

RZ11-2, Request of Luray Caverns Corporation To Rezone 6-acres From M1 (Industrial) To B1 (General Business)

Proposed Use and Location

The applicant, Luray Caverns Corporation, has requested to rezone approximately 6 (six) acres from M1 (Industrial) to B1 (General Business). The subject properties consist of an entire parcel, and a portion of a parcel, both of which are currently zoned M1. Several months ago, the applicant approached Town staff about constructing an “overflow” parking area and maintenance facility on the subject parcels. Because of the M1 zoning, Town staff informed the applicant that a special use permit would be required. Rather than apply for a special use permit, Town staff encouraged the applicant to consider rezoning the subject site to B1; if rezoned the proposed improvements – and any proposed future improvements - could be done so in a “by right” manner.

The subject parcels are located to the east of Cave Hill Road, and north of U.S. Highway 211. Attached to this report are several maps showing the location of the subject parcels, the zoning of adjacent properties and the area proposed to be rezoned.

Luray Caverns: Future Plans

As detailed above, the applicant intends to utilize the area requested to be rezoned for overflow/peak time parking and the location of a maintenance facility. The proposed parking area would be approximately 3 ½ acres (~150,000 + square feet) and provide additional parking for roughly 250 vehicles. The proposed maintenance facility’s “footprint” would be roughly 11,760 square feet and replace the former maintenance facility destroyed last spring by fire. The attached preliminary Site Plan indicates that the maintenance facility would be accessed via the proposed parking area.

Comprehensive Plan

The Comprehensive Plan states “consider rezoning land so that the zoning will reflect the actual use.” Though the subject site’s existing land use is not business, its close proximity to existing B1 zoned land, and a historic business use (Luray Caverns), means rezoning the site to business would be logical; more so than the site’s current industrial zoning.

Additional Considerations

- The Caverns has submitted a rezoning application to the Town that includes an initial Site Plan and a detailed map of the area(s) to be rezoned. During (or just after) the rezoning process the applicant will be required to submit a detailed final Site Plan in accordance

to section 515 (Site Plan) of the Town Code. For the rezoning process, the initial Site Plan submittal is appropriate and adequate.

- The subject site's Erosion & Sediment and Stormwater Management plans are required to be submitted to the Page County Building Official for review and approval. The applicant has indicated that the site's stormwater will be managed with an above ground detention pond, which will be a "dry pond" with a 30 (thirty) hour drawdown after a storm event.
- In conjunction with the final Site Plan, Erosion/Sediment and Stormwater plans, the applicant will be required to submit a proposed utility plan. This plan will be reviewed – and if satisfactory these plans will be approved by Town staff. Given the minimal water/sewer needs at this proposed site, the required review will likely be straightforward.

Staff Recommendation: Approval

November 10, 2011

The Luray Caverns' request to rezone approximately 6- acres from M1 (Industrial) to B1 (Business) appears to be a logical and appropriate request. Recently, the Caverns have expanded their business, which now extends east of Cave Hill Road. The proposed additional parking will help to accommodate visitors parking during "peak" visits; and the proposed maintenance building will replace the former maintenance building destroyed in a fire several months ago. If rezoned, the applicant will be required to satisfy Town Site Plan and engineering review requirements before this - or any future - improvements/changes can be made to the site.

Planning Commission: Approval

November 16, 2011

The Planning Commission unanimously approved Luray Caverns' rezoning application. Planning Commission members did point-out several relatively minor concerns for Town staff to consider during the Site Plan review process. These concerns were as follows: 1) ensure an appropriate vegetative buffer is provided between the proposed parking area and U.S. Highway 211; it is believed that such a buffer will reduce the parking area's visual impact from U.S. Highway 211, and 2) provide a sidewalk and/or paved trail from the proposed overflow parking area to the existing crosswalk located on Cave Hill Road. The applicant's representative stated that both concerns would be addressed during the final Site Plan review process, and that the applicant is currently evaluating several options for providing pedestrian access from the proposed overflow parking area to the existing crosswalk located on Cave Hill Road.

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