

**PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES**  
**Monday, April 10, 2017**  
**6:00 PM**

**Planning Commission Members Present:** Scott Anderson, Karen Ashley, Chris Ford, Valerie Hoy-Rhodehamel, Shawn Van Pelt

**Staff present:** Ben Shumaker

**Community members present:** David Bennett, Josh Cummings, Sandra Feren, Paul Foster, Kevin Lucas, Rose Lucas, Joel Madsen, Sharon Madsen, Robert Muth, Bill Price, Mary Repar, Ben Sciacca, Vickie Sciacca

**Call to order:** 6:00 PM

**Preliminary Matters**

1. **Chair Selects Public Comment Option: #1**
2. **March 13, 2017 Minutes: S. Madsen** commented that the easement on here property was reported with the wrong dimensions. **Ashley** moved and **Ford** seconded for approval of the minutes subject to this amendment. Unanimously approved.
3. **Public Comment Period** (For items not located elsewhere on the agenda): **Repar** as Grange Master for Stevenson Grange #121 commented she has plans to remodel the County-owned building and invited anyone considering a community event to consider the Grange as a venue once the remodel is complete.

**New Business**

4. **CUP2016-02 (Sciacca Wedding Venue) - 6:04 PM Continued Planning Commission Review and Public Hearing**

a. Review Purpose of Meeting – **Shumaker** commented this item is a continuation of the March 13 public hearing meeting to consider a CUP for a wedding venue in a residential neighborhood.

b. Appearance of Fairness Disclosures – **Shumaker** r reviewed the definition of ex parte communication and asked if any of the Commissioners had engaged in any since the last public hearing, if any had incurred a financial interest in outcome of the decision and if any other issue would prevent them from acting fair and impartial in the proceedings. No Commissioners had any Fairness Disclosures to make. There was no challenge to the Commissioners impartiality by the public in attendance.

c. Presentation by Staff – **Shumaker** presented his revised staff proposal which included an updated draft of the CUP, information about best practices on parking requirements, and additional/requested information from the applicants and public. He then reminded the Commission members they must make 4 findings to approve the Conditional Use Permit:

1. The proposed activity will not endanger the public health or safety;
2. The proposed activity will not substantially reduce the value of adjoining or abutting

property;

3. The proposed activity will be in harmony with the area in which it is located; and
4. The proposed activity will be in conformity with the comprehensive plan, transportation plan, or other plan officially adopted by the council.

**Shumaker** further explained changes to the draft CUP conditions, based on the information supplied by the applicants and the public. The change includes a measure to prevent noise disturbing the harmony of the neighborhood, and includes a new condition to require construction of a sound barrier between the venue and neighbors.

d. Presentation by Applicant – **B. Sciacc & V. Sciacca** commented they were responding to the 3 items requested by the Commissioners at the last public hearing.

1. Parking - Mr. Sciacca commented parking area available for parking in front of his rental at 1090 Briggs Rd. is 17' from the edge of the pavement to the tree line. He has also reconfigured his previous parking plan to add another parking space for a total of 17 spaces additional open space by his garage for overflow parking. He has submitted an updated parking plan.
2. Insurance - Mrs. Sciacca commented, after speaking with their insurance agent, reported they can add liability insurance which would cover the legal easement.
3. Health Dept. - Mr. Sciacca met with Nicki Hollatz from the County's Environmental Health Department to discuss their septic system and the Home's septic system would be adequate for the wedding party but portable toilet facilities would be required for the guests. He assured the porta potties would be self contained, pumped regularly and out of sight from neighbors.

e. Public Hearing was opened at 6:07 PM – **Anderson** reviewed public comment rules of public comment and each speaker's time limit of 3 minutes.

**S. Madsen**, the Sciacca's next door neighbor, read page 1 of the addendum of her previously submitted packet. In summary, Ms. Madsen declines customers of Sciacca's wedding business clients ingress and/or egress to any portion of her driveway, asserts it will have a negative impact on neighboring properties and further commented the proposed use is not in harmony with existing neighbors. She urged the Planning Commission to reject the application of this Conditional Use Permit.

