Planning Commission
October 1, 2015

CITY OF CONWAY
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 2, 2015
CITY HALL CONFERENCE ROOM – 229 MAIN STREET – 5:30 P.M.

Present: Brantley Green, Chris Sansbury, Tammy Hughes, James Young, Howard Henry, David Jordan, Larry Foye, Wren McMeekin

Absent: Chris Guidera

Staff: Adam Emrick, Planning Director; Barbara Tessier, Secretary

Others: Darren Stevens

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Green called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Sansbury made a motion, seconded by Hughes, to approve the September 3, 2015 meeting minutes as written. The vote in favor was unanimous. The motion carried.

III. REZONING

A. Request by Nelson and Oreann Kempadoo to rezone approximately .53 acres of property located at 1714 and 1716 Dillon Street in the Whittemore Park Neighborhood (TMS# 136-08-30-005 PIN 36801030001, TMS# 136-08-30-006 PIN 36801020074) from existing Low Density Residential (R-1) to Medium Density Residential (R-2) for the purposes of the development of a multi-family development.

Emrick said these two properties were located on Dillon Street near its intersection with Grainger Road. Emrick said the applicants were looking to get multi-family units on the property. He said all lots on the north side of Dillon Street were zoned R-1, and the lots on the south side of Dillon, across from the subject parcels, were zoned R-2.

Emrick said the Comprehensive Plan identified the parcels as Existing Residential. He said Existing Residential was described as follows: “Conway has many established residential neighborhood, which vary greatly in housing style,
lot size and density. In those areas that have a clear and consistent
development pattern, future building should reflect the land use and density that
has already been established.”

Emrick said staff recommended the Board review the request to determine if the
request was consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, and in the best interest of
the City of Conway.

The applicants were not present.

Hughes said the single family homes in the area were well taken care of and she
did not see a reason to put multi-family there, but she would be willing to hear
what the rest of the Board had to say.

Jordan asked if because there were two lots could they do two duplexes. Emrick
said because they wanted to do multi-family structures, they would need at least
one 6,000 square foot lot for the first building and then other buildings could be
on 2,500 square foot lots. Given that, Emrick said he thought they might be able
to get three multi-family buildings on the parcels.

Green asked if Emrick had any feedback from the neighbors. Emrick said the lot
had not yet been posted and letters had not been sent out.

Green asked if they had indicated what type of units they wanted to build.

Green asked if they would have to put in a section of sidewalk that would not tie
into anything else. Emrick said it was not a major development so they might not
have to.

Sansbury said he agreed with Hughes. Green said he hated to see the
applicant’s choice limited to what they could do with the property. There was
some discussion about the fact that some of the houses appeared to be fairly
new, and that there could be a market for single-family homes instead of mutli-
family units.

Henry made a motion, seconded by Hughes, to deny the applicants request to
rezone the property from R-1 to R-2. The vote in favor was unanimous. The
motion carried.

IV. PUBLIC INPUT

Emrick said Darren Stevens was present and wanted to address the Board about
the Comprehensive Plan.

Stevens said he made a presentation to City Council on September 21, 2015.
He said he spoke to Council about specifically the South Carolina Code 6-29-540
that had to do with the interaction of the Planning Commission with the City in
terms of the Comprehensive Plan for the community. He said specific to the
Comprehensive Plan of the community, the Planning Guide for Local
Governments of the Municipal Association of South Carolina speaks about this
code as a way in which it can involve everyone in creating the built environment
to pay attention to the adopted Comprehensive Planning elements, and the
process for Commission review being a major tool in ensuring the investments
move toward the community and the Comprehensive Plan.

Stevens said he had reviewed the last four years of the Planning Commission’s
minutes, and it seemed to him that there hadn’t been interaction between Council
and the Planning Commission on projects the Council has moved forward. He
said based on that, it seemed to him that this 6-29-540 South Carolina Code
suggests that there should be interaction.

Stevens said he presented this to Council. The Mayor and the City Administrator
said that he was wrong about it. Stevens said he was not sure if he was or not,
but it seemed to him that he disagreed with Council and the City Administrator.

Stevens said as public officials each of the Board members were entitled to and
able to write to the South Carolina Attorney General to ask for an opinion on this
matter. He said any public official could do that, but he could not do that as a
citizen. Stevens he was asking the Board to review the matter and see what they
thought.

Stevens said there were two items that were moving forward that the City was
pushing through. One was the renovation of the former Horry County Museum
building. He gave Green a letter (which is attached to these minutes) the Mayor
wrote to Senator Rankin asking for funds to renovate that building. He said the
history of the building was it was owned by the County, the County rented it to
the City to put the innovation center in there, but the innovation center went down
the street. Jordan said originally the building had been the post office. Stevens
said that was right. Stevens said it had been owned by the County until just
recently when it became the City’s property.

Stevens said if you reviewed the Comprehensive Plan, particularly the
Comprehensive Plan Tourism Element, Goal 1; Objective 2 suggests that
building should be reviewed for the Conway Artisan Center project. He said that
was the project he participated and led as chairman of the committee between
1997 and 1998 when Greg Martin was mayor.

Jordan asked how much parking Stevens’ project would need. Stevens said he
was not sure. Jordan asked if it would be less than for a banquet hall for 150
people. Stevens said possibly. Stevens said it would depend on the use. He said
they hadn’t gotten anywhere with conversation about it.

