

MINUTES OF THE STRASBURG TOWN COUNCIL WORK SESSION HELD ON MONDAY, OCTOBER 2, 2023 AT 7 P.M. IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS OF THE STRASBURG TOWN HALL.

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor Boies, Vice Mayor Reynolds, and Council Members Carter, Hooser, Kimmons, Lowder, Stover, and Woodson. **Absent:** Council Member Monahan.

Call to Order –Mayor Brandy Boies

Response Celebration of Hope Walk: Council recessed and joined representatives from Response for a presentation in front of Town Hall.

Public Hearings (if needed):

- To receive public comment on a Comprehensive Plan Amendment (CPA24-0001) requested by Landmark Atlantic Holdings, LLC, owner, for property identified as Tax Map 016 A 169A located on Fort Bowman Road, approximately three hundred feet east of the intersection of Fort Bowman Road and Old Valley Pike and containing 1.334 acres. The request is to recategorize the Highway Commercial Development Area to a Residential Development Area.

○ **Staff Report – (attachment)**

P&Z Administrator Otis said this is neighboring property to that which was approved recently. After Council went through the Comp. Plan Amendment and Rezoning, the owner realized this piece of property came with the sale. The size of the lot is too small to do much with so he is asking for a Comp. Plan Amendment so he can join it to the previously approved land.

The problems are the same as were identified with the previous approval. No comments were received except for those made during the Planning Commission meeting.

- **Public Hearing – Mayor Boies** said the public hearing is to receive public comment on a Comprehensive Plan Amendment (CPA24-0001) requested by Landmark Atlantic Holdings, LLC, owner, for property identified as Tax Map 016 A 169A located on Fort Bowman Road, approximately three hundred feet east of the intersection of Fort Bowman Road and Old Valley Pike and containing 1.334 acres. The request is to recategorize the Highway Commercial Development Area to a Residential Development Area.

The public hearing opened at 7:24 p.m.; with no speakers, it closed immediately at 7:25 p.m.

○ **Discussion**

Council Member Carter asked if this would impact the access road that was discussed in the previous discussion. **P&Z Administrator Otis** said the only impact would be the additional housing units that would create some additional traffic.

Council Member Hooser asked if this was the same property that a hotel was proposed for. **P&Z Administrator Otis** said this is the same property. The buyer was not aware he would be purchasing this portion of the property.

Council Member Hooser asked if it could stay commercial and if it did, would they have to come through the development. **P&Z Administrator Otis** said the way the gas easement goes through, the land would not allow for commercial development.

Mayor Boies said it has been confusing with this property. This Council denied the hotel proposal because the Council would not support putting the road through the neighborhood. **P&Z Administrator Otis** said that was correct because VDOT's opinion has been that the access to Fort Bowman Road will be closed eventually.

Council Member Lowder said concerns with the gas line were valid, but it does meet all the criteria for development.

Vice Mayor McCornyn said a decision has already been made about the other property and **P&Z Administrator Otis** said Council previously voted to rezone to allow for 29 townhomes.

Consensus was to add this to the agenda for the next Council meeting.

- To receive public comment on a Rezoning application (REZ24-0001) requested by Landmark Atlantic Holdings, LLC, owner, for property identified as Tax Map 016 A 169A located on Fort Bowman Road, approximately three hundred feet east of the intersection of Fort Bowman Road and Old Valley Pike and containing 1.334 acres. The request is to rezone the subject property from the Highway Commercial District to the Multi-Family Residential District.

- **Staff Report – (attachment)**

P&Z Administrator Otis said this has been submitted as an amendment to the rezoning previously approved. The existing conditions would be amended to accept this. It adds another seven dwelling units. The monetary proffers remain the same.

A picture was shown of the gas line and then another slide showed the development. A diagram showed how they want to shift the road over which would make a better connection. There will still be a gate, but there will be a cul-de-sac. Staff is recommending adding some parking. There is also a green space that would be good for a dog walk park.

- **Public Hearing:** To receive public comment on a Rezoning application (REZ24-0001) requested by Landmark Atlantic Holdings, LLC, owner, for property identified as Tax Map 016 A 169A located on Fort Bowman Road, approximately three hundred feet east of the intersection of Fort Bowman Road and Old Valley Pike and containing 1.334 acres. The request is to rezone the subject property from the Highway Commercial District to the Multi-Family Residential District.

The Public Hearing opened at 7:37 p.m.

