

Garrett County Planning Commission Minutes

September 4, 2019

I. Call to order

Tony Doerr called to order the regular meeting of the Garrett County Planning Commission at 1:30 on September 4, 2019 in the Commissioners Public Meeting Room in the Garrett County Courthouse.

II. Attendance

The following Commission members were present: Tony Doerr, Liz Georg, Jeff Conner, Tim Schwinabart, Jeff Messenger, Bill Weissgerber, Jim Hinebaugh. Shelley Argabrite

The following persons from the public were present: Earl Eisenhart, Jonathan Kessler, Paul Edwards

Staff present: Deborah Carpenter, Chad Fike, Bruce Metz

III. Approval of minutes from last meeting

The minutes were Approved as presented.

IV. New Business

a) Zoning Appeals Cases

Docket VR 796 – an application submitted by William Mitchell for a Variance to allow the construction of an addition to his home to within 1 foot of the rear property line and a detached garage to within 10 feet of the rear property line and to within 12 feet of the front property line. The property is located at 894 White Oak Drive, Swanton MD 21561. The parcel can be found on tax map 59, parcel 70, grid 13 and is zoned Lake Residential 1. The Commission offered no formal comment by a unanimous vote.

Docket VR 797 – an application submitted by Jonathan Kessler/McHenry Cove LLC for a Variance to allow the construction of a tree house/motel unit to within 2 feet of the side property line. The property is located at 23900 Garrett Highway, McHenry MD 21541. The parcel can be found on tax map 50, parcel 398, grid 2 and is zoned Commercial Resort 2 (CR2). The Commission voted unanimously to send a favorable comment to the Zoning Board.

Docket VR 798 – an application submitted by Jonathan Kessler/McHenry Cove LLC for a Variance to allow the construction of 4 cabins/motel units to within 15

feet of the side property line. The property is located at 23900 Garrett Highway, McHenry MD 21541. The parcel can be found on tax map 50, parcel 398, grid 2 and is zoned Lake Residential 1 (LR1). The Commission voted unanimously to send a favorable comment to the Zoning Board.

b) **Amendment Request**

Jonathan Kessler presented his request to add a definition for cabin hotel unit less than 1500 square feet in order to provide for closer setbacks than are required for a traditional hotel. The Planning Commission voted to forward this request to the County Attorney for review and revisit at their October meeting.

c) **Comprehensive Plan Update**

Vocational Education Discussion

Paul Edwards, Director of Secondary Education with the Garrett County Board of Education, attended to brief the group on vocational education. He explained that the school offers such programming under its CTE (career and technical education) and Dual Completer tracks. Dual completers combine college readiness with career training. The trend is for more of this type of education. He reviewed the types of programs that are offered currently and stated that there is no plan to add anything new at this time. The number of school-aged children is not increasing and therefore, adding more classes simply shrinks the size of the classes, ultimately making them infeasible to maintain.

Edwards noted that his office works with an Advisory Council comprised of business leaders that advise the Board on community needs. They also work with the students to match them with internship opportunities whenever possible, thereby getting them valuable hands on training and experience. This does not always work out for the employers given a student's schedule restrictions and transportation needs. They also have a program to train them on work skills to include interview skills.

Doerr asked about the impact of homeschooling on the school age population numbers, as well as whether homeschooling is a negative reflection on the school system. In Edwards experience the homeschool phenomenon is mostly about children having difficulty fitting into the school setting or having other activities or opportunities that would take them out of school for extended periods of time. It's a choice that parents make that does not reflect poorly on the school system at all. The biggest issue with declining school age population is not the quality to the school system, but with the inability to offer more classes and resources.

Weissgerber suggested that when marketing the area, perhaps our focus should not simply be on getting visitors or tourists, but also on promoting the benefits of moving here, specifically using the quality of the school system. Edwards noted that many new teachers will work in the county but live outside Maryland due to upfront housing costs. Weissgerber suggested some sort of incentive to make up that difference may entice them to live here and that incentive should be advertised well.

Growth Scenario Update

Carpenter stated that she made the edits the group had asked for at the last meeting. Schwinabart had a concern about Figure 1 and asked that it be clarified that not all the permits issued during the push to get permits prior to sprinkler system requirements ended up equating to new housing starts. Some of those permits were rescinded, even after the extension granted after one year of inactivity. The verbiage between ‘new housing starts’ and ‘new permits’ is used interchangeably in the text and can be confusing.

