

DORCHESTER COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING & ZONING
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Planning Commission
02-03-2021 Meeting Minutes

The Dorchester County Planning Commission conducted a meeting on Wednesday February 3, 2021 at 12pm. The meeting was held virtually.

Planning Commission:

- **Attending:**
Robert Hanson, Chair; Jerry Burroughs, Vice-Chair; Commissioners William Giese, Ralph Lewis, Laura Layton, William Windsor and Mary Losty

Also attending:

Herve Hamon, Director of Planning & Zoning; Susan Webb, Assistant Director of Planning & Zoning; Christopher Drummond, Attorney; Brandon Vermillion, GIS Specialist

- 1- Chairman Hanson called the meeting to order at 12:15pm, and proceeded with approval of the agenda; all approved the agenda as submitted

- 2- **New Business:**

- ❖ **Planning and Zoning:**

- **Text Amendment – Preston Auto Group** (the proposed text amendment would allow an increase in signage)
 - Mr. Hamon presented his report. First, he highlighted the areas of the current zoning code NOT being considered for modifications:
 - **To remain:**
 - Distance of freestanding sign from any lot line = 10 foot minimum
 - Walls signs not allowed to extend past the roof line of a building
 - Wall signs cannot project out more than 42 inches, and be located less than 10 feet from finish grade
 - No signs are allowed to project over a public right of way
 - Maximum height at top of freestanding sign = 20 feet
 - With Mr. Smith (representing Preston Auto Group), Mr. Hamon highlighted the items of the code being **discussed for modifications** (some of them at the suggestion of the Planning & Zoning Department):
 - Maximum size of freestanding sign to go from 50 square feet to 80 square feet
 - Amount of building mounted signage to go from 2 square feet per linear foot of building frontage with a maximum total of 400 square feet (with another 1 square foot of sign area for each additional linear foot of building frontage) to 2 square feet of signage per linear foot of facades visible from a public right-of-way
 - Waiving of the note c) of Table of Permitted Signs, defining an absolute maximum of 32 square foot per individual wall mounted sign (note that this has been applied previously as a variance to Preston Auto Group)

Much of the discussion regarded the amount of freestanding signs located along Route 318.

- Mr. Smith is requesting that the language of the amended text reflect a apportionment of signage commensurate with the number of vehicle brands represented on the site, with one freestanding sign per brand.

- The Planning Commission reacted by asking how many brands exactly are there now, and how many could there be in the future. Mr. Smith confirmed there were 4 freestanding signs currently, and 1 or 2 more were anticipated
- The Planning Commission and Attorney Chris Drummond expressed concerns about a cluttering of the road side with too many signs
- Mr. Smith explained that if he was to use one of Mr. Hamon previous suggestion (although only intended for discussion purposes) at a ratio of 1 sign per 1000 foot of perimeter, the dealership would be allowed 5 signs for the 5000 foot perimeter. Vice Chair Burroughs remarked that he was reading this intent of this requirement as being spread around the whole perimeter, and that the language should have read 1 sign EVERY 1000 foot to prevent the concentration of signs on one single road frontage

Chairman Hanson conducted a brief poll vote regarding the content of the text as submitted by Mr. Smith, and the Planning Commissioners approved unanimously the need for a revision.

Chairman Hanson asked Mr. Hamon to draft a revised text amendment proposal that would address all the issues discussed, as well as include traffic safety, aesthetics, sign design standards, lighting and overall amount of signage as a maximum.

The revised text will be reviewed at the March 3rd Planning Commission meeting, and Attorney Chris Drummond will file an extension of the 60 day review period with County Council.

❖ Board of Appeal Cases

- **BOA Case #2678, Covey Residence: Special Exception, 909 Hudson Road, Cambridge, MD**
 - Request approval to construct an accessory structure on a vacant lot without a primary structure

Background:

- Zoning Classification is V (Village District)
- The accessory building will be 12' x 16', total of 192 square feet; the parcel is 35,644 sf
- The accessory building will only be used for storage only; the parcel owner lives in the house right across Hudson Road
- The proposed building is more than 45 feet from a public road (min front yard setback from minor collector = 35 ft)

Decision:

Chairman Hanson expressed that the opinion of the Commission was favorable to the request, based on the information and evidence presented. The case is forwarded to the Board of Appeal for further discussion, presentation and decision.

- **BOA Case #2679, Cole Residence: Special Exception, E/S Harrisville Road, Woolford, MD**
 - Request approval to construct an accessory structure on a vacant lot without a primary structure; note: applicant is proposing two (2) possible locations for review.

Background:

- Zoning Classification is AC (agricultural Conservation)
- The accessory building will be 24' x 34', total of 816 square feet; the parcel is 2.75 acres
- The accessory building will only be used for storage.
- The proposed building is more than 60 feet from a public road. (Minimum front yard setback from minor collector = 40 ft)
- The applicant understands that since this is the only building on the lot, although an accessory structure, the setback requirements recommended by the Planning & Zoning Department shall be those of a main structure (like a 20 foot side yard setback instead of 6 foot).

Decision:

Chairman Hanson expressed that the opinion of the Commission was favorable to the request, based on the information and evidence presented. The case is forwarded to the Board of Appeal for further discussion, presentation and decision.

Chairman Hanson asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Losty made a motion, it was seconded by Commissioner Layton, all approved. The meeting adjourned at 2pm.

Respectfully submitted:

Herve O. Hamon, AICP, RA, LEED AP
Director of Planning and Zoning

Reviewed:  Chairman R. Hanson

Date: 3/3/21