

**City of Lewisburg  
Planning Commission  
Meeting Minutes – May 6, 2021  
942 Washington Street West, Lewisburg, WV  
Via Teleconference**

**PRESENT:** Commission Chair Mark Etten; Commission members Tia Bouman, Helen Harless, Davis Lewis, Valerie Pritt, Dan Stevenson; Mayor Beverly White; City Manager Misty Hill; Planning & Zoning Officer Marsha Cunningham; Recording Officer Bobby (Robert) Bordelon

**ABSENT:** Commission member Ghee Gossard

**VISITORS:** Patricia Long

**CALL TO ORDER:** The meeting was called to order at 7:03 p.m. by Commission Chair Mark Etten. No comments were offered from the public.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** The minutes of the *April 1, 2021* meeting were considered and approved during the preceding working session on May 6, 2021.

*Review and Discussion of a Conditional Use Permit Application for 951 Washington Street West*

The Planning Commission considered Colin Rose's application for a conditional use permit for 951 Washington Street W. The application asks for a conditional use permit for a three to six room bed and breakfast for the upper floor of the building. Planning & Zoning Officer Cunningham explained Rose had proven the project would not be a danger to the public health, inflict injury to any adjoining properties, be out of harmony with the area, or out of conformity. He would also be required to have two parking spaces plus one for each room or satellite parking within 400 feet of the entrance of the building. Planning & Zoning Officer Cunningham notes he “will” have the expected satellite parking.

Commission member Lewis asked if any of the parking spaces had to be handicapped parking, Planning & Zoning Officer Cunningham noted the ordinances did not have this requirement.

Commission member Little asked if the satellite parking is within 400 feet of the building. Planning & Zoning Officer Cunningham noted parking in the alley nearby, and Rose purchased a building on the corner of Jefferson Street and Foster which has a parking area to be utilized by bed and breakfast guests.

Commission member Pritt asked if the satellite parking has to be 400 feet to the entrance of the satellite building or 400 feet to the parking lot. Planning & Zoning Officer Cunningham said it would have to be from the door of the bed and breakfast building to the lot itself, depending on which route someone takes to the lot. Commission Chair Etten noted the measurement could also be interpreted “as the crow

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flies,” a diameter around the business lot, rather than a measurement of a traveling path.

Long gave information to the Commission on Rose's behalf, explaining it would be five to six rooms on the top floor of the “old Hardware Gallery,” the building in question. There are three parking spaces behind the building itself and Long noted Rose expected to need more parking due to social media concern over a potential bed and breakfast. The business plans to be a self-check in similar to The Escape on Randolph Street with no on-site employees. The business is planned as an “upscale boutique.”

Commission member Pritt asked about typical occupancy of The Escape, Long explained the business is sold out each weekend and almost every day now.

Commission Chair Etten asked if there was parking specific to check ins, loading, and unloading for bed and breakfast guests, while longer parking was elsewhere. Long noted there would only be five to six rooms, and if the three spots were taken, they could park in the alleyway in order to unload, then move to other parking. After a question from Commission Chair Etten, City Manager Hill said the alleyway was not supposed to be blocked and the city has received complaints when it is blocked by vehicles or food supplying trucks. This is also a problem in the alleyway near the Humble Tomato, for while complaints with photos were filed with the city. Long suggested the bed and breakfast could tell the guests not to park there long and said she has driven through the alley while construction equipment was parked there. City Manager Hill noted there is a sign stating there is no parking at any time in the alley. Commission Chair Etten noted the city didn't want unattended vehicles in the alley and asked if the three spaces at the building could be designated for loading and unloading. Long said the business could dedicate one or two, if not all three, spaces for this purpose and longer-term parking be done at the satellite location.

City Manager Hill noted parking is a huge issue for downtown. Commission member Little notes his support for the bed and breakfast, then explains there would be nothing stopping twelve extra vehicles from parking in another spot downtown or on Washington Street rather than at the satellite lot. City Manager Hill noted Washington Street has a two hour parking limit, but Commission member Pritt and Commission member Little both noted there is little enforcement. Commission member Little noted more enforcement could push visitors away from Lewisburg. Commission Chair Etten agrees, stating the parking enforcement official position with the city was eliminated at some point during the past 17 years he's been involved with the city.

Discussion turned to downtown parking, with the opening of Stratton Alley for businesses and apartment residents throughout downtown, parking has become limited. The bank is having trouble keeping people out of their lot and the shops would like more parking to be available to customers. There is also concern visitors to the area do not stay in Lewisburg to shop due to lack of parking. Commission Chair Etten notes there are city lots being under utilized and suggested some merchants might also be parking on the streets.

Commission member Harless explained she used AirBnB previously and often guests want to respect the town but are also looking for convenience, noting she would be "happier" with three rooms instead of six. Long noted Rose wanted to use all of the space available in the building and was basing the parking on city hotels, parking, unloading, then moving the vehicle to another lot, with the use of a valet.

Public Hearing

Commission Chair Etten opened the Public Hearing on the condition use application to order at 7:24 p.m. No visitors were present for public comment and the hearing was closed at 7:24 p.m.

Public Hearing Closed

Commission member Bouman noted if there is no staff on-site, there could not be a valet. Long agreed. Commission Chair Etten suggested a stipulation be added to the application requiring the three spaces be designated for loading and unloading. Commission member Stevenson said the website for the bed and breakfast should also note this. Long agreed, noting they also speak with guests before they check in and this could be explained then.

