

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE TOWN OF VINTON PLANNING  
COMMISSION HELD ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 2015, AT 6:30 P.M., AT THE VINTON  
MUNICIPAL BUILDING, 311 SOUTH POLLARD STREET.**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**     **Dave Jones, Chairman**  
                                  **Keith Liles, Vice Chairman**  
                                  **Bill Booth**  
                                  **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**

**OTHERS PRESENT**       **Doug and Mattie Forbes, 558 Deer Ridge Lane, Vinton**  
**(AT PUBLIC HEARING):** **Pastor Ricardo Rodriguez, Vinton Wesleyan Church, Vinton**  
                                  **Philip Thompson, Roanoke County Community Development**  
                                  **Jill Loope, Roanoke County Economic Development**  
                                  **David Hill, Old School Partners, L.L.C.**  
                                  **Dale Wilkinson, Old School Partners, L.L.C.**

**AGENDA**

**WORK SESSION—6:30 P.M.**

- I.     Call to Order**
- II.    Update on the Urban Development Areas (UDA) Planning Grant Program for Planning Consultant Assistance**
- III.   Update on the Spot Blight Properties: 123 Gus Nicks Boulevard, 830 S. Pollard Street, and 308-B 9th Street**
- IV.   Meeting Schedule for UDA Kick-off Meeting and Future Meetings**
- V.     Comments of Planning Commissioners and Planning Staff**
- VI.   Adjournment of Work Session**

**REGULAR SESSION—7 P.M.**

- VII.   Call to Order—Roll Call**
- VIII.  Approval of Minutes**
  - 1.    October 8, 2015, Work Sessions (2) and Public Hearing**
- IX.    Election of Vice Chairperson to fill the position vacated by Paul Mason**
- X.     Public Hearing to receive comments concerning:**
  - The petition 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 (MUD), to convert to 21 residential apartments with supporting recreational/small business uses, at 412 S. Poplar Street, Vinton, Tax Map Number 060.16-09-39.00 and 40.00.**
    - a.     Chairman opens public hearing**
      - Report from staff**
      - Receive petitioner’s comments**
      - Receive public comments**
      - Commissioners discussion and questions**
    - b.     Chairman closes public hearing**
    - c.     Commission takes action on proposed rezoning**
- XI.   Other Business**
- XII.  Adjournment**

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The work session of the Vinton Planning Commission was called to order at 6:34 p.m. by Chairman Jones. All five members were present.

The first item on the work session agenda was the update on the UDA Planning Grant Program for Planning Consultant Assistance. Ms. McMillan said that the Town was quickly informed it had been awarded the grant in less than a week from when the application was submitted. Since the initial award of the grant, the process has been very slow. She said they are still trying to get the scope of services finalized. Ms. McMillan sent the proposed scope of services to VDOT for approval and is waiting to hear back. For the advisory committee, she said the Town extended an invitation to serve on the committee to some citizens. She said she had a list of 12 names, and each of them said yes when they were invited to serve on the committee. The committee members will be Allison Finney (American Efficiency Inn), Dawn Michelsen (PC), Dave Jones (PC), Angie Lewis (Vinton Chamber), Bob Benninger (BZA), Bob Lewis (McDonald's), Bruce Mayer (Attorney), Chris McCarty (Grand Rental), Janet Scheid (Council), Gary Woodson (Public Works), Chris Lawrence (Town Manager), Philip Thompson (Roanoke County), Roger Saunders (Developer), Stephanie Brown (Southern Property Management), Tim Greenway (Developer). She said that the kick-off meeting is tentatively scheduled for November 30<sup>th</sup> at 4 p.m. The time may change to 6 p.m. Mr. Booth asked if they plan to have dinner for the members. Ms. McMillan said a box dinner will probably be provided. She is hoping to have the meeting at the new library. Ms. Michelsen asked if we already know the consultants from previous projects. Ms. McMillan said we have not worked with these consultants before. She said Michael Baker is the lead consultant firm. The consultants will arrive earlier in the day to meet with staff and drive around town. At the meeting, they will explain planning process and scope. The meeting will be advertised once as required. Ms. McMillan said there are planned to be four meetings total during the process. Mr. Patterson asked when the new library is planned to open. Ms. McMillan said the grand opening is scheduled for November 18<sup>th</sup>. She mentioned that the State of Town address is scheduled the next day, November 19<sup>th</sup>, at 8 a.m., at the Vinton War Memorial. Ms. McMillan asked if there were any questions about UDA. There were no further questions. She mentioned that most of agenda item 4, the meeting schedule, had been covered here.

