TOWN OF BEECH MOUNTAIN
Planning Board Meeting Minutes
October 25, 2016
Beech Mountain Town Hall

Members Present:
Board members in attendance included Andy Porter, Pete Chamberlin, Mike Chase, and John Hoffman. Local real estate brokers Tim Holland and Jim Brooks were also present.

Adoption of Agenda:
The agenda was adopted as presented.

Approval of Minutes:
The Planning Board approved the minutes from the September 2016 meeting with slight changes as discussed.

Discuss Proposed Amendment to Animals Ordinance:
James Scott reviewed that the current Town ordinances prohibited the keeping of any animals within Town Limits other than those commonly considered household pets. He discussed that Genesis Wildlife Sanctuary has been operating a wildlife rehabilitation facility within Town limits for many years. He reviewed a proposed ordinance that was intended to allow for the keeping of animals beyond the restrictions of the current ordinance, and would thereby legitimize the Genesis operation.

At the September Planning Board meeting, this draft proposed ordinance had been discussed. Supporters of Genesis Wildlife Sanctuary had attended that meeting and suggested that the proposed modification of the ordinance be broadened such that the keeping of animals be allowed on a temporary basis at locations other than within the PS district. James Scott presented an new draft of the ordinance that addressed the suggestion by allowing the agents of a licensed nonprofit animal sanctuary to care for animals on a temporary basis outside the PS district if such animals required constant monitoring and attention. After discussion on this provision, the Board supported it and moved that the language allow such temporary care for periods of up to ten days. Said motion carried with no objection.

Since no representatives of Genesis were in attendance, James Scott suggested that before the Planning Board forwarded this item to the Town Council for action they should wait for feedback from Genesis as well as a review from the Town Attorney. The Board supported this proposition and the item was tabled until such time as they received input from Genesis.

Sign Ordinance Amendments:
James Scott reviewed that Jim Frye (Local business owner- ACT Construction/ Buchanan Real Estate) had approached him regarding the sign ordinance and had initiated proposed amendments that he felt would provide more flexibility for well-planned, aesthetically pleasing, temporary signage for “special events”. (Mr. Frye was not present at today’s meeting). Since the Board’s
last meeting, Mr. Scott had made modifications that would allow off-site special event signage at certain locations, and added a provision that controls how much on-site signage an event could have that is tied to the size of the event.

Andy Porter raised his concern that these amendments would result in an abundance of signs every weekend. Mike Chase stated that these amendments were previously presented to the Board as something that all of the commercial entities and real estate agents supported. Therefore, he asked local real estate agents Jim Brooks and Tim Holland audience how they felt about the proposed amendments.

Jim Brooks responded that he felt that the abundance and size of the signs proposed are not in line with the character that the Town strives for. He commented that there are technically still restrictive covenants that make all of these signs illegal. He stated that Blowing Rock has a “caravan of homes” that is similar to the events that Mr. Frye wanted to have, but they do it without any extra signs. He stated that other desirable resort communities don’t have an abundance of signage, and used Hilton Head, SC as an example. Mr. Brooks also brought up a violation of sign regulations that occurred this summer and suggested that steeper penalties be imposed for sign violations.

Tim Holland agreed with Jim Brooks’ aversion to the proposed sign amendments and stated that such amendments would “open a can of worms” that the Town didn’t want to get into.

Given the input that had been received on this item, John Hoffman made a motion that the Planning Board recommend disapproval of the proposed sign ordinance amendments. Mike Chase seconded said motion and it carried with no objection.

**Discuss Minimum Building Size Requirements:**
James Scott reviewed that it was resolved by the Planning Board last month that an appropriate minimum dwelling unit size for Beech Mountain is 1200 sqft. However, he stated that he has continued to receive feedback that is opposed to such a requirement. There are claims that it would hurt our economy and may place the Town at risk of preventing all potential use of certain properties. In such a situation an aggrieved property owner could demand compensation from the Town. Before this item is scheduled for a public hearing, he wanted to discuss with the Board one last time.

Andy Porter commented that he wasn’t totally opposed to small houses. He stated that he would rather have a small house next door that didn’t crowd his own and block the view. A small house simply makes other houses look bigger, he said.

Jim Brooks commented that a large minimum house size requirement is not harmonious with the original intent of the Beech Mountain community. There was then a discussion about whether the “cluster” neighborhoods in Beech Mountain that were clearly intended for small houses all had zero setbacks.

James Scott returned the Board’s focus to the main question at hand, which was whether Beech Mountain should have a minimum house size at all.
Mike Chase felt that there was a need for a minimum house size, but that it didn’t need to mandate that all houses be large. He suggested that the minimum house size be set at 800 square feet, and made a motion to that effect. Pete Chamberlin seconded this motion and it passed without objection.

**Architectural Review for Addition to “White Wolf Lodge”:**
James Scott reviews that Town ordinances require Architectural Review by the Planning Board for all additions to commercial structures within the Commercial Thoroughfare Overlay District. He presented the Board with plans for an addition to the “White Wolf Lodge” at 3363 Beech Mountain Parkway that would require Board approval.

Pete Chamberlin made a motion to approve of the proposed plans as presented. Said motion was seconded and carried with no objection.

**Adjournment:**
There was a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded and carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

James Scott
Staff to the Board