

**GARRETT COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND LAND DEVELOPMENT**

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**MINUTES**

**The Garrett County Planning Commission** held its regular monthly meeting on Wednesday, October 2, 2013, at 1:30 p.m., in the County Commissioners Meeting Room. Members and guests in attendance at the meeting included:

Troy Ellington	Jeff Conner	Doug Storck
Tony Doerr	Tim Schwinabart	John Nelson-staff
Jeff Messenger	Jerry Geisler	William DeVore-staff
Bob Gatto	Paul Durham	Chad Fike-staff

1. Call to Order - by Chairman Troy Ellington at 1:30 pm.
2. The September minutes were unanimously approved, as submitted.
3. Report of Officers – County Commissioner Bob Gatto noted that Bob Browning and Steve Gnegy were both reappointed to the Deep Creek Watershed Board of Zoning Appeals.
4. Unfinished Business – None
5. New Business –

**A. Review and Discussion- Wisp Resort Beginners Hub- Doug Storck and Jerry Geisler**

1. Mr. Nelson explained that the Deep Creek Watershed Zoning Ordinance requires that modifications to a commercial resort must be reviewed by the Planning Commission, per Section 157.069 C., before approval of any new zoning permits. A copy of this section of the ordinance was distributed before the meeting, which requires an overview of the issues that the Commission must consider including landscaping, tree cover, architectural style, general design and color of any new buildings.

Doug Storck of DCL Design Studios, LLC, the designer for the Wisp Resort ski lodge, presented the plan for the new Beginner’s Ski Hub. The

new development is planned on a 178-acre parcel so the building ground cover limit of 35% is easily achieved. The existing entrance off of Marsh Hill Road will be used for access, which is currently the main access for the ski area.

Site plans from Highland Engineering and Surveying dated, September 2013, were presented by Mr. Storck. The plans show the location of the eight proposed yurt buildings, the location of existing buildings, parking, proposed contours and other information.

The yurt buildings are round in shape and approximately 50 feet in diameter. They will be burgundy and have a tan top. The buildings will have a sprinkler system and will have fire alarms. An additional 24 parking spots will be added to accommodate the seating in the concession/coffee shop portion of the development. A member of the Commission noted that the buildings would be similar to the ones that have already been built at Savage River Lodge. The top of the roof will be glass covered.

The new area will include a concession/dining area, coffee bar, merchandise, ski school, bathrooms, ski rental area and a pro-shop for the golf course that will be used as a lounge in the winter. Mr. Storck notes that by this expansion, the skiers will be more distributed though out the resort. Currently, there are not many trees or shrubs on the site, but additional vegetation will be introduced next year, according to Mr. Storck.

Chad Fike of the Planning and Land Development staff believes that the plan meets the requirements of Section 157.069 C. Mr. Nelson explained that a Commercial Resort is a permitted use in the Commercial Resort (CR) 1 and CR2 zones. The Planning Commission review is another step in the process of the zoning approval. The owners have not yet applied for a zoning permit for the new addition to the resort.

After review, the Planning Commission determined that the plans were in conformance with the Commercial Resort standards found in the zoning ordinance. The proposed development was found to be consistent with the character of the existing Wisp Resort and no negative impacts were discovered. Therefore, the Commission voted unanimously, by a vote of 6 to 0, to accept the conceptual plan and allow the Wisp to make application for a zoning permit with the planning office.

**B. Discussion of Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Proposal to add to Maryland “Wildlands” -**

1. John Nelson noted that there will be a meeting on Wednesday, November 6, at 6:00 pm at the Discovery Center at Deep Creek Lake State Park, concerning a new DNR Wildlands proposal. The DNR is seeking input on nine areas in Garrett County that could be added to the list of Maryland “Wildlands”. Mr. Nelson stated that the new acreage would be more than double the existing Wildlands area in the county. These areas are primarily ecologically significant sites that would provide for habitat preservation and could still be used for hiking, hunting and bird watching. These Wildlands could not be used for logging, improved trails and camping. In the past, the county representatives have been watchful of these designations because the use of the land becomes very limited with this designation. Other counties have proposed sites, but Garrett County, by far, has the most acreage and number of sites.

