

St. James Township Planning Commission
Special Meeting Minutes
March 15th, 2018

Present: Anderson, Croswhite, McGinnity, Tidmore

Absent: Powers

Other: Carol Burton, Dan Burton, Michelle LaFreniere, Bill Markey, Pam O'Brien, Sheri Richards, Mike Sowa, Rick Speck

1. Call to Order: Tidmore called the meeting to order at 7:10 pm.
2. Additions/Changes to Agenda: None
3. Approval of Minutes: Motion to approve minutes from the February 20th, 2018 regular meeting proposed by Anderson, seconded by Croswhite; motion passed.
4. McGinnity opened the Public Hearing on the rezoning request from R-2 to H for parcel 013-753-017-00 at 7:16 pm by reading opening remarks from Commissioner Tidmore, who was calling in. The main point was that the rezoning request was for the property, not the use of the structure. If the rezoning was approved by the Planning Commission and ultimately the Township, the use the building was permitted for, Single Family Residential, would remain unless the owners took additional action to change the use.
 - a. Applicant narrative: Carol Burton explained that she and her husband were requesting that the zoning designation of the lot on which their new building sits be changed from R-2 to Harbor. The reason for the change, she explained, was that it would increase their flexibility in how they used the building going forward. The ability to have a sign for the boat shop business would be one benefit. In addition, the question of whether the residence and mother-in-law suite above the workshop were being advertised as apartments had been raised, and at the suggestion of the Zoning Administrator, they had decided to request the change to Harbor District to allow them the possibility of changing the use and rent them as apartments at some point if needed.
 - b. Correspondence: McGinnity explained that three letters had been received in regard to the issue. The first from Haggard Plumbing and Heating in support of approving the application, citing economic development on the island as being of prime importance. The second was from Pam O'Brien, and the third from Shirley Sowa, both raising concerns about increased traffic and congestion on Freesoil and about rezoning changing the residential nature of the narrow street. All three letters were read aloud.
 - c. The commissioners addressed many of the concerns raised in the letters, pointing out that it would be difficult to attribute an increase in traffic on the road to a single new building, but that the Planning Commission appreciated the input about safety for pedestrians on Freesoil. It was also pointed out that the Master Plan does encourage more mixed uses in the Harbor area, and that the property is situated firmly within the Harbor area on the Future Land Use map.

- d. Public comment began with a point of clarification from Pam O'Brien who stated she'd been told that it was not just parcel 013-753-017-00 that a zoning change had been requested for, but also parcels 013-753-018-00 and 013-753-019-00 immediately to the north. The rezoning application is only for the single parcel listed in the posting for the hearing. There were also concerns that rezoning might increase taxes for other residents of Freesoil. In response to comments regarding congestion and danger to pedestrians on the street generally, it was suggested that a sidewalk running the length of the street would make the neighborhood more walkable and safer.
 - e. Several questions about how rezoning would affect the residential nature of the rest of the street were also brought up. Concerns included increased traffic, parking congestion, noise, etc. It was noted by the Zoning administrator that R-2 does not include any restrictions on street parking, whereas the Harbor District does.
5. McGinnity closed the public hearing at 7:57 pm when all who wished to speak had had a chance to do so.

6. Rezoning Application

The Commissioners discussed the application and the comments from the public hearing. Anderson explained that his chief reservation was that the fact rezoning a property with a building that was already built and permitted as single-family residential, when it appeared to be apartments, might set a bad precedent for property owners to do what they want regardless of zoning restrictions and then ask for a change to bring it into compliance with the ordinance after the fact.

Motion to recommend approval of the request to change the zoning of Parcel 013-753-017-00 from R-1, based on the fact that the change would be in accordance with the Master Plan, proposed by Tidmore, seconded by Anderson—Roll Call Vote:

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| Commissioner Anderson: | Aye |
| Commissioner Croswhire: | Aye |
| Commissioner Tidmore: | Aye |
| Commissioner McGinnity: | Aye |
| Commissioner Powers: | ABSENT |

Motion carried.

7. Updates to zoning application forms

McGinnity explained that he was interested in converting all zoning related applications and forms to fillable forms that could be accessed and possibly even submitted online. He solicited input from members on an example. The board agreed that fillable and searchable forms would be a worthwhile improvement to the application process.

8. Public Comment: None

9. Correspondence: None

Meeting Adjourned 8:10 pm

Next scheduled Regular Meeting: April 3rd, 2018