

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE TOWN OF VINTON PLANNING
COMMISSION HELD ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2015, AT 6:30 P.M., AT THE VINTON
MUNICIPAL BUILDING, 311 SOUTH POLLARD STREET.**

MEMBERS PRESENT: **Dave Jones, Chairman**
 Bill Booth
 Keith Liles
 Dawn Michelsen
 Bob Patterson

STAFF PRESENT: **Anita McMillan, Planning and Zoning Director**
 Karla Turman, Associate Planner/Code Enforcement Officer
 Julie Tucei, Planning and Zoning Coordinator
 Joey Hiner, Vinton Public Works (at 7:35 p.m.)

OTHERS PRESENT: **Allen Kasey, 105 Giles Avenue, Vinton**
 Casey McCauley, 820 S. Pollard Street, Vinton
 Philip Thompson, Roanoke County Community Development
 Jay Brenchick, Roanoke County Economic Development
 Debbie Adams, *The Vinton Messenger*
 Mick Michelsen (at 7:21 p.m.), 225 N. Maple Street, Vinton
 David Hill (at 7:25 p.m.), Old School Partners, L.L.C.
 Dale Wilkinson (at 7:25 p.m.), Old School Partners, L.L.C.

AGENDA

WORK SESSION 1—6:30 P.M.

- I. Call to Order**
- II. Urban Development Areas (UDA) Planning Grant Program for Planning Consultant Assistance-Draft Scope of Work Proposal and Schedule.**
- III. Meeting Schedule:**
 - 1. Roland E. Cook Community Open House Meeting—Monday, October 12, 2015**
 - 2. UDA Kick-off Meeting—3rd Week in October**
 - 3. Roland E. Cook Public Hearing—Thursday, November 5, 2015**
- IV. Comments of Planning Commissioners and Planning Staff**
- V. Adjournment of Work Session 1**

REGULAR SESSION—7 P.M.

- VI. Call to Order—Roll Call**
- VII. Approval of Minutes**
 - 1. September 3, 2015, Work Session and Public Hearing**
- VIII. Public Hearing to receive comments concerning:**
 - 1. The proposed ordinance to declare 123 Gus Nicks Boulevard, Tax Map Number 60.16-1-3, zoned CB Central Business District, a blighted property and in violation of Chapter 14 Buildings and Building Regulations, Article V Spot Blight Abatement, of the Vinton Town Code, and to consider approval of the proposed plan to demolish the structure and clear the property.**
 - a. Open Public Hearing**
 - Report from staff**

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- **Receive public comments**
 - **Discussion and questions**
 - b. Close Public Hearing**
 - c. Commission to take action on proposed ordinance.**
- 2. The proposed ordinance to declare 830 S. Pollard Street, Tax Map Number 60.19-4-4, zoned R-2 Residential District, a blighted property and in violation of Chapter 14 Buildings and Building Regulations, Article V Spot Blight Abatement, of the Vinton Town Code, and to consider approval of the proposed plan to demolish the structure and clear the property.**
- a. Open Public Hearing**
 - **Report from staff**
 - **Receive public comments**
 - **Discussion and questions**
 - b. Close Public Hearing**
 - c. Commission to take action on proposed ordinance.**
- 3. The proposed ordinance to declare 308-B 9th Street, Tax Map Number 60.10-4-27, zoned R-2 Residential District, a blighted property and in violation of Chapter 14 Buildings and Building Regulations, Article V Spot Blight Abatement, of the Vinton Town Code, and to consider approval of the proposed plan to demolish the structure and clear the property.**
- a. Open Public Hearing**
 - **Report from staff**
 - **Receive public comments**
 - **Discussion and questions**
 - b. Close Public Hearing**
 - c. Commission to take action on proposed ordinance.**

IX. Adjournment of Regular Session

WORK SESSION 2—After Regular Session

- X. Old School Partners, LLC, Authorized Agent, for a rezoning of the former Roland E. Cook School Property, from R-2 Residential to Mixed Use Development to house 21 residential apartments with supporting recreational/small business uses, at 412 S. Poplar Street, Tax Map Number 060.16-09-39.00 and 40.00.**
- XI. Citizen Comments**
- XII. Other Business**
- XIII. Adjournment of Work Session 2**

The first work session of the Vinton Planning Commission was called to order at 6:35 p.m. by Chairman Jones. All five members were present. Ms. McMillan welcomed Mr. Keith Liles to the Planning Commission. She reminded Mr. Liles that all commission members must be certified within a year to a year and a half of joining the commission. She mentioned that there is an upcoming training workshop on capital improvement programs if any members are interested in attending. Mr. Liles said he can attend the March and May Planning Commissioner certification classes. Ms. McMillan said she will register him for the classes.

