

TOWN OF BEECH MOUNTAIN

Planning Board Meeting Minutes

January 4th, 2013 (Meeting re-scheduled from Dec 2012)

Call to Order:

Chairman Andy Porter called the meeting to order at 9:05 AM. Other Board Members present in attendance were Brian Barnes, James True and Matt LaVigne.

Adoption of Agenda:

The agenda was adopted with no change.

Approval of Minutes:

Brian Barnes made a motion to adopt the minutes from the previous Planning Board meeting with several small corrections (several name misspellings and a typo). Matt LaVigne seconded and motion carried with no opposition.

Comprehensive Planning- Economic Development and Tourism:

Mr. Scott begins by discussing the timeline for completion of the Comprehensive Plan. He states that today they will be discussing Economic Development and Tourism, and that the draft for this section of the plan is the last chapter that the Board had planned to work on. However, he discussed that the Recreation element of the plan was an extremely integral and important portion of the plan, and that it was being completed by the Recreation Department and Recreation Committee in a separate and parallel process to that which the Planning Board has been working on. However, due to the Recreation Director moving away, the recreation element has been left incomplete. After discussing some options, the Board agreed that the best course of action was to try to develop the recreation element of the plan with assistance from the Recreation Committee, and to wait on the submittal of a completed draft for review by the public until the recreation plan could be incorporated into the rest of the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Scott and the Planning Board agreed to try to have an outline of the Goals, Policies and Strategies for the recreation element by the January 29th Planning Board meeting.

Mr. Scott then provides an overview of his draft of the Economic Development and Tourism component of the Comprehensive Plan. The purpose of this section is to try to find ways in which the Town, as a government entity, can support the development and sustenance of a vibrant and healthy economic climate in Beech Mountain.

He discussed some of the background information for the chapter- including that Beech Mountain was a very small town and that its economy was very unique. The economy here is based upon tourism and recreation, and other key businesses included real estate and rentals, restaurants, hotels and inns, home maintenance and home improvement and construction. The economic downturn of recent years has affected Beech Mountain much the same as it has

everywhere. Our rebound will need to focus on our recreational and natural assets that drive the businesses described above.

Mr. Scott outlined the major goals, policies, and strategies regarding economic development and tourism in his draft. He said that while there were many distinct goals for other chapters of the plan, there was really only one for this section- to invigorate the economy and thrive as a mountain destination and community.

Mr. Scott then discussed the policies and strategies that supported this goal. These included different ways of providing encouragement and assistance for existing and prospective businesses to reach their potential such as community beautification projects, recreation programs, and pedestrian walkability. These policies also included being receptive to new economic opportunities and effectively marketing and capitalizing on our assets.

Brian Barnes discussed that there are three major entities that play a role in the town's economic development: the TDA, the Chamber of Commerce, and Recreation. He described that an ongoing issue was in defining the exact roles and responsibilities for each of these groups, and suggested that the plan could include a discussion about this. James True replied that he felt the Town's major events and functions would be more efficient and successful if they were run by groups or committees that were interested in the individual events and were focused on them year round, as opposed to delegating certain events to either the TDA, the Chamber, or Recreation. The merits of these two approaches were debated. James Scott asked if Brian Barnes could write a draft of a section that could deal with this issue to be incorporated into the plan. Mr. Barnes agreed.

Discuss Sign Regulations:

Mr. Scott discussed that the Town Council had reviewed their proposal regarding temporary signs for small scale events and had several recommendations. Council's specific comments were:

- 1) *Rather than saying that these signs can only be erected weekends and holidays, perhaps they should only be allowed during the event and within a few hours window on either side.*
- 2) *The provision giving the adjacent property owner purview over signs in the right of way in front of their house has been questioned. What if the owner of a parcel at an important intersection doesn't want signs?*
- 3) *There are questions regarding the penalty and who can enforce.*

The Board debated the recommendations at length. Regarding the period during which signs could be erected (comment 1 above) Brian Barnes reflected that if the signs were not limited to weekends and holidays only, there was nothing to stop people from holding these events every day. It was discussed that events could be limited to one per each 7 days, but then it was discussed that open houses and yard sales typically last for several consecutive days (usually on

a weekend). It was also discussed that it would be difficult to keep track of how many days per week a sign had been up.

The provision that gives adjacent property owners the right to essentially “veto” any sign in the right of way adjacent to their property was then discussed. James Scott discussed that the idea for this provision came from the State law regarding political signs in the NCDOT right of way. Some of the Board members agreed with the comments that a property owner at an important intersection could basically prohibit these types of signs and therefore render these provisions meaningless. Other Board members felt that it was important for a property owner to feel that they had some control over the signs that were right in front of their property.

Mr. Barnes finally commented that what the Board was really trying to do here was simply legitimize a practice that had been going on anyway and was difficult to stop (meaning the erection of signs of this nature on weekends). He thought that the existing draft of the proposed ordinance was the best and simplest way to accomplish that. A motion was made to take no action on the Council’s recommendations, although the Board acknowledged that they had no issue with Town Council using its judgment on these matters if they so desired.

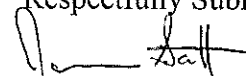
Other Business:

Mr. Porter asks for updates regarding the Streetscape/ Pedestrian pathway project. Mr. Scott discussed that the Town had run into difficulty securing all the easements that were needed to complete the trail. However, he discussed that he had recently discussed the project with NCDOT personnel and that there was a possibility to complete the trail on NCDOT right of way. The trail could probably be done in the same manner as previous phases had been completed (unpaved surface, etc.) if it was recognized as a recreational trail. Otherwise, Mr. Scott stated that there may be potential for grant funding if the trail was to be done as more of a sidewalk-type of path, but that certain groundwork would need to be completed first and the availability of grants could not be assured. Mr. Scott stated that the first step was to make a decision about which type of trail was best for the town (sidewalks vs. recreational trails) and then steps could be taken to bring it to fruition.

Call to Adjournment:

A motion to adjourn was made by Brian Barnes and James True seconded. The motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,



James Scott
Secretary to the Board