

Cullowhee Community Planning Council

Minutes

December 2, 2024

6:00 p.m.

Department on Aging, Heritage Room

Sylva, NC

Members	Present	Absent	Members	Present	Absent	Members	Present	Absent
David Claxton	X		Karen Kandl	X		<i>Vacant</i>		
Mike Byers	X		Rebecca Manring	X		<i>Vacant</i>		
Chris Stuckey	X		Damon Sink	X				

Staff Present

Michael Poston, Planning Director

Ashley Clapsaddle, Planner I

Allison Kelley, Administrative Assistant III

Call to Order

Chairman David Claxton called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m. and a quorum was present.

Approval of Agenda

Damon Sink made a motion to add agenda item *b) Project Update* under "New Business". The motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Minutes

Chris Stuckey made a motion to approve the minutes from August 5, 2024. Rebecca Manring seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Public Comment- Sign-up sheet- 3 minutes per speaker

There were no public comments.

New Business

a) Table of Use Discussion

Mr. Poston stated within the Cullowhee table of uses, recreational governmental uses are not allowed in residential districts. Residential districts are great places for parks and amenities for people to use. When the ordinance was created they did not allow that use in the Single Family (SF) or Single Family-Manufactured Home (SF-MH) districts. Currently, staff is unable to issue a zoning permit for a Greenway through residential property where they have had it planned for the last 15 years. In addition, he is unsure how this did not get caught as a few years ago they did not allow governmental recreational uses in the Institutional (INST) district and before they could approve the pool they had to make a modification. The modification included adding the letter "P" as a permitted use to the use table to allow those uses to move forward within the INST district. If somebody wants to do a commercial use, recreational type of use either indoor or outdoor they would still be limited. Staff is requesting the Council to consider making recreational governmental uses, which means our linear park system, greenways, etc. to be an allowable use.

Mr. Poston stated within the University Heights subdivision is where they see most of this happening. The County is in the process of acquiring the Maturo property, which are two parcels

that are within that area. The County received a grant from the TDA to purchase those two parcels which are approximately 19 acres of land where the Greenway is planned to go through. The County recently purchased the property that was owned by the Hooper family that is approximately 3 acres beside the Maturo property that is within the residential district. The County is working on connecting the Greenway and every other property is within the single family district, and in order to get around the bend with the Greenway the best adjustment to make is to allow for governmental recreational uses within the SF and SF-MH districts.

Mr. Byers inquired from staff what would they speculate to cause it to get designated otherwise? Mr. Poston stated a lot of tables of uses can sometimes be copied and pasted, and some recreational uses can be larger in scale and they can drive traffic. The way that we instituted it back in 2015 it has not been altered, and you could ask the question why do we include the Cullowhee Rec Park in the INST district, but then not allow for it to be in INST district. He believes that it is kind of an oversight when some of these things get in these larger documents.

Mr. Byers inquired if staff could think of an unintended consequence of changing it, and if there is a potential use that somebody could be thinking of. Mr. Poston stated it would only be governmental recreational uses, and the County would have to sign off on whatever went in. Currently, the Cullowhee River Park area that the County is looking at, which the property has been purchased is zoned residential because the property had a house that existed beforehand. There will be some traffic impacts with recreational uses to some extent, and possibly some noise. The idea of a pocket park is to be accessible to those that live around the community so people do not have to drive. With any public space, there is some potential for adjacent property owners to be impacted to some degree, but he does not believe in this case as he does not know what else they would account for.

Ms. Manring inquired what are some other examples of governmental recreational uses? Mr. Poston stated mostly it is going to be governmental recreation facilities of some type, whether that be open space, open passive park, Cullowhee Recreation Center. Ms. Manring inquired if that could include bathrooms, campgrounds, etc. Mr. Poston stated he believes that it could include a campground, but would they include a campground in that location, that is different. In addition, he stated anything that government is going to run, it is not going to be a third-party provider, and a KOA is not going to go in there as that would not be allowed. The County will own and maintain those properties that they own. Whereas property owners, on a private recreational facility may have limited options to address their grievances if there is any potential impact that can be addressed with the body.

Mr. Sink inquired what was planned for the two Maturo parcels. Mr. Poston stated as of now it is a Greenway and the initial feasibility study also indicated we would probably do some sort of trailhead parking availability within the University Heights community. However, that was from a 2009 study, and he imagines that there probably would be some thought about whether or not we can accommodate some parking. In addition, he stated there is talk about other recreational uses for the property such as if they could extend trail systems on the Maturo site for biking or walking or a combination of the two. Nothing has been decided, he stated we know that is the route that the Greenway will take and it may be nice to have more extensive trail networks on that 19 acres, and it may not all be paved as it could be a more natural cut trail type of use.

Mr. Sink inquired if they were thinking that there would be traffic that would go into University Heights to access. Mr. Poston stated that is a safe assumption, the feasibility study shows and calls out that there would be kind of a trailhead down there, and given the length of the of the Greenway there would likely be a couple of different places where you might access that. If that is the case, then we may expect some vault system, toilet or something of that nature to help accommodate usage along the Greenway. He stated they initially estimated that the Greenway would be about 3.7 miles in total length, and at the Hooper Maturo properties you are about halfway around two miles from the bridge parking. The first initial phase of the Greenway was designed to go all the way to end at South Painter Park. One of the toughest areas is on Ledbetter Road and the County Recreation Department is working with an environmental engineering firm to

help determine what options are available for construction given the limitations of that area. The County does not own any of those properties, and we are not approaching anybody at this time.