**Price**, homeowner at 1073 SW Briggs Rd, submitted a letter and petition to oppose the proposed wedding venue. He explained his 2013 home purchase and was shocked to learn Shumaker was recommending approval of the proposed activity. He went on to say did not realize there were rules which would allow noise and congestion in his small neighborhood. He then reported feeling marginalized and powerless and reached out to neighbors and attorney, Robert Muth. He added he is supportive of Mr. Sciacca's business ventures, but does not support a wedding venue so close to his home. He added there are more than 30 pages of public opposition to this proposed Conditional Use Permit.

**Feren**, resident at 1073 SW Briggs Rd, commented their lot lines are 350' apart and they consider the Sciaccas a close neighbor. She added she does not oppose their proposed

wedding venue, only their choice of location. She commented she is concerned about public safety because children access and play on the street. She added there are more vehicles to a wedding than just wedding party and guests adding to the threat to neighborhood safety. She also feels concerned congestion will detract from livability and have a negative impact on the value of their home. In summary, she wants harmony in the neighborhood and feels nuisance noise can be abusive.

**Foster**, neighbor across Briggs Rd, is concerned about guests using his driveway as a turnaround. He cares for his elderly mother and she does not welcome the traffic and noise. He feels there will be more disruption to the neighborhood if he has to call the police every time there is too much noise or congestion resulting from the proposed activities. He said it's not fair they should be allowed this permit when it will have so many negative consequences on the neighbors and neighborhood.

**Muth**, attorney for Price, submitted a letter for public record. He asked Shumaker to confirm if the CUP is transferrable. **Shumaker** confirmed it is not. **Muth** commented as of 5:30 PM, April 10, 2017, the Sciaccas' home is listed for sale on the RMLS website so this discussion could be for nothing if the Sciacca's sell their house tomorrow. He commented on the negative impact of access to the road by emergency vehicles when guests are parked on Briggs Rd. He commended Ms. Madsen for accurately reciting easement law and further expressed concerns about neighborhood harmony and negative impacts on neighboring property values, asking who will buy a property next to a commercial wedding venue. He summarized his comments by saying approval of the proposed activity would be fraught with disaster.

**K. Lucas**, homeowner and neighbor on Ryan Allen Road, submitted a map to illustrate sound carrying acoustics and his additional research on sound dissipation and crowd noise. He added he was happy to see construction of a sound barrier in new proposal but added it will only be effective in line of sight. He recited health concerns regarding noise and health and cited health issues related to noise and commented on articles written about property value decline. He summarized he wants all neighbor concerns addressed before any permit is issued.

**R. Lucas**, homeowner and neighbor on Ryan Allen Road, commented they do want to see the Sciaccas be successful in business but the location is tough for the proposed activity. She commented her appreciation for the Planning Commission's work on this topic. She then added concerns that neighbors will have no recourse if there are problems at the site. If the CUP is issued and it would be 18 months before the next review, which is too long to negative impacts to occur before review. She added the Sciacca's have a beautiful piece of land, it's just not appropriate for the proposed use.

**Rutledge** commented she attended the meeting to learn and hear what's going on. She added her heart goes out to neighbors because she believes the proposed activity is not harmonious with the neighborhood.

**B. Sciacca** responded to the comments offered. He reported neighbors have contacted him to encourage other business ventures, other than the wedding venue. He added the wedding

venue is not their first plan for the property, but their Plan B. He confirmed the house is for sale and has been for several years but claimed they can't sell the home due to a variety of factors in the neighborhood. He continued to say other people in the neighborhood are doing their own thing to impact his home, he only wants to the same privilege. He added they own the last two residents on a dead end street, they would be on site for every event and they know how to conduct a harmonious business. He summarized by saying the Planning Commission must consider the his needs equally with those of the neighbors.

**Anderson** closed public hearing at 6:41 PM

f. Planning Commission Discussion – **VHR** discussed her public safety concerns for emergency vehicles based on the number of cars which are planned to be parked on Briggs Rd. She admitted to never having been on the road, and her opinion comes only from reviewing the maps submitted for public record.

**Ashley** expressed concern about the subjective language of Finding. She then asked the Sciaccas if they wanted to continue, given the strong objections of so many of their neighbors. **B. Sciacca** answered their first choice would be to sell the home, but because they can't, this is their plan B.

