



Planning Commission Meeting MINUTES

Thursday, March 20, 2025 6:00 p.m.

Municipal Hall Courtroom

1. Meeting called to order: 6:16 p.m.
2. Approval of March agenda
 - a. Motion made to approve by Jimmy Thompson, seconded by Portia, all in favor (3-0)
3. Old Business
 - a. Public Forum- Anyone who wants to speak about something OTHER than the application. -NONE
 - b. New Commissioners- Jessie announced that Josh Dilbeck, Ward 1 Representative, was approved as the new planning commissioner for that ward and will be attending the April meeting. She also announced that there is a candidate for Ward 3 on the April City Commission agenda to be appointed. If the appointment is approved, she will also join us for the April meeting.
4. New Business
 - a. Election of 2025 Officers
 - i. Motion made by Jimmy Thompson to nominate Jason Lewallen as Chair and Portia Burns to be Vice Chair. Motion seconded by Portia Burns, all in favor (3-0)
 - b. Variance request to change the minimum unit square footage from 1,200 sq ft to 745 sq ft for an apartment development
 - i. Community Development Director Jessie Owensby presented application to commission. She said the only changes from the last application were that they increased the minimum unit size from 650 sq ft to 745 sq ft. Her amendments to the staff analysis show in **RED**.
 - ii. Jon Toppen- Tapestry Development Group- Reiterated Jessie's presentation of the application. It is a multi-family, residential, 60- unit apartment complex of varying unit sizes. They applied for a variance a second time with an increased one-bedroom unit size after hearing feedback from the neighborhood.
 - iii. **FAVOR**- Mark Reed, 395 Chambers Avenue, said that Cornelia and Habersham County is in a housing crisis. This particular demographic needs this type of housing and advocated for the construction of the units on the property for the residents of Cornelia to have a nice place to live.
 - iv. **FAVOR**- Suzanne Dow- Executive Director of facilities on property in question, said that she hosted a meeting with the neighbors to work through some of the neighbor's concerns and brainstorm solutions- they plan to continue to communicate with the neighbors throughout this process.
 - v. **OPPOSITION**- Marc Mercer- 1020 Paradise Park Road- Said that the 95 sq ft increase in unit size has no impact on the community. He said it is not even the size of a storage unit. He began to speak about the increased traffic on the road. Chairman Lewallen reiterated that the Planning Commission is not addressing those concerns

at this meeting. They would only be discussing the unit size. Mr. Mercer said, "I see how this is going to go. Thank you for your time." He then exited the meeting.

- vi. **OPPOSITION-** Stacy Henson, Landowner in the vicinity of property in question, said that her family has owned 50+ acres since 1946. Her mother has lived there for 80 years and she has lived there 51 years. She said that the 95 sq ft increase in size from last month is roughly the size of a handicapped parking spot. She said the residents of the proposed units deserve better than that. She said the units don't even have showers and these residents deserve to sit down and take a long bath if they want to.
 - vii. **REBUTTLE-** Jon Toppen addressed Stacy Henson's concerns. He said every unit will have a bath and a shower in it. There will be twenty (20) units that will be 745 sq ft. The other two floor plans range in size from 800 sq ft to 1,200 sq ft. There will be thirty (30) two-bedroom units, and ten (10) one-bedroom units. They build for two occupants per bedroom, so the one-bedroom, 745 sq ft units would be for a maximum of two (2) occupants.
 - viii. **COMMISSION-** Discussion of application and unit size amongst themselves
 1. Motion made by Jimmy Thompson to approve variance as submitted, seconded by Portia Burns, all in favor (3-0)
 2. Chairman Lewallen explained that they ultimately decided to approve because any other zone in the city that has multi-family residential as an allowed use only requires a minimum of 550 sq ft per unit size. This building, though not in a residential zone, is an allowed use for the zone and will be used solely for residential purposes.
5. Next Regular Board Meeting: **April 17, 2025** at the Municipal Complex Courtroom at 6 p.m.
 6. Adjourn- Portia made the motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:42 p.m. The motion was seconded by Jimmy Thompson, all in favor (3-0)

Present: Stacy Henson, Janet Abbott, Kristi Lewallen, Marc Mercer, Jon Toppen, Jimmy Thompson, Jason Lewallen, Mark Reed, Portia Burns, Suzanne Dow, Jessie Owensby

Absent: None