

**Planning Commission
Town of Front Royal, Virginia**

September 18, 2019

Present: **Douglas Jones, Chairman**
 Joseph McFadden, Vice Chairman
 Cee Ann Davis, Commissioner
 Connie Marshner, Commissioner
 Darryl Merchant, Commissioner
 William Gordon, Commissioner

Staff: **Jeremy Camp, Director**
 Connie L. Potter, Sr. Administrative Assistant

The September 18, 2019 meeting of the Planning Commission for the Town of Front Royal, Virginia was called to order by Chairman Jones at 7:00 PM.

CITIZEN COMMENTS:

There were no speakers.

MINUTES:

Commissioner Marshner moved, seconded by Commission Gordon to approve the meeting minutes as presented.

VOTE: Yes – Merchant, Gordon, Marshner, Davis, Jones
Absent – McFadden

(Mr. McFadden arrived after voting on the meeting minutes.)

NEW BUSINESS:

- FRSUB001521-2019, An application for approval of a Subdivision Plan, Final Plats and Bonding for a 33-lot subdivision in the R-1 Zoning District, submitted by Chris Ramsey, titled as Happy Creek Knolls, Section 4.

Mr. Camp showed the plan on the overhead screen showing aerial imagery of the site location. It is located at the end of Happy Ridge Drive as well as the end of Ewell Street.

The applicant is proposing to connect those two streets. A small portion of what is labelled as Ewell Street, south of the intersection will be renamed to Happy Ridge Drive and it will come around to the intersection.

This has previously been to the Planning Commission as a preliminary plan and was approved. The applicant is ready to move forward with the project and has submitted the designs and final engineered plan and has submitted plats. Staff has a number of comments included in the staff report which are included in the proposed motion of approval. Staff is recommending approval subject to the conditions noted in the staff report. Mr. Camp reviewed those comments. Relatively speaking the plan is substantially complete with some minor revisions before it goes to Town Council for approval. All major subdivisions are required to go to Council to accept the new roads. In this case it would be a continuation of two roads which are dead ended which have always be planned to be extended.

Commissioner Merchant asked if the Town Engineer has reviewed the submitted plat.

Mr. Camp, yes that was part of the submittal.

Commissioner Merchant referred to the stormwater management pond and said it looks to be located on what appears to be lot 900 from the subdivision plat. Does that require a drainage easement, an easement for a stormwater management pond or is lot 900 sufficient for that?

Mr. Camp said he could consult with the Town Engineer to verify if we would need an easement.

Commissioner Merchant asked if that would be part of the Stormwater Maintenance Agreement.

Mr. Camp stated it would be part of the agreement and will include the proposed stormwater pond as well as the pump station and retaining wall that goes with the pond.

Commissioner Marshner moved, seconded by Commissioner Merchant that the Planning Commission recommend approval of FRSUB001521-2019, a Subdivision Plan and Final Plats for the proposed Happy Creek Knolls, Section 4, subdivision, conditional that the applicant address the review comments in the Staff Report prior to final approval by Town Council.

VOTE: Yes – Merchant, Jones, Marshner, Davis, McFadden, Gordon

- FRSITE-001563-2019. An application for approval of a Site Plan for a new Sheetz store at 1600 N Shenandoah Avenue.

Mr. Camp explained that the property is located where the Shenandoah Motel is currently located. The current address is 1600 N. Shenandoah Avenue and will change to 1621 N. Shenandoah Avenue. Sheetz would like to build a new store at this location. It would consist of 10 fuel pumps as well as a store that is 4, 906 square feet. An aerial image of the site was shown on the overhead screen showing the existing hotel and the proposed new structure. The property is located in the Entrance Corridor, C-1 District which does allow for gas stations by right. There is an underground stormwater management facility under the parking lot and on Shenandoah Avenue towards the bottom are underground fuel pumps located in that section. Because it is located in the Entrance Corridor it requires some oversight on the exterior appearance of the store. In staff's opinion Sheetz is in compliance with the Entrance Corridor requirements. Sheetz is covering the building on all sides with masonry, stone and brick and metal roofing, along with several awnings.