**Ford** expressed his remaining concerned about Finding of Law #1, regarding the size of Briggs Rd for Emergency vehicles. He noted the oppositional testimony of neighbors who believe property values will be negatively impacted. He added the same testimony indicates the proposed use is not in harmony with neighborhood and isn't sure it is consistent with the Comp Plan either. He also repeated comments submitted by the County Environmental Health Dept, which indicates the existing septic system isn't adequate for 30+ people and portable toilet facilities would be needed.

**Van Pelt** discussed his impressions of Briggs Rd. which he sees as one of the better roads the City of Stevenson owns. He added he doesn't see the issue with parking and feels the street is plenty wide enough to accommodate the proposed activity and doesn't feel it would impact emergency vehicles. He added it's a stretch to say anything they do could devalue neighbors' property by more than the appreciation they enjoy because of the Sciacca home. He does agree however, based on the neighbors objections, the proposed activity doesn't seem harmonious and so he would find the activity conflicts with that item.

There was general discussion about how to proceed with a motion to deny CUP application. **Shumaker** requested time to draft a written denial with the Findings of Fact to reflect conflicts with public safety and neighborhood harmony.

**Ashley** moved, **Ford** seconded the motion to direct **Shumaker** to revise the Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law to restate denial of the proposed Conditional Use Permit. Vote: In favor: 4; Opposed: 0, Abstained from vote: 1 (**Van Pelt**)

5. **Planning Commission Ex Officio Member:** Review of Statements of Interest for a new Ex Officio Member, including David Bennett and Paul Spencer. After general discussion about each candidate's background and qualifications, **Ford** moved and **VHR** seconded the motion, to

nominate Paul Spencer as the Ex Officio to the Planning Commission, with David Bennett as alternate. Unanimously approved.

**6. Short Plat Proposal (57:00)** Review of J&K Cummings 4-Lot Short Plat, including a Road Width Reduction.

**Shumaker** discussed, in this proposal, the NE corner of the proposed property will be accessing an existing road and the developer's proposal is to narrow the road from the 60' required width. This is allowable but requires approval of the Planning Commission and Fire Marshall.

**Cummings**, property owner, explained due to existing hillside slope, they are asking for added area to make the site more buildable. He commented a portion of the paved road will be used by his home and others in the Angel Heights subdivision and other future subdivisions. **Shumaker** recommended Commission approval of the narrowest width possible and leave any denial to City of Stevenson Engineer and Fire Marshall. There was general discussion about the City approval process, road standards and past decisions.

**Anderson** asked if this variance is within the power of the Planning Commission and **Shumaker** confirmed it is.

**Repar** asked if EMS gets say and **Shumaker** commented that fire apparatus require more turning radius so the Fire Marshall determination is used as guidance. **Ford** asked if this will be a dead end street and **Shumaker** commented it is unknown at this time.

**ANDERSON** moved, **VAN PELT** seconded to approve the road width variance for the proposed J&K Cummings Short Plat distribution SP 2017-01. Unanimously approved.

**Old Business**

**7. Zoning Code Residential Density:** Residential Planned Unit Developments, Discussion and Next Steps

**Shumaker** noted the attendance of David Bennett, local housing developer and Joel Madsen. **J. Madsen** describes his role as the Director of Columbia-Cascade Affordable Housing Corporation and Mid-Columbia Housing Authority, which promote affordable housing throughout the Gorge. They have worked on local developments, White Cap Apartments, Rock Cove Assisted Living and Hamilton Park Apartments and offer other homeownership education programs. He applauded the City of Stevenson commitment to affordable housing and including it in the City's Comp Plan.

**Shumaker** reminded them the discussion last meeting, where they were successful in answering 3 of the 8 decision points, with 4-8, still to address at this meeting. He discussed the process for approval and added the draft language puts a large responsibility on developers to propose developments which will fit the characteristics of the neighborhood and the Planning Commission retains wide authority to approve or deny proposals.

**Decision Point #4** - Do the lot size (A), driveway length (B), and parking location provisions (C) allow sufficient flexibility while still providing appropriate protections?

Regarding Lot Size, **Repar** asked for clarity on why the minimum lot size would be changed at all after all these years. **Anderson** clarified the Commission is not seeking to modify the City's overall maximum density requirement, only to modify it within specific developments that are approved as part of a PUD to achieve a mix of housing types. **Shumaker** confirmed the Planning Commission members are comfortable with removing minimum lot sizes from the R-PUD draft. All Commission members said Yes. (1:21)

Regarding Driveway Length, **Shumaker** asks **Bennett** to repeat his concern about the 18' proposed minimum length. **Bennett** refers to the typically length of trucks and other vehicles common to our area and suggests a longer minimum driveway to avoid conflicts. **Shumaker** confirmed the Planning Commission members wanted to increase minimum driveway length to 20'. All Commission members said Yes.