Next on the agenda was the update on the abatement of the spot blight properties. Ms. Turman said that, a couple of weeks ago at a Town Council public hearing, Council adopted the ordinances for each of the properties. She said that the owners of 123 Gus Nicks Boulevard and 308 9th Street were given some time to work on their properties. Each has until December 31, 2015. Anytime after that, the Town can demolish the houses and clean up the properties. Ms. Turman mentioned that the house at 123 Gus Nicks Boulevard has already been demolished. She said the Town has not heard anything else from the owner of 308 9th Street. Ms. Turman said she will be sending a letter to the owner of the property to let her know that she has until December 31, 2015. She said that nothing has been done yet for 830 S. Pollard Street. Staff plans to talk to Chris Lawrence to find out how to proceed on it. Chairman Jones asked about the title for 830 S. Pollard Street. Ms. Turman said they can have it torn down and put a lien on it through the court. She said they can also force a sale once the lien has been placed. Mr. Liles asked if they should wait on it until December 31<sup>st</sup> in order to be consistent with the other two properties. Ms. Turman said the Town doesn't have to wait to take action at 830 S. Pollard Street because no owners have taken responsibility for it. It was mentioned that Mr. Bruce Mayer has expressed an interest in the property at 123 Gus Nicks Boulevard, and The Advancement Foundation has also expressed an interest in it.

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The next item on the agenda was the meeting schedule, most of which was covered during the UDA discussion. The UDA kick-off meeting will be held on November 30, 2015. Other future meetings include: the grand opening for the Vinton Library on November 18, 2015; and the State of the Town Address on November 19, 2015. Ms. McMillan asked them to let her know if they wish to attend the State of the Town Address so she can RSVP for them and arrange payment of the \$10 registration fee which covers the breakfast at the meeting. Ms. Michelsen mentioned that her husband, Mick (a BZA member), may wish to attend. Ms. McMillan said she will also be emailing the BZA to see if any of them would like to attend.

The last item was to receive comments from the Planning Commissioners and Staff. Ms. McMillan said that Town Council held a work session on the Roland E. Cook rezoning. She said they had some questions such as: what type of apartments they will be and the rent amounts for the apartments. She mentioned that the developers are still planning to receive historic tax credits for the project.

Mr. Booth said the owner of the new record store on Lee Avenue came by his home and purchased all of his record albums. He said he had over 3,000 of them.

Ms. McMillan said that Town Council, at a recent meeting, recognized Mr. Paul Mason for his time on the Planning Commission. She said Mr. Mason said he was sorry he moved out of town and had to resign from the Commission. He also complimented each member of the Planning Commission for their dedication.

Ms. McMillan said that the Old School Partners LLC will give an updated presentation tonight for the rezoning request. She mentioned that they will be putting the "E" back in the name. She reminded each of them to state why they vote the way they do when they take a vote on the request during tonight's hearing.

With there being nothing further to discuss in the work session, it was adjourned by Chairman Jones at 6:58 p.m.

The regular session of the Vinton Planning Commission was called to order in the Council Chambers at 7:10 p.m. by Chairman Jones. Roll was called, and all five members were present.