In addition, Figure 6 has a typo that needed to be updated.

Contract Extension Update

Carpenter included the letter from the Garrett County Purchasing Department to extend the contract for AECOM. As per the Planning Commissions’ request the Department emphasized the part of the contract that stated ramifications in the event of a non-performance or default of contract. She asked if this notification properly addressed the groups’ concern. The group agreed that it did.

Comprehensive Plan Draft Chapters

Carpenter stated that the new format that the Land Use update is in is pretty but difficult to edit, so she is trying to include as many edits as possible in the old format prior to converting to the new format. The Land Use chapter is still awaiting comments from MDP in writing. The future growth areas requests from the towns have been turned in and Departmental staff is working with AECOM staff to edit the mapping. Lastly, future development areas need to be included in both the maps and the text. Specifically, two areas in the Chestnut Ridge area are to be included. The Chestnut Ridge Development Corridor plan which includes the Moran development and surrounding areas will be mentioned in the text, with the document being attached to the Plan. In addition, an area of Chestnut Ridge to the south of I68 that has been in discussions to be an industrial park. Carpenter needs to get the actual boundary of that location to include in the Plan. The new Wolf Den State Park will be needed to be added to the mapping as well.

The Housing Element draft is complete and was sent to Duane Yoder at Community Action. We are awaiting his comments and a draft with his edits will be available for the Commission's review next month.

The Economic Development draft has been reviewed by the Economic Development Department. Carpenter stated that she would not bore the Commission with the formatting and typo mistakes but needed to go over specific content during the meeting. Data updates will wait for another month, because Fiscal Year 2019 data should be available in October.

Carpenter reviewed some edits made to the draft with the group and asked for their input. The following items were noted during these discussions:

- Agritourism needs to be added, along with the new state definition of agritourism, but it needs to be noted that it is not the savior of farmers, simply a tool they can use. In addition, hemp production needs to be emphasized as opposed to marijuana, because that seems to be the main industry being capitalized on in Garrett County.
- The Verso closure is recent, so was not in our radar before; however, it's impact will be significant on the forestry sector and related businesses. Any advice as to how to address that from the Commissioners would be appreciated.
- Outdoor recreation was added into the Emerging Market section. This was likely added here based on citizen or stakeholder input, that saw outdoor recreation as an existing or potential economic driver. The Commission wasn't comfortable with this concept being seen as an emerging economic development driver. It drives tourism and that puts money in the county coffers; however, the job creation received is not at the level to call it economic development. They thought perhaps it should be included but not in this chapter/section. It was noted that the numbers in the draft may be misleading as they pointed to generalized results from outdoor recreation, not just Garrett County. Some commission members thought that this should be moved to the section on tourism. Ultimately the group decided to forward to AECOM the request to move this section to the tourism section and to double check/clarify the numbers to ensure they or not exaggerated.
- Arts & Culture was also listed as an emerging market. Some commission members did not agree with this being in that section, especially mention of the pending Performing Arts Center (CEPAC) which is still in design

phase. It was not that they didn't want it mentioned. Rather, they wanted it noted that it is in design and the schedule for completion.

- It was noted that healthcare is the most obvious emerging market with significant impact and therefore should be listed first.
- Georg noted the lack of mention of STEM programming. It was noted that Economic Development may not be the best place to mention that. It may need to go in the Education section.
- The Commission decided that the term 'Emerging Market' was more the sticking point. Perhaps this section should be renamed Economic Opportunities or something similar.
- Under polices and actions:
 - Staff drafted a recommendation having to do with assisting logging and associated industries negatively impacted by the Verso closing. Messenger stated that there is very little that can be recommended since it's dependent on supply and demand and the market is simply not supporting the industry.
 - The nature-based tourism section caused some consternation with the commissioners. The first of the two recommendations under this section called for better coordination of nature-based and small-town tourism with creating a program with staff and funding. It was noted that the Chamber has a calendar and the Health Department has a calendar. A coordination entity may be more needed than a program with staff. Argabrite noted that activities are different if you are a resident versus a visitor. Local churches, organizations and communities will have benefits, fundraisers and activities that are important to note but may not appear on the Chamber's calendar. Carpenter will notify AECOM about the problems the group is having with the two goals and the concept of nature-based tourism/placemaking in general.

V. Next Meeting – October 2, 2019

VI. Adjournment

Tony Doerr adjourned the meeting at 3:38 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by: Deborah Carpenter, Director