The first item on the agenda was the discussion of the Urban Development Areas (UDA) Planning Grant

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Program for Planning Consultant Assistance—Draft Scope of Work Proposal and Schedule. Ms. McMillan reminded them that Ms. Michelsen is the Planning Commission's representative on the UDA committee. She asked them for comments on the draft the consultants have submitted. She said that the kickoff meeting for the UDA process is tentatively scheduled for November 5, 2015, because Planning Commission already has a meeting that night for the public hearing for the Roland Cook rezoning. She asked the members if they would be able to attend the kickoff meeting around 3 p.m. or 4 p.m. on November 5th. In regards to the Roland E. Cook building, Mr. Booth asked if the developers had already bought the building. Ms. McMillan stated that they have a contract to buy it if the rezoning is approved.

Next on the agenda, was the discussion of the upcoming meeting schedule for the Planning Commission. The Roland E. Cook Community Open House Meeting is scheduled for Monday, October 12, 2015.

The UDA Kick-off Meeting will tentatively be held on November 5, 2015. Ms. McMillan briefly discussed the right-of-way (ROW) requirements from VDOT. She mentioned that the Town's zoning ordinance is really outdated, as is the subdivision ordinance. She said that she hopes that with UDA consultant assistance, both can be updated. Ms. McMillan said that the UDA process will last approximately eight months and that four meetings are planned. Ms. Michelsen asked if they will provide materials during the process. Ms. McMillan said the Town has already given them copies of items such as the zoning ordinance, and that Roanoke County will provide GIS mapping. She asked Ms. Michelsen to review the proposal from consultants that was provided prior to the kickoff meeting.

The Roland E. Cook Rezoning Public Hearing is scheduled for Thursday, November 5, 2015. Ms. Michelsen asked what the open house on October 12th will consist of. Ms. McMillan said that the developers will be there to talk with guests. There will be several stations around the room about different aspects of the project, including one focusing on Mixed Use Development (MUD) zoning. Ms. McMillan mentioned that it will be just a drop-in meeting. They will be accepting comments and suggestions from people who attend the open house. Mr. Booth asked if the new apartments in the building will be only for senior citizens. Ms. McMillan said the apartments will be open to anyone to rent. She said they are planned to be 1 bedroom each with a total of 21 units. Chairman Jones asked how many old classrooms are in the former school. Both Ms. McMillan and Mr. Patterson said there are about 21 classrooms. Ms. McMillan said one of the developer's (Mr. Hill), mom went to the school. Ms. Michelsen asked if there is a commitment by developers to follow through with this project. Ms. McMillan said that, as long as the rezoning is approved, they are committed to completing the project. She reminded them that the Planning Commission will hear the rezoning request in a public hearing on November 5th.

The next item was to receive comments from the Planning Commissioners and Staff. The only comment was from Chairman Jones. He said that he thought that it would be a little too much to try to do the dinner at the BBQ Grill that evening and maybe we should do that another night. The Commissioners decided they would like to have pizza for the November 5th dinner/work session. With there being nothing further to discuss in work session 1, it was adjourned by Chairman Jones at 6:56 p.m.

The regular session of the Vinton Planning Commission was called to order in the Council Chambers at 7:01 p.m. by Chairman Jones. Roll was called, and all five members were present. Chairman Jones

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welcomed the new commission member, Keith Liles.

The first item on the evening session agenda was the approval of minutes from the September 3, 2015, work session and public hearing. A motion to approve the minutes as submitted was made by Mr. Patterson and seconded by Mr. Booth. All five members voted in favor of the motion to approve the minutes.

