidewalk and the building.

Mr. Griffith stated but that would be for redevelopment. Those that are there would stay.

Ms. Platt stated this section is just long term big picture goals. This is what we would like this district to be like someday. We are basically talking about principles rather than rules.

Mr. Parrish stated this is where it gets to that point where it is really a guideline. This is a perfect example of that.

Ms. Platt stated this first section is principles when you think about how you redevelop a district and get from where you are now to where you want to be. These are the kind of principles that should guide your decision making.

There was discussion about the guidelines being idealized around making the district pedestrian friendly.

Mr. Gillie stated we need to change a word then. It says *parking cannot be located in front of buildings*. We should say *parking should not be located*.

Ms. Platt stated fine. These are goals.

Mr. Gillie stated we need to change that under Section 4, page 20.

Mrs. Evans asked why do you want to change it from cannot to should?

Mr. Gillie responded she just said you could possibly have a row of parking in front, so if we are going to allow a single row of parking in front saying cannot you are saying no. We should change it to should.

Ms. Platt stated remember you still have the two part approval process. In my opinion, parking should never be located in front of buildings; but there could be exceptions in that two part approval process.

There was discussion about saying *should* verses *cannot* in regards to parking on the street.

Mr. Jones asked are guidelines binding?

Ms. Platt responded no, but they are important. The whole purpose of this is a good purpose for the people that own businesses. If everybody demands the same quality, then everybody is going to benefit from it.

Mr. Griffith asked does this affect the on street parking that we currently have?

Ms. Platt responded no.

There was discussion about different parking scenarios and what is preferred.

Ms. Platt stated some cities send their folks to planning conferences and preservation conferences where they have workshops that talk exactly about this kind of thing. Some training for the people on the Commission might be really helpful.

Mr. Griffith asked do you still have any money in your budget? The City has offered that in the past.

Mr. Gillie responded yes for some training.

Mr. Griffith stated I went to the Certified Planning Commissioner's training session.

Mr. Wilson asked I know we are not voting on anything, but how are we going to decide on should or cannot?

Mr. Gillie responded I am taking notes and I am going to write up an email and send it out to everyone saying "this is what was discussed in these sections." At the next meeting when you have your public hearing you will have a list of possible corrections to address it.

Mr. Griffith stated Section 4, the guidelines for new buildings on page 18. The new YMCA building is going to be in the district.

Ms. Platt stated it is covered. It is basically in District 4 which is extraordinary buildings.

Mr. Gillie stated page 21 addresses the YMCA.

Mr. Griffith asked are we going to put them in a position where they are going to have to change any of their plans?

Ms. Platt responded I would recommend no.

Mr. Gillie stated my read on this and based on what they submitted, no.

Ms. Platt stated there are no guidelines for iconic buildings. The best thing to do is get the community involved in seeing and discussing the plans because it is going to be there for hopefully a really long time; but really no rules apply to it. It could be a modern building. It could be all glass. It could be anything as long as the community feels comfortable with it.

Mr. Griffith stated page 29 mentions something about that drive-thrus are discouraged. There are several drive-thrus in existence now Downtown. I am assuming that all of these would be grandfathered.

Ms. Platt stated whatever is there you wouldn't ask them to change it. These would apply for new buildings.

Mr. Griffith stated you mentioned something about having a new owner, but if you have a new owner but the use of the building is the same shouldn't they be allowed to continue with that?

Ms. Platt responded I don't think so. If the guidelines have gone into effect and the person owning it knows that there are guidelines in that district then I think they apply to them.

Mr. Griffith stated no I am saying for example if American National Bank gets bought out and a new owner comes in. Shouldn't the new owner be able to continue to use that as is?

Ms. Platt responded yes, absolutely unless they want to change something. The only time you have to go get a Certificate of Appropriateness is when there is a change. It is built into the whole philosophy of design guidelines.

There was discussion about current guidelines regarding changes in use or changes in ownership.

There was discussion about the current drive-thrus in the District.

Mr. Griffith stated in Section 7 on page 40, sign guidelines. Does this overlay with what we already have?

Mr. Gillie responded not necessarily. There are some things that are different.

Mr. Griffith asked do we need to get these so we have one set of rules?

Mr. Gillie responded no. This is a separate district so it can have its own signage. Our Sign Code right now is district specific. We wanted to have cohesive sign package for this specific area so the regulations are this district specific.

Mr. Griffith asked these will supersede anything that we have?

Mr. Gillie responded correct. We talked about awnings and canopies and the sign part being on the fall part of the canopy but not on the rest of the canopy. I had someone who wanted to put their Logo on the fall part, but it says in here that wouldn't be permitted.

Ms. Platt responded you see it especially with vinyl signs where it gets kind of gaudy. Because it is a Historic District it needs to be a little bit less in your face. I don't feel really strongly about it. I have seen it tastefully done sometimes. I think I even have some pictures.

Mr. Jones asked is that on page 45?

Ms. Platt responded yes.

There was discussion about the pictures on page 45 and how signage can be tastefully done and the materials that should be used.

