

## **Gastonia Planning Commission December 7, 2023 Meeting Minutes**

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The Gastonia Planning Commission meeting opened at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, December 7, 2023, in the Council Chambers at City Hall, 181 S. South Street of Gastonia, NC.

Present: Chair Kristie Ferguson and Commissioners Rodney Armstrong, Megan Chapman, Anthony Gallant, Carl Harris and Glenn Silverman

Absent: Commissioners Jim Stewart and Chad Ghorley

Staff Members Present: Charles Graham, Quentin McPhatter, Jason Thompson, Maddy Gates, Jalen Nash, Jordan Tubbs, Cory Steiss, and Amber Bridges

### **Item 1a: Role Call / Sound Check**

Chair Kristie Ferguson noted the absence of Commissioner Stewart and Commissioner Ghorley and declared a quorum for the meeting.

### **Item 1b: Calls/Contacts to Planning Commission Members**

None of the Commissioners received any contacts.

### **Item 1d: Approval of November 9th, 2023 Meeting Minutes**

Commissioner Gallant made a motion to adopt the November 9<sup>th</sup> minutes as presented and Commissioner Silverman seconded the motion. The motion unanimously passed (5-0).

### **Item 2: Public Hearing (Continued) – Delmont Court (File #202300273)**

Subject hearing involves a request to rezone approximately 1.43 acres from RS-12 (Single-family Residential, minimum 12,000 sq. ft. lots) to RMF CD (Residential Multi-family – Conditional District). The subject property is located at the intersection of Delmont Court and Edgewood Road and is owned by RYSM Investments, LLC

Chair Ferguson recognized Maddy Gates, Senior Planner, for staff presentation. The zoning map was displayed. Ms. Gates noted that this is a continued item from the November Planning Commission meeting. She stated the property currently consists of an existing apartment development that was built in 1970 and has 16-units. She noted that the request was to rezone the entire parcel to RMF CD, Residential Multi-family, for the purpose of adding six additional units, making it a total of 22-units. The site plan from the November meeting was displayed. Ms. Gates explained the previous concerns for a lack of parking. The revised site plan was then displayed and further explained. She shared that the new site plan had added 10 parking spaces, making a new total of 36. Ms. Gates stated that there are no other changes to the plan. She shared the request is consistent for residential uses according to the 2025 Future Land Use Map and that staff is recommending approval.

With no questions for staff, Chair Ferguson recognized Josh Shope, 1417 Wandering Way Drive, Charlotte, NC. Commissioner Chapman asked Mr. Shope how he took into account the concerns from the public that arose at the November meeting. Mr. Shope replied that the sidewalk on Edgewood Road was removed due to safety concerns and that additional parking was added for the new building. He explained further that each apartment building now has their own separate parking.

With no further discussion, Commissioner Gallant made a motion to approve the request as presented with the statement of consistency and reasonableness. Commissioner Silverman seconded the motion. With no discussion, the motion to approve the request as presented was unanimously passed (6-0).

### **Item 3: Public Hearing – Prime Gastonia, 2024 Redbud Drive (File #202300272)**

Subject hearing involves a request to rezone a portion of tax parcel 148683 for approximately 8.64 acres from RS-12 (Single-family Residential, minimum 12,000 sq. ft. lots) to O-1 CD (Office – Conditional District). The subject property is located east of the S. New Hope Road and Redbud Drive intersection and is owned by New Hope Baptist Church.

Chair Ferguson recognized Jason Thompson, Planning Director, for staff presentation. The zoning map was displayed. He stated the request was to O-1 CD, Office, for an independent living center. Mr. Thompson explained that an independent living center is an age targeted facility which provides services such as congregate meals and transportation services to its residents. The site plan was displayed. Mr. Thompson stated the facility would have a maximum of 145 units and the access is located off of Redbud Drive. He further explained the conditions of approval and stated that the City Traffic Engineer is present for any questions. Mr. Thompson again referenced the zoning map and discussed the context of the surrounding area which is mainly residential with commercial clustering. The proposed conceptual elevations were presented. Mr. Thompson discussed the design standards in the Unified Development Ordinance and how they relate to the elevations. He stated staff is recommending approval as presented.