Next was the public hearing to receive comments concerning the proposed ordinance to declare 123 Gus Nicks Boulevard, Tax Map Number 60.16-1-3, zoned CB Central Business District, a blighted property in violation of Chapter 14 Buildings and Building Regulations, Article V Spot Blight Abatement, of the Vinton Town Code, and to consider approval of the proposed plan to demolish the structure and clear the property.

Chairman Jones announced the public hearing and read the request aloud. He then stated that there would be rules for conducting the public hearing. He stated that the property owner would have five minutes before public comments and five minutes after the comments. He said that anyone else who would like to talk about the property would have three minutes. He said they do want to make sure no one who would like to speak is excluded.

Chairman Jones opened the Public Hearing at 7:06 pm for 123 Gus Nicks Blvd, and asked for the staff report. Ms. Turman read the staff report, a copy of which will be made a part of the permanent record. She showed an aerial map of the property and some photos of it on the overhead projector. She stated that the property owner was notified last year that the property was determined to be blighted. She said the owner contacted Ms. Turman recently to say that he had hired a contractor to demolish and clear a portion of the property. She stated that the contractor was hired and contacted the Town and County and is in the process of obtaining a demolition permit. Ms. Turman said the owner has been informed that he will need to clear the entire property. She said this property was deemed a fire hazard and has had vagrants in it from time to time.

Ms. Turman asked if there were any questions for staff. Mr. Booth asked if the partial clearing of the property that the owner proposed is going to be allowed. Ms. Turman said that the owner was told the property must be completely cleared. Ms. Michelsen asked what will happen if the property is only partially cleared. Ms. Turman stated that the Town will clear it and bill the owner for the work or place a lien on the property.

Chairman Jones asked if anyone in attendance would like to speak about 123 Gus Nicks Boulevard. No one responded. Therefore, there was nothing further to discuss, and Chairman Jones closed the public hearing at 7:14 p.m. Chairman Jones stated that he needed a recommendation from the Commission. Ms. McMillan said the recommendation needed to state whether the property is blighted and needs to be demolished and cleared.

Mr. Booth began to make a motion to recommend that the property be declared blighted. However, Chairman Jones asked if he could revise and add to the motion. He instead made a motion to recommend that Council declare that the property is blighted, but to see that the owner may still carry on with his own plans to clear the property within a reasonable time frame—no later than the end of December 2015 for progress to be made by the property owner. The motion was seconded by Mr.

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Patterson. A roll call vote was taken and all members voted in favor of the motion.

Next, was the public hearing for the proposed ordinance to declare 830 S. Pollard Street, Tax Map Number 60.19-4-4, zoned R-2 Residential District, a blighted property and in violation of Chapter 14 Buildings and Building Regulations, Article V Spot Blight Abatement, of the Vinton Town Code, and to consider approval of the proposed plan to demolish the structure and clear the property. Chairman Jones stated that the same rules to apply to this public hearing as the one before. He opened the public hearing at 7:18 p.m.

First, Ms. Turman presented the report from staff, a copy of which will be made a part of the permanent record. She said that the property was determined to be blighted. A surviving member of the family who owned the property lives in the house next door. Mr. Banks is unable to sell it due to no clear deed for the property. Ms. Turman said that a notification of this hearing was sent to Mr. Banks. She said a title search conducted by the Town found nine possible other heirs and notifications were sent to their last known addresses. She said that the Town attorney has been consulted about the title issues on this property. Ms. Turman showed them some aerial maps and photos of the property on the overhead. There were no further comments or questions for Ms. Turman.

Chairman Jones asked for comments from the public. Mr. Casey McCauley, who lives at 820 S. Pollard Street, spoke first. He said that only raccoons, snakes, and cats live in the house at 830 S. Pollard Street. He said there are large holes in roof, and that he would not walk on the floor because it is rotten. Mr. McCauley said that by taking care of this blighted property, the Town can help increase the value of his property and make the area safer for his grandkids by declaring this a blighted property. Chairman Jones asked on which side of 830 S. Pollard Street is Mr. McCauley's property on. Mr. McCauley said his property is on the upper side. Mr. Allen Kasey, a member of the Vinton Board of Zoning appeals and resident on Giles Avenue, said he just came to support Mr. McCauley. Mr. Kasey said he passes this house all the time and said it is blighted and should be torn down. He said it is a hazard and an eyesore. He stated that he is in agreement with declaring it blighted. Chairman Jones asked how close Mr. Kasey lives to it. Mr. Kasey explained the location of his property in relation to the house at 830 S. Pollard Street. Chairman Jones asked if Mr. Kasey knew the property owner who lives next to the property. Mr. Kasey said he does know him and that he thinks the gentleman's health is getting poor. Mr. Kasey suggested that the Town escheat the property and sell it.

