

Macon County Planning Board Minutes

November 18, 2010

Call to Order: Chairman Lewis Penland called the meeting to order at 5:05 pm.

Members: Lewis Penland, Mike Grubermann, Mark West, Alan Marsh, Jimmy Tate, Larry Stenger, Al, Slagle, Susan Ervin, Lamar Sprinkle

Staff: Derek Roland, Matt Mason, Jack Morgan

Media:

Approval of Minutes: Alan Marsh made motion to approve 10/21/2010 Minutes, Larry Stenger seconded this motion

Liaison Reports:

MCWC- Did not meet for the month of November

Transportation Steering Committee- Mark West commented that this committee was making excellent progress.

Comprehensive Plan Review- Derek Roland reported to the board that the review process for the Comprehensive Plan was continuing to make progress. The Board met on November 9, 2010 where they reviewed through page 64 of the document. At this meeting Mrs. Rhonda Blanton of Healthy Carolinians and Susan Ervin of the Macon County Planning Board agreed to individually review the document for grammatical errors. Throughout this individual editing they will also include notes about how the current recession could potentially affect the population projections contained within the plan. The board will continue to meet and review the plan for overall content and structure, rather than grammar. Mr. Stenger requested at this meeting that prior to the December 7th review session, all members become familiar with pages 64-91 of the document.

Educational Segment- Educational segment was incorporated into the public comment session at this meeting. Due to lack of attendance by the public, the board was able to have an extended public session with the two members present.

New Business: (The public input session occurred prior to the meeting being called to order. Following the public input session some board members questioned what form the final product from the slope development committee to the planning board should be submitted in.) Alan Marsh made a motion that the slope development sub-committee continue to work on the nuts and bolts of the slope development recommendations. When the recommendations are complete the final product will be submitted to the board, where the board will then make a decision. The board came to a consensus on this motion.

Jimmy Tate felt that if the recommendations are simple and technical they will be bulletproof and have an excellent chance at being accepted by the commission. Jack Morgan felt that the Planning Board should submit to the commission the recommendations, rather than an ordinance. The commission can then turn the recommendations over to the county attorney, who can proceed with writing an ordinance.

Unfinished Business:

Review letter that is to be presented to the County Commission naming new “at large” board members. The Board reviewed the draft letter by Derek Roland that is to be presented to the County Commission. Roland was instructed to correct the spelling of a candidates name prior to submitting the letter. Roland was then instructed by the board to email the letter to Commissioner Koppers, who would then discuss the best time to present this letter with his colleagues. Chairman Penland will attend the Commission Meeting where the letter is presented. The Board approved the draft letter by consensus.

Next meeting Date for Comprehensive Plan Review. The next meeting of the board will be December 7, 2010 to discuss the Comprehensive Plan.

Public Session: (J.B. Coram) Mr. Coram began the public session expressing concern over the timing on the slope development ordinance. He felt that the election year, combined with the declining economy in Macon County presented a major obstacle for the planning board to overcome. He suggested in the future that the board consider outlying circumstances such as these, before embarking on an ordinance writing process.

Mr. Coram also expressed concern over noise pollution and crime in Macon County. He felt that the board should begin discussing each of these issues now to “get ahead of the curve”. Coram felt that Realtors and developers alike are selling the peace and tranquility of the mountains here in Macon County, if noise pollution goes unattended to, peace and tranquility will no longer be a marketable asset. With respect to crime, Coram felt that the drug problem is seriously affecting the quality of life in our county. Mexican

cartels are beginning appear which are a tremendous hazard to public safety. The gambling establishments that continue to flood into the county should also become an area of concern according to Coram.

When asked if he supported standards on slopes Mr. Coram responded by saying he has always supported responsible development practices. However, Coram informed the board that opponents of the slope development ordinance are making a strong case. Opponents are continually citing loss of property values, and the fact that slope hazards are really “not that big of a problem” as reasons for the board to abandon efforts on creating a slope ordinance.

Mr. Slagle addressed both of these issues with facts compiled by the planning board. Mr. Coram was given a summary of the economic impacts on counties in the western region that had put slope development ordinances in place over the past decade. This research, contrary to the opinion of slope development opposition, shows slope regulations having no affect on the number of building permits issued by counties which put the regulations in place. In response to the “where’s the problem?” argument, Mr. Slagle cited many instances occurring in both the Mountain Region and Macon County where disturbed slopes have caused property damage. Matt Mason then presented many examples of slopes to give Mr. Coram a visual representation of what the current recommendations would regulate.

When asked how to best counter the opposition, Mr. Coram felt that the board needs to present their case in the same places the opposition is presenting theirs. Mr. Coram also felt that the public needed to be informed of the tremendous population growth that Macon County is expected to realize over the next 20 years and made aware of the fact that eventually people will have no choice but to build on slopes. Larry Stenger volunteered to write a letter to the newspapers which would notify the public of these facts.

Joe Simmons of Cabe Realty felt that the planning board should not back off now in their efforts. They should continue to arm the public with facts.

Next Meeting Date: The next meeting of the Macon County Planning Board will be December 16, 2010. Location TBD. (December 7, 2010 Comprehensive Plan Review Session @ Environmental Resources Building.)

Meeting Adjourned: Alan Marsh Made Motion to adjourn Meeting at 7:00 pm. Jimmy Tate seconded this motion.