



GATE CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

MINUTES

March 1, 2011

The regular monthly meeting of the Gate City Planning Commission was held Tuesday, March 1, 2011 at 6:00 PM.

CALL TO ORDER:

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 6:01 PM and asked the secretary to call the roll.

ROLL CALL:

MEMBERS PRESENT: Tim Bartley, Jo Ann Castle, Delany Herron, Faye Sanders, and Roger Cassell.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Steve Templeton, Gate City Town Manager

ALSO PRESENT: Michele Brooks, Gate City Town Attorney, and Mayor Mark Jenkins.

DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM:

With five (5) voting members present, the requirements for a quorum are met.

PUBLIC EXPRESSION:

No citizens present requesting audience.

REVIEW AND ADOPTION OF MINUTES:

The minutes from the previous regular meeting held Tuesday February 1, 2011 was presented.

Motion made by Faye Sanders to adopt the minutes as presented. Motion seconded by Tim Bartley.

VOTING AYE: Tim Bartley, Jo Ann Castle, Delany Herron, Faye Sanders, and Roger Cassell.

VOTING NAY: None

MOTION CARRIED

REPORTS:

A) **A) SECRETARY:** At the regular monthly meeting of the Gate City Town Council, held Tuesday February 8, 2011, Roger Cassell presented the concerns addressed by Faye Sanders at the February Commission Meeting, relating to future Commission activities. Mayor Jenkins stated that he would attend the next Commission meeting, to be held on March 1, 2011, to discuss possible activities for the Commission.

B) COMMITTEES:

- 1) Comprehensive Plan: Nothing to report.
- 2) Land Use: Nothing to report.
- 3) Subdivision Ordinance: Nothing to report
- 4) Zoning: Nothing to report
- 5) Capital Improvements: Nothing to report.

C) TOWN COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE MEMBER:

At the invitation of the town, a representative from Sternberg Lighting met with town officials to examine possible upgrades to the existing decorative street lamps. He proposed replacing the present five sixty-watt incandescent bulbs in each lamp with LED bulbs, which would reduce the current electric draw from three hundred watts to sixty watts for each lamp. The cost of replacement was estimated at \$1000.00 for each lamp if only the lighting head were replaced. The company could also provide new poles with flag and planter brackets, if desired, at an additional cost of approximately \$1000.00 per pole. Presently, flag brackets exist on the utility streetlight posts. There are currently eighty-eight (88) decorative street lamps throughout the town.

Jo Ann Castle questioned whether the existing lights could be sold to recoup a portion of the cost. Mayor Jenkins replied that this option has not been investigated at this time.

Mayor Jenkins stated that the existing lamps lose efficiency partly because the lamps are oriented in an upward manner. Much light is lost because the light is directed upward. When pointed downward, the light saturation would be focused where it is most needed. The LED lighting units also have dimming capabilities for additional savings during the nighttime hours, but can be programmed to produce more light at certain times when the street lamps provide lighting for residents who use the town sidewalks for early morning or late evening exercise. The dimming unit, if chosen, would be an additional cost.

Jo Ann Castle asked if a study has been done to show when the savings in electricity would offset the investment. This will be done, by reading the power meters, one on each block of lights, to determine the actual cost of current light operation. Another savings factor might be removing the existing utility streetlights, which won't be needed if the new lamps are installed. Mr. Cassell stated that present lighting cost for both the decorative lamps and the utility streetlights is approximately \$30,000.00 per year. Mr. Cassell plans to determine whether the Town might be eligible for off-peak usage rates from Appalachian Electric Power.

Jo Ann Castle questioned whether it might be more cost effective to remove and invert the existing lighting heads, to orient the light saturation down rather than up, and replace the incandescent bulbs with fluorescent bulbs. Mr. Cassell stated that the life span of the LED bulb is longer than that of a fluorescent bulb.

Faye Sanders stated that the expense of \$1000.00 per lamp seems excessive. Mayor Jenkins responded that grant funds are likely available to cover the cost.

Mr. Cassell also updated the Commission on the removal of eleven (11) of the existing decorative street lamps and their relocation along Water Street. When funds and time are available, more lamps will be relocated to other presently unlit areas of the town.