There was no one else there to speak on this issue, and no further discussion or questions were heard about it. Chairman Jones closed the public hearing at 7:27 p.m. Ms. Michelsen asked about the time frame for tearing the house down. Ms. Turman said it would depend upon when Town funding is available. Ms. McMillan said they needed a motion, and if they are in favor of it, that the motion must state that they recommend declaring the property blighted and recommend clearing of the property. Mr. Patterson made a motion to recommend to Town Council that the property be declared blighted and be cleared. The motion was seconded by Mr. Booth. A roll call vote was taken, and all members voted in favor of the motion.

The next item on the agenda was to hear the proposed ordinance to declare 308-B 9th Street, Tax Map Number 60.10-4-27, zoned R-2 Residential District, a blighted property and in violation of Chapter 14 Buildings and Building Regulations, Article V Spot Blight Abatement, of the Vinton Town Code, and to consider approval of the proposed plan to demolish the structure and clear the property. Chairman Jones

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opened the public hearing at 7:29 p.m. He asked for the report from staff.

Ms. Turman read the staff report, a copy of which will be made a part of the permanent record. She mentioned that it is the only one of the properties that the owner did try to begin making a plan for it, but unfortunately, the owner has not followed through with it. Ms. Turman showed the Commissioners an aerial map and photos of the property. She said that staff's recommendation is to demolish the structure. Ms. Turman said she did speak with a tenant of the owner about the property. The tenant said that the property owner had spoken with someone they know about demolishing the property, but that person is not licensed contractor and is not able to do it.

There were no members of the public there to comment on the proposed ordinance. Mr. Booth asked if there is another structure on the property. Ms. Turman said there is not, it is just a very small property. There were no further comments or questions from the Commissioners. Therefore, the public hearing was closed at 7:34 p.m. by Chairman Jones.

Mr. Booth made a motion to recommend that Council declare it as blighted property since it is in violation of the ordinance and that it be demolished and the property cleared. Ms. Michelsen seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and all members voted in favor of the motion.

Chairman Jones asked that each member explain why they voted the way they did on all three of the properties. He said that he voted yes on all three of them because he thinks this is a good program. He said the Town needs to take care of these things, and he felt that adequate time has been given to the property owners. He said it is the right thing to do. Mr. Patterson said the properties are eyesores and that the Town should do something about them. Mr. Booth said this was not the first encounter with this issue for the Commission, and it needs to be taken care of. He said he is familiar with each of the properties and that it is in the best interest of the Town. Mr. Liles stated that it is his first day on the Commission, but that he did receive the minutes from the last meeting. He said he visited all three properties and felt that they bring the neighborhoods down and are eyesores. He said he hopes this will make way for something better to come to each property. Ms. Michelsen said she has been driving past the Gus Nicks Boulevard house for the past 20 years, and it has not improved in that time. She said she feels that the Town has been patient with the property owners and that the properties are eyesores and are dangerous. She said that staff did their homework and gave the owners ample opportunity to take care of the properties.

There was nothing further to discuss during this portion of the meeting; therefore, the regular session was adjourned at 7:38 p.m. by Chairman Jones. Chairman Jones welcomed everyone to stay for work session 2 which would be on the proposed rezoning of the former Roland E. Cook school property. Mr. Kasey and Mr. McCauley left the meeting.

The second work session of the Vinton Planning Commission was called to order immediately after the regular session at 7:38 p.m. by Chairman Jones. All five members were present.

The first item on the agenda was to hear about the request of Old School Partners, LLC, Authorized Agent, for a rezoning of the former Roland E. Cook School Property, from R-2 Residential to Mixed Use Development to house 21 residential apartments with supporting recreational/small business uses, at 412 S. Poplar Street, Tax Map Number 060.16-09-39.00 and 40.00.

