

THOMASVILLE PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION
OFFICIAL MINUTES
March 5, 2007

A meeting of the Planning & Zoning Commission was held on Monday, March 5, 2007, at 5:30 p.m. in Council Chambers, Thomasville, GA. Members present were William Dickey, Bob Parrish, Rosemarye Boykins, Gene Collins, Rudolph Elzy, Dr. Annie McElroy, and Brian Knox. Also present were Duane Treadon, Zoning Administrator; Kha Thomas, Senior Assistant City Manager; Shannon Jones, Administrative Assistant. Guests are listed on the attached sign-in sheet.

Call to Order-

Chairman Dickey called the meeting to order and gave the invocation.

Approval of Minutes-

Rosemarye Boykins moved that the minutes of the February 5, 2007 meeting be approved. The motion was seconded by Gene Collins, and passed unanimously.

Old Business – None

New Business-

Mr. Dickey reviewed the City of Thomasville's City Code 22-160, "Rules Pertaining to Public Comment", with the citizens that attended the meeting.

Applicant 07-03-01 Jason Little, owner's agent for property located at **415 Fletcher Street**, Thomasville, Georgia. The application is to rezone the property from R-2 to C-1 Limited Use (Commercial Plant Nursery Only).

Mr. Dickey asked for the staff report to be presented. Mr. Duane Treadon informed the Commission that the applicant, wishes to maintain the existing structure, by utilizing it as office, retail, and living space related to the operation of the plant nursery business. The back property areas would be developed as the nursery and plant display area only. He also informed the Commission that historically, the property has been zoned R-2 for over 20 years, and may have been since the inception of zoning within the City of Thomasville. According to the Thomas County Tax Assessors Office, the property consists of one parcel covering approximately 3.22 acres of land.

Mr. Treadon advised the Commission of the following planning considerations. The first to consider was whether or not the rezoning proposal would permit a use that is suitable in view of the use and development of adjacent and nearby properties. Treadon explained that the development of the plant nursery would impact the area even though it is in line with the manufacturing property to the north; it would, however, remain less compatible with other adjacent residential properties. To the rear of the property, there would possibly be an increase of infill housing development in the future.

Treadon advised the next issue to consider in evaluating the application, is whether or not the proposal would adversely affect the existing adjacent, or nearby properties.

He informed the Commission that the surrounding developed properties should not be affected; however, if developed for residential use, the surrounding vacant land may be negatively impacted due to the nature of the business.

Treadon advised the Commission that in consulting with the City's Landscape specialist the following considerations were recognized. Due to the nature of the proposed business, excessive watering can be expected. This will increase the soil water content. This water will drain to the nearest low point. Depending on the slope of the land neighboring properties may be affected by increased soil water percentages. Water may also seep onto abutting streets. Another consideration is airborne particles generated by mixing of potting soils and elements. Excessive dust may blow to neighboring properties

Treadon suggested to the Commission that the rezoning proposal may result in an increased use of existing streets. He stated that a commercial business will always bring more traffic and noise to an area. If the normal business operation hours are to be expected, then the increase should coincide with area commercial traffic times. Increase in traffic and noise would be most noticeable during weekends when other surrounding businesses are closed.

Mr. Dickey asked Treadon if normal business hours would include weekends for a plant nursery. Treadon responded by stating that weekend hours would be expected for this type of business. Including limited Sunday hours (i.e. possibly from noon till six o'clock in the evening.)

Treadon stated that with conditions, the rezoning would be in conformity with the policy and intent of the Thomasville Comprehensive Plan. Applying appropriate design and use conditions may allow the proposed use to act more as a buffer and be further inline with the Thomasville Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Treadon presented the following examples of design and use standards:

- Zero visual and use impact on Fletcher St.
- Restrict commercial access to Victoria Pl. only
- Limit hours of operation (normal business hours no extended hours)
- Require opaque visual screening of appropriate design reflecting the historic nature of the neighborhood
- Require developers to consult with Thomasville Landmarks (upon Thomasville Landmarks approval) for developing a plan that protects the historic fabric of the neighborhood, and the property while allowing the proposed use
- Other conditions as identified

Mr. Treadon concluded his staff report by stating:

“This is a unique parcel that is on the border of two incompatible development zones; with manufacturing to the north, and residential to the south, east and west. Given that both the subject parcel and surrounding neighborhood are listed on the National Register of Historic Places/Districts adds to the need to insure any allowed use will be compatible and appropriate. If the proposed use is allowed, safe guards to insure it will act as a buffer need to be in place in the form of conditions. As a buffer, the proposed commercial use would be allowed, but only when development plans demonstrate a minimal impact on the surrounding residential use and historic fabric.”

Mr. Dickey asked Mr. Treadon if there were other suggestions, or options available.

Mr. Treadon advised that a citizen asked if the lot could have two zones on it. He advised the concept of having two zones on the lot was possible. Under this concept the lot could be rezoned C-1 Limited Use plant nursery only, with a front portion being zoned R-2, if zoned this way, then no commercial activity could occur on the front R-2 portion. Another option would be to zone the entire lot C-1 Limited Use (Plant Nursery Only), and inserting a clause in the zoning ordinance that would cause the front identified portion to revert back to R-2 after a certain time limit. This would allow the developers to utilize front portions of the lot for retail operations while they developed the rear portion of the lot for a new retail operation.

Mr. Treadon then read into the record an email received in support of the zoning from Rick and Linda Pulliam.