Mike Gross, 122 Signal Cottage Drive: Said Council knows his position on the gate, turn-around, etc. He just had a question for Council tonight that deals with a series of conversations they have had in the neighborhood in regards to the future of the gate once the developer is gone and it falls to the residents and the HOA to maintain it even though there will be a key to the gate for emergency access. Residents were talking about amending the proffer statement before full approval. Where the statement talks about the gate, they were wondering if Council would consider “amending the proffers one small additional bit where it specifies the gate” additional options would be added that would be less costly and less maintenance and easier for the HOA to take care of. He said it could be a gate or hanging barriers or signage with all being VDOT approved traffic control options. Emergency access signs are all over and VDOT approved. **Mr. Gross** said this would solve all of the problems associated with a closed, locked, inaccessible path. This is just an idea he had, and he thinks the developers would be amenable with a less costly alternative.

With no other speakers, the Public Hearing closed at 7:39 p.m.

○ **Discussion**

Mayor Boies asked if what **Mr. Gross** is asking would be allowed. **Town Manager Coggsdale** said between now and next week, staff could follow up and see if the ideas would work. **P&Z Administrator Otis** said we would have to lean on VDOT to see what would be allowed.

Council Member Kimmons said he finds the gate to be perplexing in that VDOT and the town would require the HOA to maintain the gate. Why should they have to pay for this? He would like any alternative other than a gate.

P&Z Administrator Otis said this is an unusual situation. Gated communities are different; this is VDOT limiting access to Fort Bowman Road.

Council Member Hooser asked why VDOT is not paying for this since they are requiring it. **Council Member Kimmons** said they should pay for it and maintain it.

Council Member Carter asked if the new design will still connect with Fort Bowman Road and then to Route 11. This road will connect, and it will still allow for emergency vehicle access.

Consensus was to place on the agenda for the next Council meeting.

Introduction and Recognition of Visitors and Guests: **Tim Taylor, BOS,** was in attendance.

Citizen Comments on non-agenda items:

Todd Gess, Mt. Zion Un. Methodist Church, Queen Street, Strasburg, VA: Stated he was coming before Council regarding a letter sent to Town Council dated March 3, 2020. COVID stopped the discussion at that time, but there were additional emails in 2021. Property was exchanged, but the first issue is who owns the cemetery? **Town Attorney Miller** had said there was no evidence that the cemetery is owned by Mt. Zion. The reason he (Rev. Gess) initiated the letter was because of fallen limbs and other things that are falling onto Mt. Zion’s property and tearing up the guttering and tearing up the roof. There is now a vine coming down from one of the trees which is a hazard in the graveyard. He

talked to **Wyatt Pearson**, the former town manager, who rudely said that essentially it is not the town's responsibility. Every conversation he had with **Mr. Pearson** was rude.

Rev. Gess asked if the town is actively trying to figure out who owns the old graveyard. It has been going on for three years. This needs to be put on the agenda and addressed.

The second item regards the front of the property of Mt. Zion which was sold to Mt. Zion by **Dennis Morris**, a Board of Supervisor member in Shenandoah County. They are in the process of getting it surveyed, but based on information he has gotten from Autocad and by taking dimensions, what Mt. Zion was sold by **Mr. Morris** is a portion of the end of Queen Street. He said there is a map that shows that when the town sold the water tank property, there was supposed to be a new street called Princess Court.

He has many other items to discuss, but he sent an email which addressed these.

Mayor Boies said she appreciates **Rev. Gess** coming to the meeting, and they have the email he sent and town staff is working on the list. She worked closely with **Rev. Gess** when she first became mayor in trying to get answers on who owns the cemetery. She will go through old emails. She continued by saying they (Council) have been accused of selling property without public knowledge. She has gone through old minutes and other things and Council was very careful to make sure it was very open so this would not be an accusation to them. She went through the minutes and staff told Council they did not even need to have a public hearing on the sale, but Council said they wanted a public hearing as they did not want to be accused of doing this behind closed doors. She specifically made sure that did not happen and it is in the minutes, and she will share these.

Rev. Gess said when the property was sold, it was during COVID and there were no in-person meetings. The meeting that was held on February 1 to sell that property to **Dennis Morris** occurred with a notice of only eight days. He said that Council's guidelines require 14 days. **Mr. Pearson** asked why he wanted to buy the property and if they wanted to build more graveyards and added that was all we needed – more graveyards. He didn't even think we had a right to the property. It was the rudest conversation that he ever had with a public official. **Mayor Boies** said we now have different staff. **Rev. Gess** apologized for being so emotional but said if Council had heard the stories he has heard from his congregation, they would be emotional, too.