The first item on the evening session agenda was the approval of minutes from the October 8, 2015, work sessions (2) 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 election of Vice Chairperson to fill the position vacated by Paul Mason. Chairman Jones said that Mr. Mason moved out of town into a new home. He said that Mr. Mason had to resign since he no longer lived in the Town. Mr. Patterson made a motion to nominate Ms. Michelsen for Vice Chairperson. Chairman Jones asked if Ms. Michelsen would like to be Vice Chairman, but instead she said she wanted to nominate Mr. Liles for the position. Mr. Patterson rescinded his motion. Ms. Michelsen made a motion to nominate Mr. Liles for Vice Chairman. Mr. Booth seconded it. All members voted in favor of the motion to make Mr. Liles the Vice Chairman.

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The next item on the agenda was the public hearing to receive comments concerning: The petition 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 (MUD), to convert to 21 residential apartments with supporting recreational/small business uses, at 412 S. Poplar Street, Vinton, Tax Map Number 060.16-09-39.00 and 40.00.

Chairman Jones read the request, and then he opened the public hearing at 7:14 p.m. First, the report from staff was requested. Ms. McMillan gave a summary of the staff report, a copy of which will be made a part of the permanent record. She mentioned that an open house meeting which had been held recently had about 25 people attend. She stated that they had also received two letters, one from Mr. Jim Peters who was in favor of the project, and one from Ms. Dawn Hale who expressed some concerns about the apartments.

Next, the Planning Commission received comments from the petitioner. Chairman Jones requested that the speakers identify themselves and come to the podium at the front if they wish to speak. Mr. David Hill came forward and said he is one of the petitioners from Roanoke for this project. He mentioned that this would be the first time through for the Mixed Use District (MUD). He said so far the process with the Town has been very pleasant and very helpful. Mr. Hill presented a revised PowerPoint presentation, a copy of which will be made part of the permanent record. During the presentation, he said everyone has made good suggestions for the project like: having only upper scale housing; keeping the historic school character; adding more parking; better arranging the parking, having a place for dumpster; keeping the existing memorial trees; having bigger apartments; opening the first floor to grade; and keeping the "E" in the name. He showed the sign with the "E" being added. Mr. Hill also showed the Commissioners a revised site drawing showing the parking, dumpster and the openings to grade level from the lower floor that will be created. He said that handicap access will be also provided and an elevator will be added. There will be direct handicap access to the mid- and first-levels of the building. The elevator will go bottom to top in the building. All existing trees in the front will remain since they are the memorial trees. Mr. Hill also showed some new architectural elevation drawings, which outlines the entrances, handicap accesses, and also the courtyards to be added. The drawings also showed the old-style windows being reinstalled. Mr. Hill thanked them for their time and asked one of the Old School Partners, Dale Wilkinson, if he had anything to add. Mr. Wilkinson did not have anything to add. Therefore, Mr. Hill concluded his presentation.

Public comments were received next. Mr. Doug Forbes spoke first. He said he resides at 558 Deer Ridge Lane, Vinton. He said he soon plans to be a resident of Vinton. Mr. Forbes said he had talked considerably with his wife about the two vacant schools, and they wondered why they remained empty so long. He said they are both very happy that these folks have come to Vinton to make something nice of the school. He said this building is special to almost everyone who has been raised in Vinton. His mom was a member of the first group who went to the school. He also went there in 1940. Mattie and he have looked forward to the day that they would hear positive things about it once again. Mr. Forbes said he is interested in moving in there. He said it is a great investment. He also wanted the developers know that there are two time capsules in front of the building, and one of the trees is in honor of young student by the last name of Worley. Miss Worley, he said, was killed by a school bus in 1969. Her class planted a tree and buried a time capsule in her honor in the front lawn. He said they plan to talk with the partnership to see if they can be allowed to look for it. He said he is looking forward to it being developed, he and his wife being able to live there, and to it being a tax revenue generator for the town.