Regarding Parking Location Requirements, **Shumaker** reminded the Planning Commission they retain the option to review each proposal on a case by case basis also but he did suggest including some multiplier formula in the PUD so developers aren't surprised by additional parking requirements. **Shumaker** confirmed Planning Commissioners generally approve of including a parking multiplier if group parking instead of on-site parking is proposed. All Commission members said Yes.

**Decision Point #5** - Has the staff draft adequately captured what should be mandatory and what should be optional in the approval of density bonuses?

**Shumaker** discussed a two-step draft process for developers to achieve density bonuses. He explained a developer could be eligible for additional lots completing the following mandatory items:

1. Underground all utilities, including existing but giving an option to not include 3-Phase utilities which are exponentially more expensive.
2. Install conduits/vaults ready for fiber to home systems.
3. One lot required to be sold/developed as affordable/workforce housing.

**Shumaker** went on to discuss some optional criteria to reach density bonuses, actions which would could be used to grant up to 30% more lots in an R-PUD. Examples may include:

1. Donating additional lots beyond the first one sold to an agency that would create affordable housing.
2. Adding community amenities such as pedestrian pathways, open spaces, viewpoints, recreation areas, landscaping, historic preservation, critical area protection, etc.

**Shumaker** explained why the draft proposes to give bonuses to developments preserving critical areas. The current market tends to shy away from development affected by critical areas and this measure is intended to make projects viable. **Bennett** explained those density bonuses are designed to make some properties more financially attractive to developers. **VHR** stated her disagreement that simply preserving critical areas justified a bonus. **Shumaker** suggested changing the draft language from "restore and/or preserve" to "restore and/or enhance". All Planning Commissioners said Yes, with the change to keep "restore and/or enhance" and remove "preserve".

**Decision Point #6** - Is the requirement to obtain professional assistance with preparation of R-PUD proposals acceptable?

**Shumaker** noted that professional assistance can come from an architect, engineer, landscape architect, or surveyor and that this requirement increases cost of entry for developers. All Planning Commissioners agreed that this is acceptable and said Yes to the decision point.

**Decision Point #7** - Is the R-PUD process adequate to review, guide, and approve R-PUDs? All Planning Commissioners said Yes.

**Shumaker** noted the next steps will be for staff to update the draft to include the proposed changes, publish a press release for next month's meeting to invite community input and prepare an updated a fee schedule for land division processes.

8. **Critical Areas Ordinance:** Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas & Frequently Flooded Areas  
**Shumaker** reminded the Planning Commission members of their feeling that the issue was too much to digest at the last meeting and highlighted the issues where direction is still sought. **Anderson** commented the item is simply beyond any of the Planning Commission members scope of knowledge or background. He proposed a special meeting with City Council, where Paul Hendricks, who has a degree in this area, could provide better insight. **Shumaker** commented the Planning Commission has authority to push the agenda item to the City Council entirely.

**VHR** moved, **Anderson** seconded to accept the Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas and Frequently Flooded Areas as final for their future recommendation to the City Council. Unanimously approved.

### Staff Reports

9. **Staff & Commission Reports:**  
**Shumaker** reports the City Council is receiving an update on the General Sewer Plan and Sewer Plant updates at their next meeting. **Anderson** commented he is worried about the cost of these upgrades and doesn't want to see the City just throwing money at it. He discussed a desire to obtain grants.

Meeting adjourned at 8:23 PM

Approved \_\_\_\_\_; Approved with revisions \_\_\_\_\_

---

Scott Anderson, Chair                      Date  
*Minutes by: Jennifer Anderson*

*Planning Commissioner Attendance*

	2017											
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Anderson	X	+	+	+								
Ashley	X	0	+	+								
Ford	X	+	+	+								
Hoy-Rhodehamel	X	+	+	+								
Van Pelt	X	+	+	+								

+ = present; 0 = excused absence, — = unexcused absence, X = cancelled meeting