

The following minutes are of the Planning & Zoning Commission meeting on Thursday, April 28, 2022, in the Abita Springs Town Hall.

Commissioner Templet called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Commissioners John Pierce, Chad Hall, David Gruning, and Eric Templet were present. Bryan Gowland was absent. Kristin Tortorich, Paul Harrison, and Mark Fancey were also present. All stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Commission reviewed the draft minutes from the March 31, 2022, meeting. Commissioner Pierce motioned to accept the minutes of the March 31, 2022, meeting as presented. Commissioner Gruning seconded the motion. All commissioners were in favor.

Planning Commission

Zoning Commission

PUBLIC HEARING:

Proposed amendments to Town Code Sec. 9-306 – Jurisdiction

Town Code Sec. 9-306 grants the Historic Commission authority regarding the design of buildings constructed on properties along highway corridors entering Abita Springs – Hwy. 36, Hwy, 435, and Hwy. 59. The proposed amendments would extend the authority of the Historic Commission to include buildings constructed along Harrison Avenue.

Stewart Eastman said the Historic Commission approved the Auto Zone on Harrison Avenue. He questioned the need to extend the Commission’s authority since the Commission is not doing anything.

EJ Boudreaux said he does not like the proposed amendment.

Brenda Lanier asked for clarification regarding zoning.

David Bourd asked if the Historic Commission adds another level of review. The response was “Yes”.

Sandra Sifer said residents want more say. They are fighting to save the character of Abita.

Commissioner Gruning motioned to close the public hearing. Commissioner Pierce seconded the motion. All commissioners were in favor.

Commissioner Hall motioned to forward a recommendation to the Town Council to adopt the proposed amendments. Commissioner Pierce seconded the motion. All commissioners were in favor

Proposed amendments to Town Code Sec. 9-229 – Residential-Commercial Overlay District

The proposed amendments would allow cafes/restaurants as a permitted use in the Residential-Commercial Overlay District and would allow expanded hours of operation for all commercial uses. Currently commercial uses in this zone are allowed to operate from 7:00 am to 7:00 pm. The proposed amendments would expand hours of operation for commercial uses from 7:00 am to 9:00 pm.

Mark Fancey read a statement from Mayor Curtis stating that the Town has begun work on an ordinance that would provide for a temporary moratorium on certain commercial developments. The mayor is requesting that the amendments be deferred at this time since extensive changes to the Zoning Ordinance are planned.

Lengthy discussion ensued. Commissioner Gruning motioned to remove the item from the agenda. Commissioner Pierce seconded the motion. All commissioners were in favor

Proposed commercial use – Midtown Cultural District: Retail nursery at 22107 Hwy. 36

The request is to allow a retail plant nursery as a permitted use in the Midtown Cultural District.

Commissioner Templet opened the public hearing. Buddy Coate, the applicant, explained that the proposed use would be a small retail nursery similar to The Garden Spot in Mandeville. He said the indoor space would have items such as gifts, pots, and statuary. He said an accessory building would be constructed behind the main building for additional storage.

Stewart Eastman said he supports the proposed use as a good fit for the Midtown Cultural District.

Jessica Schilling said she is excited about the business as she loves her garden.

Commissioner Templet mentioned that the proposed use was similar to other uses allowed in the Midtown Cultural District such as florist or feed store. He said he hopes the business outgrows the space.

Commissioner Gruning motioned to close the public hearing. Commissioner Pierce seconded the motion. All commissioners were in favor.

Commissioner Gruning motioned to approve the proposed use in the Midtown Cultural District. Commissioner Pierce seconded the motion. All commissioners were in favor.

Discussion:

Landscape plan review for 22107 Hwy 36.

The property was recently cleared along the Abita River. The landscape plan was developed based on recommendations from the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries to restore the site. The landscape plan has been reviewed by Dr. Malcolm Guidry, Town Arborist. The plan calls for planting two rows of trees the length of the property – about 240 feet. Shrubs would be interplanted with the trees. The Commission reviewed the landscape plan.

Public Comment

Cindy Sales said she is new in town and does not understand local processes. She suggested some type of program be instituted, such as coffee with a Town Councilor as a useful way to spread information. She said Facebook and the Internet are not the only ways to get information out.

Stewart Eastman recommending adopting an ordinance limiting chain retail stores. He said that there is no reason to keep putting off ideas. He said Abita Springs is a unique town that needs to stop formula retail.

Brenda Lanier said she lives on Hwy 59 and hopes that at some meeting the traffic and noise pollution will be discussed.

Announcements

None.

Commissioner Gruning motioned to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Pierce seconded the motion. All commissioners were in favor. The meeting adjourned at 7:08 p.m.

Kristin M. Tortorich, Planning Director

Date