Mr. Sink expressed interest to have the opportunity to have a chance to weigh in on these projects before they begin. Mr. Poston stated the only way they would be able to have direct approval is through the special use permit process or a rezoning of the property. He believes the Cullowhee Recreation Department would come to the Council if there is interest to present their plan as a matter of courtesy.

Ms. Kandl inquired if the Ledbetter Road area was problematic because of the terrain. Mr. Poston stated that it is relatively visible when you turn onto Ledbetter Road off of Monteith Gap Road there is a stretch between the guardrail and the river that has very little space for facilities, sidewalk or anything to go on there. The guardrail was put up probably in 2015 or 2014. Mr. Claxton stated it was maybe put up in 2006. Mr. Poston stated they had a problem with people driving into the river quite a bit. However, when they put up the guardrail there is not as much room to move on and off the road, a few years ago there was a gentleman that was walking in the middle road at night because he did not have many other options to safely walk. He stated this type of facility may give someone like that a better chance to get off the road. The idea of the Greenway system is that it is recreational, but part of it is to help alleviate areas that may or may not have transportation options.

Mr. Poston asked the Council to consider holding a public hearing at the January meeting, and staff would reach out to the Recreation Department to bring back more information about that area, and discuss how they would communicate to this Council as they move through their iterations.

Mr. Sink stated something that could happen is the County could decide to put in a 40 car parking lot at one of the de facto trailheads for the Greenway. Mr. Poston stated they are discussing mechanisms and this is a legislative process that gets decided by the Board of Commissioners. In addition, the original Tuckasegee River Greenway feasibility study and plan has about four trail heads, one at Locust Creek, Monteith Gap, University Heights, and South Painter. However, he does not believe if they went back and looked through the history of the planning, that was always something that had been envisioned in some shape or form as an access point. He stated that is always something to question and for that community to be aware of and to have some input into. He would expect that there would be the desire to have parking by the County at that location.

The Council unanimously agreed to call for a public hearing on January 6, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. for their next regularly scheduled meeting.

b) Project Update

Mr. Poston provided a brief update with exterior and interior photos of the Jackson County Recreation Indoor Pool and that they expect that it would be opened at the beginning of 2025. He updated the Council on Monteith Gap Road and provided pictures of the current status of that road construction project. The last project update was regarding the future Cullowhee River Park and the County retains all the acreage in that section that comes to about an acre and a quarter. CuRev (Cullowhee Revitalization) has had some renderings for the park done, but the County has not come up with a finalized concept plan. He mentioned the County has purchased a couple additional properties which included the old Keller property near the island by South Painter Road, Ledbetter Road and Monteith Road.

Mr. Claxton inquired if when they take the bridge out if the County would get property to the riverside of the road. Mr. Poston stated everything in this old road bed will be will be abandoned, and usually whoever has the underlying property rights retains that. He stated on a state road like this, a lot of these properties were cut on both sides of the road, and they also own what is under the road based on their deed. The County owns all the property in and around the area, and they believe that they will pick up some more land area that can be programmed for Greenway connectivity extensions.

Mr. Byers inquired if the County has a way to access the property involved behind the Alpine apartments site. Mr. Poston stated there is access to get back there of about 10 feet, but they have not programed that space and expect that would likely not be used in a commercial fashion and expect that it would be recreation at this point and possibly an extension to how they operate a River Park area. The property is zoned commercial and could be used for commercial purposes, but it is in the floodplain, floodway, and they expect there might be some opportunities to connect that into our recreational resources.

Ms. Manring inquired if the flood changed any areas around the bridge. Mr. Poston stated no, the flood just proved the modeling was correct as everywhere you saw the flood waters rise to was where the 100-year flood plain was. Due to the confluence of the Cullowhee Creek into the bend of the river, once the Tuckasegee gets high enough all of the water backs up. In addition, he stated that is part of the reason they will not let me keep that bridge for pedestrian purposes because the hydrology will not work.

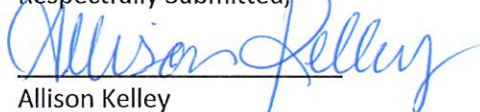
Ms. Manring inquired about the status on the two Council vacancies. Mr. Poston stated we have had a couple of people apply and staff has sent those on to the Commissioners. One vacancy is in Commissioner Stribling's district, which has now changed to Commissioner Cooper, and it would be up to her to make that appointment. The other vacancy relies with the chairman, and he would ask the clerk about the status of those vacancies. Whether staff receives the volunteer application or they send it directly to the clerk it is filtered through the Commissioners, and at that point it is at their discretion. Ms. Manring inquired when they would be hearing the architectural review for Sazon. Mr. Poston stated they planned to present that this month but the timing did not work out and they anticipate to have that before the Council for their January meeting.

Mr. Poston informed the board and introduced Ashley Clapsaddle, who is the departments new Planner I and they procured her from Jackson County Environmental Health and Health Education. Ms. Clapsaddle has experience enforcing rules and regulations in Jackson County with on site and restaurants.

Adjournment

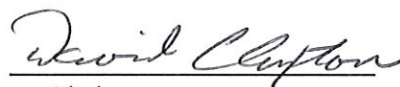
With no further business, Rebecca Manring made a motion to adjourn. Karen Kandl seconded the motion and it carried unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 7:06 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Allison Kelley

Administrative Assistant- Planning



David Claxton

Planning Council Chair