James Nickens, Mt. Zion Church: Stated his concern is for the property next to the church. There are Confederate soldiers and Civil War soldiers buried there. At one time a barbed wire fence surrounded it. Now the problem is that the trees are hanging over their church. The church has been a pillar of the community since it was moved to the town from Fishers Hill by his grandfather, uncles, and cousins. It would hurt him very badly if one of those trees fell on their sanctuary which is a historical church in the Valley. He spoke to Council about a year ago in regard to this situation. Please, don't trim them back, but take them out. They have no use. Vines are growing on them, and limbs are falling off. It would be devastating to the church family for the sanctuary to be destroyed.

Discussion Items/Updates:

1.) Civil War Marker – Banks Fort Road

Town Manager Coggsdale said a request has been made to relocate the Civil War Marker on East Washington Street to land owned by the town on Banks Fort Road. It would be

across from the water tank. The story told on the marker goes with the area of Banks Fort Road. This request came from the Civil War Trail signs. The town would not have to move it; the Civil War Trails organization would find another organization that would sponsor the marker and they would pay for it.

Council Member Carter asked for clarification on the proposed location.

Council Member Hooser doesn't think anyone would ever see the sign where it is being proposed. Unless we invest money to build steps, no one will see it.

Council Member Stover said when Civil War Trails do something, they do it right. It will be a new sign and they will take care of the upkeep. People sponsor the area, and this is an extraordinary organization, and they have the funding to do it right. They are trying to figure out if it would be useful for them to move forward with this.

Vice Mayor McCorn said she has worked with the Civil War Trails. There are individuals who follow the Civil War Trails. They have robust marketing. This marker would be plugged into their network and mapped out. This is definitely off the beaten path with a beautiful view. She thinks we should think about all the factors before deciding.

Town Manager Coggsdale said no timeframe was given for moving forward on this. The current sign needs work. He thinks there are more questions to ask such as if it is for vehicular traffic and if so, where parking would be.

Council Member Woodson said if a new sign is being put in, they really don't need to take this sign away. He thinks it would be good to keep it there and build a new sign.

Town Manager Coggsdale said the verbiage would be on the sign on Banks Fort Road.

Vice Mayor McCorn said this sign was part of the historic walking tour. The group in charge of updating the walking tour decided the sign should go. A lot of the information on the trail sign is now on the new walking trail sign and the plan had been to remove the sign. She is not sure if they are aware of the topography of the site they are proposing.

Mayor Boies said this could be another way to get a pocket park in that area. If we have another organization that is willing to make it ADA accessible, it would be a closer step to a pocket park.

Council Member Hooser said putting a park there would make the person who owns the land feel like there are people in their front yard.

Council Member Kimmons said he likes the idea of moving it to this location. The one on Washington Street makes you question why it is there. He does have concerns with maintenance. The resident maintains the property now, but would they maintain the sign?

Town Manager Coggsdale said that would be part of the conversation.

Supervisor Taylor said the town pays a small amount each year to sponsor and then Civil War Trails will help with marketing. **Town Manager Coggsdale** said he will try to invite the representative to a meeting to provide more details.

2.) FY2025 Preliminary Budget Discussion

Town Manager Coggsdale said this is an opportunity for Town Council to provide staff their thoughts on important items that need consideration during the preparation of the FY2024-25 Draft Town Budget and FY2025-2029 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). It is time for Council to start the dialogue on what their goals and objectives are.

Council Member Lowder said his children play Little League. Little League is concerned about lighting. He would like to look into putting lights up at the ball fields at the Town Park. It would make the fields look nicer and would reflect the fields at the school. **Council Member Kimmons** said the soccer fields need work, too. **Council Member Hooser** said the entire park needs lights.

Mayor Boies said **Council Member Kimmons** is the liaison for the Parks and Rec. She knows all would like to see improvements to the park. We need to start chipping away at the Master Park Plan. We approved bathrooms so wondered where we are on that.

Council Member Stover said the bathrooms were in the budget and when **Ms. Hilton** said the cost would be \$300,000, he about flipped. People talk about the pool. We already have the pool, and we need to keep it up. He said the season at the pool was bad and if we have another season like that, it will be worse.

Council Member Kimmons said the pool needs work. We have continually pushed things out in the park.

Council Member Stover said we must take care of what we have before we put in lights.

Mayor Boies asked if there is any momentum on the park's bathrooms. **Town Manager Coggsdale** said we need to sit down with Council and decide what they really want. Council has been left out of the discussion. Staff will come back with some options. We will be moving forward with something in this budget year. We can learn from others success. It is time for Council to have their thoughts.

Mayor Boies said a lot of staff time went into the Master Park Plan. Restrooms are a necessity. Could they be incorporated in the pool facility? We need to think outside the box. **Council Member Woodson** said you would be integrating many different park users.