Stevens said he thought the Comprehensive Plan, the Cultural Resources
Element, Goal 3, Objective 3... Stevens then corrected himself saying it was Goal 1, Objective 2 that a committee should be formed, that Council should appoint a committee and the committee should determine the use of that building and they hadn’t gotten that far. Stevens said he was here today as a representative of Conway Cultural Development Corporation which was in the process of being a community development corporation which was an outgrowth of the cultural plan from 1999. He said they were just getting the ball rolling with some things now, and he thought they were in a good position to make something happen with that building.

Stevens said he was a bit frustrated with minor actions by the Council over the last few years. He said as he saw projects being implemented, he realized they were not in line with what he saw in the Comprehensive Plan. He said the questions he had in his mind preceded Emrick coming on board. He said he was beginning to wonder what the problem was and he put his finger on it with pointing to this 6-29-540, but he wasn’t sure. He told the Board he hoped they would take a look at it. He said he hoped, if it was correct, that Council would provide the Board with an opportunity as the Planning Commission to review their development plans for the old Horry County Museum building and also the former law enforcement center at 200 Laurel Street. He said it was now an empty lot and there were plans in place to put a City square there.

Stevens said he also wanted to point out 6-29-510 which talks about how the Planning Commission should be driving the planning process. He said he understood that they had a limited amount of time around the table, so staff had to drive the process. He said the Board would have to reconcile that however they as a body reconciled that question, and how it related to the Code. He said if they had any questions, the South Carolina Attorney General could give counsel on that.

Green asked Emrick if this issue had been brought up to Council yet. Emrick said it had. Emrick said within Steven’s handout was a reference to an attorney general’s opinion for a school district that was considering something similar. He said, if he remembered correctly, it specifically said in the Attorney General’s ruling was that if a community had a zoning ordinance that would take the place, of the Comp Plan, for all cases. Emrick said as he understood it, the City had enacted a zoning ordinance, which was enacted with the recommendation of this Board, so if the land use that was being proposed is consistent with the Zoning Ordinance it already has the approval of the Planning Commission. Emrick said in cases where a community does not have a zoning ordinance, then they are required to look at the Comprehensive Plan because it was the only guide they have to go by. He said in that case, they would have to be sure it was consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, and if it was not, they would have to advertise that it was inconsistent. He said it was a rule the City simply did not have to follow.
because there was a zoning ordinance. Emrick said the zoning ordinance was the codified version of the Comp Plan and that was what the City was required to follow. Emrick said the Comp Plan, as it sat, was just a guide. He said it was also in need of a rewrite, and staff was in the process of doing that now.

Green asked Stevens if they had presented anything to the City prior to this detailing Steven’s art-based committee needs. Stevens said he had meetings with the Mayor and City Administrator, but not with Emrick. He said what was driving this conversation was because it was clear that what they were suggesting had validity, but they were basically brushed off in a way that was not satisfying.

Green asked Emrick if he had a chance to see their agenda or plans for what they were hoping to accomplish. Emrick said not specifically, but he had many conversations with Stevens, the CREATE Conway group, and a couple other groups. He said he understood they needed space for arts in downtown. Emrick said at some point during the Comprehensive Plan rewrite it was mentioned specifically that that space should be considered for the arts center, but the prerogative of the Council is what dictates the use. Emrick said again that the Comprehensive Plan was not a codified law and just a guideline.

Hughes asked if there was any other space that was available at this time. Emrick said that to his knowledge not any that was publically owned. Green asked Stevens how much square footage would be needed. Stevens said between 6,000 and 9,000 square feet would be adequate. He said there were a lot of empty buildings downtown that could work for them, but he did not think they could negotiate with the property owners based on what the owners felt the value of the property was. He said they had worked with the City to find out who the owners of various property were and sent them letters, but nothing had transpired yet. Stevens said they were pursuing a couple of options. He said one question was specifically what the City wanted to do with Elm Street. He said they had spoken with Bill Marsh. He said they brought Coastal Carolina’s art department in as well as the City Administrator and Emrick about some ideas, but they never went anywhere. He said this was all part of a conversation that had not gotten any traction.

Green asked if the City still had a grant writer. Emrick said we did not.

Green thanked Stevens for his presentation. Green asked Emrick if they could get some information together so they could draft possibly a letter to see if there was anything the City was looking at for grant opportunities. Green said maybe there was a building the City might think was a good fit. Emrick said it could be discussed again at a future meeting if necessary.

Stevens said speaking from experience, when the City had a grants writer, there were some advantages because often there are community organizations asking
for various things and if the City can’t help them, the mayor sends them on their way. In the past, at least what the City could do was send the organization to the grants writer for help or guidance. He said that seemed reasonable.

Green said they would address this at a future meeting Planning Commission meeting.

Green asked Emrick if there was anything he had to tell the Board. Emrick said permit issuance was up for housing. He said St. John’s Ridge Phase 2 was up and going. He said there were several other communities that would be starting new phases as well.

V. ADJOURN

Jordan made a motion, seconded by Young, to adjourn the meeting as there was no further business to come before the Board. The vote in favor was unanimous. The motion carried.

Approved this ______ day of ________, 2016.

Brantley Green, Chairman