The Commission feels as a whole that the possibility of designated trails through State property, especially along the Youghiogheny River should be encouraged. Mr. Nelson notes that a recent letter from the Secretary of DNR specifically mentioned that a designated trail along the river, though the Youghiogheny corridor would not be allowed, but the Garrett Trails Committee is challenging that determination.

Commissioner Gatto distributed a pamphlet from DNR outlining the location of the sites that are being considered for Wildlands designation. This new designation must be approved by the General Assembly.

Paul Durham believes that over the years it was always the intention of the State to use the old existing tram road for access along the river for at least a primitive trail. He notes that the railroad bed already exists, but property ownership along the railway is fragment. Mr. Durham believes there has been a change in philosophy in Annapolis. Mr. Durham feels that it could be useful to discuss the possibility with DNR of allowing primitive, but not improved, trails through a Wildland area.

Mr. Nelson urges the general public and public officials to attend the November 6 hearing, or provide comments to DNR and the County Commissioners. If after the hearing, the DNR recommends the approval of the new Wildlands designation, then the Governor will review the request. Then legislation would have to be developed and approved by the General Assembly in 2014.

William DeVore who is a member of the Garrett Trails Committee believes that the proposed trail through the Youghiogheny corridor is an

important link that is part of a larger, proposed countywide trail network, though the use of bicycles may be limited here. He believes some trails should be established and maintained for fire fighting and other emergencies that could occur on this State ground.

Chairman Ellington believes that the Wildlands areas should be designated only if trails are allowed to exist within them, but that is probably not possible. Mr. Nelson reviewed the nine locations that DNR is seeking input, including six sites within Savage River State Forest (2,638 acres), Potomac State Forest (1,637 acres), Youghiogheny Corridor (3,993 acres) and Potomac-Garrett State Forest (246 acres). The significant resources for each tract are also noted on the pamphlet. The total area nominated for Wildlands designation amounts to 8,514 acres. Though the Commission discussed some of the benefits in limiting the use of this property, Chairman Ellington believes that there is little enthusiasm from the Planning Commission about including this new acreage into the Wildlands category.

## C. Miscellaneous

### 1. Deep Creek Watershed Zoning Appeals Cases –

- a) **VR-709** - an application submitted by Robert F. Buck for a Variance to allow a residence that would come to within 15.0 feet of a rear property line. The owner has purchased the “buy-down” from the State of Maryland. The property is located at 101 Glenarm Way, tax map 58, parcel 319, and is zoned Lake Residential 1(LR1). The Planning Commission offered no comments on the proposed application.
- b) **VR-707 Continued from the September meeting of the Board of Appeals**- an application submitted by Franklin Richards for a Variance to allow an addition to a residence that would come to within 6.0 feet of the side property line. The property is located at 270 Penelacre Lane, tax map 57, parcel 478, Lot 11 and is zoned LR1. The Commission reiterated they believe that if there are strong objections by the neighbors, the Appeals Board is urged to consider the Variance very carefully.

2. **Minor Subdivisions** – Approved minor subdivisions were included in the packet mailed to the Commission members prior to the meeting.

3. **Discussion on Major Subdivisions- Wisp Resort Section** – Mr. Ellington asked whether the developed agreement for the Wisp Resort had been executed. Mr. Nelson noted that the single legal entity still has not been

developed for the Lodestone Subdivision PRD, which was a requirement for approval by the Planning Commission at the September meeting.

**3. Mining Permit Applications – None**

**4. Amland Preservation District Applications-None**

**D. Next Scheduled meeting -** The next regular meeting of the Planning Commission will be held on **November 6, 2013**, in the County Commissioners Meeting Room, at 1:30 pm.

**E. Adjournment-** 2:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

William J. DeVore  
Zoning Administrator

