

Cullowhee Planning Council

Minutes

November 2nd, 2020

6:00 p.m.

Virtual Meeting

Members	Present	Absent	Members	Present	Absent	Members	Present	Absent
Rick Bennett		X	Jim Lewis	X		Vacant		
Joel Setzer	X		Mike Byers	X		Vacant		
David Claxton	X		Carol Burton	X				

Staff Present

Michael Poston, Planning Director
 Caroline LaFrienier, Planner II
 Allison Kelley, Administrative Assistant

Call to Order

Chairman David Claxton called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and a quorum was present.

Additions to Agenda

Jim Lewis made a motion to approve the agenda as written. Joel Setzer seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Approval of Minutes

Joel Setzer made a motion to approve the minutes from September 14th, 2020. Jim Lewis seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Public Comment- Sign-up sheet- 3 minutes per speaker

There were no public comments.

New Business

a) Cullowhee Small Area Plan Updates

Mr. Poston introduced Ms. Carol Burton as a new Council member, and that she is the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs at Western Carolina University.

Mr. Poston stated at the last Council meeting they discussed the action items and implementation strategies from the Cullowhee Small Area Plan, and which action items the Council wanted to prioritize. CuRvE has been working towards a River Park with Western Carolina University and with the potential dam removal. He stated the River Park was discussed in the Small Area Plan as an opportunity the Council would like to support, along with the continuation of the greenway. The plan also discussed recommending zoning and text amendments regarding lot widths and parking standards. In addition, there are recommendations in the plan that suggests modifying a special river district in the Old Cullowhee area that may provide additional opportunities for future development.

Mr. Poston informed the Council staff met with the Jackson County Parks and Recreational Department to discuss the Master Plan that was created in 2009 and updated in 2013. The River Park was not included in the planning document, and the Council asked the Recreation Department to include and prioritize the River Park. Mr. Poston stated this concept has gained some traction as it is discussed in the Small Area Plan, and because it is not located in any recreation planning document has made it difficult for CuRvE to seek outside funding. The Recreation Department is looking to update the Master Plan and include prioritizing the River Park project. In addition, they would correspond with their consultant

Equinox that created the planning documents to discuss the costs associated with modifying the Master Plan or the Planning Department could help amend the plan.

Mr. Poston stated the Council also discussed the potential for the Monteith Gap Road park area that would be in conjunction with the realignment of the intersection at Monteith Gap Road, South Painter Road, and Ledbetter Road. This project has been put on hold due to budget constraints by the NCDOT, and there are no definitive dates set at this time for the project. Mr. Poston stated there are some projects such as NC 107 South and Dillsboro Bridge that would continue to move forward that is funded through NC bond money. In addition, most projects that do not currently have existing funding or under construction have been delayed.

Mr. Poston stated that before the Covid-19 pandemic, staff expected to have the ability for movement on the greenway properties. He stated there was discussion amongst the property owners to use MainSpring Conservation as a potential partner. He stated they were trying to make use of Clean Water Management Trust Fund Grants, but were unable to develop appropriate funding and would reassess at a later funding cycle.

In addition, he updated that the county and Recreation Department has been in the process of creating and updating the Jackson County Walks: Pedestrian Plan and Greenway Master Plan. They held public meetings with feedback, and the consultants have contacted stakeholders throughout the county including those that represent those with disabilities to ensure the policies are inclusive and functional for a variety of individuals. He believes there would most likely be another steering committee meeting in December, and another public meeting at the beginning of 2021.

Mike Byers stated CuRvE requested the NCDOT to transfer rights-of-way of the properties near the dam. Mr. Poston stated that the NCDOT has property they acquired from the realignment of Wayehutta Road. The NCDOT provided the county with an updated right-of-way plat map, and the county Tax/Mapping Department combined all properties into one Parcel Identification Number (PIN). Staff has made a new request for the NCDOT to provide and separate the six different PIN's, and go through the Board of Transportation.

