

Monroe County Board of Commissioners

Minutes of the September 03, 2024

Called Commissioners Meeting

6:00 P.M.

Present:

Greg Tapley, Chairman

Eddie Rowland, Vice-Chairman

Lamarcus Davis, District 1

John Ambrose, District 3

George Emami, District 4

Staff:

Ben Vaughn, County Attorney

Jim Hedges, County Manager

Richard Dumas, Public Information Officer

Kelsey Fortner, Community Development Manager

Janet Abbott, County Clerk

Welcome

Chairman Tapley welcomed everyone in attendance.

Prayer

Elder Lloyd Strickland with Daysprings Presbyterian Church gave the invocation.

Pledge

Chairman Tapley led the Pledge.

Roll Call

County Clerk Janet Abbott called roll.

Call to Order

Chairman Tapley called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M.

New Business

Approve Agenda

Chairman Tapley presented the agenda for approval with the addition of executive session for legal and the removal of the Giles Road application

Commissioner Emami motioned to approve the agenda as amended.

Commissioner Davis seconded the motion, and the motion passed 5-0.

Approve Minutes-August 20, 2024, Regular Meeting and the August 23, 2024, Called Meeting

Chairman Tapley presented the minutes of the August 20, 2024, Regular Meeting and the August 23, 2024, Called Meeting for approval.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve the minutes with the usual 30 days for changes

Commissioner Emami seconded the motion, and the motion carried

P&Z Hearing-Jeffery Way-Variance-Pooler/Washington-Gbessagee

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to enter a public hearing at 6:04 p.m. for a Variance application.

Commissioner Davis seconded the motion, and the motion carried 5-0.

Community Development Manager Kelsey Fortner presented a variance application located at 352 Jeffrey Way, Map 064A Parcel 023. The property owner/applicant is Emmanuel and Melissa Pooler/Toni Washington-GBessagee. Mrs. Fortner stated the variance application is for a second dwelling on the property. The second dwelling is for a 1,400 square foot home to be placed on the property behind the main dwelling.

The Planning and Zoning Board recommended approval.

The applicant Emmanuel Pooler was present on behalf of the application.

Commissioner Ambrose stated he would like to make a restriction that the dwelling is only for a family member.

Mr. Pooler agreed to the restriction.

Chairman Tapley asked County Attorney Ben Vaughn if this restriction could be placed on the application.

County Attorney Ben Vaughn replied to Chairman Tapley that it could be placed on a special use application if the applicant agrees.

Commissioner Emami stated he thinks the requirement would be an undue burden.

Noone was present in opposition to the request.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to close the public hearing at 6:10 p.m.

Commissioner Emami seconded the motion, and the motion carried 5-0.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve with the stipulation that the home can only be rented out to a family member.

Commissioner Rowland stated he has a hard time with the stipulation because it would be too hard to enforce.

Commissioner Emami seconded the motion for discussion.

The motion failed 1-4 with Commissioner Ambrose in favor and Chairman Tapley, Commissioner Davis, Commissioner Emami and Commissioner Rowland opposed.

Commissioner Emami motioned to approve the special use application as presented.

Commissioner Davis seconded the motion, and the motion carried 4-1 with Commissioner Ambrose opposed.

County Attorney Ben Vaughn addressed the Board asking if they would move Executive Session to the next item on the agenda so that Attorney Brandon Bowen could participate via phone in the executive session discussion.

Commissioner Emami motioned to amend the agenda to move Executive Session to the next item.

Commissioner Ambrose seconded the motion, and the motion carried 5-0.

Executive Session-Legal

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to enter executive session for legal at 6:14 p.m.

Commissioner Emami seconded the motion, and the motion carried 5-0.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to close executive session at 6:30 p.m.

Commissioner Davis seconded the motion, and the motion carried 5-0.

Action from Executive Session.

County Clerk Janet Abbott stated two legal matters were discussed during Executive Session and no action is needed at this time.

P&Z Hearing-Giles Road-Special Use-Acquire Timber/Stolzfus/Zook

Applicant pulled the application prior to the meeting.

