



**March 11, 2024  
Council Meeting  
Approved Agenda  
7:00 p.m.**

- CALL TO ORDER Action
- APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA Action
- MINUTES                      • February 12, 2024 Council meeting minutes Action
- REPORTS                      • Mayor’s Report: Mayor Whited Information  
   • Treasurer’s Report: Gail Swift Information  
   • Town Attorney: Mr. Crim Information  
   • Zoning Administrator: Mr. Gyurisin Information  
   • Planning Commission Information  
   • Architectural Review Board Information
- OLD BUSINESS
- NEW BUSINESS                      a) Public hearing to consider the Rush River Commons Action  
   application for a Special Use Permit (SUP) to expand  
   the current signage limits.  
   b) Restrictions for Short Term Lodging room capacity. Action
- PUBLIC FORUM
- ADJOURNMENT

NEXT REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL  
April 8, 2024



March 11, 2024

Town Council Approved Minutes

- **CALL TO ORDER:** Mayor Whited opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m. Council members Fred Catlin, Jean Goodine, and Brad Schnieder were present. Town Attorney Martin Crim (attended remotely) and Town Manager/Clerk Barbara Batson was present. Drew beard, Patrick O’Connell and Gail Swift were absent.
- **APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA:** Mr. Catlin made a motion to approve the agenda and Ms. Goodine seconded and a roll call vote was taken:

Mr. Catlin voted “yes”    Ms. Goodine voted “yes”  
 Mr. Schneider voted “yes”                                         Mayor Whited voted “yes”  
 And the motion passed 4-0, with Mr. Beard, Mr. O’Connell, and Ms. Swift absent.

- **MINUTES:** minutes were not presented.

- **REPORTS:**

**Mayor’s Report:** Mayor Whited acknowledged the passing of Mr. John Anderson, who was a great supporter of the town. He reported that the town was preparing for the next round of repairs at the wellhouse.

**Treasurer report:** The budget work session was scheduled for March 23.

**Town Attorney:** Mr. Crim reported that the next meeting for the Commission of Local Government (CLG) is scheduled for March 22, 2024. The meeting will begin at 3:00 p.m. and the town is first on the agenda, Mr. Crim will be attending remotely. On May 20, 2024 the CLG will be in town for the boundary line adjustment presentation. The presentation will be held at the Rappahannock County courthouse at 3:00 p.m., the public hearing will start at 7:00 p.m., also at the courthouse.

**Zoning Administrator:** Mr. Steve Gyurisin reported that the post office, packing shed and Rush River Commons are at the top of his list. He met with the representative for the packing shed and toured the inside and outside of the building. The representative said the owner would hire someone to clean the outside of the property. Mr. Gyurisin will be reporting to the ARB next month with a list of deficiencies. Mayor Whited shared that the property owner is actively trying to sell the property

**Planning Commission (PC):** Ms. Anstey reported that the PC met in February and continued the discussion on the zoning map and ordinance. She said that will be an ongoing discussion. The PC also finalized its recommendations for the TC regarding short term lodging.

Architectural Review Board (ARB): There was no report.

OLD BUSINESS:

No old business was discussed

NEW BUSINESS:

- a) Public hearing to consider the Rush River Commons application for a Special Use Permit (SUP) to expand the current signage limits.

Mayor Whited opened the public hearing to consider a special use permit to increase the footage for signs at Rush River Commons. Ms. Anstey confirmed the PC had a quorum and opened the PC public hearing.

Mr. Gyurisin reported the special use permit application was to increase the square footage for signs at Rush River Commons. The property is zoned Village Mixed Use and Village Residential and is located within the historic district. The project is currently under construction. The signage packet includes the food pantry, office building and directional signs in the parking lot. The current square footage is currently more than the square footage allowed. He reported that the zoning ordinance, allows a maximum of 15 sq ft for the food pantry and office building. He reported that he is interpreting the limitation to be per building. The application is for 52.33 square feet. The signs also require architectural review board approval.

After a discussion with Mr. Crim, Mr. Catlin shared with the council that the total allowable square footage is based on the cumulative number, and not each individual sign.

Mayor Whited opened the meeting to public comments at 7:08 p.m.

Mr. Steve Plescow, representing Rush River Commons, said the project has several buildings including the food pantry, office building, and 5 residential buildings. He shared that the project wanted to have a consistent theme for the signage on the campus. When they designed the signs, they kept in mind the ARB requirements. He also said that the town has minimal signage and most of it is small. Mr. Plescow shared that there would be no signage on the side of the office building facing Warren Ave. They took inspiration from the Inn at Little Washington's sign for the ballroom. They have a project sign that they'd like to put at the corner of Leggett Lane and Warren Ave.