Town Manager Coggsdale said he is looking for ideas for next year's budget. No bathrooms will be built before Council decides what they want.

Council Member Hooser said the first thing that is always cut is park improvements. We can't keep compromising. He hopes we can prioritize the park in this budget.

Vice Mayor McCorn asked about the infill/infiltration. **Town Manager Coggsdale** said an update will be given during this meeting.

Council Member Carter would like to have sidewalks from Oxbow into town. **Town Manager Coggsdale** said VDOT has some funding that we might be able to go through the process to get. We need to do this hand in hand with VDOT. There is not a lot of room for sidewalks. He said VDOT requires sidewalks to be put in when a piece of property is

developed. **Mayor Boies** said we have other areas that need sidewalks. We need to look at this so all people can get around town safely.

Mayor Boies said clean water and safety take most of our money.

Council Member Carter asked if we have asked for corporate sponsors to help with our parks. Most big companies have a day of service that could fix the volleyball court.

Mayor Boies said there are opportunities to build up our community, but she is not sure how this is done in government.

Rev. Gess said he is concerned about his congregation and community. This is an excellent opportunity to give fundraisers that are 50/50. Half of the funds would go to the church and the other half to the park.

Council Member Woodson said most town events are not run by the town, but the town has to pay for police, etc. He knows other places have the organization that is sponsoring the event pay for the staff needed. He thinks the town should have a grant writer on staff.

Council Member Hooser said all the trees up to Food Lion are dead. **Town Manager Coggsdale** said the property management company is concerned about the looks of that area. **Mayor Boies** thinks the intent with the wildflowers was good, but the outcome hasn't turned out quite as expected. She knows this was sold to Council because of staffing resources. She has had complaints about the grass at 115 West King Street, but we asked citizens not to mow so maybe the town didn't mow either.

Town Manager Coggsdale said we hope our revenue grows, but it usually doesn't keep up with requests. We have to make the tough decisions.

Mayor Boies said we will ask the staff to bring recommendations on what is needed to run the town efficiently. **Town Manager Coggsdale** said staff will do their work, and then a draft budget will come to them.

Council Member Woodson said it looks like the volleyball court will need to be moved.

Town Manager Coggsdale asked all to look at the Master Park Plan. We can then look at priorities. **Council Member Carter** asked if it would be **Brian McKee** who would be working on community engagement for sponsorships. **Town Manager Coggsdale** said we will work on this. Every little bit helps.

Council Member Woodson said he knows of someone who got some money, and they want to give to non-profits. He will talk to them to see if they are interested. **Town Manager Coggsdale** said sometimes you have to put your needs out there to see if someone can meet those needs.

More discussion was held about the volleyball court. **Council Member Stover** said you cannot play volleyball by yourself. He could see putting \$5,000 in a basketball court, but he doesn't want to put money in the volleyball court when there are other needs in the park.

Town Manager Coggsdale asked what the goals and objectives are as we approach the FY2025 budget cycle. We have to have a goal. **Mayor Boies** encouraged the liaisons to work with the other Council Members and staff to prioritize things.

Council Member Kimmons said he has mentioned this. He is still interested in getting rid of vehicle tax and transferring it to property tax. He is interested in knowing how much we would save by not sending out those bills. **Town Manager Coggsdale** said these are things he might be able to answer. Staff can research this to see if it is feasible as long as there is a consensus for staff to investigate. **Consensus was to investigate.**

Council Member Carter would like to see us getting all the business spaces filled on King Street. **Town Manager Coggsdale** said this is a topic that can be explored. Are there incentives that can be offered? **Council Member Carter** would love us to be a small shop community.

3.) Project Updates

115 W. King Street: **Town Manager Coggsdale** said we have received comments back from the Shenandoah County Building Official's Office regarding the requirements for repurposing this facility into a new police station. The requirements will significantly impact the renovation budget. Staff will seek to have the project engineer (Dewberry) at the next work session to go through some cost estimates and processes, as well as some options.

Queen Street Sewer Line Rehab Project: **Town Manager Coggsdale** said this project seeks to repair and/or replace existing sewer lines to improve the Inflow/Infiltration issues that exist which lets groundwater into the system which is then treated by the WWTP. The town is working with USDA to complete a checklist of items. Once this is completed, they can provide the "green light" to proceed to bid. Staff will seek to have the project engineer (Thrasher) at the next work session to brief Council.

Sandy Hook Waterline Replacement: **Town Manager Coggsdale** said this project seeks to replace existing water lines in the Holliday Street area and out to the school campuses. The project engineer (Pennoni) indicates that the design is at the 90 percent mark. Staff will seek to have the project engineer at the next work session.