P&Z Hearing-Old Atlanta Hwy-Special Use-Hargetts South-Hargett

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to enter a public hearing at 6:32 p.m. for a Special Use Application in A-R.

Commissioner Rowland seconded the motion, and the motion carried 5-0.

Community Development Manager Kelsey Fortner presented a Special Use Application in A-R located at 2535 Old Atlanta Hwy, Map 029 Parcel 019. The property owner/applicant is Hargetts South, LLC, Tim and Ashley Hargett.

Mrs. Fortner stated the Special Use application is for a campground on the property. The lot is 1.97-acres requiring a variance for being less than 25-acres. The request is for three campers.

Tim Hargett stated there are currently two RVs on the property that are occupied and have electricity, water and septic available. Mr. Hargett stated the property contains two stick-built homes and an older single-wide trailer. Mr. Hargett stated about 9-10 people currently live on the property.

Alicia Heldstrom stated she has lived there for a little over 2 years in a large 50-amp camper. Ms. Heldstrom stated she and her husband prefers to live in a camper, and it is not due to a financial situation. Ms. Heldstrom stated she does not want to live in a campground, and this is a central location to family and work.

The Planning and Zoning Board recommended denial with the condition the current RV residents on the property be allowed until January 1, 2025, to move their RVs out and find an alternative place to live.

Jason Gifford spoke in opposition stating his family lives next door, and he can throw a rock from his bedroom window and hit camper. Mr. Gifford stated it is quiet now but that can change, and he doesn't want it that close to his house.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to close the public hearing at 6:42 p.m.

Commissioner Rowland seconded the motion, and the motion carried 5-0.

Commissioner Rowland motioned to deny the application.

Commissioner Emami seconded the motion, and the motion carried 5-0.

Commissioner Rowland stated he had spoken to the Hargetts, and they are nice people. Commissioner Rowland stated we (the board) spent time developing UDO and basically you can live in an RV in a park or with certain conditions. We have already relaxed the rules and if we approve this everything our citizens told us they wanted we will be throwing out the window.

P&Z Hearing-Moreland Ave-Rezoning-Henderson/Emami

Prior to the hearing Commissioner Emami recused himself from the hearing.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to enter a public hearing at 6:45 p.m. for a Rezoning Application in R-1.

Commissioner Davis seconded the motion, and the motion carried 4-0.

Community Development Manager Kelsey Fortner presented a Rezoning Application in R-1 located at 0 Moreland Avenue, Map F32 Parcel 019. The property owner/applicant is Cecil Henderson/George Emami, Primepoint Ventures.

Mrs. Fortner stated the rezoning application is to rezone to RMF for multi-family zoning for 4-Quad Unit Townhome buildings.

The Planning & Zoning Board recommended approval.

Steven Rowland spoke on behalf of the application. Mr. Rowland presented stating he was requesting the rezoning of 4-acres from R-1 to RMF, for townhomes. Mr. Rowland stated the project would have a total of 20 townhomes in six total buildings. Mr. Rowland stated the units will be two-story with a garage on the ground level. The townhomes will be fee simple ownership, have public water and sewer access, any permits needed will be obtained and permission from the power company to encroach on their power line easement will be requested. Mr. Rowland stated the townhomes would have a homeowner's association to be formed for grounds maintenance. Mr. Rowland stated each unit would have a driveway and a garage in front with curb cuts onto a newly created private road off Moreland Ave. Mr. Rowland stated these are not a cheap product but a more affordable product.

Commissioner Davis asked whether the townhomes would truly represent affordable housing.

George Emami replied to Commissioner Davis, the price point will be below anything you can find in the county right now. Mr. Emami stated the only way to achieve this is with attached housing. Mr. Emami stated this fits into what I would consider the missing middle which is a sustainable comfortable style of growth.

Commissioner Davis stated his other concern is the road is very tight at the church and if you widen the road, it will be in the church's front door.

Mr. Emami replied it is a city road, and the city owns it, but I would be willing to do some asphalt extension on either side. Mr. Emami stated he was asked by the city to prove the road was wide enough.

Commissioner Ambrose asked will an investor be able to come in and buy 5 or more units and use them as rentals.

Mr. Emami replied we are not trying to build them that way, we really want them to be owner/occupied housing. Mr. Emami stated that's not the goal here.