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Commissioner Gallant asked if additional traffic information for the site and development could be provided. The City Traffic Engineer, Cory Steiss, stated that the development was required to do a Traffic Technical Memorandum (TTM), which was still under review. He explained the draft improvements from City staff which includes the addition of a N/E extended merge lane, a turn lane into the site, and two exit lanes out of the site. He explained the improvements were for concerns on level of service and safety and that the City is waiting for NCDOT to review. Commissioner Silverman asked Mr. Steiss what the timeline was for NCDOT to finalize their review. Commissioner Silverman also stated that the shown speed limit on Redbud Drive is 35 miles per hour but shared that people drive much faster and that it is a concern. Mr. Steiss responded that the date for the NCDOT review is likely December 17<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup>. He also noted that the improvements shown are all that can be provided from the City's requirements and code.

Commissioner Harris asked Mr. Steiss if there is anything from a traffic standpoint that can require two entrances. Mr. Thompson replied that it is based on fire code and unit count. He indicated in this case, the building will have fire sprinklers throughout which allows one entrance per fire code.

With there being no questions for staff, Chair Ferguson recognized Brett Massey, 3335 Misty Hollow Court, Graham, NC. Mr. Massey shared general background information on the Prime Independent Living company. He shared other facilities they have in Myrtle Beach and Knoxville, Tennessee. Mr. Massey shared the details of the feasibility study that was conducted for this site, showing that there was a need for senior housing. He also noted the Redbud site was a good location for their project due to close proximity of commercial, retail, and other services. He discussed the two neighborhood meetings that were held and shared that there were concerns from residents on Redbud traffic. Mr. Massey explained the by-right option for RS-12 zoning and the average trip counts for both uses. He indicated, the independent living center would have a low impact on traffic.

With there being no questions for staff, Chair Ferguson recognized Brandon McKoy, 4524 Rillview Court, Gastonia, NC. Mr. McKoy stated he was the pastor of New Hope Baptist Church. He shared he was in support of the rezoning petition for an independent living center. Mr. McKoy stated on behalf of the church and its mission, a senior living facility was the best use of the church land. He explained how the proposed use aligned with the values of the church as well as the existing neighborhood. Mr. McKoy indicated that the members of the church voted almost unanimously in support of the independent living center. Additionally, he shared that the initial request was for 16 acres of church property, but the 8 acres worked better as the church could now keep their ball fields.

Commissioner Silverman asked Mr. McKoy if the proposed facility was considered more to be assisted living rather than independent living. Mr. McKoy responded that the facility provides several services including sensors in rooms, congregate meals, and concierges. Mr. McKoy indicated that additional details would be better answered by the Prime representatives. Commissioner Chapman asked Mr. McKoy if the church had considered a second access from the parking lot to the proposed facility. Mr. McKoy replied that the entire church parking lot would have to be redone if that were the case, which was not their intentions.

Chair Ferguson recognized Debra Maynard, 2015 Ayrley Town Boulevard, Charlotte, NC. Ms. Maynard shared that she is the President of Operations for Prime. She responded to Commissioner Silverman's question, stating that they do not provide on-site care of any kind. She clarified and discussed the types of services that are provided such as 24-hour concierges, housekeeping, activities, scheduled transportation, communal meals, and maintenance. Further, she stated that if the residents own care cannot be coordinated by them personally, they cannot live at this type of facility. Ms. Maynard stated most residents do have their own cars and that the average age is 77-82 years old. Commissioner Silverman stated he understood the facility and the mission but that it is a matter of logistics and the site. Ms. Maynard, noted that other similar properties in the Gastonia area, have a 12-year wait list.

