

Cashiers Area Community Planning Council

Minutes

June 20, 2022
5:00 p.m.
Albert Carlton Community Library, Community Room

Members	Present	Absent	Members	Present	Absent	Members	Present	Absent
Daniel Fletcher	X		Sonia Morales	X		Dr. Douglas Homolka	X	
David Bond	X		Carole Stork	X		<i>Vacant</i>		
Glenn Ubertino	X							

Staff Present

Michael Poston- Planning Director
John Jeleniewski- Senior Planner
Anna Harkins- Planner I
Heather Baker- County Attorney
Allison Kelley- Administrative Assistant III

Call to Order

Chairman Glenn Ubertino called the meeting to order at 5:06 p.m. and a quorum was present.

Additions to/Approval of the Agenda

Daniel Fletcher made a motion to approve the agenda as written. David Bond seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.

Public Comment

- **Mary Palmer Dargan:** Ms. Dargan stated the number one item in the ULI report that was recommended is conservation. She stated she and her husband were walking around Cashiers Lake the other day, and she took a picture of a hillside, which is the green curtain of Cashiers that is not noticed while driving but only by pedestrian traffic (walking, hiking, etc.). In addition, she stated the Council can help update the Cashiers ordinance to make these conservation ideas happen. The first one update she would recommend is a tree ordinance that would identify elder trees, grand trees, buffer zones, and look closely at the different items that are affecting trees when it comes time to have construction on site, whether it is residential or commercial. The next one is to revisit the slope ordinance to reflect Cashiers soils. Ms. Dargan stated if you have not looked at a soils map before, when you see many topography lines running across a property it means that it is a rather steep slope. She stated the picture of the slope she showed the Council is about 25% on average. Ms. Dargan stated the slope is very different on mountain soils than it is on soils that are clay or in a different place such as Northern Georgia.
- **Bill Horton:** Mr. Horton stated the ULI reports first two priorities they call out is for green space or conservation plan. He stated as a Northstar, we cannot lose sight of that. The second priority is trails, pathways, and walkability. Current non-profits such as Vision Cashiers and others have already started doing a lot of work towards those recommendations. Mr. Horton stated it is critical for the community to review and consider keeping both recommendations together and integrated. In addition, he stated

another point he wants to underscore is about slopes. He stated many are familiar of the sign after leaving Ingles that has a 8% grade warning for trucking, and all coming down that hill is aware that it's a relatively steep slope, and most of our red flags are 35%. Mr. Horton stated other than soil, the other issue here is cover, canopy, sub-canopy, ground cover, grasses, and small plants that have a huge bearing on whether a 8% slope is a big deal or little deal in terms of erosion. He stated their ordinances speaks of slope failures, landslides and slope slides can happen to 25%, which is a catastrophic failure. He stated they should pay attention to the unique slope issues that are relative to Cashiers and the environment and not get caught up in boilerplate numbers that are generally used. Lastly, the recommendation to expand the representation of the Council. He stated the fact that the Council couldn't get a quorum last month was a sign of the challenge Council members deal with, because most everyone here are business people that have day jobs. He believes expanding representation would increase the pool of expertise which could be helpful for the Council.

- **Ben Harris:** Mr. Harris stated he is the president-elect representing the Cashiers Chamber of Commerce. As the Council is aware, after an extensive research and deliberative process, the ULI Advisory Service Panel – Cashiers, NC final report on growth management was released in late May. The panel made five major recommendations: (1) Create a long-term conservation plan to permanently protect critical natural areas, steep slopes, green spaces, and scenic views; (2) Build a robust network of pathways, trails and sidewalks to promote walkability within the village core; (3) Work with state and county governments to accelerate construction of critical infrastructure, including transportation, broadband, water and sewer; (4) Create an organization focused on bringing in more diverse housing (both for sale and rental) to address critical workforce housing needs; and (5) Work proactively with major landowners to ensure development respects local values and community character and scale design architecture.

He stated as the Sponsor of the ULI Panel, the Cashiers Area Chamber will continue its commitment to inclusivity and transparency throughout this process. In partnership with Cashiers Area Community Planning Council, Jackson County officials and other local and regional charitable organizations, the Chamber will continue to facilitate collaborative efforts to consider these recommendations, determine purview, set priorities and implement next steps. Panel Chair Ed McMahon emphasized, *“Going forward, the real question for Cashiers area is not whether it will grow and change, but how. Progress does not demand degraded surroundings. With high standards and a dedicated citizenry, Cashiers can grow without losing the places and characteristics that people love.”* Mr. Harris stated the Chamber looks forward to working with the Planning Council and other community stakeholders in the future to ensure we address inevitable growth with proactive strategies that, as the ULI Panel advises, *“ensures the qualities that have made Cashiers special will not be diminished.”* In order to do so, Cashiers will need disciplined and determined leaders like you, and the Chamber pledges our partnership and support is transformational effort.

In addition, Mr. Harris stated we do not want this to become an additional burden to the Planning Council or to the Planning Department. He stated he believes the Council has been doing great work, and the Planning Department works tirelessly with not enough staff to address the huge amount of work that they have in front of them on a daily basis. The Chamber will continue supporting this collaborative effort, in order to keep moving the ball forward. Mr. Harris stated they are carefully entertaining the idea of hiring an additional staff person, whether that be through the county or through a private organization to work 24/7 on this to take some of the pressure off the existing volunteers and staff.

