

OXFORD PLANNING COMMISSION

Minutes – August 9, 2016

MEMBERS: Jonathan Eady, Chair; Jeff Wearing, Vice-Chair; Vivian Harris, and Ron Manson. Penny England was out of town and Shawn Gaither was absent.

STAFF: Bob Schwartz, city manager and zoning administrator.

GUESTS: Robert Pope, Susie Reid, Charlie Williams, Pastor Josh Roberts, and Kendra Mayfield from Oxford College. Mike Ready, city councilmember, joined the meeting for the agenda item about the Downtown Development Authority.

OPENING: Mr. Eady called the meeting to order and welcomed the guests.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Upon motion of Mr. Wearing, seconded by Mr. Manson, the minutes for the meeting of June 14, 2016 were approved. (The Planning Commission did not meet in July.) The vote was 4-0.

SUSIE REID DEVELOPMENT APPLICATION – Ms. Reid submitted a development application to permit the addition of a dining room on the rear of her home located at 134 Longstreet Circle. Mr. Eady reviewed the application and noted that Mr. Schwartz and Mr. Wearing had both made site visits. Mr. Schwartz reported the distance from the rear of the new dining room to the rear property line was 37 feet. The setback distance required in the R-15 zone is 25 feet. The members of the Planning Commission did not have any questions for Ms. Reid who was in attendance along with Mr. Pope and Mr. Williams on her behalf.

Upon motion of Mr. Wearing, seconded by Ms. Harris, the Planning Commission voted to approve the development application as submitted. The vote was 4-0.

NAMETAGS - During the interval between cases, Ms. Harris suggested that in the future, it might be helpful to the public for the Planning Commission members to have nametags at their places so that everyone would know who everyone else was. After some discussion the Planning Commission agreed this would be a good idea. Mr. Schwartz promised to have nametags at the next meeting.

ALLEN MEMORIAL SIGNS REQUEST - Mr. Eady suggested we should start by reviewing what we had done before. The Church came to the Planning Commission with a sign request in April. The Planning Commission discussed the request and determined it would not be able to approve it. Before any vote was taken, the Church withdrew the request.

Since then the church has had a dialogue with the City. City Council determined the process in the zoning ordinance would require the request return to the Planning Commission.

Pastor Roberts noted the Church has done what they felt they should do. Mr. Eady suggested if the Church was an historic structure, it might be possible for the City Council to approve the

sign. It would not be possible under the current ordinance for the Planning Commission to approve an off premises sign. However, City Council could approve an historic directional sign.

Pastor Roberts noted that this would be the best outcome for the Church. The goal is to have a sign on the right-of-way on the east side of Emory pointing toward the Church to give directions to out-of-town visitors.

Mr. Schwartz apologized to the Planning Commission for the method in which this was handled. He noted if he had called the chair perhaps he would have received advice to go in another direction. However, he and the Mayor had felt that by treating this request “under the radar” it could be handled better.

Mr. Wearing noted the Planning Commission is bound by the ordinance and needs to follow it. Mr. Eady suggested there is an avenue to grant the church an historic sign.

Upon motion of Mr. Wearing, seconded by Mr. Manson, the Planning Commission rejected the request for the private off premises sign of Allen Memorial Church. The motion passed 4-0.

OXFORD COLLEGE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT PLAN - Kendra Mayfield introduced an informal discussion about the requirements in the zoning ordinance for a Future Development Plan for Oxford College. It is required to be updated every ten years which would be January, 2017. Ms. Mayfield and the members of the Planning Commission discussed several of the requirements for the update. One of the suggestions from Ms. Mayfield was to provide an annual update with only a yearly projection of future plans. It is difficult to make accurate ten year projections. Mr. Eady asked that Ms. Mayfield prepare an outline of what she would like to do and the Planning Commission would give it serious consideration.

PRIVATE COVENANTS - Mr. Manson brought up the issue of the private covenants in the Wentworth neighborhood which were difficult to enforce. Initially, the Planning Commission had asked the developer to supply it with the covenants when Wentworth was developed. However, Wentworth never formed a homeowners association. Mr. Eady noted in his experience private covenants are governed by contract law and are independent of zoning. Often, the covenants expire after twenty years. It is usually not the purview of the governing jurisdiction to oversee the covenants. The homeowners could modify the covenants or create a homeowners association but that may be difficult to do.

MAYOR’S QUESTIONS – Mayor Roseberry had asked for advice from the Planning Commission in answering a series of questions about the current sign ordinance and its possible future replacement. Mr. Eady suggested the City find a model for revisions to the sign ordinance. He suggested it be submitted to the Planning Commission after it has been reviewed by the city attorney.

DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY - Mike Ready, former chair of the Planning Commission and current city councilmember was present to discuss with the Planning Commission the possibility of the City forming a Downtown Development Authority. Mr. Ready

used a PowerPoint presentation to frame the discussion. (A copy of the PowerPoint presentation is attached to these minutes.)

Mr. Ready noted that a Downtown Development Authority may be one of the mechanisms used to help get the City to another plateau. On May 16th, Mayor Roseberry had appointed him to chair a city council study committee. The other members were councilmembers David Eady and Jim Windham. So far, the committee has met six times.

Mr. Eady noted that greater communication between the Council and the Planning Commission would be helpful. For example the proposed Asbury Park has not yet been included in the land use plan. The City Council should let the Planning Commission know about future land use plans. It should be a formal notification so that the Planning Commission can respond.

There was some discussion about the revision to the right-of-way survey of the whole city being prepared by city engineer Robert Jordan. The Planning Commission asked that a copy of the survey be sent to them when it is available.

Mr. Eady and the Planning Commission thanked Mr. Ready for spending the time to brief them on the discussions concerning a possible Downtown Development Authority.

ADJOURNMENT: Mr. Eady adjourned the meeting at 9:15 PM.

Submitted by:

Bob Schwartz, zoning administrator