Ms. Platt stated I think this is something that the Design Committee would have to address.

Mr. Griffith asked is there a way to write in some way so that they could put their name or address on there somewhere?

Ms. Platt asked where is that Kenny?

Mr. Gillie responded Section 7, page 42.

There was some discussion about what can and cannot be done with signage on awnings.

Ms. Platt stated maybe we just need to say permission is required for logos or other designs on the slope portion of a canopy. Would that cover it?

Mr. Gillie responded probably.

Mr. Wilson stated I think we need to be pretty tight on this stuff because pretty soon you will look like a mascot. Is it possible to stop others from saying "well you did it over here?" It is the character of our Downtown that we are really talking about.

Mr. Gillie stated turn to page 45.

Ms. Platt stated this is pretty understated. I think if we would say that this example is acceptable in your opinions, then I think the answer would be to say "review is required for lettering or logos on the slope portion of the canopy." That covers it.

There was further discussion about the examples of awnings and canopies.

Mr. Jones asked on page 45 down in the left corner, what do you do on the side there?

Ms. Platt responded usually nothing because you could have another business owner beside you put one up that would hide whatever you put there.

Mr. Jones stated if you are walking down the street you can't see the drop that is facing the street.

Ms. Platt stated you don't need those because you have the option of using projecting signs.

Mr. Gillie stated or sandwich board, A frame, or something else stuck out in the street like that.

There was discussion about what type of signage is currently being used Downtown and Ms. Platt discussed the option of not using awnings at all.

Mr. Griffith read Section 8, page 54 Item 2. I had a concern with that. With reducing that to two lanes is it going to increase congestion since there will be no turning lanes?

Ms. Platt responded it is already being done.

There was some discussion about the current Streetscape Project on Main Street and the future plans for traffic control.

There was discussion about outside dining and rooftop restaurants.

Ms. Platt read Section 2, 6.3.

Ms. Platt stated anytime you are going to have this sort of thing, they will have to go for review. As deemed appropriate is your way to keep somebody from doing something completely nuts.

Mr. Griffith stated I am finished with mine. I think the key to the whole thing is those who are appointed.

Mr. Wilson asked do we need to discuss the only thing that people are talking about, what is the commission going to be, what is it going to look like, how is it going to be appointed? People seem to be concerned about the flexibility of the group. I don't know how we can control that.

Mr. Whitfield responded that is completely in Council's purview.

Ms. Platt stated it would be our recommendation; maybe even put it in the guidelines that it would be our goal to obtain people who either own property or businesses within the District. I think that is a reassurance for those people concerned about it. I think it is the right thing to do.

Mr. Griffith stated three of the five people that spoke at the last meeting expressed a willingness to serve on the Commission.

Ms. Platt stated let me just say in that regard having listened to those people that you do sometimes face the danger of going in the other direction in getting too many of those people who say "do whatever you want, I don't really like these guidelines anyway; I don't know why we have them." They have to believe this. You don't want to appoint people who think this is stupid.

There was further discussion about the importance of selecting appointees and the application process.

Mr. Gillie stated I have all of whom shall be property owners or business owners within the City of Danville.

Ms. Platt stated I think it should be residents, property owners, or business owners.

Mr. Gillie stated I will give that a shot and send it out to everybody.

There was more discussion about the requirements for the Commission.

Mr. Gillie stated this is what I have. *The River District shall consist of seven citizens a minimum of three whom shall own property or businesses within the District and all of whom shall be residents of the City or be property or business owners within the City of Danville.*

Mr. Whitfield stated within the River District.

Mr. Gillie stated that was a mistake on my part. *The members shall be appointed by the City and serve without compensation. Consideration for any appointment to the Commission should be given to architects, landscape designers, attorneys, bankers, business owners, and realtors.*

Mr. Griffith stated or contractors.

Mr. Gillie stated I think I have this. I will send this out to everyone.

Mrs. Evans asked can the application have open ended questions?

Mr. Parrish responded I think she was planning on using a standard citizen application for any other Commission. That is what I told Sue to use.

Mr. Whitfield stated I think it is going to have to be altered and maybe significantly.

Mr. Parrish asked so you are suggesting having some open ended questions?

Mrs. Evans responded yes, not a resume per say but give us some of your background.

Ms. Platt stated why you think you bring something to the table.

There was further discussion about the application.

Mr. Whitfield stated I will not be here next Monday, but Alan will be.

Mr. Gillie stated we have a lengthy agenda.

There was some discussion about the potential of how many citizens will attend the next meeting and whether or not Ms. Platt needed to be there.

Mr. Reynolds stated I just want to make sure that this is repeated in each section so that it is clear because this will be adopted as a subsection of the Zoning Code. Under Certificate of Appropriateness, point 6.6, page 39 *failure to obtain appropriate permission is a strict Zoning violation*; therefore that should be repeated in each section.

There was discussion about how the changes would be made and brought to the next meeting.

With no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 4:22 p.m.

APPROVED