Mr. Dickey asked anyone in favor of the rezoning to speak to the Commission. Jason Little, owner's agent, spoke on behalf of the project. Mr. Little informed the Commission that the idea of establishing a plant nursery arose from a previous trip to Thomasville, Ga. Little stated that the nursery would add to, and preserve the Historical nature of the surrounding area and property. Gecko Gardens will be an upscale retail garden center which would provide the public with specialty plants, garden services, design, and consultation services. Gecko Gardens would utilize the historical Wright House property and Fletcher Street (historically known as Fletcherville). Little also gave a board presentation of the signage for the project. The signage would have a simple shingle, with "Gecko Gardens" at the heading, and "Thomasville, Georgia" highlighted at the bottom. The nursery's entrance would be off of Victoria Place, and exit out of both Victoria Place and Lester Street. Deliveries will be made on the Lester Street side. Little also informed the Commission that the parking area would be paved with gravel, which would lesson any water run-off. The nursery would also showcase a butterfly garden, rose garden, and gazebo. A glass conservatory would also be constructed on the property.

Rosemarye Boykins asked Mr. Little, whether or not excessive dust and water run-off would have a negative impact on the neighborhood.

Mr. Little assured the Commission that the Garden Center's water usage would be managed to reduce the effect of water run off. Further, he stated that theirs was not a growing business, and the mixing of soils that generate dust would not occur on the property.

Boykins also questioned Mr. Little on the types of fertilizers, and pesticides that would be used, that would affect people that live, work, and play in the surrounding area. Mr. Little informed the Commission that they use organic fertilizers, and ultra fine oil-based pesticides which are 98% water.

Mr. Dickey questioned Mr. Treadon in regards to Landscape requirements, and whether or not the project would fit within those guidelines. Treadon informed the Commission that the buffering areas would be in line with the Landscape Requirements, however, some trees may need to be removed. He also stated that a fence with a six foot buffer separating the residential district, and commercial district is required. Mr. Little stated that he would comply with all landscaping requirements, and a chain link fence with landscaping would be used as a buffer between commercial and residential districts.

Mr. Dickey asked for anyone else who would like to speak in favor of the rezoning application.

Janet Dilling spoke in favor of the rezoning, but wanted certain conditions to be in place to protect the residential aspects of Fletcher Street.

She suggested that a front portion that would include the Wright House have an expiration date to where it would revert back to R-2, allowing the developers time to establish their business and relocate the commercial operation to the rear of the property.

Robert Cannady expressed his concerns, gave a historical background on Bartow Street, and wanted Bartow Street to be considered for an upcoming meeting for preserving its historical nature.

Stanley Smith spoke in favor of the rezoning on 415 Fletcher Street. He stated that it is hard to maintain Historical properties. Smith stated that he feels that the rezoning would be a great idea; it would preserve the Historical nature of the area, and would provide green-space.

Mr. Dickey then asked for those opposing the application to express their concerns.

Carol Whitney, resident located at 422 Fletcher Street expressed her concerns about the enforceability of the zoning. She wanted assurance that the project, if approved, would remain consistent with the neighborhood, and that it would carry out its intentions as planned. She expressed her concerns for future commercial developments at this location, and suggested that some type of code be enforced to insure that the property would not be used for some other type of business in the future.

Mr. Dickey called for a brief recess, and asked Brian Knox to temporarily preside over the meeting. Mr. Dickey returned to the meeting in approximately ten minutes.

Mr. Knox asked for any more comments opposing the plant nursery.

Sharon Edwards, resident located at 425 Fletcher Street expressed her opposition for the rezoning to the Commission. Mrs. Edwards stated that the children who constantly walk to and from the local schools in the area would be greatly affected by the increased traffic. She also stated that even though the pesticides that would be used to maintain the garden center is 98% water, the other 2% are chemicals.

Teresa Greene-Clark, resident located at 430 Fletcher Street, also opposed the rezoning. She expressed her concerns for the children that walk to schools between the hours of 7:30am to 3:30pm. Ms. Clark stated that the garden center would increase the flow of traffic, which would create a noisy and unsafe environment, in a usually quiet environment for children.

Norman Billups, resident located at 426 Fletcher Street, was concerned that the business would cause his property value to decrease. He also expressed his concerns regarding the safety of the children, with the increased traffic that the business would cause. Mr. Billups also stated that the business would possibly increase chances of crime and theft in the area.

Kayla Clark, resident located at 430 Fletcher Street opposed the rezoning, and stated that the business may attract unwanted insects and animals such as owls, birds, and snakes. She also stated the business would increase an unwanted flow of traffic in the area.

Mr. Dickey then closed the public hearing on the matter. The Commission then went into discussion on the rezoning.

Following a discussion by the Planning and Zoning members, a motion was made by Brian Knox and seconded by Gene Collins to recommend the approval of the rezoning of property located at 415 Fletcher Street, Thomasville, Georgia from R-2 to C-1 Limited Use (Commercial Plant Nursery Only) with the following design and use standard included as part of the approved action:

- *Applicant is to comply fully with applicable City landscape design ordinances and tree ordinances so as to achieve zero visual and use impact on Fletcher Street*
- *Restrict commercial vehicular access to Victoria Place, with it noted that an exit drive on the property from Lester Street is approved and access to/from an employee parking lot on Lester Street is also approved*
- *Require opaque visual screening of appropriate design reflecting the historic nature of the neighborhood.*
- *Developers must consult with Thomasville Landmarks in developing the final plan that protects the historic fabric of the neighborhood and the property while allowing the proposed use.*
- *In addition, the City of Thomasville is highly encouraged to install sidewalks in appropriate places near the subject property on Victoria Place, Lester Street, and Fletcher Street to help address concerns expressed by many neighbors related to children having to walk in the street because of there being no sidewalks.*

The motion was passed with a 4 to 2 vote. Gene Collins, Bob Parrish, Bryan Knox, and Rudolph Elzy in favor of the rezoning. Rosemarye Boykins and Dr. Annie McElroy voting against it.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

Chairman