

The following minutes are from the Planning & Zoning Commission meeting on Wednesday, December 16, 2020 in the Abita Springs Town Hall at 6:00 p.m.

Commissioner Gowland called the meeting to order and all stood for the Pledge of Allegiance. Commissioners in attendance included Bryan Gowland, Barbara Jackson, Eric Templet, David Gruning and John Pierce. Kristin Tortorich and Mark Fancey were also present.

The Commission reviewed the draft minutes from the November 19, 2020 meeting. Commissioner Templet motioned to accept the minutes of the November 19, 2020 meeting as presented. Commissioner Gruning seconded the motion. All commissioners were in favor.

Commissioner Gowland introduced John Pierce as the new Planning and Zoning Commissioner replacing Dan Underwood.

The Commission reviewed 2021 meeting dates. Commissioner Gruning motioned to approve the meeting calendar. Commissioner Templet seconded the motion. All commissioners were in favor.

Planning Commission

No items were discussed.

Zoning Commission

Discussion:

Kristin Tortorich said that the public hearing to consider enacting a 6-month moratorium on subdivisions smaller than 3 acres in the Brook Forest Road area is scheduled for the January 2021 meeting. She said that she has not received any inquiries regarding subdividing property in the Brook Forest Road area.

Low Density Residential District

The Commission reviewed the draft Low Density Residential District. Mark Fancey explained the subsection (f) District standards that includes requirements for flood zones, tree removal, and water and sewer was adapted from similar sections found in St. Tammany Parish rural residential zones. The section provides guidance for property owners and staff regarding required standards. Fancey noted that the draft allows larger-scale uses such as parks and schools subject to Commission review. Commissioner Templet said that he likes this provision as it provides more flexibility.

Commissioner Gowland asked if the Residential-Commercial Overlay Zone would remain in effect for properties along Hwy 435 if that area was included in the new low density residential district. Mark Fancey replied that the overlay zone would remain in effect if the surrounding area was re-zoned.

Commissioner Gruning suggested several revisions to subsection (a) regarding the purpose of the district and subsection (b) regarding permitted uses. The Commission agreed with the revisions.

Commission Gowland said that the Commission must decide upon a minimum lot size for the district. He said that residents in the Brook Forest Road area prefer a 3-acre minimum lot size. The Commission reviewed Town Code Sec. 3-405 which allows subdivisions of 15 or fewer lots in areas without community water and sewer service provided all lots are at least 2-acres in size. Commissioner Templet said he did not see any grounds to justify a 3-acre minimum lot size and that the minimum should be consistent with this section. Commissioner Jackson said she also agreed that the minimum lot size should be consistent with the existing Code provision.

Commissioner Gruning said that he did not think that Sec. 3-405 compelled a 2-acre minimum lot size standard for the zone. He said he is sympathetic to residents in the Brook Forest Road area who want a 3-acre lot size.

Donna Caire said that a 3-acre minimum lot size is more consistent with the purpose of the zone to maintain the rural character of Abita Springs, conserve natural areas, and promote environmental quality. She said the area has problems due to flooding and a substandard road.

Commissioner Gruning motioned to include a 3-acre minimum lot size in the Low Density Residential District. The motion did not have a second. The motion failed.

Commissioner Templet motioned to include a 2-acre minimum lot size in the Low Density Residential District. Commissioner Pierce seconded the motion. Commissioners Jackson, Templet, and Pierce voted aye. Commissioner Gruning voted no. The motion passed.

Staff will make the necessary revisions and provide a revised draft for Commission review at the January 28, 2021 meeting.

Commissioner Templet motioned to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Gruning seconded the motion. All commissioners were in favor. The meeting adjourned at 7:04 p.m.

Kristin M. Tortorich, Planning Director

Date