- **Maria Partlow:** Ms. Partlow stated read all of the ULI study, and she believes the most important part of the study on Page 30 *“Another thing that Cashiers needs to recognize is that all development is not created equal. Some development projects will make your community a better place to live, work, and visit. Other projects will not. Cashiers needs to raise its expectations about the quality of new development. The biggest impediment to better development in many communities is the fear of saying “no” to anything. In the panel's experience, communities that set no standards or low standards will compete to the bottom. Conversely, communities that set high standards will compete to the top.”* Ms. Partlow stated having the ability to say “no” to development that is inconsistent with the community’s vision for the future is where Cashiers wants to be. In addition, as they move forward, the most important thing right now is to pass an ordinance that is necessary to restrict development the way we have had it studied, and the way we want it so we will be able to say “no.” She stated they should consider expanding the Planning Council footprint immediately to represent as much of the community as possible, in a way geographically that would help should they decide in the future to incorporate.

New Business

a) Urban Land Institute (ULI) Discussion

Michael Poston stated within the ULI Report there is a *Suggested Functions and Roles of Community Organizations in Cashiers* table that has who the championing organization or entity should be that would help move forward on specific issues in the area. In addition, the Council’s charge is protective the character of Cashiers, review projects and create design standards, and keeper of the future. He stated the Council has the ability to make recommendations to the Planning Board and Board of Commissioners about how we regulate and set up development parameters. The ULI Report is consistent with the Cashiers Small Area Plan that was adopted in 2019. In addition, he stated the ULI report reference back to the Cashiers Small Area Plan in regards to architectural standards, which the Council has already made some related ordinance amendments. Both identify that there is a gap in housing and workforce housing, and these discussions would need to continue with community involvement. Mr. Poston stated the report also discusses transportation and the need for improvement at Highway 107 and 64 intersection or for the county to continue to prioritize as a project moving forward with DOT. In addition, the report speaks of enhancing and maintaining the Village Ramble and Greenway systems. He stated in regards to sidewalks, the Council has instituted a requirement for new development and redevelopment to require sidewalks along the road frontage. In the Cashiers Small Area Plan it discusses utilizing shared parking in the Village Core, and in the ULI Report recommends reviewing the parking schedule for specific uses. The Planning Council’s role of protecting the character of Cashiers is through our regulatory documents, standards, and ordinances. Mr. Poston stated the county manager did recommend funding in the 2022-2023 budget to seek assistance for recodification of the Cashiers Ordinance. In addition, he stated staff is currently working on the request for proposal (RFP) to seek a planning firm to begin the process of rewriting the ordinance based on the Cashiers Small Area Plan and ULI recommendations. Mr. Poston stated this process takes a few months, once the RFP is sent out, companies have four weeks to respond and prepare their application to evaluate their abilities to do the job. Once the applications are received they would evaluate based on the criteria, experience, and budget. He stated once they have selected the consultant, there is a formal process to go through the Board of Commissioners for approval. He stated staff would be sending out the RFP by mid-July and the process would officially

kick off around September or October and would take 12 to 18 months. Mr. Poston stated the chair and vice-chair would be involved in the process of selection of the consultant. After selecting a consultant, they would begin with a kick off public meeting, and have sections for public feedback.

Mr. Ubertino stated he believes the Chamber should lead to get other groups such as Vision Cashiers and Develop Cashiers Responsibility together for additional input and discussions. Mr. Poston stated the Council can also be a part of those discussions and staff would coordinate with the Chamber, as these meetings would need to be noticed as a public meeting.

Mr. Fletcher inquired if there was anything the Council should be working on in the short-term until the consultants begin the ordinance recodification process. Mr. Poston stated if there are issues that begin to arise that needs to be addressed in the short-term, they are nimble enough to make those changes. However, if it's an issue that requires a big rewrite to the ordinance, they are most likely going to incorporate those into the ordinance recodification process. He suggested the Council should have conversations about where their time is best spent, and consider how to protect the character.

Mr. Ubertino stated getting local groups together to prioritize and discuss issues that could be done with little to no cost. In addition, he stated there is a lot of recommendations that would cost money and he believes the only way that is going to happen is through public private partnership. He stated there has already been some discussions and ideas, but they need to get together to make a decision to bring these recommendations forward.


Mr. Fletcher stated it was mentioned in the ULI Report to expand the membership of Council. He inquired if the Council would vote on this matter. Mr. Poston stated any decision by the Council would go to the Board of Commissioners. In addition, he stated they would have to think through and have discussions for that recommendation. He stated when the Planning Councils were established they would be made up of individuals that are business owners, property owners or residents that are located in the zoned areas that would be subject to the regulations that were being created. He stated some other councils and committees do appoint non-voting ex officio members for certain purposes. For instance, the Cullowhee Planning Council established a non-voting ex officio position for somebody from Western Carolina University. He stated this seat was created because a lot of what happens in that community is not dictated but has the ability to be impacted by decisions made at the university level. Mr. Poston stated they would discuss expanding membership of the Council at the next meeting to allow staff to review and gather additional information regarding this potential recommendation. In addition, he stated he had been discussing the table of permitted use with council member Daniel Fletcher who has some ideas and would like to begin discussion with the Council. Mr. Poston asked the Council to begin reviewing the permitted use table, and bring feedback at the next meeting.

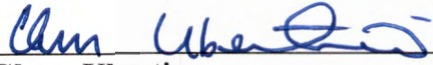
Mr. Poston stated both staff and Council would continue the conversations of the components identified in the Cashiers Small Area Plan and the ULI Report. In addition, he stated they would continue to collaborate with the Chamber and other community partners as they move forward in this process.

Adjournment

With no further business to discuss, David Bonds made a motion to adjourn. Daniel Fletcher seconded the motion, and the meeting adjourned at 6:09 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,


Allison Kelley
Administrative Assistant


Glenn Ubertino
Cashiers Planning Council Chairman