Staff has put forth a number of comments on the site plan that do need to be revised such as some of the requirements for parking, landscaping, and some minor changes that need to be made. Staff met with Sheetz onsite to discuss a couple of comments. One of those being truck traffic and how that would work. Sheetz will be coordinating with their delivery trucks to not use 17th Street but using the larger entrance in front of the site.

Another major issue is that 17th Street is a very narrow road, and this was talked about at a Planning Commission work session. There is a 24-25 foot pavement section and there is some concern with traffic congestion. Staff spoke with Sheetz early on and they prepared a signal warrant analysis. They also did a small traffic study and looked at the possibility of putting a traffic light at this location. Based on the traffic report that was not warranted. However, we still have concerns about the congestion and in the meeting this afternoon was focused on what else could be done to improve the overall conditions particularly with not turning out of that intersection. Staff believes we have a solution with Sheetz to help mitigate those concerns to improve that intersection. A representative from Sheetz was present to talk about those improvements.

Bill (last name illegible) an engineer with Sheetz said they had met with Mr. Camp and Robert Brown the Town Engineer and talked about some things that could be done on 17th Street. They agreed with Staff to see what happens with 17th Street. The traffic study done with full movement off Shenandoah does not show that many cars are going to leave that back entrance which is a secondary entrance for the site. In the morning the study showed 9 extra trips at that location in the peak hour so they would see how it all played out instead of spending money up front and it not actually affect anything. We will help contribute to a mini right out at some point in the future if the Town decided that is what they wanted to do. Some things we could present to you would be to

construct something at the intersection of 19th Street and Shenandoah and prohibiting left turn outs or go ahead with the mini right out, part of 17th Street as part of their construction project. Sheetz is okay with helping with either one of those. The Town needs to decide what is best for them and what they would like to see happen at that intersection. We want to take a look at the right options to see what all is involved there and come up with a reasonable number to contribute up to in order to help with that right out. We view that as hopefully offsite work that they would work out as they go through the process and we could continue with the approval process of the onsite work.

Chairman Jones said he drove out to the location at 4:40 pm and wanted to turn left out of 17th Street and it took about 10 minutes to get out. That is a potentially difficult intersection.

Bill said they understand that and realize that their stores do add traffic to certain roadways and that is why they do the studies to find out what the impact of that is going to be. The study we had done, that although we may add some extra trips it doesn't significantly impact the situation out there right now. That doesn't mean we are not willing to try and make the situation a little bit better.

Planning Commissioners discussed their concerns and questions about the intersection as well as the back entrance, stacking issues and alternate ways into the Sheetz store. Bill answered their questions and acknowledged their concerns.

Commissioner Merchant welcomed Sheetz to the community. He shared that there are a lot of people excited to get a Sheetz in Front Royal. His concern on 17th Street was as Chairman Jones experienced and shared earlier when coming from 17th Street onto Shenandoah Avenue. It takes only one car turning south onto Shenandoah Avenue to back up traffic. He said he was pleased they are willing to work with the Town to either the possibility of widening that entrance or at the least, which may be the best solution, limiting left turns out of 17th Street onto Shenandoah Avenue so there is no backup of traffic. This is going to be a busy site. Regardless of what the traffic study says traffic will come out that back side. Whatever we can do at that intersection would be great. That is the only problem he sees with the site plan and it's not a problem, but it helps the Town citizens and it will certainly help the traffic flow of your store. Commissioner Merchant asked Mr. Camp if we needed to have something in writing from Sheetz or how would it be handled if the Planning Commission approves the plan with that condition.

