

**TOWN OF BASALT
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING and PUBLIC HEARING
Tuesday, May 1, 2018**

CALL TO ORDER

The Planning & Zoning Commission was called to order at 6:16 pm. Commissioners present were Bill Maron, Eric Vozick, Gino Rossetti, Joan Keefe, and Alternate Tracy Bennett.

Staff present included Susan Philp, Town Planner; James Lindt, Assistant Planning Director; and Watkins Fulk-Gray, Staff Planner. A sign-in sheet for public attending the meeting is available for review at Town Hall.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

M/S COMMISSIONERS ROSSETTI AND KEEFE TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF APRIL 17, 2018. MOTION CARRIED BY A VOTE OF 5 TO 0.

AGENDA ITEMS

Discussion of the Mid-Valley Area Master Plan

Lindt described a meeting of the RFVRPC two weeks prior where amendments were proposed. Some changes were consistent with the Basalt P&Z's comments, including density ranges on the Urban/Suburban Residential future land use designation, with 3-7 dwelling units per acre; and a density range for the Mixed Use category was assigned for up to 7 units per acre. However, Lindt indicated that quite a few comments from the P&Z were not included. The RFVRPC discussed the draft plan but continued the discussion to this Thursday, May 3rd. There was also discussion about an urban growth boundary in the County. Staff has provided a draft letter to the RFVRPC that discusses priorities of comments that could be proposed to the RFVRPC. Lindt stated that he does not think all comments are going to be included, and suggested prioritizing and limiting comments to three topics. Chair Maron agreed.

Commissioner McAllister joined the meeting at 6:23.

Chair Maron said that not many policy changes have been written into the plan, but rather language changes. He said that he approves of the three prioritized comments suggested by Lindt. He proposed offering to the RFVRPC that the P&Z and RFVRPC include a member from each body to sit at their respective hearings for certain important hearings, in a joint planning effort.

Lindt discussed the three priorities he identified in the staff memo. Policy 1.2.1A is about encouraging compact, pedestrian-oriented development and limiting the scale of development outside the town to village commercial-type scale. He discussed policy 1.2.1, which would recommend a joint build-out analysis. Lindt said that this is a very important one. Policy 2.2.2 is also suggested for inclusion in the draft plan, and relates to keeping development in El Jebel to the "village commercial" scale. He also suggested adding language to the Plan stating that the Plan is a guide and does not bind decision-makers to the density ranges in all cases. The letter Staff drafted also recommends changes to the future land use map included in the plan. The draft letter suggested that the Fields property be changed back to a large lot residential designation rather than Urban/Suburban residential. The letter also suggested changing the

Fitzsimmons property, which used to have a gas station on it, from Mixed Use to Urban/Suburban Residential, however Staff expressed that they would like to check in with the Crawfords about their intent for the property before providing this comment. Additionally, the letter suggested changing the Willits Lane CDOT property back to Public Service from Mixed Use. Lindt also suggested that a portion of the El Jebel Mobile Home Park be changed back to Urban/Suburban Residential from Mixed Use, which is in line with the current use of the property.

Commissioner Rossetti asked what the reaction from the RFVRPC was after employing the conciliatory approach that had been agreed upon by the P&Z. Lindt said that the RFVRPC is receptive to the P&Z and its concerns. The draft language for the Plan came from Eagle County's staff rather than from the RFVRPC. Philp said that it is difficult to say how well the RFVRPC likes the draft Plan or the P&Z's suggestions. They are interested in an urban growth boundary. Chair Maron said that different language from "Urban/Suburban Residential" would be good, and that even the RFVRPC agrees. He said "village commercial" might be better, and added that the letter should state P&Z's appreciation for listening to their comments.

Philp summarized Chair Maron's suggestions, which are about language and incorporating participation from members of each body in the other body. Chair Maron clarified that this should only be for significant projects. He said this would be a "give" from the Town, because the Town will have more things for Eagle County to weigh in on than they will have for the Town. He suggested that this would help Town Council believe that the P&Z is interacting well with the RFVRPC.

Commissioner Vozick asked if the RFVRPC has responded to Ryan Mahoney's suggestions about joint planning. Philp guessed that the RFVRPC wants to defer this issue to the county commissioners. She noted that having only one member from each body leaves the possibility that the person might not be representative of the body they represent. She asked if it would be possible for someone to attend their meetings, which are at 2:30 pm. Chair Maron added that it would only be once or twice a year. Commissioner McAllister said that it wouldn't have to be mandatory. Chair Maron suggested creating a high threshold for when a P&Z commissioner would attend a RFVRPC meeting. Commissioner McAllister asked if they should have a vote, and didn't think that would be possible. He said that when joint planning was brought up by Ryan Mahoney at a previous RFVRPC meeting, they were civil but did not appear very interested in the idea.

