



MINUTES OF THE
PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION
OF THE VILLAGE OF VOLENTE, TEXAS
TUESDAY, APRIL 14, 2015 at 6:30 P.M.
City Hall, 16100 Wharf Cove, Volente, Texas.

Present

Jeff Browning, Chair
Phil Mitchell
Rett Scudder
Nancy Carufel, Alternate

Absent

Richard Roucloux
Judy Barrick

Also in Attendance

Council Member Bill Connors
Council Member Kristi Belote

1. Open Regular Meeting.

Chair Jeff Browning called the meeting to order at 6:34 p.m.

2. Call Roll.

Julia Vicars, City Secretary called roll. A quorum was established.

3. Citizen Comments.

Judy Graci, Booth Circle, voiced concerns that the Village is moving from a rural feel towards denser development. Feels there needs to be more openness and transparency with Agendas and Meetings. Requested that community surveys and agendas be placed on Nextdoor. Believes that residents should have the opportunity to discuss all changes to be made to the zoning ordinance.

Kit Hopkins, Booth Circle, states that she came from Houston and watched the city change to five feet setbacks and that she bought in Volente to escape all of that. Has concerns over some of the proposed changes. Prefers the look of the Village now, with its rural feel.

Allison Thrash, FM 2769, supports simplifying the ordinances but not at the cost of the rural feel of Volente. Adds that new categories could possibly open a door to high density development. States that the 2003 and 2014 Community Surveys both indicate the public does not want to see high density development.

Jan Yenawine, FM 2769, states that the Planning and Zoning Commission should look at the proposed changes, without political pressure, and make recommendations to Council based on their opinion. Setbacks of five feet are inappropriate because of the fire hazard. Stresses the importance of Town Hall Meetings and public involvement. The Chair thanks the citizens for their input.

4. Approval of the Minutes from March 10, 2015.

Commissioner Rett Scudder makes a motion to approve the meeting minutes from March 10, 2015. Seconded by Commissioner Phil Mitchell. Carries unanimously.

5. Discussion and Possible Action on Recommending to Council an amendment to Ordinance No. 2004-O-24, 2004-O-25, and 2014-O-12; possibly changing the process and routing of variance requests.

Barbara Wilson, City Administrator, details the background on this item. The powers were given to the Planning and Zoning Commission to hear and make recommendations to Council on variances from certain ordinances. This proposed change would allow all variances from Water Quality, Site Development, and Subdivision to bypass Planning and Zoning and go to Council. Council has discussed this matter briefly but would prefer Planning and Zoning's recommendation before discussing further.

Citizen Comments:

Jan Yenawine, FM 2769, states that the Planning and Zoning Commission should remain the first board to review requested variances because they are a non-political board set up for this purpose. He cautions that side-stepping this process may create some unforeseen circumstances. States that joint meetings with Council and the Planning and Zoning Commission have taken place in the past, with just one public notice.

Judy Graci, Booth Circle, states that a topic of this magnitude should be discussed at a Town Hall meeting. Feels that this change, made to keep an applicant's cost down, would not be just, adding that there is a cost to acquiring a variance because it costs the city to do so. Feels that it is best that the city take two looks at each application, with the City Engineer weighing in. States that the public notice for the Planning and Zoning Commission meeting could include the date of the Council meeting, to cut down on costs for the applicant.

Allison Thrash, FM 2769, feels that this is premature to look at this issue in an attempt to streamline the development process until a full review of ordinances has been completed. If ordinances are streamlined and simplified then the amount of variances would go down.

Ken Beck, Booth Circle, states that the Local Government Code establishes the Planning and Zoning Commission. Adds that Council would give variances the same attention that the Planning and Zoning Commission does, but that in an attempt to alleviate some of the burden on residents wishing to build in Volente, Council had proposed this Agenda item. States that Council and the Planning and Zoning Commission could look at the dates they meet and try to schedule enough time between a Planning and Zoning meeting and the creation of a Council Agenda.

Kit Hopkins, Booth Circle, says that this situation of Planning and Zoning reviewing a variance then Council doing the same is like belts and suspenders. Having Planning and Zoning take the first blush look at a variance then having Council come behind and decide the ultimate result allows the variance to be looked at by more eyes and heard by more ears, ensuring nothing has been overlooked and that everyone is treated the same.

Kristi Belote, Buddy Ave, is concerned with the time constraints Council faces and agrees there should be checks and balances. Feels that with an influx of new members on Planning and Zoning and new members on Council, then neither party is particularly politically motivated and that each can take an unbiased look at variances.

Bill Connors, Lakeview, states that while we should consider applicant's time, and find a way to cut the time it takes to receive a permit, we should keep variances heard by a party other than Council initially.

Alternate Nancy Carufel asks if it is LCRA, utility companies, or the Village causing a delay in the permitting process.

Barbara Wilson, City Administrator, answers that before the Village can review a site plan it goes to LCRA and the Public Utility Companies.

Alternate Nancy Carufel asks for clarification that there is nothing on the Village side holding up the variance process.

Barbara Wilson answers yes, nothing on the Village side holds up variances.

