

The following minutes are from the Planning & Zoning Commission meeting on Thursday, May 28, 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, and Dan Underwood. Commissioner David Grunning was not present. Kristin Tortorich, Jane Dufrene, and Mark Fancey were also present.

The Commission reviewed the draft minutes from the January 23, 2020 meeting. Commissioner Templet motioned to accept the minutes of the January 23, 2020 meeting as presented. Commissioner Jackson seconded the motion. All commissioners were in favor.

Commissioner Gowland reviewed the meeting agenda. Items before the Commission include a public hearing on a proposed variance and a discussion of side yard setback requirements for corner lots. He said that public comments could be submitted online to the Town website during the first 30 minutes of the meeting and would then be received by the Commission.

Planning Commission

Public Hearing: Variance - Cruz/Firman, 22097 9th Street.

Commissioner Gowland opened the public hearing. The request is to allow for 20-foot side yard setback where a 30-foot setback is required. The applicants wish to construct a small house on the property. They had previously discussed the variance with the Commission at the January 2020 meeting. The lot is bounded by Highway 59, 9th Street, and St. Ann Street. Commissioner Gowland said that this is a pie-shaped lot and the proposed variance would address a hardship and allow construction of a home on the property. He noted that at the narrow end that lot was only 36 ½ feet wide. Commissioner Templet said that this is a clear case where a variance is required – when it is untenable to fit on house on the lot with the required setbacks. Commissioner Underwood said that the reason for variances is to take care of individual cases like this one. Commissioner Jackson noted with she was pleased about the number of trees that are left on the property.

Commissioner Gowland closed the public hearing.

Zoning Commission

Discussion: Corner lot setbacks

Commissioner Gowland noted that there was no specific proposal or ordinance before the commission, but this is a discussion regarding whether it is feasible to reduce the required 30-foot side yard setback for the street side on corner lots. Janet Dufrene said that several variance requests had been received or discussed with property owners seeking a 20-foot side yard setback.

Discussion ensued regarding reducing the required setback to 20 feet. Commissioners Gowland, Underwood, and Templet all expressed support for a change. Commissioner Jackson asked if the lots that would be impacted by such a change have been mapped. Janet Dufrene said that the lots had not been mapped.

Commissioner Gowland asked if any online public comments had been received during the meeting. The following comments were received:

Stewart Eastman – Regarding the proposed variance: The Zoning Ordinance requires a 30-foot setback and people should be held to that standard. The applicants have a small triangular lot and should build a small triangular house.

Stewart Eastman – Regarding the discussion of corner lot setbacks: Thirty feet is not an excessive standard. If anything, it should be greater. A 20-foot setback is too close to the street – about six steps.

Commissioner Underwood made a motion to approve the variance request. Barbara Jackson seconded the motion. All commissioners were in favor.

Commissioner Templet motioned to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Underwood seconded the motion. All commissioners were in favor. The meeting adjourned at 6:34 p.m.

Kristin M. Tortorich, Planning and Zoning

Date