January 23, 2020

**Meeting Minutes from Planning Commission Meeting on January 22**

**Public Meeting Seeking Input into Planned Zoning Ordinance Revision**

The notes below are the meeting minutes for the Planning Commission’s meeting on January 22 at 4:00P. The intent of the meeting was to seek input from the citizens of Cedar Bluff regarding the planned revisions to the town’s Zoning Ordinance.

The meeting was called to order by John Hyatt at 4:00P. The first order of business was to have Rajiv Kumar Myana (Raj) of the East Alabama Planning and Development Commission (<http://www.earpdc.org/contact/>) provide an overview of a) the town’s Zoning Ordinance document (last updated in 1999) and b) the town’s Comprehensive Plan document (last updated in 2013). Raj explained how the two documents were developed, how they are intended to be used and how they should be updated. Raj agreed with a comment by Bill Holland that the roles and responsibilities of the Planning Commission should be part of the Zoning Ordinance (along with the Board of Adjustments). He will provide draft language for that section of the document. Finally, Raj agreed to provide a copy of his presentation to the Assistant Town Clerk (Renee Anderson) for her to post on the town’s web site.

After Raj’s presentation, John Hyatt requested comments from members of the public (who had signed in and requested to speak). Those requesting time to speak were Bill Warren, Janet Witt, Scott Botton, Dave Kubat, Thomas Sweet, Bobbie Hicks and Gay Labarre. There were several consistent themes from the speakers. Those themes are summarized below:

**Enforcement of Current Zoning Ordinance:** Several of the speakers noted that the current Zoning Ordinance, while not perfect, is a fairly comprehensive document. In their view, the major need around zoning for Cedar Bluff is enforcement of the existing regulations. Most felt that there was no concerted attempt to enforce the regulations. Many felt that a full-time building inspector / enforcement officer was needed to ensure the regulations are enforced in a regular, consistent manner. In their view, this position could be financed through the fines associated with zoning ordinance violations. It was noted that a way would need to be found to funnel the fines for this purpose since the current regulations do not allow this use. John Hyatt asked for a list of zoning issues that this group felt were not being addressed – Tom Sweet agreed to help pull together the list.

**Attract Business to Cedar Bluff:** Bill Warren noted that he had spoken with the Lt. Governor’s office and the Cherokee County Chamber of Commerce regarding assistance in attracting business to Cedar Bluff. Several items were noted that needed to be addressed: overall “shoddy” look of the downtown area, identification of the best type of business for Cedar Bluff, agreement about where businesses were to be located, inventory list of properties in Cedar Bluff that are appropriate for business use, etc. Bill Warren, John Hyatt and Bob Pickrel will develop a set of “next steps” around this proposal.

**Improve Overall Look and Feel of Cedar Bluff:** Several participants noted the rather “shabby” look of the town, given that the zoning ordinances are not enforced. They felt that any attempt to attract business and grow the town would be hindered by the overall appearance. Part of their recommendation was to ensure that the Zoning Ordinance addressed maintenance of structures and grounds in the town and that these ordinances be enforced. The other part was to develop a plan to rehabilitate the dilapidated buildings downtown (using grants or other means). No next steps were identified for these comments other than enforcing the zoning ordinances.

**Specific Zoning Ordinance Items to be Addressed:** Dave Kubat noted several areas in the current Zoning Ordinance that he felt needed to be addressed. *Neighborhood Business* – increase size of allowed business (currently 2500 sq ft), limit the height to no more than 3 stories (currently 50 feet), increase setbacks from all sides of the property, update ordinance to provide for a buffer between the business and the neighbors, restrict business architecture to be consistent with the neighborhood; *Highway Commercial*– limit highway commercial to SR 9 and SR 68; *Restaurant Lounges and Bars* – update ordinance to address the concept of lounges and bars in Cedar Bluff (especially for Neighborhood Business);*R3 Residential* – update R3 residential to allow for residential senior living and quad homes; *Other Zoning Ordinance Issues* – address campers, tiny houses, manufactured homes in R1 (Roger Griffeth requested that Raj provide guidance for manufactured homes in R1 as part of the Zoning Ordinance update). Renee Anderson was going to reach out to Dave Kubat and ask him to send his list of recommended changes to the Planning Commission.

**Alcohol and Zoning Ordinance Conflicts** – Dave Kubat noted during his recommendations that there were conflicts between the Alcohol and Zoning ordinance documents. The Planning Commission needs to address any potential conflicts as part of the Zoning Ordinance update.

**Slow Down Zoning Update Process:** - Several attendees felt that the Zoning Ordinance update process should be slowed down. They felt that a lot of the issues outlined above required time to look into and resolve. Since the Zoning Ordinance has not been updated since 1999, they felt a little extra time is certainly warranted. In addition, a request was made that no zoning changes be approved until the Zoning Ordinance is updated. Many of the issues outlined above are very impactful and need to be addressed prior to continuing to allow zoning changes.

John Hyatt thanked the attendees for their input and congratulated them on a successful meeting. One attendee asked if the minutes from the meeting would be published. The group agreed that Renee Anderson would publish the minutes on the town’s web site. Any comments around errors or significant omissions in the minutes should be addressed to Renee so that she can pass them to the Planning Commission.

The meeting was adjourned.