

**CITY OF COLUMBIA FALLS
PLANNING BOARD MEETING MINUTES
HELD FEBRUARY 15, 2022**

REGULAR MEETING – 6:30 PM.

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL: Acting Chairman Kavanagh called the meeting to order at 6:31 PM.

PRESENT

Vukonich (Arrived 6:33 pm)

Nelson

Byrd-Rinck

Lundgren

Duffy

Kavanagh

Singer

ABSENT

Smith

Shepard

Also Present: Contract Planner Eric Mulcahy, City Manager/Zoning Administrator Susan Nicosia, and City Attorney Justin Breck (Via ZOOM)

ANNUAL ELECTION OF PRESIDENT AND VICE-PRESIDENT:

Duffy motioned to nominate Vukonich for the position of Planning Board President and it was seconded by Nelson. All members voted in favor of the motion. Duffy motioned to nominate Shepard as Vice President and it was seconded by Singer. Motion carried with all those present voting in favor. Vukonich then arrived at the meeting and accepted his appointment as President of the Planning Board. Kavanagh relinquished his Acting Chairman position to Vukonich.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

1. Approval of October 12, 2021 Regular Meeting Minutes

Motion made by Kavanagh to approve the October 12, 2021 minutes as presented, seconded by Nelson. Motion carried with all those present voting in favor: Vukonich, Nelson, Byrd-Rinck, Lundgren, Duffy, Kavanagh, and Singer

VISITOR OR PUBLIC COMMENT: (An opportunity for the Public to comment on any items not on tonight's agenda) - NONE

PUBLIC HEARINGS AND ACTION:

1. **Request for a Planned Unit Development in the Columbia Falls Zoning Jurisdiction:**

The applicant, DARCAR, is requesting a Planned Unit Development for property at 1123 9th Street West, Columbia Falls. The proposed PUD would allow the conversion of the basement to dormitory style apartments that could house up to four people. The main floor of the building will remain commercial use. The property is zoned CB-2 (General Business). The site is the State Farm Insurance building located just west of Backslope Brewing. The property is described as Lots 1, 2, & 3 excluding the South 10 feet in Block 5 of Robindale in Section 8, Township 30 North, Range 20 West, P.M.M., Flathead County.

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Planner Eric Mulcahy presented Staff Report CPUD-22-01 Request for a Planned Unit Development, reviewing the zoning deviation requested with the PUD: Mixed Use with residential. There was no written public comment received for this PUD Request. Vukonich asked if there were any questions for staff. No technical questions were raised.

At 6:40 pm, Vukonich opened the public hearing and invited the applicant, Darin Fisher, to address the Board. Mr. Fisher stated that he was at the hearing to speak in favor of his project and to answer any questions. Mr. Fisher explained his project to the Planning Board in more detail, clarifying the “dormitory style living” as two bedrooms with two beds each will be in the basement, one and a half baths, two toilets, and one shower, a large kitchen and living area will be built. The rear of the upstairs area will be a prep kitchen for Backslope Brewery and the front area is to be determined but will include retail. Mr. Fisher has talked to the Fire Chief regarding installing new egress windows in the basement. The target tenants will be J-1 Visa holders and seasonal workers for Backslope Brewing. Mr. Fisher noted that all access to basement area will be private and there will be no structural changes to the building.

Chairman Vukonich closed the public hearing at 6:45 pm and asked the Board members if they had any questions.

Vukonich commented that this project will probably be looked at very intensely by subsequent businesses and people, if this works then more projects like this will come. Kavanagh stated that this property is appropriate for this kind of dormitory residential use. Duffy wondered if dormitory type residence projects would spread out into residential areas. Planner Eric Mulcahy said he does not think it will be a concern as a similar project in a single-family residential zone would not catch any traction. Singer says you can’t control who lives in a single-family residence and there could be a lot of people living there. City Manager/Zoning Administrator Susan Nicosia stated that we define family in our zoning regulations as one or more persons related by blood or a group of not more than 4 unrelated persons. She continued by saying that there are businesses buying multi-bedroom homes for employee housing and they are still maintaining integrity as a single-family home. The City does not anticipate 20 employees in a single-family home and we would not see a dormitory in single-family residential zoning. Mulcahy says this project is not precedent setting in a negative way, it is precedent setting in a positive way. Vukonich commented that it is necessary to take what is there and modify it in the right and proper way to provide more housing and this is project is a good example.

Motion made by Duffy to adopt Staff Report CPUD-22-01 as findings of fact, Seconded by Lundgren. Motion carried with everyone present voting as follows: AYE: Vukonich, Nelson, Byrd-Rinck, Lundgren, Duffy, Kavanagh, and Singer NAYE: None Absent: Smith, Shepard

Motion made by Kavanagh to Recommend Approval of PUD to City Council, Seconded by Byrd-Rinck. Motion carried with everyone present voting as follows: AYE: Vukonich, Nelson, Byrd-Rinck, Lundgren, Duffy, Kavanagh, Singer NAYE: None Absent: Smith, Shepard

ADJOURNMENT – Motion made by Nelson to adjourn meeting. Meeting duly adjourned at 7:03 PM.

Chairman

Attest:

Public Works Clerk