

RIDGWAY TOWN COUNCIL
& PLANNING COMMISSION

MINUTES OF JOINT WORKSHOP

JULY 25, 2017

The Town Council reconvened for a Joint Workshop at 5:40 p.m. in the Ridgway Community Center at 201 N. Railroad Street, Ridgway, Colorado. In attendance Councilors Austin, Hunter, Hawes, Williams, Young and Mayor Clark. Mayor Pro Tem Johnson was not present for the roll call.

The Planning Commission was present in its entirety with Commissioners Emilson, Falke, Liske, Nelson and Chair Canright in attendance.

Town Clerk's Notice of Joint Workshop Meeting dated July 18, 2017.

1. Presentation of future development of Chipeta Solar Springs Resort and request to purchase a portion of Cottonwood Park

Jack Young presented a depiction of a proposed expansion of the Chipeta Solar Springs Resort and explained he is requesting to purchase a portion of Cottonwood Park, on the north side of the resort, to use as a parking area. He noted this is the "only way to make the Chipeta more viable" to construct "a hot springs resort with 60 rooms" and he is "reticent to do it because of parking out front" because the "parking should be in back". He explained he is proposing "we build a hot springs" and is "working with a geo-tech company to research the area" the "consensus is there is hot water over there" and "I'm willing to spend \$50,000 to have a geothermal study done". He stated this is an "opportunity for the Town and will offer employment" noting currently there are 26 rooms and a lap pool. The "scenario is 60 parking spots and 60 rooms" keep the existing pool, "add a large pool and five private soaking pools which would also be open to the public" and "another pool just for guests". He noted this "equates to 4000 feet of water source". "We believe our guests would stay longer if there were things to do" and it would be "more of an attraction for Ridgway". He reported "we now have 63% returning guests" and "we offer a different experience for people". Mr. Young stated "it would be 5 million to build this" and spoke to the "impact and betterment for Ridgway". He discussed current occupancy for the lodge and proposed occupancy at 60 rooms and "annual gross sales from 1.2 million to 3.8 million will increase sales and lodging tax" and "increase employees from 36 to 55" "which would increase jobs" and provide a "tourist contribution to the Town".

Town Manager Coates noted the park space is 50 feet wide by 350 feet long and .375 acres. She noted "the request is to purchase the park space from the Town to turn the park into a parking lot for the benefit of the Chipeta".

Mr. Young noted the plat for the property states the area is dedicated as park and open space.

Mr. Young answered questions from the Council and Commission. It was noted that Mr. Young had offered to trade or purchase the property, and there was discussion regarding what type of exchange was being proposed.

Mayor Pro Tem Johnson entered the meeting at 6:10 p.m.

There were comments and discussion by the Council and Commissioners. Based on a question from the Council, Mr. Young noted there would be “46 parking spots and 14 onsite underground parking spaces”.

It was noted from the Council residents currently patronize the restaurant and roof top bar, and with the addition of public use of the pools, there would need to be more than the proposed 60 parking sports. It was also noted the proposal is for less than the current number of parking spaces at the resort.

SPEAKING FROM THE AUDIENCE:

John Countryman, property owner near the lodge, stated “the homeowners association should be informed” and “given notice” and said he is “strongly concerned with the additional traffic it pulls into the subdivision”. He spoke in opposition to “giving public use space to an organization” and noted the proposal will “double the rooms with far less parking spots from the current” use. He opposed the “trading of public space for private use in a residential area” and questioned how the “neighbors will be affected by it”. He noted “the land can be used for affordable housing, we already own it”. He stated “you can’t give away a local asset for private use”.

Fred Boyle, property owner near the lodge stated “if this takes place I urge you to require absorptive pavement” to prevent “industrial run-off” and a “policy of no spraying plants”. He questioned where the “extra 19 employees” “are going to live”?

Robert Warren, property owner near the lodge, suggested trading the land for affordable housing. He stated “I like the idea of parking on that side” to “reduce congestion next to the park”.

Nori Frances, property owner near the lodge, question the parking, “with more people” “it sounds like the parking will be worse”. She questioned the public and private events held at the resort and current lack of parking, and asked where are all the new employees are going to park.

The Chipeta Resort Manager stated “events held this year at the lodge” had parking issues “because we had two parking lots closed during the events”. She noted the “way we do weddings” it “won’t be impacted by that”.

On a question from the Commission regarding drilling for the hot water, Mr. Young stated “if the water is not 100 degrees we will use a Kojen Unit” “a natural gas product to produce hot water to enhance the water temperature which will also generate our own electricity”.

Craig Fetterolf stated this “makes the Town look at an underutilized park” and asked “has the Chipeta lived up to it’s promises for the last 25 years?”

The Town Clerk read an email from Andy Michelich in opposition to “selling any public space to individuals or private companies”.

Baker Bent spoke in opposition to “selling public property to an individual who is going to benefit from it” and noted it is “not a good precedent to set”. He stated “open spaces add value to the Town, in just being land”.

Fred Boyle suggested performing a wildlife corridor assessment of the area.

There were comments from members of the Council and Commission. It was noted the number of parking spaces is not taking into consideration public use of the restaurant, bar, facilities and special events. Mr. Young stated "I would be open to the restaurant and pool being for resort guests only".

There was discussion by the Commission and Council regarding the concept of trading land for affordable housing.

Mr. Young suggested "a long term lease would satisfy the people here" noting it could be "pre-paid with a value up front" and stated he would pay for an MIA appraisal of the property.

The Town Manager asked if the Council is willing to consider conveyance of the property?

Andrew Cesati, property owner near the lodge, stated "the traffic flow on Chipeta at key times is overwhelming" and parking on the street for the Chipeta Lodge "is an issue".

There was discussion by the Council and Commission. The Mayor asked the Council if there was an interest in exploring trading for property in another location in Town to use for affordable housing. Councilor Young said no, and all other members of the Council expressed interested in Mr. Young locating a potential parcel of land for a trade.

2. Continued discussion regarding affordable housing

Staff Report dated 7-25-17 from the Town Planner presenting affordable housing fee waivers and reductions.

Planner Coburn presented current Town development fees and reviewed costs of construction which are offset or pass through costs to the Town. These include building permit, plan review, encroachment permit and refundable bond, sewer and water taps, meter parts and installation, wood/gas stove permits and subdivision costs such as excise tax and infrastructure of streets, sidewalks and utility line installation.

There was discussion between the Council, Commission and staff. It was agreed the Town should continue to recoup all incurred costs, and waiver of fess will not be a practical option. It was also agreed Town fees are in line, and in some cases lower, then the cost incurred by the Town to provide them. Consensus was staff should review the zoning and building codes and address inclusionary housing and waiving excise development fees for affordable housing. Staff was also directed to look at other financing opportunities, such as sales and use taxes, to assist in funding affordable housing.

3. Discussion pertaining to possible planning and land use priorities, initiatives and projects for 2018 budgeting purposes

Staff Report dated 7-24-17 from the Town Manager and Town Planner presenting the 2017 Planning Commission Work Plan and 2018 Considerations.

Staff, Council and Commission reviewed the Commission's 2017 Work Plan including accomplishments, items in process and those needing to be addressed.

There was discussion regarding items to consider in 2018. The Council and Commission agreed the master plan and land use plan and land use mapping; Space to Create live/work workforce housing project; affordable housing policy and updates addressing owning and renting, should be priorities.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Pam Kraft, MMC
Town Clerk