Philp noted that the RFVRPC does not get referral comments from Basalt, as Basalt receives from them. The RFVRPC Chair requested the opportunity to comment on Willits, but they were not given the opportunity by their staff.

Commissioner McAllister asked if the joint planning issue needs to be cleared by Town Council. Chair Maron expressed uncertainty about this issue as well, but offered that it could be an olive branch to the RFVRPC. Philp suggested offering it as a suggestion to Town Council instead of directly to the RFVRPC. Chair Maron said that it could be offered "pending Town Council approval." He said that when Mahoney discussed joint planning previously, the Eagle County Planning Director, Damian Peduto, did not appear to like the idea. Commissioner Vozick asked if Town Council will follow up on Ryan Mahoney's original proposal, and then suggested that the issue of joint planning is not as important as the P&Z's other comments about the draft Plan.

Chair Maron said that when Ryan Mahoney proposed joint planning with the RFVRPC at a previous meeting, he got a “you-must-be-joking” vibe from Planning Director Damian Peduto, more so than from the Planning Commissioners. Commissioner McAllister agreed.

Commissioner Rossetti asked if the letter from P&Z needs to be sent by Thursday, and Lindt replied that it should be.

Chair Maron suggested taking the idea of joint planning and sharing non-voting membership to Ryan Mahoney tomorrow for the purpose of determining whether it should be added to the letter.

The P&Z approved of the concept of cooperating with the RFVRPC and potentially assigning members to each other’s meetings, pending a decision from Town Manager Ryan Mahoney.

M/S COMMISSIONERS ROSSETTI AND MCALLISTER TO APPROVE THE LETTER SUBJECT TO AMENDMENTS AS DISCUSSED. MOTION CARRIED BY A VOTE OF 6 TO 0.

Discussion of the Master Plan Update

Philp said that the Master Plan update was not included in the 2018 budget, though that does not mean it can’t be done. She suggested that the P&Z look again at comments they made at a worksession in the fall before an upcoming joint meeting with the Town Council. One of the goals is to be on the same page as the Town Council once the Master Plan update occurs. Another goal in this effort is to highlight areas that the P&Z would like to concentrate on. She placed a map of downtown for the P&Z to view and draw on. She said that the P&Z would not be discussing the CDC property at the moment, because there will be a land use application for them to review.

She summarized previous discussion by the P&Z about the update: enhance the vitality of the community, particularly East Basalt/Downtown; accommodate young people in the community; additional growth in the Downtown core to enhance vitality; the Plan should have “teeth” and not be subjective; pedestrian-focused amenities for young people; look comprehensively at growth and housing; avoid inconsistency with development review; more vitality at Willits and maintain historic character of Old Town; continuity of design, including streetscapes, lighting, and connecting paths; affordable housing solutions and the competition Aspen’s affordable housing program offers to Basalt; an opinion survey about vitality; attract more nonprofits; look at the development potential of the Clark’s Market site and consider what was done during the Our Town Planning process; transportation improvements, putting greater emphasis on trail connections and transit; enhance relationships with neighboring jurisdictions, particularly Eagle County; pursue jobs/housing balance; allow kids to be able to return to Basalt after college to live and work; finish developing the west Two Rivers Road corridor near RMI for trails and recreation, including a commuter trail; trail connections between parks and between neighborhood and parks; having a joint session with Town Council.

Commissioner Rossetti asked if Tim has done any more work since this discussion in September of 2017. Philp replied that no significant work had been done except on the survey.

Commissioner Rossetti offered three more recommendations for the future Master Plan update, beginning with an automobile underpass to Southside be a priority. He stated that it is important for safety, convenience, and uniting the Town. Another suggestion Commissioner Rossetti offered is the entry into Basalt, which he stated is not attractive at all. He offered that this would

not have to cost a lot of money, and that an underpass to Southside could work in tandem with this idea. Commissioner Rossetti also suggested that changes could be made to the downtown area, and said Grand Junction's downtown core could offer an example by how it is pedestrian-oriented, circuitous and difficult to drive, it has minimum parking. A key to improving the Downtown area would be reducing truck traffic on Midland, possibly by creating a new road through the Basalt Center Circle area. Commissioner Vozick noted that some of that work had already been discussed.