Commissioner Harris asked Ms. Maynard if there are grandkids or family members under the age of 55 that are allowed to live there. Ms. Maynard responded that anyone under 55 cannot live there. She stated guests or family members are allowed to stay up to 30 days a year. Commissioner Harris asked staff if the required TTM will also include a full Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA). Mr. Steiss explained the differences between a TTM and a TIA. He noted that a TIA would not be required for this site because it did not meet the 1,000 daily trips threshold. Mr. Steiss noted that a TTM was required due to the existing traffic concerns on Redbud Drive. Commissioner Harris asked staff what intersections were studied. Mr. Steiss replied it was Pamela Street and the Redbud – New Hope intersection.

Ms. Maynard further explained details of the facility, including the personal living quarters, activities, events, transportation services, and security. Chair Ferguson asked Ms. Maynard when completion of

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the facility would be. Ms. Maynard said the typical construction timeline is 18 months. Commissioner Harris asked what the expected age range would be in Gastonia. Ms. Maynard responded that they would expect residents in the 70s age range.

Commissioner Chapman asked Ms. Maynard how early after opening, they would expect full capacity. Ms. Maynard replied typically a year but hopefully faster. Commissioner Chapman asked if the other Prime facilities in Myrtle Beach and Knoxville only had one entrance. Ms. Maynard replied yes, and it has not been an issue.

Chair Ferguson recognized Walter Kimble, 2769 Independence Way, Gastonia, NC. Mr. Kimble shared that he is a member of the New Hope Baptist church and that he is in support of the project. He stated several of applications and offers were made on the church property but this project is the only one they actually considered. Mr. Kimble also discussed traffic concerns and shared that he thought this use was the least impactful. Commissioner Silverman asked Mr. Kimble if there would be clergy staff or church outreach at the Prime facility. Mr. McKoy replied “Yes”, that the church would like to interact with the Prime residents in the future.

Chair Ferguson recognized Eric Elliot, 410 Deerwood Drive, Gastonia, NC. Mr. Elliot shared that he lives in the neighborhood across the street. He explained that he liked the project but had traffic concerns. Mr. Elliot shared the original site plan which was 16 acres and had frontage on S. New Hope Road and Redbud Drive. He stated the 16 acres would have been much better to have another access. Additionally, he shared that Redbud Drive and Pamela Street are dangerous and accident prone. Mr. Elliot also stated that a left turn out of the proposed site would be impossible. He expressed concern for only having one access into the site and shared that he believes the Planning Commission decision should wait until the full TTM report is finalized.

Mr. Massey referenced the comments from Mr. Elliot. Mr. Massey stated the original request was for 16 acres but after studying the soils and the additional costs, Prime could not afford the full 16 acres. He stated he agreed to the TTM and all future mitigations but it would not have been feasible to add an additional road and land. Commissioner Chapman asked Mr. Massey if there can be any coordination with the church to have an access on S. New Hope Road. Commissioner Chapman shared traffic and safety concerns. Mr. Massey replied that the costs would not be feasible and it would kill the project. Commissioner Harris asked Mr. Massey, if NCDOT came back and required two accesses, what would happen. Mr. Massey replied that he would have to try and negotiate again with the church and most likely raise the costs of rent. Commissioner Chapman asked Mr. McKoy about connection to the church parking lot. Mr. McKoy replied that the parking lot is already being used as a cut through for people and a connection would make it significantly worse. He noted that a right-turn lane is planned to be added on New Hope which may help.

Chair Ferguson asked Mr. Thompson if a finalized traffic report would be helpful in this case and available within the next few weeks. Mr. Thompson replied “Yes”. He shared information on by-right options in RS-12 and the low traffic count the project would produce. Commissioner Silverman made a motion to close the public hearing. Commissioner Chapman seconded the motion. The motion to close the public hearing was unanimously passed (6-0).

Commissioner Silverman brought discussion amongst the Commissioners to continue this item to the January 4<sup>th</sup> Planning Commission meeting. He stated due to outstanding information from the traffic report, he feels a final vote cannot yet be made. Chair Ferguson stated she was in agreement with Commissioner Silverman.

