

Cullowhee Planning Council
Special Meeting (Work Session) Minutes
April 23rd, 2019
7:00 p.m.
Hospitality Room, WCU Ramsey Center

Members	Present	Absent	Members	Present	Absent	Members	Present	Absent
Rick Bennett	X		Myrtle Schrader	X		Mike Byers	X	
Scott Baker	X		Joel Setzer		X	Jim Lewis	X	
Jack Debnam	X		David Claxton	X				

Staff Present

Michael Poston, Planning Director
 Heather Baker, County Attorney
 Caroline LaFrienier, Planner I
 Allison Kelley, Administrative Assistant

Others Present

Harrison Conner, Student Representation for the Cullowhee Small Area Plan
 Jake Petrosky, Stewart Inc.
 Will Linville, Stewart Inc.
 Kristy Jackson, Stewart Inc.
 Steven Faber, Stewart Inc.

Call to Order

Chairman Scott Baker called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and a quorum was present.

Additions to Agenda

Jack made a motion to approve the agenda as written. Jim Lewis seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.

Work Session Discussion

a. Cullowhee Small Area Plan

Jake Petrosky asked the steering committee for their feedback and reaction from the Framework presentation.

Mike Byers stated he liked the public expressed the need for faculty and staff housing as many are commuting to work. Mr. Petrosky stated they had received feedback from the realtor stakeholders there were barriers such as a return on investment to factor-in, regarding staff housing. The demand for student housing has inflated the market, however there is a lot of innovative approaches such as affordable housing to combat this challenge. Mr. Petrosky stated his staff had been researching how communities in the past approached, and addressed this type of market challenge. For example it could be through a community land trust, public private partnership, or zoning etc.

David Claxton inquired if the Council could implement zoning regulations that enforce dense housing in a particular area but only allow for single-family homes. Mr. Petrosky stated the Council was already implementing those types of regulations as the current single-family zoned area detours attached or dense projects that could be student housing, however the Council could do more with the future land-use plan.

Jack Debnam stated the lack of staff housing is not problem that is unique to Cullowhee, it is a problem at every University across the state, and potentially the entire nation. He stated people within the area do not make enough money to afford a \$250,000 house with a \$2,000 month mortgage after taxes, insurance, student debt, car payment and children.

Jake Petrosky stated other college towns have dealt with the same issue of residents not being able to afford housing. He stated his staff completed an analysis of the Cullowhee Planning Area zoned districts, and reviewed the available and underutilized land. They netted out buildings, steep slope, floodplains, and there was only a small amount of around 30% of available buildable land in the study area.

Myrtle Schrader expressed she believed that Cullowhee was more classified as a Post Office Box and does not really exist. Ms. Schrader was surprised the public asked for leadership of a town council. She stated in the past, when it had been presented to become incorporated like Forest Hills it had been voted "no". In addition, believes this project is very proactive, however the landowners and residents of Cullowhee that have been in the area for years must be on board to create these ideas for the plan. Ms. Schrader inquired from staff if the county was funding the Cashiers Small Area Plan.

Mike Poston stated the sidewalk plan is currently moving forward, and not everything in the planned document has a price tag attached as it is a capital project with expendable resources. The sidewalk project is being conducted by a non-profit group (Vision Cashiers) that wants to see that type of infrastructure be implemented in the Cashiers area. The County Commissioners have partnered with the non-profit group to build the DOT sidewalk per their specifications, and the county is willing to maintain and own the sidewalk networks.

Rick Bennett informed the Council he use to work in real estate and had an office in Cullowhee. He stated, once a month builders/developers would come into the office to inquire the typical amount for a house that would sell in Cullowhee. Mr. Bennett, stated his office would quote a price to the builders/developers and they could not make a profit due to all of the expenses that go into building the house. Mike Byers agreed with Mr. Bennett and stated, there was a need for market rated rental apartments, town homes and single family residential homes within the Cullowhee area. Myrtle Schrader stated there was a feeling of community for Cullowhee in the past and now it is different due to the growth from the University.

Scott Baker mentioned there is more public involvement and input unlike the previous vision projects. He believes the most important aspect of this project should be realistic that the Council can implement, such as the Greenway, or adult housing, etc.

Mike Byers stated the vision for Old Cullowhee would be a unique challenge for the designer as Curve has done a lot of work to add to potential opportunities. Mr. Petrosky stated Curve had created a vision, assembled funds, and gained momentum within the river. He believes this plan can build on the opportunities outside the river such as retail businesses, and restaurants to gain more traffic attraction back on Old Cullowhee.

Steven Faber, landscape architect presented a mock drawing of the vision for Old Cullowhee to the Council. He stated, Old Cullowhee is a linear corridor that could be redeveloped. However, they are limited by a mountain or hillside that would not allow for depth for development to occur, and a floodplain that would limit the opportunities at the back of the buildings. He stated, the vision is to move new buildings to the street with a wide sidewalk, on-street parking, and pedestrian connections across the road to slow down traffic. In addition, on the south/east end of the bridge at the intersection two buildings exist. One of

the buildings is currently boarded up and might be an opportunity to build on the park idea that Curve is reviewing. They could create parking opportunities to connect those to the street to the water, and create more of a destination. Mike Byers inquired the vision of occupancy in the two buildings.

Mr. Faber stated depending on the parking they could be single use buildings such as a store-front retail store, small business/shops, or they could be a mixed use with the upper half space for offices and apartment rentals. In addition, they could provide access into the floodplain for more parking to connect on the backside of the property. Another consideration is to add a roundabout at the intersection to help with traffic flow.

Mike Poston stated there are other departments that would come together to develop this plan. Stewart and staff held a stakeholder meeting to gain more knowledge from other departments. This will allow the consultants to avoid one less hurdle developing the plan.

Myrtle stated she was intrigued by a biking and walking trail from the JC Recreation center to connect to the campus. She asked if this was feasible and attainable as it would be a visible improvement to help spark interest from the community.

Mr. Petrosky stated it would be feasible to look into, coordinating with DOT and potentially a traffic analysis. Within this plan the Council will create an action plan of goals and objectives to achieve short term and long term. He stated, there had been work done for bicycle and pedestrian road improvements through the comprehensive transportation plan. The Small Area Plan will give the Council the opportunity to revisit and review the Cullowhee Community Vision Plan's goals and objectives. This will help determine what goals to include in the Small Area Plan and develop new future goals.

Jack Debnam inquired as an alternative to buying buildings from different property owners but focus on the parcel on Old Cullowhee Road currently owned by William Keller JR (PIN 7559-36-8557) that is undeveloped, and get a right-of-way of 30'. It may be in the floodplain, but it can be used for parking as a starting point.

Mr. Petrosky stated at the next steering committee meeting they would have a more in-depth conversation of the goals for the Cullowhee area and a future land-use map. The map will be the overall vision for the development pattern of the Cullowhee area, and go into detail of character areas outside of the current zoned districts.

Adjournment

With no further business, David Claxton made a motion to adjourn. Rick Bennett seconded the motion, and the meeting adjourned at 7:56 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Allison Kelley
Administrative Assistant- Planning



Scott Baker
Planning Council Chair