Commissioner Vozick suggested that in the Master Plan update, transportation connections, such as a bus, should be identified that would help link Willits, Downtown, and Southside. Commissioner Bennett said that money could be taken out of the equation for this purpose of creating an "aspirational document."

Chair Maron said that there is a large amount of data from the Our Town Planning project. He said that the last two master plans were done in similar ways, but that this time around could be different. He suggested discussing with Town Council a vision for what the Town should be, and working backwards from that. Commissioner Vozick said that organizations like RMI and RFC should be celebrated. Though Basalt doesn't necessarily need to attract nonprofits, it could bill itself as "the river nonprofit center of the West," or something similar. Commissioner Bennett questioned this, on the basis that attracting nonprofits does not bring a tax base. Chair Maron recalled that Mike Scanlon also opposed this idea for that reason. However, he noted that having lots of nonprofits brings civic vitality, which translates to more people and energy. He explained that in the past there was a time when numerous Aspen or Snowmass nonprofits were looking to move to Basalt, with Challenge Aspen as an example. They would bring visitors to hotels and restaurants and move to Basalt with their families.

Commissioner Vozick said that tax revenue has never been better. Commissioner Bennett asked what hotel visitors would stay in when no one wants to build the hotel, or when there's not enough density to support a hotel. Chair Maron referred to this as a chicken-and-egg issue. Commissioner Rossetti said that attracting nonprofits is not a critical item to focus on. He said that attracting paying people is the priority. Chair Maron agreed and added that density is his priority. Commissioner Keefe suggested diversity as another important quality.

Commissioner Bennett asked what "vitality" and "character" and "small-town character" really mean. Chair Maron that vitality is "people spending money and time." Chair Vozick asked how many people Basalt wants, and suggested that there is an upward limit. Philp said that having more dwelling units does not necessarily mean more people or vitality, noting how in Ute Center there appear to be many second homes and few actual residents. Commissioner Bennett said that high real estate prices are the real culprit making Town goals difficult to achieve, as in all desirable places. Chair Maron said that both of his neighbors are second home owners, leaving their homes empty. Commissioner Bennett said focusing on real estate prices is what should be focused on, as they prevent affordable housing. Chair Maron said there are ways to fix this problem, such as density and height, but these are often not palatable. Philp argued that it may not be possible to "build our way out" of the issue, and suggested that places like Denver, who do allow density and height, are not affordable.

Commissioner Keefe discussed the Basalt Center Circle area. Chair Maron said that nothing would happen in that area until the common area issues are worked out. Commissioner Rossetti acknowledged that it is complicated, but said it can be sorted out. Commissioner McAllister suggested that it should be scraped. Chair Maron said that there should be municipal help to allow for redevelopment of the site. He said that the amount of money it would take to

redevelop the area, and suggested it could be \$30 million, would not be worth the return, given the kinds of densities allowed in Basalt's regulations. He expressed the need to engage with the development community to understand what is holding the area back from redevelopment.

Commissioner Vozick said that conversations had happened in the past, and that someone was working on a project there. He noted that the former Habitat for Humanity space is not good for anybody when it sits empty. Commissioner McAllister proposed discussing changing the zoning regulations to make redevelopment in some places more possible. Chair Maron suggested taking a step back and viewing all the elements and challenges of the site objectively. Philp stated that good, thoughtful zoning is already in place from the Our Town Planning efforts. Commissioner McAllister suggested offering incentives to make developers come.

Philp said that while the P&Z wants to have a productive conversation with the Town Council, it should maybe stay at an aspirational level. Commissioner Bennett agreed that the conversation's tone should not be accusatory, but should be about identifying and fixing underlying issues.

Chair Maron said having more community outreach to try to reach consensus on the Basalt Center Circle area. He offered three steps that should be taken: community engagement process, to try to achieve some sort of consensus; rethinking the master plan process from the beginning; and having a "hotshot," visionary consultant. Commissioner Rossetti reaffirmed the importance of the Basalt Center Circle area and the CDC parcel. He said people getting faith in the Town Council is also an important step in seeing the desired redevelopment. He suggested buying and condemning the Basalt Center Circle area. Chair Maron stated that he wants the Master Plan to help the Town get from where it is now to the vision in the Our Town Planning process. He agreed that Gino's idea is one possibility, albeit an extreme one. Commissioner Keefe suggested looking from a business sense at these large redevelopment issues. Chair Maron suggested using public private partnerships in a redevelopment effort, though this would be complex.