Mitchell Bunce resident of 380 Strickland Loop asked where we are going to put these kids when these families move in. Mr. Bunce stated there is currently a bus stop in the area and traffic will be a

nightmare. Mr. Bunce continued the tax base is not keeping up with the children coming into our schools.

Cassandra Gaines resident of Gilmore Road stated the issue is going to be traffic. Ms. Gaines stated George Moreland lives on the road and if you widen it, it will literally be at his door. Ms. Gaines stated this will impact the church. She stated we agree we need affordable housing, but this needs more planning because this will negatively impact both of neighborhoods in the area.

Willie Moreland resident of Moreland Ave stated we have gone through this and there is no way this can be done without impacting my side of the road. Mr. Moreland stated the traffic is already heavy in the area and the City of Forsyth already said he couldn't put in multi family housing.

Alan Wise resident of 40 George Street stated he was against the project and asked where the traffic is going to come out on Gilmore Road from the subdivision.

Chairman Tapley reminded everyone there are two pieces of property, one is city, and one is county, we are addressing the county portion.

Commissioner Rowland stated access to the townhomes on Moreland Avenue gives a second exit road onto Hwy 83 N., that would limit the traffic that enters on Gilmore Road and Willis Circle.

Commissioner Rowland stated the church in the area is very close to the road but there are a number of churches in the county that are close to the road.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to close the public hearing at 7:21 p.m.

Commissioner Rowland seconded the motion, and the motion carried 4-0.

Commissioner Davis motioned to deny the application, but the motion failed for lack of a second.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve the application.

Commissioner Rowland seconded the motion, and the motion passed 3-1 with Commissioner Davis opposed and Commissioner Emami recused from the vote.

Public Comments

Mitchell Bunce stated he appreciates the Board. Mr. Bruce stated you have a difficult job to do. He encouraged the Board to look at development and how fast the county is developing.

Betty Eskew addressed the Board asking has the Board heard back from David Knight. Ms. Eskew asked Commissioner Emami had he written a letter regarding the development in High Falls.

Cassandra Gaines asked the Board what type of recourse the citizens of Gilmore Road have with the decision that was made tonight regarding the Moreland Avenue rezoning decision.

Commissioner' Comments

Commissioner Lamarcus Davis

Commissioner Davis stated he would like to thank county wide staff as a whole. He asked everyone to continue to pray for the country, the city, and the county.

Commissioner Eddie Rowland

Commissioner Rowland stated he would like to update everyone on the status of the library situation. Commissioner Rowland stated the Board is still considering ideas on the library books and they have spoken to some of the residents, he continued stating we know what we want but we have to find a legal path and he asked the community to bear with us.

Commissioner Rowland commended EMS/Fire Chief Matt Jackson for his dedication and leadership during the recent fire at Branded Starr Western Wear on the Forsyth City square.

Commissioner John Ambrose

Commissioner Ambrose stated in response to Commissioner Rowland's comments regarding the library, he stated I have a plan for January 1st to shut it down if the books aren't removed.

Commissioner Ambrose stated the reason he voted to approve the Moreland Road application is the developer could easily have put some big apartments there and added 3 or 4 hundred people.

Commissioner George Emami

Commissioner Emami stated he has mixed emotions on tonight's meeting and would like to very briefly speak to those that showed up tonight. Commissioner Emami stated I hear your concerns and that is the reason I didn't try to max out the property. Commissioner Emami stated he prides himself on being a good neighbor.

Commissioner Emami thanked the Board for recognizing property owner's rights, he stated people have to be able to use their property in a reasonable way.

Chairman Greg Tapley

Chairman Tapley stated he would like to reiterate what Commissioner Rowland stated regarding Chief Jackson and stated he is just one example of a great team we have put together. Chairman Tapley continued stating we have the right people in the right place.

Adjourn

Commissioner Davis motioned to adjourn at 7:37 p.m.

Commissioner Ambrose seconded the motion, and the motion was carried 5-0.

MCBOC draft Minutes of September 3, 2024, meeting
MCBOC approved.

Respectively Submitted by:

Janet Abbott, County Clerk