

The following are minutes from the Planning and Zoning Commission meeting on Thursday, May 30, 2024, in Abita Springs Town Hall. The meeting convened at 6:12 P.M.

Commission Vice Chairman Hall called the meeting to order, and all stood for the Pledge of Allegiance. Commissioners in attendance included Chad Hall, Mike Lanaux, and Lex LeBlanc. Commissioners John Pierce and Claire Guidry were absent. Kristin Tortorich, Mark Fancey, and Heather Hockman were also present.

CALL FOR AGENDA MODIFICATIONS

Kristin Tortorich said the Moratorium Exception Ordinance No. 544 for Longbranch Recovery & Wellness needed to be deferred to next month due to more information being needed from the Town Engineer.

Commissioner LeBlanc motioned to defer the Moratorium Exception item. Commissioner Lanaux seconded the motion. The vote in favor of deferment was unanimously approved.

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

The Commission reviewed the draft minutes from the April 25, 2024, meeting. Commissioner LeBlanc said he reviewed the minutes and had nothing to add or change.

Commissioner Lanaux motioned to accept the minutes of the April 25, 2024, meeting as presented. Commissioner LeBlanc seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

PLANNING:

Review Short-Term Rental Application for 7th Street

Kristin Tortorich explained the application for a new Short-Term Rental was complete. The house is located at the corner of 7th and St. Mary and was recently purchased and renovated. Kristin Tortorich confirmed that this would be the tenth permit to be issued if approved. Commissioner Lanaux stated he had reviewed the application, visited the area surrounding the property, and had no issue with the location.

Commissioner LeBlanc motioned to approve the application. Commissioner Lanaux seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

ZONING:

PUBLIC HEARING

Proposed Commercial Use for Abita Paws Grooming Salon at 22155 Level Street

Kristin Tortorich introduced the application. The applicant came for discussion at the last meeting. The applicant would like to open a grooming salon and is seeking approval because grooming is not specifically listed as an approved use in the Midtown Cultural District Overlay. Commissioner LeBlanc said he didn't see any issue with the proposed use as it is not anything that would be detrimental or cause a lot of noise. Vice Chairman Hall said it seemed like a great idea to him. Commissioner Lanaux noted the large number of dogs in the community and said hopefully the business would be successful. Vice Chairman Hall opened the Public Comment period.

Public Comment

None.

Vice Chairman Hall closed the Public Hearing.

Commissioner LeBlanc motioned to approve the application. Commissioner Lanaux seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

CONSIDER MORATORIUM EXCEPTION***Ordinance No. 544***

The item was deferred.

DISCUSSION**Steve Muller St. Charles Street Resubdivision**

Kristin Tortorich stated Mr. Muller has a large property on St. Charles Street that he is wanting to divide into two lots consisting of 2.693 acres and 3.792 acres. Commissioner Lanaux asked about the setbacks for building. Ms. Tortorich stated all requirements for size and frontage have been met, with one lot having 192 feet of frontage and 210 feet for the other with each lot exceeding 2 acres. Kristin Tortorich stated the item would be on the agenda for the June meeting for a Public Hearing and then will be up for a vote.

Potential commercial development on Hwy 36 next to the Abita River

Commissioner Lanaux stated the plan looked much better after the revision since the last meeting. Commissioner Lanaux then said he was concerned about the lack of buffer if the parking lot was placed on the right side of the lot as shown in the presentation. Commissioner Lanaux then recommended the entrance from Hwy 36 to be centered to the pedestrian walkway. Commissioner LeBlanc said this was a much better design than last month. Commission Vice Chair Hall asked about Master Plan compliance with parking. Commissioner Lanaux said he thought parking spaces 12 and 13 create a limited amount of buffer.

Kristin Tortorich stated the comments from the Commission are limited as the design is subject to a final submission being made, the Town Engineer signing off on the project, and Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Scenic Rivers (LDWFSR) issuing their permit.

Commission Vice Chair Hall and Paul Mayronne asked about the timeline and order of the approval process. Paul Mayronne asked if the project would have to have Scenic Rivers approval before seeking site plan approval and the moratorium exception being considered by the Planning & Zoning Commission. Mark Fancey asked about Scenic Rivers ability to weigh in on setbacks. Paul Mayronne confirmed LDWFSR does determine their own setbacks for the project. Paul Mayronne said he didn't want to spend six months to a year seeking approval from Scenic Rivers to come to the Town and have to start over with planning because the project didn't meet the Town's requirements. Paul Mayronne said the whole property is within Scenic Rivers purview, so they don't have the luxury of just building outside of a certain set of dimensions and says he knows the process involves a significant level of scrutiny. Mr. Mayronne expressed a desire for a preliminary approval from the Town, short of a Building Permit, and said he thought tweaking the plan and getting the changes approved at the Town level could potentially be easier than submitting changes for new approvals at the State level.

Mark Fancey expressed concerns that a preliminary approval by the Commission could be construed as taking an approval to the State and the Town could be viewed as an ally and legal advocate. Mr. Fancey suggested the Town stay out of approvals until Scenic Rivers makes their decision.

Mr. Mayronne said there are two jurisdictional bodies that may have different conflicting opinions, so it is a bit of a chicken and an egg situation they are being placed in. Mark Fancey commiserated with the challenge they face, and said that as a Planner, he tends to yield to the higher authority; the Town

would typically yield to the State. Mr. Fancey used the example of a driveway size and location. If the Town was alright with it, but the Department of Transportation didn't agree, the driveway would have to meet the requirements of the Department of Transportation.

Commissioner LeBlanc asked about the required buffer from the river. Commission Vice Chairman Hall read the following about waterway buffers:

Sec. 9-707. - Requirements for issuance of residential clearing or development clearing permits.

(b)Development clearing permit requirements.

(4)Buffer requirements in conjunction with the issuance of a development clearing permit: The following requirements are mandatory. All buffers required shall be exclusive of all easements, servitudes and/or rights-of-way within the property.

b.Waterway buffer. A minimum uncut vegetation buffer of at least 50 feet in depth from the centerline of the stream channel along both banks of all established natural stream beds, riverbanks and improved drainage canals shall be preserved uncut.

Commission Vice Chairman Hall asked about the status of replanting the damaged trees in the previously cleared area on the parcel. Paul Mayronne said he would follow up with the owner.

Mark Fancey made the suggestion of presenting a revised plan showing dimension of the parking area, to include the size of driveways and parking spaces, for staff and the Commission to get an idea of how everything is going to fit on the property and if it complies with the parking standards. Mr. Fancey said sizes would likely need to be 20' wide drive aisles (for one way) and 9'x18' parking spaces. Mr. Mayronne thanked the Commission for their time and comments and said there would be another presentation after some more work.

OPEN COMMENTS

None.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Kristin Tortorich announced the annual Fourth of July event will be held at the park again this year from 5-9 P.M. and she said to check the website for more details.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Lanaux motioned to adjourn. Commissioner LeBlanc seconded the motion. All voted in favor. The meeting adjourned at 6:37 P.M.

Kristin Tortorich, Planning & Zoning Director

Date