

**Town of North Wilkesboro
Planning Board Minutes
January 16th at 5:30 pm**

Members Present: Church, Cox, Nichols, Turner, Queen and Long

BOA Present: Casey and Matthews

Also Present: Meredith Detsch, Planning Director, Michael Parsons Board of Commissioner, Heather Murphy and Chris Smith from the Health Foundation

Chairman Church called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm. Motion to dispense the reading of the minutes and approve the December 12th 2019 regular meeting minutes was made by Ron Queen, seconded by Martha Nichols, and were unanimously approved 6-0.

Chairman Church called for any additions or deletions to the agenda. Martha Nichols made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Danny Long, and they were unanimously approved 6-0.

New Business:

Proposed text amendment to Article VI Zoning District 6.7 Table of Uses, Proposed text amendment to Article IX Landscaping, Fences, and Walls, 9.8 Design Standards for Fences and Walls (B). Proposed text amendment to Article XI Additional Conditions for Certain Uses, add 11.9-4 Temporary Alternative Landscaping

Meredith Detsch presented the three proposed ordinance amendments to allow temporary alternative landscaping in the form of goats clearing property. Creating this as a temporary use permit, the Town can regulate the time period and still meet the current Zoning Ordinances and Town Codes. Limiting the days and number of permits allows the use but it is not keeping goats (allowing them permanently) or changing the zoning district. Kudzu is an invasive species that is difficult to control and this option for alternative landscaping is less detriment to the soils and runoff into our river verses mass clearing and pesticides. Thorough research was conducted by staff throughout the state which yielded several municipalities utilizing this on private and public property. Currently this ordinance is geared to private property only. The Town Code would need to be changed to allow this on public property. The Zoning Ordinance has to be changed in three locations to allow this use. The first location is Article VI Zoning District 6.7 Table of Uses to include alternative landscaping with conditions. The next section of the Zoning Ordinance that needs to be amended is Article IX Landscaping, Fences and Walls, 9.8 Design Standards for Fences and Walls to allow electric fencing with this temporary permit. Finally conditions need to be placed on this temporary permitted use to ensure the goats are not being kept. The Zoning Ordinance would need to be amended in Article XI Additional Conditions, 11.9 Miscellaneous Uses to add 11.9-4 Temporary Alternative Landscaping. The following conditions are proposed:

(A) A temporary permit may be issued by the Zoning Administrator allowing grazing by goats only to be placed on a property for up to (14) fourteen days per permit cycle in all zoning

districts. Only five (5) permits will be issued a year total on specified property. Conditions placed on temporary use follow:

(B) All conditions will be required to obtain a temporary permit for alternative landscaping: (1) electric fences must be labeled with safety precautions and cannot be within the right of way, a site plan will be required at time of permitting (2) applicant must provide written and signed permission with contact information from all adjoining property owners (3) no structures may be erected to house the goats (4) permit will be restricted to extreme or invasive species vegetation removal (5) upon expiration of the permit all electric fencing must be removed; and (6) the permit will not be extended unless extreme circumstances occur and written approval of the Planning Board if valid reasons are given to merit such an extension.

The applicant Heather Murphy with The Health Foundation explained the concept and their vision and explained they had looked at multiple ways to clear the kudzu along the embankment along their property and goats seemed like the best alternative. Heather explained they could always spray or take a large piece of equipment in to clear the area but given the close proximity to the river it seemed detrimental to the environment. Otis Church asked how they were controlling the kudzu now and Heather Murphy explained they have tried cutting it back and are fighting a losing battle. Martha Nichols asked if there was any Mountain Laurel or Rhododendron in the area as those species are poisonous to goats. Heather explained they would be hiring a company to conduct the grazing and they would verify. Martha Nichols explained to the board and applicants that she had concerns with the fencing and how it would be installed in the kudzu given how thick it is currently. She also went on to explain that the fencing would need to be at least 5000 volts to ensure the goats stayed contained. Heather Murphy explained the company they were looking at is called Goat Squad out of the Carrboro area and the owner brings in about eight to ten goats and stays with them throughout the temporary grazing period. Martha Nichols asked if any of the goats were Boar goats as they can be aggressive and also has concerns over the liability issue with the fencing and children around. Heather explained the company was very reliable and conducts this business all over the state. Otis Church asked how erosion would be controlled after the clearing occurred along the hill side. Heather explained there was a lot of rock under the kudzu holding the area in place and also there would be several trees as well as other vegetation remaining that would be above the goats' reach. Martha asked Heather about the traffic along 421 and how the goats would stay contained from the loud noises and ambulance sirens. Heather would look into the matter. Heather explained they would have a meet the goats event to educate the public first before setting this up and she has spoken with all adjacent property owners and they are all on board. The board discussed if there were any objections or any other concerns. Ken Turner did have concerns with heavy rains and potential mudslide risks and Heather echoed her comments earlier that there was other vegetation on the slope including numerous trees. Otis Church asked what kind of timeframe they had and Heather told the board springtime and then they would bring the goats back potentially two to three times more. Martha Nichols made the motion to amend the Zoning Ordinance, Article VI Zoning District 6.7 Table of Uses to include alternative landscaping with conditions. Danny Long seconded the motion and it passed unanimously 6-0. Danny Long made the motion to amend the Zoning Ordinance Article IX Landscaping, Fences and Walls, 9.8 Design Standards for Fences and Walls to allow electric fencing with this temporary permit. The motion passed unanimously 6-0. Danny Long made a motion to amend Article XI Additional Conditions, 11.9

Miscellaneous Uses to add 11.9-4 Temporary Alternative Landscaping. Ronald Queen seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

The next item on the agenda is an appointment to the Planning Board since a seat was vacant. So far staff has received three applications for the one in-town position. Discussion on how to choose an applicant ensued among the board members. It was decided that the board could interview all applicants if they would like but it would need to be in a public setting. Danny Long made a motion to table the appointments until next month and have all applicants come in to be interviewed. Ken Turner seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously 6-0.

Meredith Detsch explained that in the near future additional training would be needed for the board as the State statues are changing and she would be bringing to the board additional information after she attends an information course on the 160D Statue rewrite.

With no further business, Chairman Church called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Danny Long made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:15 pm and Ronald Queen seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously 6-0.

Respectively submitted,

Meredith Detsch, Planning Director



Otis Church, Planning Board Chairman *or*,

Martha Nichols, Planning Board Vice-Chairwomen