

**REGULAR MEETING OF THE
LURAY PLANNING COMMISSION
JANUARY 13, 2010**

The Luray Planning Commission met on Wednesday, January 13, 2010 at 7:00 p.m. in regular session. The meeting was held in the Luray Town Council Chambers at 45 East Main Street, Luray, Virginia. Chairman Tom Potts presided and opened the meeting.

Commissioners Present:

Tom Potts
Peyton Baughan
Clifton Campbell
Larry Hakel
Sam McNeely
John Meaney
Mary Menefee

Others Present:

Rick Black, Town Manager
Bryan Chrisman, Assistant Town Manager
Ligon Webb, Town Planner
Jason Spidler, Town Attorney
Catherine Stewart
Liz Lewis
Karen Riddle

Chairman Tom Potts called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and everyone joined in the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag.

ADDITIONS TO AGENDA

There were no additions, deletions or corrections to the agenda.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

A regular meeting was not held in December. On December 18 several Commissioners visited Wisteria Vineyards to review their operations.

PUBLIC HEARING:

Mr. Webb stated there are three different amendments to the Town's Zoning Ordinance. One is the adoption of the definition for our Arts and Cultural District. This is something that was proposed by Catherine Stewart of LDI. This legislation was approved by the General Assembly in the winter of 2008 and basically allows town and cities to provide incentives and also to create districts within a municipality to promote arts and cultural activities. Providing the incentives is something the town or city can do, but first and

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foremost here in Luray we thought creating a district for the arts community where arts are promoted and encouraged would be a good first step.

Commissioner Potts then opened the public hearing, and assigned a speaking limit of 10 minutes per person.

LIZ LEWIS, 8 Cliffside Drive, Luray, VA

She stated she is President of LDI and explained that their board got involved in this designation and now this ordinance. She would like to see added to the definition “events and festivals” since LDI and the Town promote so many of those. She also had a lot of local citizens mention to her about Children’s Art Education. Education is in there, but she doesn’t know if you have to be so specific as to say Children’s Art Education. Commissioner Potts stated the more specific you make it, the greater the bindings you place on yourself. She is here to answer any questions that you might have as to where we are going with this designation and what we are going to do with this designation. She advised that the Town has already begun developing a Luray Arts Council, so there is an active group of citizens volunteering in a cohesive manner to do something with the designation of this ordinance – to promote it, to organize it, to hopefully change the economy, maybe increase the industry; that’s what LDI would like to see happen with the district.

Commissioner Menefee asked why LDI thought that you need a specific ordinance to be able to do what you want to do. Ms. Lewis stated it’s a nice tag line but she thinks what they can do is actually go after some additional funding opportunities. That funding will help the artists already in town, could bring more artists in, as well as create more programs. It increases local traffic and helps the local economy downtown as hopefully bringing some other industries. Commissioner Menefee asked what brings artists in besides being the formal designation would be some tax incentives which initially results in some decrease in revenue for the town. Commissioner Potts stated the issue of offering incentives is fully authorized by the State.

Ms. Lewis stated that when LDI got involved, as well as creating a Luray Arts Council, we thought a lot of incentives would be through funding we would get through grants. That’s how we would promote and market so we could use those monies instead of laying heavy incentives on the town itself.

Ms. Menefee asked if Mrs. Lewis foresaw a decrease in grant funding of this type from the state. Ms. Lewis stated she thought the arts, cultural and education grants may continue. Ms. Menefee asked are they just primarily state grants available or are there

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national grants. Ms. Lewis stated there are national grants and private foundations. The Luray A & C would also work through the Virginia Arts Commission. Ms. Menefee stated a formal designation helps you to be able to apply for this. Ms. Lewis stated yes, it shows that we are organized.

KAREN RIDDLE, 18 Campbell Street, Luray, VA 22835

Ms. Riddle is President of the Luray-Page County Chamber of Commerce. She also serves on the Shenandoah Valley Music Festival Board and has a strong relationship with the Arts and Cultural District, Board and Council as well. She is completely in support of the Arts and Cultural District. There is no simpler way to put it; art can completely build a community. In places like Staunton, the American Shakespeare Center gives 60,000 people each year a taste of the Elizabethan Era via the world's only reproduction of the Black Players playhouse. For tourism – visitors who come to our town will have another reason to stay longer and increase the revenue here in Page County. Typically this is the segment of the market that has a more disposable income. In the future we could position ourselves to have numerous events going on at the same time. The arts as well can also expand economic development for the community. Economic development for the arts has added millions of dollars to the state's bottom line, leaving an opportunity to add this to the bottom line in Page County. This is an opportunity for bringing in some revenue. When you think about education, if you ask anyone, there are nearly 2 million children who have participated in art events in Virginia last year and when you think about those children who may have attended a family concert even in Luray or Woodstock or perhaps they visited a museum such as the Shenandoah Valley Museum in Winchester, this is very exciting. Maybe the acting classes they take at Wayside Theater could be something we could eventually do here in Luray. These opportunities are extremely exciting. The art continues to build communities and we can do this all in Luray.

CATHERINE STEWART,

Ms. Stewart wanted to project the word "free". This is a free initiative for Luray. Luray Downtown Initiative is 210 percent behind it. We ask for your support; we don't see funding to be an issue. We are going to look further into some arts and cultural initiatives. As far as the Virginia Art Commission, there are some national funding initiatives we can look into and we hope to bring something into this community that is long range and we do ask for your support.