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Next to speak was Pastor Ricardo Rodriguez of Vinton Wesleyan Church. He said that he is excited about the project and thinks it will add value to the town and to the community. He said he has been disappointed that it has just been sitting there empty all this time. He mentioned that, at one time, Manna Ministries had been contacted about taking over the building for their outreach, but they didn't have the money at the time to do so.

Ms. Jill Loope, Roanoke County Economic Development Director, spoke briefly and added that the County had worked hard to find developers who will do a quality project.

Chairman Jones asked staff to read the email and letter received into the record, both of which will be made a part of the permanent record. Ms. McMillan read them into the record. One letter was from Ms. Dawn Hale, and the email was from Mr. Jim Peters.

Next, the commissioners had the opportunity to discuss the request and ask questions. Chairman Jones mentioned that they had the chance to walk through the school. Mr. Booth said that he can't see anything but positive results from the apartments being finished in the old school building. He said he would not have enough paper to list all the good things to come from the project. Mr. Booth said he is in favor of the project because of the economic value to the Town. He said it is a really good thing for the Town. Mr. Patterson said he thinks it is a great idea to have apartments there. Ms. Michelsen echoed the others and said it will be a boon for Vinton and for those who live here. She mentioned that the residents of the building will be able to walk to restaurants, banks, etc. Ms. Michelsen said this project might help alleviate the issues brought up by Ms. Hale by upping the bar for apartments. Ms. Michelsen said she grew up in a small town where beautiful schools are also being preserved, and she thinks it is great. She wonders if they are going to allow pets. Vice Chairman Liles also echoed the others' comments. He said he drives by the old school all the time, and he sees it rotting away. He said that being built in the year 1915, it should be really well-built. He mentioned that it looks like they might already have two residents for the apartments (Mr. and Mrs. Forbes). Vice Chairman Liles said he is in favor of moving forward with the project. He asked what their timetable is for tenants being able to move in, if everything goes according to schedule. Mr. Wilkinson said they hope to open sometime during 2017. He said one year from now would be ideal. Mr. Forbes asked to say one more thing. He said in regards to a mix of young and older tenants, he would welcome help from the younger tenants. Mrs. Forbes mentioned that she has several people who might be interested in renting an apartment there, but she needs the plans and prices. Mr. Wilkinson said he also wanted to thank Ms. Hale for expressing her concerns in her letter. He said they will try to do anything they can to mitigate those type of issues. Mr. Booth asked if they had decided what will happen with the auditorium area on the upper floor. Mr. Hill explained a few ideas they are considering for that area. Chairman Jones said he thinks this is a great idea. He said he, like Ms. Michelsen, was not born in Vinton. He said he came to Vinton in 1986. Chairman Jones said he has no attachment to the school, but he lived in a town that had three elementary schools. He said the high school that was there when he grew up there now has apartments in it. He said the junior high is also apartments now. However, all three elementary schools were torn down. He said it is sad to think that those old schools are gone. Chairman Jones said that it would be a shame to see Roland E. Cook end up like that. There was no further discussion; therefore, Chairman Jones closed the public hearing at 7:58 p.m. Mr. Booth made a motion to recommend that the property be rezoned from R2 to MUD to convert the former school to 21 residential apartments. He stated that it is a very positive thing for the Town and a great opportunity for the residents. He said he cannot see a negative to it. Vice Chairman Liles seconded the motion and said he feels the same as Mr.

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Booth. Vice Chairman Liles said he is ready to move on to the next school project. A roll call vote was taken, and all members voted in favor of the motion. Those who didn't make or second the motion also stated why they voted as they did. Chairman Jones said he thinks it is nothing but a great idea and that they need to get rolling on it. Ms. Michelsen agrees with each of them and thinks it's a very positive thing for the community. Mr. Patterson said it is good for the school and community people will enjoy living there.

There were was no other business; therefore, the meeting was adjourned at 8:02 p.m. on a motion by Mr. Patterson and a second by Mr. Booth.

Respectfully Submitted,

Anita McMillan  
Planning Commission Secretary