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Chairman Jones asked Mr. Hill to come forward to introduce himself. Mr. David Hill, from Roanoke, came forward and said he had been working on various projects in Vinton over the years. He introduced Mr. Dale Wilkinson, another member of Old School Partners, LLC. Mr. Hill said they are proposing to transform the former Roland E. Cook School into a mixed use development that includes apartments. He said that it is currently owned by Roanoke County, and will need a zoning change to redevelop the property. He stated that they are proposing to rezone the property to the new Mixed Use District (MUD). Mr. Hill said, if successful, this will be the first change of zoning to this district in the Town. He mentioned that he had carefully read the district regulations and tried to make it all fit. He said the property is located at the corners of Jefferson Avenue with Poplar Street and Blair Street. He mentioned that the formal front lawn along Poplar Street has always been there and they plan to leave it as is. Mr. Hill stated that the play area behind the building area is proposed to be a landscaped parking area. He showed some slides from a PowerPoint presentation he created for the meeting, a copy of which will be made a part of the permanent record. Mr. Hill said they will keep the existing building and renovate it in two part process. It is also planned to be placed on the National Register of Historic Properties. He mentioned that there are tax credits available for restoring the building correctly. He said that many people he has run into around town have told him not to mess up their old school. He said they will be keeping the grounds historic by leaving the front lawn, trees, sidewalk and surrounding wall. He also said that they plan to make some of the paved areas on the sides of the building into courtyard areas. He said the walls surrounding the property will remain, but chain link fencing will be removed. He mentioned that windows were installed in the 1970s and the ceilings inside were lowered. He said the ceilings will be restored to their original height of 14 feet and windows will also be restored. Mr. Hill said that the Vinton Museum provided an old photo of the front showing how the older windows looked. He mentioned that the second floor is only about 30 inches higher than ground level, and that will allow for a porch to be constructed. He said they plan to add some additional windows on the lower level to provide more light and ventilation. They are proposing to provide some angled parking along the existing alley. He pointed out that the cornerstone on the building is dated 1915, and that is 100 years this year. Mr. Hill said the expected completion date for the project will be spring 2017. Mr. Hill said he performed a parking count of available on-street parking nearby. He found that there are 59 on-street parking spaces within 200 feet of the building, and 159 on-street spaces within 400 feet of it. He mentioned that he did not count parking on any of the steeper streets. He said that, at first, he was thinking about not having on-site parking, but later reconsidered and added it in the former playground area with some additional angled parking spaces off the alley. He also showed where the fire lane areas and the handicapped parking and ramp will be on the property using the diagram in his PowerPoint presentation. A suggestion was made by one of Mr. Hill's colleagues that the parking spaces should be angled spaces in order to make the parking lot circulation better. Another suggestion was to use the complete name as the project name, Roland E. Cook Lofts, instead of just Roland Cook Lofts. He said many people felt it was important that the full name, including the middle initial be used. He mentioned that they will include some garden plot areas on the front lawn for the residents' use. Mr. Hill said some of the basement units will have doors and access to courtyard areas; some may not due to the lay of the land. Mr. Hill asked for questions or comments from the commissioners.

Chairman Jones asked about the trees at the back of the property and if they will have to remove them. Mr. Hill said some trees will have to be removed, but there are plans for new trees to be planted. He said there will be enough room to add some trees. Mr. Liles suggested that they should definitely consider putting the initial "E" back in the name of the lofts. Mr. Hill said they can add it back on the sign for the development. Chairman Jones asked about the layout of the building, and whether people will enter on the first floor or

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second. Right now, you enter on the second floor. Mr. Hill says the building has a lower, middle and an upper floor layout. Chairman Jones asked if the room layouts are cookie cutter. In response, Mr. Hill explained the layout of each floor. He even mentioned a “missing room” on the lower floor that appears to have never been dug out. He said maybe the original contractors hit rock, but he can’t be sure until they can get in there and look at the area. Chairman Jones asked if there is an elevator. Mr. Hill said there is not an elevator now, but they will be adding one during the renovations. Mr. Hill mentioned that upper floor is an unusual layout for an old school because there is a gym and a stage up there. He said that the Department of Historic Resources has ruled that it is a characteristic that defines the building, and they will have to leave it as is. Mr. Hill said it is in their plans to use that area for amenities for the building’s residents and guests. He said there may be a concierge desk there. Mr. Booth asked if the all of the apartments will have high ceilings. Mr. Hill said they plan to incorporate the high ceilings into the apartments. Mr. Booth asked who the contractor will be on the project. Mr. Hill said Old School Partners will be the general contractor. Mr. Booth said he would really like to see the work done by local contractors.

