

TOWN OF SPENCER
BOARD OF ALDERMEN
CALLED MEETING
JOINT MEETING WITH PLANNING BOARD
TUESDAY, JANUARY 20, 2009
6:30 P.M.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor Jody Everhart
Mayor Pro-Tem Jeff Morris
Aldermen: Nick Bishop
Donnie Hinson
Ken Womble

MEMBERS ABSENT: Aldermen: Scott Benfield
C. E. Spear

Planning Board members present were: Ron Gerlock, Jim Gobbel, Jeff Kiker, Tom Long, and Craig Powers. Also present were: Town Manager Larry Smith, Land Management Director Dustin Wilson, and Town Clerk Lisa Perdue.

Mayor Everhart called the meeting to order explaining that the joint workshop was scheduled to discuss requirements for development in the I-85 area. There will be no period for public comment. The portion of Long Ferry Road between the railroad crossing and I-85 is no longer in the commercial corridor.

The most recent new business at I-85 had to meet a lot of restrictions, which makes it hard to get new growth. Visibility is important for a business to survive and for security. Alderman Womble stated he feels we need leniency on signs to promote businesses. Jim Gobbel and Alderman Hinson agreed that higher signage should be allowed on I-85.

Alderman Bishop was on the Planning Board when the ordinance was written. The intent was to avoid a big conglomeration of signs, as on Innes Street in Salisbury. He is agreeable with revisiting the issue of signage. He feels larger signs are okay, but we need to retain some control over how many signs are allowed. He wants Spencer to remain a quaint and small town, but maybe the Planning should revisit the restrictions. It would be a benefit to have green spaces (planters, shrubs). Sidewalks may be needed at some point as that area develops. Ron Gerlock gave Childress Winery as an example of an attractive highway business.

Alderman Morris feels some businesses may not want to jump through the necessary hoops that it takes for the current ordinance, since that may take several months. Spencer needs new businesses to get increased revenue so the tax rate can stay the same. Problems with the current ordinance include: facades with a national corporate logo are prohibited, building setbacks should be changed, the maximum sign area and height is too restrictive, and prohibited signs include the new LCD type signs. Those signs are

valuable and would increase the tax base. They would not be desirable in the downtown area, but would be okay in I-85. His suggestion would be to remove some of the HB restrictions for the Interstate area, specifically, the part of the ordinance relating to windows and doors, and the part concerning outdoor goods for sale.

Alderman Morris proposes creation of an Interstate Business District along the entirety of Long Ferry Road as a new zoning classification. He also would like the definition of Adult Establishment to be reviewed in the zoning ordinance. The current definition requires that 50% of the merchandise sold must be adult material. Legally, that amount could be changed to as little as 15%.

Jim Gobbel asked how Spencer could attract businesses such as Childress Winery. Morris responded that we should allow uses "by right" without jumping over hurdles.

Mayor Everhart is concerned about the Trevey property, which abuts the Aldi property. Aldi is in East Spencer, therefore East Spencer could potentially annex the Trevey property.

Alderman Morris asked if the ordinance could address the issue of property owners so that they could petition for a buffer if neighboring property is declared historical and the owners make a historical archaeological find.

Ron Gerlock stated he likes the idea of Interstate Business zoning. Signs need to be easily seen and corporate logos are good because they are recognizable.

Jeff Kiker feels writing new specifications will be challenging because there is a fine line between too much restriction and not enough. But he agrees signs need to be visible.

Tom Long thinks an Interstate Business classification would be a good idea because Spencer can maintain its small town charm in the downtown area, but large businesses on I-85 would have other requirements.

Gobbel feels it is good for the Planning Board to meet jointly with the Aldermen. He would approve of a new IB district, and feels that we should allow signs the same as those located elsewhere on I-85.

Mayor Everhart mentioned that the new LED signs could be used to advertise local events.

Morris thinks we should look at the topography because that could impact the height of the signs.

Craig Powers stated that our current ordinance is similar to what is currently allowed on Innes Street in Salisbury. He cautioned Board members that the LED lights are currently

under a safety study, and we should wait until the study is complete. He feels that we need connectivity between businesses (sidewalks and drives between businesses). If

water service is provided to business, backflow preventers can be very large and may need to require screening. He feels that some restrictions need to remain for the results to be tasteful.

Members agreed that the Interstate Business zoning classification should be the first priority for the Planning Board.

They may also consider high density residential development such as condos. The issue of cluster development could be explored as well. That subject was mentioned previously in the land use plan, but it was determined that few parcels would qualify.

Mayor Everhart reminded the Aldermen of the annual planning retreat on January 30 and 31 at the Spencer Fire Department.

With no further business, Mayor Everhart adjourned the meeting at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa B. Perdue
Clerk to the Board