Alternate Nancy Carufel asks about the possibility of using joint meetings instead of changing the routing process.

Barbara Wilson, City Administrator, answers that joint meetings, would be a longer meeting but only require one public notice.

Commissioner Rett Scudder makes a motion to postpone this item for six months, allowing for time to streamline and simplify the process using other methodologies with the possibility of combined public notices and joint meetings. Seconded by Commissioner Phil Mitchell. Carries unanimously.

6. Discussion and Possible Action regarding the Zoning Ordinance, specifically the following information:

- a. Update from Bill Connors and Kristi Belote on the Progress made by Council at their last Work Session.

Council Members Bill Connors and Kristi Belote give background on the work session from March 31st and the progress made at the work session itself.

Council Member Connors stresses that everything suggested at this point is completely conceptual, with plans to involve the public when Council comes to consensus on the conceptual plans. In the near future Council will begin creating a redline draft, which will be taken back to the Planning and Zoning Commission for review. After their review, Council will review again and make changes. Final revisions will be presented to the Public via Town Hall meetings, neighborhood meetings, Nextdoor, etc. Council Member Connors summarizes the process for Ordinance Review he has created. Ideally, Council and the Planning and Zoning Commission would be working simultaneously to achieve review and revision at a quick pace.

- b. Zoning Districts.

Council Member Kristi Belote summarizes the conceptual Zoning Districts and the Zoning Chart in the backup material. She references the "What is Zoning"

document in the backup material from the City of Austin, adding that this guide has helped her get a better understanding of zoning.

Chair Jeff Browning says that while he wants to help provide relief to some of the smaller lots within the Village he is cautious of any changes that would allow someone to build a tiny house on a lot if it diminishes the property values of a neighbor.

c. Zoning Uses.

Council Member Connors summarizes the development of his conceptual Zoning Map, detailing what each section would be titled and how it allows for the uniqueness of the properties within each neighborhood.

Jeff Browning, Chair, thanks Council Member Connors and Council Member Belote for their hard work.

Citizen Comments:

Allison Thrash, FM 2769, suggests that Council and the Planning and Zoning Commission entertain the idea of a Town Hall meeting at the front end of this topic. Feels that this would help the boards get a pulse on properties, the community, and the desire of property owners within the Village.

Judy Graci, Booth Circle, asks Council Member Connors who asked him to come up with these categories.

Council Member Connors answers that these are completely conceptual and he desired to give Council a starting point to make changes from.

Judy Graci responds that multi-family townhomes and condominiums are out of the box and not fitting with the spirit or vision of Volente.

Council Member Connors and Barbara Wilson state that there are already properties within the Village used as multi-family.

7. Discussion and Possible Recommendation to Council on the issue of water tanks providing a recommendation as to whether they are permanent structures or portable structures, and if they should require screening.

Barbara Wilson summarizes the reason Council has asked for Planning and Zoning's opinion on this matter and some of the recent history of water tanks within the Village. Council Member Kristi Belote mentions the current results from survey questions asking the public their opinion on this topic. The surveys were posted on Nextdoor and in the email Newsletter.

Citizen Comments:

Ken Beck, Booth Circle, states that he met with Gary Frame to get data on water tanks. The most popular size of water tanks is 2500 gallons which is 8ft x 8ft. Rainwater Collection has an optimal size of 10,000 gallons.

Kit Hopkins, Booth Circle, says there are already large rainwater collection tanks within the Village. There needs to be some limit on how far they can be in the setback, but some leniency to allow residents to collect rainwater.

Judy Graci, Booth Circle, feels that how tall and where a tank can be placed should be a considered. What might be best for the owner may not be best for the neighbor. Feels that side setbacks might be acceptable but front setbacks should not.

Jan Yenawine, FM 2769, states that tanks should be allowed anywhere on someone's property with a consideration to the front setback. Feels that water tanks are portable structures if they are sand bedded and there is no concrete foundation.

Bill Connors, Lakeview, states that the placement of a water tank within a setback does not impact overcrowding, traffic, or congestion, density of population, but is instead solely based on aesthetics. Feels that people should be allowed to place a water tank on their property where it is most appropriate, allowing only for safety concerns.

Alternate Nancy Carufel makes a motion to recommend to Council that water tanks are a portable structure that can be placed in the setbacks, excluding the front setback, and allowing for Council to decide on size, height, width, and screening. Seconded by Commissioner Rett Scudder. Carries unanimously.

Alternate Nancy Carufel makes a motion to postpone Agenda items 8, 9, and 10 to the next meeting. Seconded by Commissioner Phil Mitchell. Carries unanimously.

8. Review of the Vision Statement of the Village of Volente and Recommendation to Council on any necessary changes to ensure it encompasses the atmosphere, view, and ideals of Volente.
9. Review of the Comprehensive Plan, Chapter One.
10. Review of the Zoning Map.

11. Adjourn.

The meeting adjourned at 9:02 p.m.

Passed and Approved this 9 day of June, 2015.

Signed:

JB

Jeff Browning, Chair of Planning and Zoning Commission

Attest:

JV

Julia Vicars, City Secretary