BOB HARRISON, Lives in Pine Grove, owns couple of businesses in Luray

One of the things that impressed him the most when he came to Luray has a lot to do with what we are talking about tonight and that was the murals. As an artist himself, he was

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very impressed. He had come from Leesburg where he fought for murals and always got no because that's going to fall under the sign ordinance. It's unlike any other town he can remember. This is an artsy kind of little town. That's one of the things Luray has over most of the other towns. There are a lot of other towns like Luray who are trying to get their main street programs to do the very same things and that is to get their economic well being a little higher than it was the year before. Trying to create not only a better place for our own citizens, we are trying to create a little bit more interest in our town. One of the things that Luray has already in place is a grant. Luray is out there in front, so it seems natural that if we are going to have an overlay and going to shoot for getting people of culture and arts here that we have to leg up on the competition.

DAVID NEWMAN, 11 Independence Drive, Luray, VA 22835

David is a professional singer. He moved to Luray about five years ago. He had very little to add to what has already be said. He would like to reinforce that when he first came to Luray, visiting the Art Warehouse was a defining experience for him for how he viewed the town and knowing that there was a rich community of artists here made it much more attractive to him and he believes it makes it attractive to many people who come here to visit or to stay. He also wanted to add that he began his professional career in Philadelphia where he was singing in the opera company. The mayor was not interested in arts as a patron but he quickly grasped the significance of the studies that were being put out that were showing the value of the arts economically and so he made the calculated political decision to establish the Avenue for the Arts in downtown Philadelphia which has utterly revitalized downtown Philadelphia. We already have that significant degree of arts here. He thinks this kind of cultural district can only enhance that and would like to add his voice to say that the slightly expanded boundaries are valuable because they will encompass several existing businesses that are arts related such as the Playhouse that Park Inn has in place but also other potential buildings that are currently being unused that might be able to qualify for some kind of arts related use.

WES PORTER, owns the gallery next to Artisan's Grill.

Wes stated that he personally had jumped the gun a little bit and brought in a well accomplished artist from Middlebrook, VA and had a portrait demonstration and it was very well attended and we feel successful. He said his businesses have already started bringing in more arts activities and it seems to work. People came up and said how much they enjoyed it and the artist and model. We have done one little thing to start off and it went well if that seems to give any extra energy to this idea.

Chairman Potts then closed the public hearing

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Chairman Potts stated he previously discussed with the group the first meeting of the committee formed by LDI and about the whole idea of putting this program together. He came away impressed and struck by the fact that it gave him insight into how great an art community there is here in the area. Jim Mayes says that most of what is displayed in his place is done by artists here within 40 miles of Luray. The bottom line of what it means and the driving force behind the entire discussion was what is LDI's mission. Their mission is to help to redevelop the downtown making it a center of activity for tourists. It is to beautify and enhance the community, to create jobs, to put more money in the pockets of businesses and here's a whole group of people he never thought of as being contributors to that who not only saw themselves as part of it but were aggravated that they couldn't take off on it tomorrow. He is interested in seeing this happen and hoping to see it pass.

Commissioner Menefee stated she appreciated the input of the speakers and it certainly was informative to her and appreciates the economic opportunities in an arts district. She asked Ligon in his research did he come across any communities that have for whatever reasons looked into this and decided not to pursue it. Mr. Webb stated that most communities are just starting to adopt them.

Commissioner Menefee asked if it is addressed in our Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Webb stated no, but that it had been discussed during the development of the Plan. One of the areas of the Comprehensive Plan that probably didn't get enough attention was arts and culture. He doesn't believe there is a lot of language in the Comprehensive Plan about arts and culture.

Commissioner Campbell stated that it helps to answer part of your concern about bringing people to downtown. Commissioner Hakel stated that one of the speakers recommended that we change the definition to add "events or festivals" but when we are talking about live performances, do we need to add the words "events or festivals"? Commissioner Baughan stated that festival may include live events. Mr. Webb stated we could be more specific. Commissioner Baughan stated he doesn't have any problem with the way it's written and he thinks the area you are talking about includes areas that probably would be the areas where these types of activities are going to be promoted. It is an overlay situation, so your underlying ordinance still governs so nobody should get the impression that we created this district.

Commissioner Meaney stated that he doesn't have a problem with this, in fact, he is very encouraged. He sees it as something he supports very heavily.

Chairman Potts stated that he would like to see us act on it tonight. Commissioner Baughan made a motion that we add "festival and events" that promote arts and culture.

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Motion seconded by Commissioner Hakel. The vote was as follows: YEA: Commissioners Hakel, Baughan, Campbell, Potts, Menefee, Meaney and McNeely. **7-0**

Mr. Webb gave an update for next month's meeting. He indicated that the hospital would be bringing in their SUP application. Commissioner Hakel wanted to ensure we were looking at road improvements and traffic studies.

Mr. Webb stated in February he will give the annual report on what we did in 2009, and that the Town Council has sent back the sign ordinance. They seem to be happy with it, but what they want us to do is give some of the businesses here in the county who makes signs to look at it and get their opinion. He will invite them to come to the meeting.

Commissioner Potts stated he hadn't seen anything or change to the ordinance on wineries/microbrewery. Mr. Webb stated he would work on this.

Commissioner Potts stated that his objective in getting someone to locate a winery here in town is to get it on the map so that Luray becomes a tourist destination for wine tasters. He is interested in seeing it in our ordinance so that it is an encouragement. Mr. Webb stated we can add it to the ordinance and give it a definition. Mr. Webb stated he will bring something back next month and do it by right in B1 and M1.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business for consideration, a motion was made by Commissioner Baughan and seconded by Commissioner Hakel that the meeting be adjourned. Meeting was adjourned at 8:12 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Bryan T. Chrisman
Assistant Town Manager

ATTEST:
