

**Lewisburg Planning Commission (Working Session)**  
**Meeting Minutes – June 3, 2021**  
**942 Washington Street West, Lewisburg, WV**  
**Via Teleconference**

**PRESENT:** Commission Chair Mark Etten; Commission members, Helen Harless, John Little; Mayor Beverly White; City Manager Misty Hill; Recording Officer Bobby (Robert) Bordelon

**PRESENT VIA ZOOM:** Commission members Ghee Gossard, Dan Stevenson

**ABSENT:** Commission members Tia Bouman, Davis Lewis, Valerie Pritt, Planning & Zoning Officer Marsha Cunningham

**REMOTE VISITORS:** Christie deMuth of WVU Law

**CALL TO ORDER:** The meeting was called to order at 5:31 p.m. by Commission Chair Mark Commission Chair Etten.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** A motion to approve the May 6 Planning Commission minutes with an amendment adjusting language around information provided by Council member Little, and to approve the May 6 Planning Commission Working Session, with amendments to fix the spelling of Dinsmore from Dismore and correcting the second for the motion to adjourn from incorrect Commission Chair Etten to the correct Commission member Little, was made by Commission member Harless and seconded by City Administrator Hill. Motion carried, six in favor and three (3) absent (*Commission members Bouman, Davis, and Pritt*).

*Public Comment*

Mayor White acknowledged this meeting of the Planning Commission as Commission Chair Etten's last. She thanked him for his service, saying the commission has “been blessed by your presence” and that he has “done an outstanding job and for that we're really grateful.” Commission member Harless also noted Commission Chair Etten ran the Planning Commission meetings smoothly.

Commission Chair Etten thanked everyone for the comments and noted his pleasure that the board was interested in being proactive in meeting the planning needs of the city, such as tackling parking.

*Review and discussion of the draft sign regulations*

Returning to work on the sign ordinance, the commission began with consideration of signage in the neighborhood commercial district. Review of the area around Jim's Drive In found the business was the only potential place in violation, but it signage would be grandfathered into the zoning, so only new signage would be affected by any zoning changes. The regulations were not altered, with the max

height set for eight (8) feet, though the closer to the road, the shorter the sign must be.

Next general commercial and industrial districts were considered. deMuth noted the size of the signage permitted was tied to the building fronts – one and a half (1.5) squarefeet per one (1) linear foot of building frontage. Commission member Harless noted the regulations could be usual for smaller or medium businesses to be seen.

After reviewing other communities, deMuth noted if the regulation seems to be working, the Planning Commission could leave it in place. Commission member Gossard and Commission Chair Etten expressed concern for cluttered signage, meaning when there are so many signs that they is not visible because they are being blocked by another sign. Commission member Harless noted this could be self-regulating “to a certain extent” for the businesses.

Commission Chair Etten noted the only business the city has received complaints about in the past is Lewisburg Diamond and Gold, but this is due to what appears to be temporary signage functioning as permanent signage. The dimensional requirements for signs were established in 1994 – Walmart was estimated to have moved in around 1996. Commission member Harless noted the light-up GoMart signage was a controversy in the city went it was being considered.

Much of the current signage is in line with the current requirements, deMuth explained saying the commission could keep it if it wanted. After Commission member Little asked what the desired out coming of the new sign ordinance is intended to be, deMuth explained the ordinance is unconstitutional because it regulates by content instead of size, stating “if you were sued, you would lose.” Comission member Little and Commission Chair Etten agreed the goal is not to be more restrictive, but remove the unconstitutional policy and prevent sign pollution.

The current ordinance for neighborhood commercial district allowed unlimited wall signs and one ground sign. Commission member Goussard noted there would need to be an upper limit on wall signs in order to in harmony with the historic district, but Commission Chair Etten explained this district is north of the interstate, away from the historic district.

Commission Chair Etten asked if there was a reason the sign number limitations should not be consistent, noting restrictions could affect businesses in the commercial district, and noted his support for the current signage as a maximum in order to prevent overcrowding signage.

deMuth noted the square footage by linear storefront footage would limit the amount of sign clutter, with signs scaling up as they get farther behind the right of way. The storefront signage for the Brier Inn monument sign was thought to be taller than 16 feet and could be out of compliance with current regulations. The landscaping as also noted by deMuth to help blend the signage – Commission member Harless stated the landscaping also blocks some of the signage and making getting onto the road difficult in places.

Feather signs were vocally opposed by many commission members and Commission Chair Etten.

The commission set an upper limit of four signs, with monument signs restricted to not exceed one half (0.5) squarefeet of sign area per one (1) lineal foot of lot frontage, not to exceed 26 square feet of sign face.

*Parking for downtown businesses*

Commission member Harless noted downtown would likely always be congested due to the intersection of Washington and Jefferson streets and noted a parking garage might be something to consider.

Possible signage directing drivers to the parking lots already in place would assist in getting extra cars off the downtown street parking.

City Administrator Misty Hill brought information on the Shuck Memorial Baptist Church parking lot. A deal between the church and the city was previously considered in order to improve downtown parking, but funds were not committed to the project. The material cost of paving was expected to cost approximately \$100,000 for the 20 parking spaces close to the historic district. The lot would also be on the side of town that needs more parking currently.

Currently, the city has parking at Lewisburg United Methodist Church, a lot on Lafayette Street, the lot behind Del Sol, the Greenspace lot, and street parking. Enrollment at New River Technical College was also thought to be on the rise, so the college's parking lot did not seem to be the right solution.

City Administrator Misty Hill agreed to get a price estimate and a plan on signage to existing parking lots together for the Planning Commission to further consider.

Commission member Little also requested the current parking information be added to the city's website, with information on handicapped parking, how many spaces, and any restrictions.

*Communications from members*

City Administrator Hill noted the position of Commission Chair would be open after the departure of Commission Chair Etten. Commission Chair Etten noted that because the Planning Commission is a commission and not a committee, the position does not have to be filled by a member of City Council.

Mayor White also noted her desire to find more people to serve on the Planning Commission that are not involved with City Council. Commission member Little noted his plan to remain on the Planning Commission if he would be elected to City Council.

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**ADOURNMENT:** Commission member Little made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:37 p.m. Commission member Harless seconded the motion. The motion carried with six in favor and three (3) absent (*Commission members Bouman, Davis, and Pritt*).

Respectfully submitted, Robert (Bobby) Bordelon