

TOWN OF BEECH MOUNTAIN

Planning Board Meeting Minutes

March 26, 2013

Call to Order:

Chairman, Andy Porter, called the meeting to order at 9:10 AM. Other Board Members present in attendance were Brian Barnes, Matt LaVigne, James True and John Hoffman.

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. Matt LaVigne seconded and the motion carried with no objection.

Public Comment Period:

No public comment was offered at the meeting.

Comprehensive Planning:

Planner James Scott presented the Planning Board with copies of the completed draft of the Comprehensive Plan. He briefly summarized the contents of the plan and the chapters that the Board had discussed and considered over the past year and a half. He reiterated that he felt that the completion of this plan represented a significant step for the community. He requested that the Board move to present the draft of the plan to the Town Council for consideration. He anticipated that upon receipt of the plan, the Town Council would formally open a "public comment period" of several months to gather public input on the plan before potentially adopting it.

Brian Barnes made a motion to send the draft of the Comprehensive Plan to the Town Council. Said motion was seconded and passed with no objection. Mr. Barnes also commented that he felt that the plan represented a major undertaking and recommended that Mr. Scott be commended for his work on this project.

Discuss Cell Towers:

Mr. Scott opened the conversation by discussing how the Town had amended standards regarding cellular communications towers several months back. At the time, several Council members supported the stronger measures regarding the location of cell towers but expressed concerns that even the new stricter standards did not go far enough. It was mentioned at the time that the proposed cell tower standards could be passed, but even stronger measures could be discussed further in the future. Mr. Scott stated that he would like to discuss the possibility of such stricter standards, and had prepared some draft measures for their consideration. At this point, he felt it was important to note that no measures taken would be retroactive to the cell tower that was issued a Conditional Use Permit for the site on Slopes Rd.

The draft measures that Mr. Scott presented involved restricting cell towers to only the CS2 zoning district. Mr. Scott discussed how their previous work had limited cell towers to the large tracts and outlying areas that comprised the R1 zoning district. However, much of the concern leading to the sentiment that those measures were not protective enough stemmed from the fact that cell towers are essentially a commercial use, but are allowed in the R1 district, which, although it does represent the outlying areas of the town, is a district whose primary intent is for low density single family residential use. There was considerable support for a change that would limit these towers to only commercial districts. However, Mr. Scott stated that he highly advised against allowing cell towers in the CS1 district, which is the Town's main commercial district. He felt that the CS1 district was the major corridor through Beech Mountain and presented visitors and residents with some of their strongest impressions of the Town. He felt that the reasons for restricting cell towers in residential districts were possibly even more compelling in the CS1 district. Therefore, the draft standards he had worked on proposed limiting cell towers to only the CS2 district. The CS2 district is a very small district that is adjacent to the CS1 yet is off of the main thoroughfares. The CS2 allows a variety of Commercial uses that he felt would be more compatible with cell towers.

Upon considering the proposed changes, the Planning Board was concerned with the small size of the CS2 district. They felt that such a change would give the owners of the parcels in that district a monopoly over future cell towers in the area, and potentially give an unfair advantage to a very small number of property owners. Furthermore, the Board commented that the area around the CS2 district was already one of the better-served areas of the Town in terms of cell coverage. There is likely to be no need for additional towers in that area. On the other hand, cell coverage in the remote areas of town is very poor, and cell towers could actually help these areas. Brian Barnes mentioned that in prior discussions regarding future growth of the Town, they had identified potential growth opportunities in some of the areas in the R1 district. James True pointed out that no one on the Planning Board was a telecommunication expert and he felt that more input was needed on the technology before limiting towers to such a small area. John Hoffman discussed how cellular technology would likely be obsolete in the future and towers would become unnecessary.

After further discussion and consideration, the Planning Board decided to take no action on the cell tower issue.

Other Business:


Brian Barnes mentioned that he felt that future Planning Board work should involve devising implementation plans for several of the recommendations outlined in the Comprehensive Plan, particularly for further work on the streetscape and completion of the pathway from the "Gateway" to the Town to the Parkway Overlook. Other Planning Board members echoed the importance of this project.

Mr. Porter asks if there is any other business to discuss and there is none at this time.

Call to Adjournment:

A motion to adjourn was made, seconded and carried.

Respectfully Submitted,



James Scott
Secretary to the Board

