

# MORGANTOWN PLANNING COMMISSION

## MINUTES

6:30 p.m.

June 11, 2020

By Electronic Means

**COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:** Peter DeMasters, William Blosser, Ronald Dulaney, AJ Hammond, Sam Loretta, Bill Petros, Carol Pyles, Michael Shuman, Tim Stranko

**COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:** None

**STAFF PRESENT:** Christopher M. Fletcher, AICP

I. **CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL:** DeMasters called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and read the explanation of the how the Planning Commission conducts business by electronic means and rules for public comments.

II. **GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENTS:** None.

III. **MATTERS OF BUSINESS:**

A. Approval of the May 14, 2020 meeting minutes. Stranko moved to approve as presented; seconded by Petros. The motion carried unanimously. Loretta abstained due to his absence.

IV. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS:** None.

V. **NEW BUSINESS:**

A. **MNS20-04 / McLaughlin / 448 East Brockway Avenue:** Request by Sandra McLaughlin for minor subdivision approval of property located at 448 East Brockway Avenue. Second Ward Tax District, Tax Map 35, Parcels 52 and 55; R-1A, Single-Family Residential District.

Fletcher presented the Staff Report and noted the petitioner was unable to attend and asked staff to represent the petition.

There being not comments or questions by the Commission, DeMasters asked if there was anyone present to speak in favor of or in opposition to the petitioner. Fletcher confirmed no one had signed up prior to the meeting to speak. There being no public comments, DeMasters as for staff's recommendation, which was read by Fletcher.

DeMasters asked if there was any discussion. There being none, he asked for a motion.

Stranko moved to approve MNS20-04 subject to Staff conditions; seconded by Shuman. The motion carried unanimously.

**B. TX20-03 / Administrative / Wiles Hill Gateway Overlay District:** Administrative request to amend Sections 1329.02 and 1331, and create Article 1358 WHOD, Wiles Hill Gateway Overlay District of the Planning and Zoning Code as they relate to the Wiles Hill Gateway Overlay District recommended in the Future Study Area No. 5 Plan dated October 8, 2019.

Fletcher presented the Staff Report. DeMasters asked if there was any discussion.

Petros asked about accessory dwellings and setbacks. Fletcher noted that if the accessory dwelling unit is detached from the principal building then it will need to meet related accessory structure setback requirements, like a shed or a detached garage.

Stranko inquired about provisions with regard to retaining walls. He understands that what we are trying to avoid the monolithic twenty-foot-tall retaining wall, so each retaining wall section cannot be more than five feet tall, is that correct? Fletcher responded in the affirmative.

There being no further comments or questions by the Commission, DeMasters asked if there was anyone present to speak in favor of or in opposition to this text amendment. Fletcher confirmed no one had signed up prior to the meeting to speak. However, staff received two emails, which Fletcher read into the record.

From Richard Dumas, 444 Overhill Street. "I would like to express my support for the proposed plans for The Wiles Hill Gateway Overlay District. This overlay district has come about as a result of the city's most recent Comprehensive Plan (Special Study Area 5). I would also like to thank the city staff, Planning Commission, stakeholders and community members who have invested uncounted hours in the development of a plan which balances the needs and desires of the neighborhood, stakeholders and the city. Respectfully submitted."

From Bette Garrett, 36 Highland Avenue. "First of all, let me say that the map that was enclosed with your letter is horrible. The lines delineating the location of the subject site are barely visible. The streets are not labeled. Mostly it just means that development and developers are continuing to crawl up Wiles Hill and eradicate and established neighborhood with longtime residents. I've lived in my home for 34 years. As a single woman, it took a lot of hard work and a lot of sacrifice to have a house and pay off the mortgage. I've spent many thousands on maintenance of my house which is over 100 years old. This is a neighborhood. Yes, some of the homes are rentals, but they've been occupied by the same persons for five to ten years. So now your developments want to demolish a part of the Wiles Hill neighborhood. I could have a six or even four-story building occupied by rowdy students across the street from me?! You will probably go ahead with development as you have already planned and not pay a bit of attention, consideration, or care to this letter. Based on past performance, the Commission has usually sided with developers. I see this meeting as nothing more than a formality. Just a rubber stamp. Sincerely yours."

There being no further public comments, DeMasters asked if there were any comments from Commissioners.

Stranko wanted to address Ms. Garrett's email noting that everyone cares about the concerns that she has, which is the reason why we convened this process. He thinks the practical effect of this proposal is exactly the opposite of what Ms. Garrett assumes. He thanked her for her comments but disagrees with her judgement.

Loretta asked if we had heard anything from Mr. Metheny. Fletcher stated staff has been in regular working contact with Mr. Metheny and the Wiles Hill Neighborhood Working Group. Fletcher noted nothing would lead him to believe that Mr. Metheny would be in opposition to it.

Fletcher would characterize their conversations over the entire time and most recently as being positive. Staff did not receive any formal communication of support or opposition.

Petros wanted to applaud staff and homeowners in Wiles Hill, as well as Mr. Metheny in working this out. A tremendous amount of work has been done and it looks like a beautiful plan. Petros noted that he did have concerns regarding accessory dwelling units. He feels we will be setting a precedent for the rest of Morgantown.

Dulaney thanked Fletcher and his staff as well as the constituents of Wiles Hill that participated in this process. He also thanked Mr. Metheny for his patience and willingness to go through this process and work through this with the community. Regarding the accessory dwelling unit, this is a good opportunity to “pilot” that again. If regulated well this could be a very useful tool to provide affordable housing.

Stranko noted he agreed with Dulaney’s comments. He stated that we have two options. To protect the Wiles Hill neighborhood and to motivate redevelopment.

There being no further comments or questions by the Commission, DeMasters asked for staff’s recommendation, which was read by Fletcher.

Stranko moved to forward to City Council the proposed planning and zoning code amendment as described in addendum B with a recommendation that City Council enact; seconded by Loretta. The motion passed unanimously.

**VI. OTHER BUSINESS**

**A. Committee Reports**

- Traffic Commission Report: None.
- Other Committees: None.

**B. Staff Comments: None.**

At approximately 7:10 William Blosser noted that he was in attendance and that he had been on video conference all evening. He appeared in the Webex video conference as “user” instead of his name. He confirmed the votes he cast for both addenda items were “aye.” He apologized for not noted he presence when the roll call was taken.

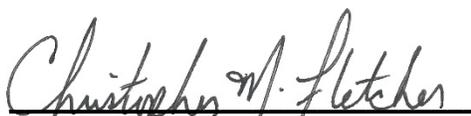
**VII. FOR THE GOOD OF THE COMMISSION: None.**

**VIII. ADJOURNMENT: 7:14 p.m.**

MINUTES APPROVED:

July 9, 2020

COMMISSION SECRETARY:

  
Christopher M. Fletcher, AICP