Mr. Camp said there was a draft motion and he would recommend approval since we have an agreement that we add a condition to the motion that approval is conditional on Town staff working with the Town Engineer, Town Attorney and Sheetz to come up with an agreement that Sheetz could potentially pay up to 100% if it calls for either a turn lane being to 17th Street or create an island potentially on 17th Street or some other measure to restrict left turn movement. We can move forward with that as a separate project under

that agreement and the Town could take the lead on that. To assist Sheetz, we would have a funding source so we could move forward on that quickly.

Commissioner Davis expressed that the area has a lot more foot traffic that may be realized. In the absent of a light and crosswalks, probably prohibiting a left out would be the safest option at this point. I'm curious to know what my colleagues think about that. Not only are we worried about congestion and backups, getting emergency vehicles in and out and the hazards to pedestrians.

Bill wanted to clarify that the turn lane is not a turn lane, it's a small right turn coming out with not the full width lane.

Commissioner Marshner asked if Commissioner Davis had concerns about the left turn coming out of the main entrance.

Commissioner Davis said she had concern for the turn coming out of the main entrance. She didn't think we have enough financial incentive to correct that at this point but truthfully, I think this is a place we need to be thinking about a crosswalk, lights and things to make it safer.

Bill clarified that they were speaking of striping across the driveway.

Mr. Camp said yes.

Commissioner Merchant moved, seconded by Commissioner Davis that the Planning Commission recommend approval of FRSITE-001563-2019 for a new Sheetz gas station and store on North Shenandoah Avenue with the first condition that all review agency comments be adequately addressed before final approval and signatures are issued by the Town and the conditional approval with the Town Attorney and Town Engineer to address issues at the intersection of 17th Street and North Shenandoah Avenue. The issue being the left turn/right turn capability and possibilities at said intersection.

Bill said they are committed to help out as discussed early today and they are on board.

VOTE: Yes – Davis, Marshner, Merchant, Gordon, Jones, McFadden

OLD BUSINESS:

- FRSPU-1263-2019. A Special Use Permit Application (SUP), submitted by the Embassy Deliverance & Worship Center, for a daycare at 460 S. Commerce Avenue.

Commissioner Jones noted the Planning Commission had a site visit at the proposed daycare location and he opened the floor for discussion.

Commissioner Davis asked if Mr. Camp had any additional comments.

Mr. Camp said the public hearing was closed. As the Chairman said, we met on site. The applicant has put forth a plan which in staff's opinion addresses the safety concerns of the Planning Commission. He put an extra condition on sheet 6 of the staff report of the recommended conditions of the special use permit and he does recommend that the Planning Commission make a recommendation for approval to Town Council. Town Council will make the final decision.

Some Commission members held a brief discussion with the applicant and believed this would be an asset to the community.

Commissioner Davis moved, seconded by Vice Chairman McFadden that the Planning Commission issue a recommendation to approve FRSPU-1263-2019, for a daycare at 460 S. Commerce Avenue, with the conditions noted in the Staff Report and with the Applicant's revised strategy and plan for managing loading and unloading of children.

Vote: Yes – McFadden, Gordon, Merchant, Jones, Davis, Marshner

PLANNING DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Mr. Camp gave a brief review of the monthly report and noted highlights as to where we are at this point of the year. As of the end of August we have 206 zoning permits and if it continues, we are on pace for 309 which is slightly above the past several years. We also have 17 house permits which is a solid number for this point of the year which is on pace for 25 new dwellings this year.

Staff met with Valley Health who wants to come forward and meet with the Planning Commission. Staff recommends we set up a work session for that. Mr. Camp distributed handouts to Commission members to brief them about signage at the new hospital site. They do have a pretty extensive master signage plan they want to present. There are a few aspects in the plan that may require some changes to our code. This will be discussed at the work session.

COMMISSION MEMBER REMARKS:

There were no additional comments and the meeting was adjourned.

Commissioner Merchant moved, seconded by Vice Chairman McFadden to adjourn the meeting.

VOTE: Yes – Davis, Marshner, Jones, McFadden, Gordon, Merchant

The meeting adjourned at 7:40 PM

Connie L. Potter
Sr. Administrative Assistant