



The following are the minutes from the Planning and Zoning Meeting held on Wednesday, September 25, 2019 in the Abita Springs Town Hall.

The meeting was called to order by Bryan Gowland. Commissioners in attendance included Barbara Jackson, Byron Armand, Bryan Gowland and Eric Templet. Dan Underwood was absent. Also, present Dave Chatelain, Certified Building Official and Planning & Zoning Director Cindy Chatelain.

Bryan Gowland welcomed everyone and all stood for the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Eric Templet motioned to accept the minutes from the last meeting and to dispense with their reading. Seconded by Barbara Jackson. All in favor.

Bryan Gowland opened the Planning Portion of the meeting and noted that three items had been advertised as Public Hearings.

Bryan Gowland gave a little back ground on the area of town called "New Abita" and Mr. Pasqua's input in developing that area. Now Mr. Pasqua would like to develop the rest of his property in New Abita but wants to do so on smaller lots. He would like the original lots of record (60 x 150) reinstated.

Mr. Pasqua is first on the agenda as a Public Hearing. He would like the Planning & Zoning Commission to consider revoking the Contiguous Lot Law, Ordinance # 190. He noted studies that say smaller lots are better than larger ones. He would like to be able to build on lots that reflect the original size, when the maps were drawn and the lot were plotted with 60 foot frontages. In 1996, the laws were changed to require those same lots to be a minimum of 90 foot frontages.

Mr. Pasqua talked about the lot sizes today being too large, increases the cost of housing and exacerbates social segregation. Larger lots harm the environment and increases urban sprawl. He says it doesn't make sense to develop the land he has left with the rules that are in place. More discussion took place. Basically, Mr. Pasqua is asking that the law be thrown out to allow him to build on the original lots of record. Otherwise, he stated, the property will remain undeveloped.

Bryan Gowland opened the discussion to the residents in attendance.

Mr. Hebert Rabilia, who lives at the corner of Minkler and Palmer Streets, spoke of the facts of building in his area. There are some fine homes built in the area. He would object to reducing the lot sizes to 60 foot. He and all of his neighbors live on nice size lots of at least 90 to 100 foot frontages.

Mr. Pasqua quoted more statistics, this time some from the from the Census Bureau.

Mrs. Spicuzza lives in the area as well. She asked if those statistics were from the northeast and not our area. Densely populated area like the pacific west. She is also against reducing the lot size requirements. Doing so would throw off the scale of the neighborhood and the smaller lots would look out of place.

Mr. Reidenauer currently lives on Heard Street and is in the process of building his new home there as well. He agrees with the other residents, he too, is against the smaller lot sizes. He feels the attraction of the area is the larger lot sizes.

More discussion took place. Mr. Pasqua stated that the sizes of the houses won't be reduced only the lot sizes would.

Rhonda Scorsone asked about the statistics that Mr. Pasqua is quoting, she asked if they are general population in the nation or in Abita specifically. Bryan Gowland answered...general population of the nation. More discussion took place.

Bryan Gowland concluded the discussion. He noted that the law was implemented under his administration. Abita has benefitted from this law. The law helps manage the growth of Abita Springs. Property values have increased steadily. The law also helps protect the tree canopy.

Bryan Gowland then asked if the commission had any input.

Eric Templet asked if the commission should move this to the Town Council, to be amended or removed.

Bryan Gowland replied that the P&Z Commission has the authority to recommend the law. The question is...Does the P&Z Commission want to recommend this law be changed?

Barbara Jackson asked how many lots does Mr. Pasqua own? He did not give a clear answer, but went on to explain that instead of 10 lots in each square with the law there are only 6 lots per square.

Bryan Gowland asked for a motion from the commission. He asked if they wanted to throw out the law? More discussion took place.

He asked again for a motion, either to resend the law or to keep it in place.

Byron Armand made a motion to keep the law as it is. Barbara Jackson seconded that motion. All commissioners were in favor of keeping the Contiguous Lot Law, Ordinance # 190 in place as is.