Faye Sanders asked who is removing and relocating the street lamps. Mayor Jenkins replied that the Town's Maintenance Crew is performing this work.

D) ZONING ADMINISTRATOR:

Not present due to medical leave.

E) GATE CITY TOWN ATTORNEY:

Michele Brooks stated that if the members of the Planning Commission wish to amend the by-laws to alter the frequency of meetings held per year, she would draft the amendment to present to the Commission for approval. No action was taken at this time.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: None carried over.

NEW BUSINESS:

Mayor Jenkins presented the Commission with items he feels would be beneficial to the growth of the community. He began by describing the current plans to develop a walking trail that could eventually encompass as much as twelve (12) miles in length, and his desire to develop 'green space' areas where land is available.

- 1) Install a picnic shelter and add landscaping, as way station on a lot adjacent to the Burnt Cabin Branch leg of the walking trail at the corner of Chestnut and Promise Streets. A casual estimate of approximately \$10,000.00 was submitted for the cost of the shelter construction.
- 2) Land is available, at a minimal-cost lease agreement from Norfolk-Southern Railroad, near the location of the old railroad depot site. It is conceivable that the Town could build a Railroad Museum that he feels would be a major tourist draw. The Mayor also believes that if the Town should decide to go forward on this project, Norfolk-Southern might contribute funds to build a structure dedicated to this use.
- 3) Mayor Jenkins suggested that the Commission examine set back and side yard requirements built into the existing zoning regulations. Due to changes in the need for access by fire equipment, it is not necessary to have the required set back and side yards on future new construction. Reducing the present set back and side yard requirements, where feasible, would better serve the lot sizes that exist in the town. Also, the required width of streets is gradually being reduced and the Virginia Department of Transportation is beginning to allow that narrower streets be taken into the State Maintenance System.
- 4) Jo Ann Castle suggested that the town should consider working with the owner of the Scott Motel property on Highway 23-S to build another motel on the site along with re-establishing a restaurant in conjunction with the motel. A restaurateur presently located in Tennessee would very likely be interested in re-locating to a site in Gate City. Faye Sanders noted that the Economic Development Authority had commissioned a study that had shown that an over night tourist facility would be feasible and profitable.
- 5) Roger Cassell stated that he and Council Member Wallace Ross had discussed developing the large vacant lot adjacent to the entrance to Gate City along Highway 23-N as a wayside with a picnic shelter and tourist information, and that by relocating the monument-style historical markers from their present site alongside the highway near Weber City to this location, visitors could more easily read or photograph the information. He further stated that the existing picnic tables on Highway 23-N and -S near the railroad overpass receive a great deal of use and it would seem reasonable that Northbound travelers would benefit from a similar site at this location. He also pointed out that there is no public recognition of the history of Moccasin Gap as the Gateway to the West. Moccasin Gap's historical information could be displayed on this site. Mayor Jenkins noted that V-DOT might not approve entrance and egress at this location due to the traffic patterns and concentrations.

6) ITEMS NOT ON AGENDA:

- 1) Mayor Jenkins updated the Commission on plans for the Music Fest festival to be held in downtown Gate City in June. The group who has organized the events in the past has turned it over to the town. The town hopes to arrange more child-friendly entertainments and has contracted two bands for this event. The bicycle ride on 'Possum Creek and the geo-caching event are to be included. Roger Cassell expressed a desire to hold an event that could include fireworks. He stated that any fireworks show in the past has been very successful.

- 2) Mayor Jenkins also described plans to hold a Farmer's Market in the town's main parking lot on Saturdays. The Farmer's Market will be held separately from the weekly Flea Market that is open on Fridays.

ADJOURNMENT:

After agreement to discuss these proposals at the next regular meeting, a motion for adjournment was made by Jo Ann Castle and seconded by Faye Sanders.

VOTING AYE: Jo Ann Castle, Faye Sanders, Delany Herron, Roger Cassell and Tim Bartley

VOTING NAY: None

MOTION CARRIED

Meeting adjourned at 7:38 PM.

Secretary, Jo Ann Castle

Delany Herron, Chairman
Approved: 4-5-11