Mr. Dale Wilkinson spoke next. He said he is one of four members of Old School Partners, LLC. He addressed Mr. Booth’s questions about the contractor for the work on the building. He said that Construction Unlimited is owned by one of the members of Old School Partners, LLC. Mr. Wilkinson said that, as a developer, he uses Construction Unlimited for his business. He stated that they do plan to use local subcontractors to keep the project as local as possible. Mr. Wilkinson said he is very excited to be a part of the Vinton community. He said he is also very excited about the project because of the historic restoration part. He said they hope for a mix of young and old tenants for the building. He mentioned that the project should bring additional life to Vinton’s downtown area. Mr. Booth asked if leaving the open space they propose on the upper floor is going to be a detriment to their project. Mr. Wilkinson said they will be losing about 8 apartments because of it. He said that, in order to get the historic tax credits, they have to leave the gym and auditorium area alone. Mr. Booth said since the outside will remain unchanged, he is surprised they will be required to leave that area inside the same. Mr. Booth said the project will be beneficial to tax revenue. Mr. Hiner pointed out that more apartments do not add much revenue. Mr. Wilkinson said that the tenants will also be eating out and shopping in the Vinton area, though. Ms. McMillan mentioned, with the site being 1.05 acres, there can only be 24 units or less. Mr. Wilkinson said that the tax credits are vital to them being able to do this project. It was also mentioned that Old School Partners, LLC, also includes Greg Rhodes and David Spigle. Mr. Booth mentioned that he knows Mr. Rhodes. Chairman Jones asked what other projects Mr. Wilkinson has done. Mr. Wilkinson listed the Summerfield where Carilion’s athletic club is located, Stonegate subdivision off Sanderson Drive, the Goodwill near Hunting Hills Plaza, and 2901 Prosperity Place Warehouse. Mr. Booth asked if Mr. Rhodes would be involved in the construction. Mr. Wilkinson said Mr. Rhodes will be the contractor. Mr. Booth mentioned that Mr. Rhodes is currently working on a Blue Eagle Credit Union location now. Chairman Jones mentioned how unusual it is to have local people come to the work session to talk about local happenings. Mr. Wilkinson mentioned that Roanoke County has been a very cooperative partner in the project. He said that the Economic Development Department had been excellent with regards to communication and the working relationship. Mr. Wilkinson said he is also actively pursuing other economic development opportunities in Vinton. Chairman Jones mentioned the former Holdren’s County Store/Gish Mill site to Mr. Wilkinson.

Ms. McMillan asked if it would be possible for the Commissioners to tour the school building. Mr. Brenchick said he didn’t see why not. Mr. Hill suggested the following Monday around 5 p.m. for the tour, right before the open house. Ms. Debbie Adams, of *The Vinton Messenger*, said she would also like to go

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on the tour. Mr. Patterson and Mr. Liles will not be able to attend the tour. Mr. Booth may be able to attend, and Mr. Jones will definitely attend the tour. Ms. Michelsen would also like to attend. Mr. Hill said they can walk any of them through the building at their convenience. Chairman Jones asked if there were any other questions or comments. The commission was reminded of the Planning Commission public hearing to be held on November 5, and the Town Council public hearing to be held on November 17, 2015, for the Roland E. Cook rezoning. Mr. Hill mentioned the open house again on October 12, 2015, and said it would be open house format with tables spread around the room for different topics about the project. It was mentioned that many notices about the open house were sent to surrounding property owners. Also, it was mentioned that Mr. Wilkinson was interviewed about the project and the open house on WFIR radio station.

There were no citizens in attendance for the citizens' comments portion of the meeting, and there was no other business. Therefore, work session 2 was adjourned at 8:22 pm on a motion by Mr. Booth and a second by Mr. Liles.

Respectfully Submitted,

Anita McMillan
Planning Commission Secretary