Commissioner Chapman made a motion to continue this item to the January 4<sup>th</sup>, 2024 Planning Commission meeting. Commissioner Silverman seconded the motion. Commissioner Gallant discussed with Commissioners how the traffic report would impact their decision. He added that the Commission should be careful to add additional conditions which may make the project not feasible. Discussion ensued amongst the Commissioners in regards to traffic. Assistant City Attorney, Charles Graham, noted that the role of the Commission is not to re-design the project. He also indicated that the applicant and developer will be required to provide all mitigations from the TTM or it does not get built. The Commissioners discussed the process of continuing an item when information is outstanding.

With no further discussion, the motion to continue this item to the January 4<sup>th</sup> meeting was unanimously passed (6-0).

### **Item 4: Public Hearing – 1750 Rankin Lake Road (File #202300457)**

Subject hearing involves a request for an I-2 SUP (General Industrial - Special Use Permit) for approximately 242.66 acres. The subject property is located at 1750 Rankin Lake Road, west of Gastonia Dallas Highway and is owned by the City of Gastonia.

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Due to the quasi-judicial matter of the special use permit hearing, Planning Tech, Jalen Nash, administered the oath to all speakers for Item 4.

Chair Ferguson opened the public hearing and recognized Jordan Tubbs, Senior Planner, for the purpose of staff presentation. The zoning map was presented. Mr. Tubbs stated that the City of Gastonia is the property owner and the applicant is Gaston County Community College. He shared that the request is for a special use permit for the Rankin Lake Pistol and Firing Range for an additional training facility and new parking lot. Mr. Tubbs discussed surrounding zoning and uses. The proposed site plan was displayed. Mr. Tubbs shared the proposed finding of facts prepared by the applicant. He stated that the request was consistent with the finding of facts and that staff was recommending approval as presented. Finally, he noted that the applicants are present if additional information is needed.

Chair Ferguson recognized Jason Dolan, 610 E. Morehead St., Charlotte, NC. Mr. Dolan indicated he affirms the oath. He shared that the entirety of the parcel is 242 acres, but their site is only 2.5 acres for the addition of a training facility. Mr. Dolan shared that parking is also going to be added.

Chair Ferguson recognized Mack Millen, 201 Highway 321, Dallas, NC. Mr. Millen indicated he affirms the oath. He shared that he is present on behalf of Gaston College and is the Facilities Director. Mr. Millen shared the request is for a de-escalation training center which is currently partnered with the City of Gastonia. He shared the intent is to continue and enhance training for law enforcement. Commissioner Silverman asked Mr. Millen what the timeline would be for this facility to open. Mr. Millen replied that they are currently working with the State and will do a Request for Proposal (RFP) for general contractors, but he was unsure. Commissioner Chapman asked if the site is 2.5 acres. Mr. Millen replied "Yes", and discussed how all the land of the parcel is broken up. Mr. Millen also shared that they are partnering with the City to pave the road in question.

Chair Ferguson recognized Joe Humphrey, 1000 W. Morehead, Charlotte, NC. Mr. Humphrey indicated he affirms the oath. Mr. Humphrey noted that they anticipate end of construction to be the end of 2024. Commissioner Harris asked what the make-up of the building will be. Mr. Humphrey responded that it is a pre-manufactured steel building which will hold all ballistics within. He further noted, he designed the infrastructure but not the actual building. Mr. Humphrey noted that the intent is to allow for a network throughout all facilities on-site and he did a similar project in Charlotte.

With no further discussion, Commissioner Silverman made a motion to approve the request as presented with the statement of consistency and reasonableness and in consideration with the findings of facts. Commissioner Harris seconded the motion. The motion to approve the request as presented unanimously passed (6-0).

### **Item 5: Other Business**

Mr. Thompson shared updates from previous City Council items. He stated two text amendments were approved at the November 21<sup>st</sup> City Council meeting.

### **Item 6: Adjournment**

Chair Ferguson entertained a motion to adjourn the December 7<sup>th</sup> Planning Commission meeting. Commissioner Gallant made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Commissioner Harris seconded the motion. The motion to adjourn was unanimously passed (6-0). The meeting adjourned at 7:07 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

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Jalen Nash, Planning Technician

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Kristie Ferguson, Chairwoman