There is currently a space set aside for a food service business. They'd like to put a sign near the front door of that space. Additionally, there will be building numbers and directional signs. Each building will have a building number and the residential units will have mini directories to show visitors how to access the stairs to the upper level. There will also be directional signs in the parking lot.

Ms. Anstey asked how large is the biggest sign? Mr. Plescow responded that the main project sign is on a 5ft tall wooden post, similar to the ballroom sign on Main Street. Ms. Goodine asked how the project sign compares to the Welcome to Washington sign? Mr. Plescow responded that it was on a 60-inch post, which he said is shorter than the Washington sign. Ms. Goodine said she thinks the Rush River Commons sign looks taller than the Washington sign.

Mr. Catlin asked if there will be directory signs listing the tenants of the office building? Mr. Plescow said there would, those signs would be located inside the building. Mr. Catlin said although the logo for the Rush River Commons project is lovely, it gives the impression that it is separate from the Town. He wonders if something could be done to better mesh with the town?

Mr. Gary Achiele said that the current signs in town are discrete and tasteful and relate to one another. There are no signs that say the Inn at Little Washington. He also mentioned that churches and other Inn's in town have very discrete signs. He said his greatest concern is for the food pantry signage, which is 28 ft and the most outside of our ordinance. He has a concern about the Rush River logo sign as you enter into town. He said at the beginning of the project the guiding principle was to have it a part of the history and fabric of the town and not be a separate entity.

Ms. Buntin said that the design of the project is lovely, she wouldn't like to see signs that have an urban feel.

At 7:29 p.m., Ms. Anstey moved to close the PC's public hearing, and Ms. Kauffmann seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

At 7:29 p.m., Mr. Catlin moved to close the TC's public hearing, and Mr. Schneider seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Anstey shared that the PC received the SUP application today and they have not had enough time to review it. She did share that she would like to see the project sign be more in the spirit of the town. She said she agreed with Ms. Buntin and doesn't want the signage to have an urban feel. She's worried that the proposed signage would make the project an appendage of the town, rather than an add-on into the town. She is concerned that the project sign separates the project from the town and that was not the intention when the project was initially approved. She feels the image of separateness is troubling.

Ms. Kauffmann said she also needed more time to review the application packet. She agrees that the proposed signage creates a Rush River Commons project that is separate from the town. Ms. Bruce said she also needs more time to review the application and wants to ensure the signage is keeping in spirit with the town.

Mr. Plescow responded that they have been working on this since the fall and used existing signs as inspiration for their signs.

Ms. Anstey asked, why do you want the brand of signage to be Rush River Commons versus Little Washington? She also mentioned that the Inn of Little Washington has a large campus in town but they don't have branding for each separate building. Mr. Pennington said he was concerned the project sign would make it seem that it wasn't a part of the fabric of the town.

Ms. Goodine said that the project sign will dwarf the welcome sign and she'd like to see it removed. She doesn't have any concerns with the food pantry signs.

Mr. Akre said that he felt the concern about the project sign was disingenuous, given the signs for the post office and fire station. He also thought that branding was not part of the purview of the PC and TC. Mr. Whited reminded Mr. Akre that the fire station is located in the county, not the town.

Mr. Schneider feels the signage for the food pantry is fine, but would like to see the project sign removed from the application. He wants the development to feel inclusive with the town.

Mr. Plescow said they would be happy to delete the project sign.

Mr. Catlin suggested that if the green used on existing signs was used instead of the proposed blue, that it would make it feel more in line with the town. Mr. Akre replied that he didn't think the town had an official sign color. Mayor Whited confirmed the town does not.

At 7:54 p.m. Ms. Anstey motioned to table the discussion until their next meeting on March 25 and to close the PC meeting, and Ms. Kauffmann seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Whited motioned to recommend the PC approve the application, minus the project sign, and Mr. Catlin seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Whited motioned to hold a special meeting on March 25 along with the PC's regular meeting and Mr. Catlin seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

b) Restrictions for the short-term lodging room capacity.

Mayor Whited reported that the PC has submitted four recommendations.

PC recommendation 1: The PC recommends to the Town Council that it consider that a town-wide policy be adopted that encourages business and economic development but not at the expense of existing residential housing stock. For example: conversion of an existing residential home to a non-residential use.

Mr. Catlin made a motion to adopt this policy and Mr. Schneider seconded, and a roll call vote was taken:

Mr. Catlin voted "yes"	Ms. Goodine voted "yes"
Mr. Schneider voted "yes"	Mayor Whited voted "yes"

And the motion passed 4-0, with Mr. Beard, Mr. O'Connell, and Ms. Swift absent.