Mr. Poston updated the Council that the county completed the 2020 Census, and the overall self-response rate increased 3.2% since 2010. The overall self-response rate was 33.7% that was completed online or by mail, and the county has improved 36.9%. Not all counties in NC achieved their 2010 response rate, which does not help the state in regards to representation. The Cullowhee census tract in 2010 had a response rate of 43.4%, and in 2020 the response rate decreased to 39.2%. Mr. Poston stated he believes the decrease is attributed to the pandemic as students were not on campus during spring, and it was difficult to capture those students when they returned in the fall. Lane Perry, director of community engagement at Western Carolina University (WCU), and his coworkers did their best to outreach to students to be counted. In addition, Forest Hills had the highest increase in self-response rate from 37% in 2010 to 51.5% in 2020. Webster showed a 5% increase, and both Dillsboro and Sylva underperformed. Mr. Poston stated that overall the county had improved in self-response, and the Census Bureau would take the information the enumerators have counted and remove the vacancy rate which is any house that is not lived in for more than 6 months out of the year as of April 1, 2020. The total response number would most likely be in the 70-80 range once the second home communities that would not be counted are removed. In 2010 when they had a 33.7% self-response rate, the total response rate was 70% that is attributable to the large second home population.

David Claxton inquired if the 70-80% response rate reflects the number of the population of the county. Mr. Poston stated the count is based on dwelling units, and they have a separate count for those experiencing homelessness. In addition, response rates are the percentage of dwelling units (data points) that have responded to the census in any given area.

Carol Burton inquired how the WCU students were counted for the 2020 Census. Mr. Poston stated the student population is counted two ways, first the on-campus student population is enumerated by the university as group quarters counts. WCU provided the data of students that lived off-campus and those that reside in the county the majority of the year would be counted. If their parents claimed those off-campus students, the Census Bureau would move them to count for Jackson County.

Mr. Claxton inquired if there were any discussions of apartment complexes in the Cullowhee area. Mr. Poston stated there had not been much discussion of additional apartment complexes at this time, and believed there would be a pause based on his discussions with apartment owners, and developers. However, there could unless there could be discussions in the future for small developments (8-10 units

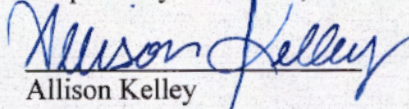
of studio apartments for graduate students, etc.) Mr. Byers stated if a developer reaches out to the university if they are considering student housing in the Cullowhee area. In addition, he stated the university has a formula for the trajectory of enrollment, and based on the formula he had been informing developers there is no need for additional student housing as the university expects a decline in the number of 18-year-olds across the nation in 2026. However, there is a need on a smaller scale for market-rate housing as there is not a good inventory in the area for graduate students and faculty members. There is a need for apartments with master bedrooms and large kitchens that is not typically included in student housing developments.

Mr. Poston informed the Council he attended a Board of Commissioners work session in October and asked the Planning Department to look into issues surrounding erosion control and stormwater specifically outside of the zoned jurisdictions. Staff and the Planning Board have made changes regarding the order of operation of construction fencing the horizontal grading before going vertical with the buildings to the Erosion Control Ordinance. In addition, staff would be discussing with the Planning Board to consider a multi-family housing ordinance for developments outside the zoned jurisdictions, which would be important for the future of Cullowhee.

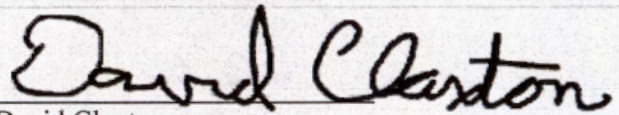
Adjournment

With no further business, Joel Setzer made a motion to adjourn. Jim Lewis seconded the motion and the meeting adjourned at 6:35 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Allison Kelley
Administrative Assistant- Planning



David Claxton
Planning Council Chair