UDO Rewrite: **Town Manager Coggsdale** said the project is approximately 70 percent complete and work continues with the Berkley Group to address specific concerns from previous meetings with Council. The Berkley Group has inquired about the scheduling of the next joint meeting. Dates chosen were December 5, December 19, or December 18, all at 7 p.m.

Committee of the Whole (listed Areas of Focus will be discussed):

- Public Safety Committee
 - Speeding on Front Royal Road

Vice Mayor McCorn said **Asst. Town Manager Shipe** had emailed her a report about the speeding report on Front Royal Road. **Asst. Town Manager Shipe** said staff got a complaint about speeding on East King Street. It is a VDOT maintained road and they

enforce the speed limit allowed. If a Council letter comes to VDOT, they can do a study. Nothing says they will change the speed limit, but it is a start.

Council Member Hooser said no one obeys the speed limit there. If it is reduced to 25 mph, maybe people will go 35 mph.

Town Manager Coggsdale said it is only a request from Council.

Vice Mayor McCornyn asked about crosswalks. Could we put these further out? This would have to go to VDOT. She asked if this is part of the larger conversation that we want to be more pedestrian friendly, should we start with the letter or the letter and crosswalk.

Asst. Town Manager Shipe said the concern was about the cluster mailbox. The Post Office said they could put in a second cluster mailbox; or mailboxes could be installed on Eberly Street but keep the same address of Front Royal Road.

Asst. Town Manager Shipe said a letter could be sent and then a speed test would be done. **Town Manager Coggsdale** said the letter could include the request for a crosswalk. It was thought part of the study could be to find the best place for a crosswalk.

Council Member Hooser said when you turn out of Eberly Street, it is a blind turn. It has been suggested that a large mirror be installed to help with vision.

Consensus was to send the letter.

➤ Ordinance Committee

▪ Zoning Text Amendment – Short Term Rentals

P&Z Administrator Otis said that at the Planning Commission meeting, the Commission voted to recommend to Town Council to hold a public hearing for the text amendment to repeal the Short Term Rental Ordinance. He would need action taken by Council to advertise the text amendment.

Council Member Carter moved to allow staff to advertise for Short Term Rentals text amendment; second by Council Member Hooser.

With no discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

▪ Zoning Text Amendment – Schedule for Publishing Public Hearings

P&Z Administrator Otis said in dealing with the last SUP, it was realized that the UDO states action must be taken within 30 days of the advertisement which is impossible. He has revised this to follow the State Code: the Planning Commission would have to make a decision within 90 days; Council would have one year once it is a complete application.

Vice Mayor McCornyn moved to advertise the text amendment for public hearing process for SUP; second by Council Member Hooser.

Discussion: **Council Member Kimmons** asked if action is not taken within the 90 days and one year, is it deemed approve and it is.

With no further discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

- Council Public Hearing Process – State Code Changes

Town Manager Coggsdale said State Code made changes. Currently, Town Council holds Public Hearings at their monthly Work Session and then places the item on their monthly Regular Meeting for action. The Code of Virginia amendment requires that the action be intended to be taken at the meeting at which the public hearing is held.

Staff proposes the following process:

Work Session: Town Council will receive a preview/update on the applications that will be scheduled for public hearing at the Regular Meeting. This will give Council a chance to ask questions and be familiar with the application before the public hearing and intended action.

Regular Meeting: Town Council will conduct the required public hearing at this meeting and intend to take action that evening.

Vice Mayor McCorn said it would be nice if everything is good, the intention would be to take action on the same night.

Mayor Boies said there might be times that the public hearing provides some information that needs to be considered more. If this happens, a vote will not happen.

Council Member Comments:

Vice Mayor McCorn will be covering the Council meeting next week as **Mayor Boies** will be out-of-town. **Council Member Kimmons** will be out-of-town.

Council Member Hooser said there are a lot of children that do not have yards or have a yard that cannot be used, so having play areas is important.

Mayor Boies said to keep an eye on the Rails to Trails project. It could create a path from the park to Strasburg Junction.

Congratulations on the sell-out of the Grilled Cheese and Tomato Soup Festival. **Town Manager Coggsdale** said we are looking at ways to grow this festival without taking away from it.

Mayor Boies said it was brought up getting more businesses downtown. The festivals bring people downtown. If we continue to represent in a positive light, we will keep encouraging people to come to Strasburg.

Council Member Lowder asked for an update on the River Walk. **Town Manager Coggsdale** said he is scheduling a meeting with the working group so he can be informed of the project better. He will then provide an update to Council.

Closed Meeting:

Adjournment: Being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 9:31 p.m.