Commissioner McAllister suggested being careful about even talking about the Town condemning property. Commissioner Vozick suggested that they have a conversation with Tim Belinski, as his role in Basalt is very important at the moment, between Willits and the CDC parcel. Philp suggested starting with trying to sort out the legal, CCIOA aspects of the Center Circle area. Commissioner Rossetti suggested the need for an underground parking structure to serve Downtown. Philp asked if people in West Basalt would approve a \$30M bond for a project in East Basalt. The Commissioners thought that the citizens would. Commissioner Vozick brought up the issue of second home owners, and suggested they might not support it. Commissioner Bennett said that they do not vote. Chair Maron noted that this illustrates the importance of a community outreach program.

Commissioner Bennett recalled that the Our Town Planning process was positive at first, but turned ugly. Commissioner Vozick observed that Latino families were not properly included in that planning process, and are unlikely to involve themselves in Basalt's affairs after that, as many of them moved downvalley. However, he said that there are many Latinos who work or spend time in Basalt.

Philp suggested that many people are burned out on planning efforts. She noted that open house events, like RFTA does sometimes, are often poorly attended. Commissioner Vozick suggested that there is still energy for doing something positive, but that people are "gun shy."

Chair Maron suggested getting “our ducks in a row” for the Master Planning process. The P&Z should pinpoint three simple points, but speak in broadbrush.

Commissioner Vozick said that a facilitator with a sense of humor could go a long way. Paul Andersen did a good job as a neutral voice with credibility. He said there were hurt feelings in the community.

Commissioner McAllister suggested starting at a grassroots level. Chair Maron recalled living room conversations involving residents that were good.

Lindt offered that the our Town Planning effort may have gone into too much detail, which was what allowed people to get their feelings hurt when they did not get exactly what they wanted.

Philp agreed. She cautioned against promising people specific amenities.

Chair Maron suggested telling Town Council that the P&Z would like to approach this master Plan differently, and their desire to have a grassroots effort. He urged the P&Z to simply get Town Council engaged and excited about the process and not get into specifics. Commissioner Vozick asked if the P&Z should talk about its list of topics. Chair Maron said no, that the goal should be to get the Town Council engaged and excited, and to listen to them. Commissioner Rossetti said that the P&Z doesn't know what might come of the worksession.

Philp asked if it would not be valuable to include some ideas for what the Master Plan should include. Chair Maron said perhaps it would be good to have some ideas to bring up later. He said the typologies in the Master Plan can be too specific to bring up. Commissioner Keefe suggested bring a problems and solutions list. Chair Maron suggested just a problems list and a general goal statement.

Commissioner Vozick cautioned against being committed to certain solutions early in the process, such as a parking structure. Chair Maron agreed and cautioned against being too specific and suggesting ideas too expensive or grandiose.

Commissioner Bennett asked Chair Maron what the “old way” of approaching the Master Plan process was, if he is suggesting a new process. Commissioner McAllister suggested starting the process with a grassroots effort. Chair Maron suggested to begin by asking questions. Philp said she had received a lot of feedback about having gone house to house, and that it was more negative than positive. Chair Maron said that getting people's feedback is the most important thing, and he got a lot of his ideas from Jim Kent and Keith Ikeda. Commissioner Keefe asked what the Town wants to get by the grassroots effort. Chair Maron said the Town should hear whatever people have to say. Chair Maron said that getting information is one goal, but another is to get them on the Town's side. Commissioner Rossetti suggested the steps should be to engage people and get their opinion, to go to Town Council and bring ideas and get their comments, and then start the Master Plan process.


Commissioner Vozick asked when the meeting with Town Council could be. Philp said that June 22nd could be the date. She said that surveys and outreach could occur after, but that the initial meeting would be to get their blessing to start the Master Planning process. Chair Maron said he would be out of town for that date. Philp suggested July 10th. All present said it would work. Philp said that Staff would type up material for them to review at the next P&Z meeting.

All expressed their content with the 23 items listed in the staff packet. Philp reviewed Commissioner Rossetti's four suggestions, which were an underpass to Southside, work on the entry to Basalt, changes to Midland Avenue based on ideas from Grand Junction, and a transportation connection of some sort between Willits and Downtown. She said that on Tuesday, Town Council would discuss RFTA's strategic plan options, which would include minor changes in Basalt. She said a bus circulator did not make the initial cut and would be a second-tier item.

M/S COMMISSIONERS MCALLISTER AND KEEFE TO ADJOURN. MOTION CARRIED BY A VOTE OF 6 TO 0.

The P&Z was adjourned at 7:43 pm.

TOWN OF BASALT
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION

By 

William C. Maron, Chair

Attest 

Susan Philp, Planning Director