

August 16, 2023 Joint Session with Council and the Planning Commission

A joint meeting of the Council of the City of Martinsville, Virginia and the Planning Commission was held on August 16, 2023 in Council Chambers, Municipal Building, at 4:00 PM. Council Members present included Mayor Jones, Vice Mayor Rawls and Council Member Kathy Lawson. Staff present included Interim City Manager Glen Adams, Clerk of Council Karen Roberts, Building Inspector Kris Bridges, and members of the Planning Commission to include DeShanta Hairston, Riggs Roberson, Joseph Martin, Jonathan Martin, Nelson Evans and Conrade Young who arrived later.

Planning Commission Chairman Joe Martin called the meeting to order.

Joe Martin was voted to remain Planning Commission Chair, Austin Roberson will maintain the Vice Chair position.

Nelson Evans made a motion to approve the minutes; Jonathan Martin seconded the motion with all members in favor

Site plan review – Kris Bridges said that Hannah Powell and Lisa Watkins are both sick and unable to attend. Commission has been provided paperwork and Kris pointed out modifications to allow for tiny homes with smaller lots but still within specs for 5 potential tiny homes on Mineral Street along the walking trail. Per Kris, the plans look very nice and will be the first development to utilize the trail. Hairston asked if developer would sell or rent? Kris said she would rent initially. Jonathan Martin asked what the homes would look like? Kris said they are similar to container homes with an open layout. Kris confirmed that this development would be located in the uptown business district.

Street abandonment by Mr. Buck – staff does not recommend approval because it would create a nonconforming land-locked lot which is a violation of city ordinance. It would reduce the city's ability for further development, it would potentially hinder the city from providing infrastructure including electric and internet by doing away with the right-of-way and overall, it's just bad practice to force adjacent property owners to provide an easement. Kris explained that the lot is an undeveloped right of way. Attendee explained that the property is accessible from the street, that it would not be closed off. Kris explained that the property owner has the option to merge his properties without creating a landlock but that abandonment would not be a good option because it would landlock other properties. Attendee said owner has no intention of developing the land and the Planning Commission members are welcome to tour that location for a better understanding. The owner simply wants to consolidate all property into a single lot. Jonathan Martin made a motion to to agree with staff recommendation and not approve the request; Roberson seconded the motion with all members in favor. Kris recommended if the attendee would like to appeal the decision, she could file the appeal with City Council

Attendees discussed the old Winn Dixie building and the multi-unit project planned in Pittsylvania County

Discuss certain processes such as Special Use Permits – Planning Commission, Council Members and Michael Greene discussed the tiny house project. The Historic District was

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expanded in 2022 and concerns were raised that although this property is not in the historic district, this project would be adjacent to that district so the smaller, more contemporary appearance could be a concern. Hairston said the need for housing is more important than the historical requirements of adjacent properties. Council Member Lawson explained that homes in the City are required to be on permanent foundations and that mobile homes are not allowed. Interim City Manager Glen Adams has sent information on this project to the City Attorneys for review. Adams requests an additional joint meeting with Council, the Planning Commission and members of various boards.

Mayor Jones opened the City Council meeting at 4:45pm. Council Member Lawson stated that she's received comments from citizens that tiny homes would be good to have but in the right place and owner occupied only, not as short-term rentals. Chairman Joe Martin said the current City ordinance does not allow tiny homes at all, the ordinance to allow tiny homes in City limits has not been approved. Attendee said a resident had purchased the land with the intentions of adding tiny homes; residents need to be informed of the proper steps. Per Lawson, The Planning Commission has no blocking or enforcing mechanisms but Council does. Greene explained if that ordinance can be expanded it would provide better guidance for developing the area.

Attendees discussed the best way to communicate information to residents, property maintenance concerns and how to enforce those policies and fines. Interim City Manager Adams said that he will consult with the City Attorney's about property maintenance fines and enforcement and he has asked Sands Anderson to approach Judge Greer to decide on acceptable action. Jonathan Martin recommended tabling the zoning ordinance discussions until the new Community Development Director is hired and can work with Kris Bridges in Inspections.

There being no further business, the Planning Commission and City Council adjourned at 5:25pm

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Karen Roberts, Clerk of Council

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LC Jones, Mayor