PC recommendation 2: The PC recommends to Town Council that the current B&B Ordinance as adopted was carefully thought out with regard to the number of rooms and guests per room in relation to the Town and surrounding residents and that no change is needed to the current ordinance except clarification of ownership.

Mr. Catlin made a motion to accept PC recommendation 2 and Mr. Schneider seconded, and a roll call vote was taken:

Mr. Catlin voted "yes"	Ms. Goodine voted "yes"
Mr. Schneider voted "yes"	Mayor Whited voted "yes"

And the motion passed 4-0, with Mr. Beard, Mr. O'Connell, and Ms. Swift absent.

PC recommendation 3: The PC recommends to the Town Council that existing B&B properties that have evolved into more than a SUP 5-room limited property should apply individually for a

Special Use Permit (SUP). Such property application can then be evaluated on its own merits based on the application and the particular proposal.

Mayor Whited directed the TC's attention to the business inventory sheet in their packet. He said there are two different types on B&Bs in town, professionally managed and mom and pop style. He shared that in a previous meeting, the council had discussed that the town ordinance limited the room capacity to 5 rooms and the state defines it as 18 or fewer guests. He recommends that in the ordinance we recognize the two classes of B&B currently operating in town. Class 1, those being traditional B&Bs and Class 2, those being professionally managed.

Mr. Catlin made a motion to accept PC recommendation 3, with the additional changes noted below and that the PC and TC move to take such actions to modify the existing ordinance and to add the definition of what professionally managed means, and Ms. Goodine seconded, and a roll call vote was taken:

Mr. Catlin voted "yes"

Ms. Goodine voted "yes"

Mr. Schneider voted "yes"

Mayor Whited voted "yes"

And the motion passed 4-0, with Mr. Beard, Mr. O'Connell, and Ms. Swift absent.

Mr. Catlin's recommendation: The PC recommends to the Town Council that existing B&B properties that have evolved into more than a SUP 5-room limited property should apply individually for a Special Use Permit (SUP). Such property application can then be evaluated on its own merits based on the application and the particular proposal, **thus, there would be a second class of B&Bs with more than five rooms but less than 10 rooms in its current footprint of the structure. Each such entity would require its own SUP and would need to be professionally managed. The second class of B&B would need to provide evidence that it is professionally managed.**

PC recommendation 4: The PC recommends to the town council that ownership of B&Bs and AirB&B type STLs be carefully evaluated and considered for any new SUP applications. An ownership period of 3 to 5 years is suggested before a property owner can apply for a SUP to operation a STL property for either a B&B or AirB&B.

Ms. Goodine expressed her concern that the language in the recommendation of 3 to 5 years left things open to interpretation. Mayor Whited said that the TC would decide on the number and send the issue to the Zoning Administrator and Town Attorney to draft the ordinance for TC approval.

Ms. Anstey shared that the PC at its regular meeting was initially suggesting 2 to 5 years, but after hearing public comments, change it to 3 to 5 years because the public felt 2 years was too short.

Mr. Catlin made a motion to accept PC recommendation 4 and direct the Zoning Administrator and Town Attorney to draft an ordinance for the TC's review, and Mr. Schneider seconded, and a roll call vote was taken:

Mr. Catlin voted "yes"

Ms. Goodine voted "yes"

Mr. Schneider voted "yes"

Mayor Whited voted "yes"

And the motion passed 4-0, with Mr. Beard, Mr. O'Connell, and Ms. Swift absent.

PUBLIC FORUM: Mayor Whited opened the public forum at 8:43 p.m.

Ms. Shiloh Byars asked if people who already owned their property would need to have someone professionally manage the B&B. Mayor Whited said that they would not, it would only need to be professionally managed if they went above a certain number of rooms.

Mr. Achiele said that when he was on the TC they were concerned where the manager would live. He suggests things you want to be clear about, once you get an offsite manager they can live anywhere, like Bangalore; he suggests that you want to have someone actually physically in town. He doesn't feel what the county recently passed on this issue is legal, and feels in the next State general session this will become a state issue and not a local issue.

Ms. Buntin expressed a concern regarding what Foster Harris House intends to do to that property.

Mayor Whited closed the public forum at 8:52 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT: Mr. Catlin moved to adjourn the meeting AT 8:52p.m. and Ms. Goodine seconded, and a roll call vote was taken:

Mr. Catlin voted "yes"

Ms. Goodine voted "yes"

Mr. Schneider voted "yes"

Mayor Whited voted "yes"

And the motion passed 4-0, with Mr. Beard, Mr. O'Connell, and Ms. Swift absent.

THE NEXT REGULAR MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL IS  
April 8, 2023.

Barbara Batson, Administrator/Town Clerk

Attachments:

Zoning Administrator's report

PC recommendations