In response to a question from Commission member Stevenson, Long noted the bed and breakfast is expected to charge approximately what The Escape charges – 99 dollars during the winter months and 150, 160 for the summer months.

Commission member Stevenson asked who had to be notified during the application process. Planning & Zoning Officer Cunningham explained the required paperwork had been completed and notifications done correctly. No certified mail was required.

Planning & Zoning Officer Cunningham said they had proven no endangerment to the public safety, it would not be out of conformity or harmony with the area, the newspaper publication fees were paid. Commission Chair Etten noted the parking issues could be considered a public safety item and it was for the Commission to determine if the these conditions had been met before making a recommendation to City Council.

Planning & Zoning Officer Cunningham said a notice was also posted on the building before 15 days prior to the meeting, on April 21.

Commission Chair Etten said the burden of proof is on the applicant to show the application does not endanger public health or safety, injury the values of adjoining or aligning property, be out of harmony with the area it is located, or be out of conformity with community planning. Commission Chair Etten notes the application does not contain anything that directly addresses those four items, so concerns should be presented to Long, if any exist. No concerns were presented.

Commission Chair Etten called for a motion concerning the application for a conditional use permit at 951 Washington Street West for a bed and breakfast of three to six rooms. Planning & Zoning Officer Cunningham noted the motion would likely be a recommendation for City Council.

Commission member Stevenson asked if any businesses presented concerns about the applications. Planning & Zoning Officer Cunningham noted one caller from the public wanted to be present for the

meeting via teleconference, but declined to provide the needed email address to dial into the meeting.

*Motion to recommend application*

Commission member Stevenson moved the Commission recommend the application be accepted, with the stipulation that the three parking spaces in Stratton Alley be set aside for temporary parking with sign notifications and other discussed items in order to ameliorate parking on Washington Street for overnight guests. Commission member Lewis seconded the motion. The record reflects eight (8) affirmative votes with one (1) absence (*Commission member Gossard*).

*Comments from the Zoning Officer*

The next meeting is a working session scheduled for 5:30 p.m. on June 3, 2021. The application for 951 Washington Street West will be placed on the City Council agenda for Tuesday, May 18, 2021, for consideration for approval. No applications are currently filed for consideration at the next Lewisburg Planning Commission meeting.

*Communications from Commission Members*

Commission member Little noted the concerns of the commissioners and citizens about parking downtown. He expects the issue to get worse and could limit the growth of the city without proactive action from the Planning Commission and City Council. Commission Chair Etten noted an agreement was pursued with Shuck Memorial Baptist Church at 841 Washington St West to provide additional parking for city visitors, while providing the church with upgrades to the lot and prohibiting public use of the lot during certain times. Commission member Pritt noted, due to her position at the Greenbrier County Visitors and Convention Bureau, having heard concerns and complaints about parking in the city from out of town visitors. Commission member Little noted the restrictions could also impact alcohol sales at local restaurants and breweries. Commission Chair Etten noted this issue would be raised at City Council during the Planning Commission report for further consideration, not just for the application but for boarder consideration.

City Manager Hill detailed challenges and solutions to the parking issues. Due to complaints, the city has looked into solutions. In 2017, Shuck approached the city and work was completed with Chapman Technical Services to develop a \$100,000 development package for the church parking lot. The American Rescue Plan money is soon expected. A plan is needed for continued downtown development and parking is the biggest “hiccup.” A Supreme Court ruling determined the city could not mark cars, which led to the removable of the meter maid position, but tickets and towing are not the solution either. Parking lot near Bodies in Motion is not utilized, often due to the needed walking.

Commission Chair Etten questioned if there was enough signage to direct drivers to the parking lot. He

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noted an agreement with the Lewisburg United Methodist Church to utilize their parking lot and previously approaching New River Community and Technical College about using their parking lot for municipal parking. Supports the Planning Commission getting involved with this issue. City Manager Hill met with other localities and Virginia Tech about comprehensive plans but have not yet heard back. City Manager Hill also notes the parking lots mentioned here are uphill from downtown, leading to under utilization, leading more interest in the Shuck project. The old True Value building has also been sold, so the city could not use that property for additional parking. Commission member Stevenson noted more signage for parking lots could visitors find the lots, citing other cities.

Commission Chair Etten requested an agenda item be added for the next Planning Commission meeting concerning parking. The Shuck project details were requested for the meeting information packet.

City Manager Hill asked Commissioners about meeting in person in June. Commission member Harless expressed support, noting ease of public access to in-person meetings. Commission member Stevenson would rather remain remote. City Manager Hill explained the Council chambers could hold in-person meeting while some Commissioners remain remote after work by Mountaineer Computers has been completed. Commission member Stevenson looks to keep the Commission working well together, most of the meeting having taken place remotely. Commission Chair Etten asked if there was opposition to a hybrid in-person meetings for next month. Commission member Stevenson agreed to this. Commission member Pritt also supports hybrid due to being out of town next month. Next meeting is set for a hybrid.

**ADJOURNMENT:** Commission member Pritt made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:58 p.m. Commission member Stevenson seconded the motion. The motion carried with eight (8) in favor and one (1) absent (*Commission member Gossard*).

Respectfully submitted, Robert (Bobby) Bordelon