Mat Raley was next on the agenda. He is seeking a side yard set-back variance on an irregular shaped lot on Golden Street in New Abita. Bryan Gowland explained that the lot is more or less a pie shape, larger at the rear than in the front. A map showed the exact location of this lot. Mr. Raley showed the commission the plans of the new house to be constructed. In this case, only the points of the structure encroach into the setbacks. The house is pushed back from the front as far as possible. There is a noted drainage servitude at the rear of the lot. Bryan Gowland said that reasonable requests are considered when such issues are present. He wanted to mention that this is the only irregular lot left in the area.

Mrs. Spicuzza confirmed that its hard to fit houses on irregular shaped lots.

Eric Templet motion to approve the 7 foot side yard set-back variance. Barbara Jackson seconded the motion. All in favor.

Darin Fisher is also seeking a side yard set-back variance on a 60 foot lot at the corner of Leonard and Bryan Streets. The house will encroach into the street side setback which should be 20 feet. He is seeking 5 feet on the street side, making it 15 feet on both sides of the new structure.

Rhonda Scorsone interjected that she built a house on a 60 foot lot and conformed to the rules. Bryan Gowland reminded her that her lot was not a corner lot, a corner lots loses an extra 5 feet.

A resident from the neighboring property asked if this was a cheaper lot. He also asked if the house will be closer to his house. The answer was no...it will be 15 feet to the interior lot side as currently required.

Byron Armand motioned to approve the 5 foot variance on the street side. Eric Templet seconded the motion. All in favor.

Bryan Gowland opened the Zoning Portion of the meeting.

Rhonda Scorsone would like to get a Bed & Breakfast License for 71675 Leveson Street, the old Laundry Mat Building. She explained that she is currently working on the building. Bryan Gowland went over the requirements for Bed & Breakfast operations. The owner has to live in the building and provide one meal. The stay can not exceed two weeks. The building must be in compliance with the code requirements.

Byron Armand asked if permits are required for the work inside the structure. The answer is Yes... a plan must be submitted for review and a building permit must be issued to complete the work. Historic must approve any signs.

Bryan Gowland asked for a motion to approve this license. Discussion took place. Bryon Armand has concerns about the conversion of the building to a residential use. Bryon Armand would like to see the conversion before issuing a license.

Bryan Gowland asked that this be tabled until the conversion takes place making this a residence and when proof of ownership can be verified.

Motion to table by Eric Templet. Byron Armand seconded the motion to table. All in favor.

Marie Dessommes is seeking approval of an Occupational License for the structure at 22059 Hwy 59, to become the "Coffee Spot". Discussion took place that noted this building has been used as a coffee shop in the past. This is an allowable use. A motion to approve by Byron Armand. Seconded by Barbara Jackson. All in favor.

Mr. Lohr has passed his exam to become a private investigator. He needs an "In Home Office" approval for this new business. No public to visit and no signs to be posted at the home which is located at 22008 9th street.

Eric Templet motioned to approve the "in home office". Bryon Armand seconded. All in favor.

Ron Blich and his sister in law, Lovel Blich came in to discuss the possibility of a recommendation from the P&Z Commission to revoke the portion of North Street between Magnolia and Pine Streets. They are asking to acquire this portion of land to maintain the tree canopy. They feel that this unopened street would never be opened or used by the public. The commission instructed Mrs. Blich to move forward with a revocation request. A Public Hearing will be advertised for next month's meeting.

The commission was sent a document for review and input concerning Accessory Buildings & Ancillary Building.

The Commission agrees that Accessory Buildings are meant for storage. Ancillary Buildings are an extension of livable structures. Conversion to or Construction of Ancillary Structures must meet International Residential Building Code (IRC). The size of Ancillary Structures falls under Ordinance # 430 and are limited to ½ the size of the main structure. One thing the commission asked was would there be limits on how many structures would be allowed?

The Commission agrees on the 35 foot height limit on Accessory Structures. They also agree with limits of the 7% of the total lot area for the Accessory Structure, as noted on the document named Instrument 2019-012. A letter will be forwarded to the Town Council stating that they agree with this document. But they would like the document to define the sizes of the Ancillary Structures and if possible, the number of auxiliary structures that will be allowed.

With no other business, a motion to adjourn was made by Byron Armand.
Seconded by Eric Templet.
All in favor

The next meeting is scheduled for October 30, 2019


Cindy Chatelain Planning & Zoning Director


date