

**PLANNING AND  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

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**Cedar Mountain Small Area Planning Committee Meeting  
November 20, 2019 at 6:00 PM  
Cedar Mountain Community Center, 10635 Greenville Highway**

**I. Welcome, Call to Order, Curley Huggins, Chair Cedar Mountain Small Area Plan Committee**

Curley Huggins called the meeting to order at 6:04pm on Wednesday, November 20<sup>th</sup> and mentioned that all committee members were in attendance except Candy Gray. Members present were Chair Curley Huggins, Vice Chair Lucia Gerdes, Tom Oosting, and Mark Tooley. (Candy Gray arrived once the meeting had been called to order.) Curley Huggins thanked the community for allowing the committee to host their meeting at the community center and mentioned that there would be a chance for public input at the beginning and the end of the meeting. He shared his appreciation for the community's guidance. Staff present were Jason Stewart, Planning and Community Development Director and Kate Hayes, Interim Planner. There were around 10 members of the public present.

Before opening the meeting to public comment, Curley Huggins addressed the committee and the community about the timeline the committee would like to adhere to. The first meeting was a crucial handoff from the steering committee to the county appointed committee while also hearing from community members. The second meeting was an opportunity for committee members to express their opinions and air their concerns. The meeting on November 20<sup>th</sup> was meant to discuss land use overlays that could serve as a template from other areas. The group would discuss tools that would help build an initial framework that they can flesh out into a working planning document. The goal for the meeting included adopting a vision statement and agreeing on boundary lines, having a framework by March or April, a working plan by Summer, and then presenting the final document some time in the Fall of 2020. Curley Huggins did not think it was an overly aggressive schedule. He went on to suggest skipping the December meeting and picking back up in January of 2020 prepared to discuss the information the committee received from the Planning Director. The timeline was agreed upon by the committee members, but Tom Oosting added that he hopes they don't get overwhelmed by material. Curley Huggins wants to agree on the basic issues by June at the latest and then transition into a full working planning document by July or August. They would like to have something to present to the community members by September 2020 and then to the Planning Board by the end of the year. Mark Tooley asked if staff could put a timeline on the initial layout and Jason Stewart answered that the process would reasonably take 12-18 months based on how long most plans take in other places. Mark Tooley is open to meeting twice a month if the committee needs to in order to stay on schedule.

**II. Public Comment (15-minute time limit. Speakers are limited to three minutes.)**

**Clint Owings** – He questioned if the committee would meet at the Cedar Mountain Community Center in the future? Lucia Gerdes mentioned that it was booked on Thursdays, but asked about other days of the week. Jason Stewart suggested the fourth Tuesday of the month after some discussion.

**Karen Ramseur** – She asked if the group is still using the survey from Robert Lawson? Kate Hayes advised that staff would be happy to include it if we receive the full report.

**Bob Twomey** – He questioned the branding as the process continues. He wanted to know what construction would look like, what is Cedar Mountain and what identifies that for construction projects. He also questioned where the business corridor would be within Cedar Mountain. Bob Twomey considered the market across from the golf course down to the Taproom as the business community where there would be specific requirements for people to locate their business. He didn't think that it would be likely that a business would want to locate on a side road, unless it was Cascade Lake Road. Cedar Mountain is constrained by steep terrain and floodplains; you can't develop those very well so there is a finite area that can be developed for commercial or residential use. Bob mentioned that everyone needs to be involved; he is against zoning and feels that the community pride should play a part in what Cedar Mountain should be.

### **III. Approval of Agenda and Minutes (10/24/2019)**

Mark Tooley made a motion to approve the agenda and Tom Oosting seconded. The motion carried unanimously. After one correction by Tom Oosting to change his wording from impervious to pervious, Lucia Gerdes made a motion to approve the amended minutes from the October 24, 2019, meeting and Mark Tooley seconded. The motion carried unanimously. At this time, Candy Gray made it to the meeting.

### **IV. Old Business**

#### **A. Vision Statement (Kate)**

After Kate Hayes went over the following statements, Tom Oosting presented a fourth option for the committee to consider. Kate's suggestions included the following: 1) "The Cedar Mountain Small Area Plan strives to balance the area's natural beauty and cultural resources while developing the built environment to preserve and protect the greater Cedar Mountain Community through a citizen driven process that highlights the desires of Cedar Mountain residents." 2) "Through a citizen driven process, the Cedar Mountain Small Area Plan will facilitate a long-range plan by balancing responsible development with the need to preserve and protect Cedar Mountain's natural beauty and rural community character." 3) "Based on the desires and involvement of the greater Cedar Mountain community, the Cedar Mountain Small Area Plan strives to preserve and protect the natural beauty of the community, maintain the rural character, and protect the mountain ecosystem while balancing the need for responsible development of the built environment."

Tom Oosting suggested the following statement: "The Cedar Mountain Small Area Planning Committee will develop a land-use management perspective that strives to balance the area's natural beauty and historic and cultural resources with responsible commercial and private development. The Committee respects the evolution of this community and its values and therefore will develop its management perspective by being responsive to the many voices of the Cedar Mountain citizens." After deliberation and a few minor changes, the committee approved the following statement as the adopted vision statement for the Cedar Mountain Small Area Plan: "*The Cedar Mountain Small Area Planning Committee will develop a land-use management perspective that strives to balance the area's natural beauty, historic, and cultural resources with responsible commercial and private development. The Committee respects the evolution of this community, its values and will develop its management perspective by being responsive to the many voices of the Cedar Mountain citizens.*"

## **B. Updated Cedar Mountain Map (Kate)**

Kate Hayes presented a draft map of the Cedar Mountain boundaries. On the map she included the locations of the Cedar Mountain Fire District as well as the Cedar Mountain Voting District. This map was overlaid with information about the conserved lands in the area as well as the commercial node identified in the 2025 Comprehensive Plan along Highway 276, where growth could occur but there are not currently utilities in this area. After discussing the slight differences in the boundaries, the committee members began discussing which option they wanted to approve as their boundary. While Tom Oosting mentioned a vital neighborhood near Sequoyah Woods, Candy Gray wanted to stay with the voting district. Members then asked if High Rock would be included; Tom Oosting asked if we could remove the HOA areas from the map, but members stated that these areas wouldn't be impacted anyways because the plan would target commercial uses. Which neighborhoods were represented in the original steering committee survey? Steel Creek and Sequoyah Woods are accessible from 276.

Candy Gray asked how often voting districts change and Jason Stewart stated that because of the 2020 Census coming up, they could change in 2021. Candy Gray felt that encompassing the voting district would be the easiest and cleanest option even if it changes. Mark Tooley is located in the Cedar Mountain Fire District, but not the voting district and he would personally be okay if the plan left him out. Tom Oosting moved to approve the election district as the primary area of Cedar Mountain for the involvement during the Small Area Planning process, seconded by Candy Gray. The group then discussed including one parcel deep on the other side of the 276 corridor where the voting district ends. Lucia Gerdes mentioned this would be anything directly adjoining 276 that has parcel frontage along the road. Curley Huggins paused to make sure those boundaries made sense to Jason Stewart.

## **V. New Business**

### **A. Comprehensive Plan Survey Results (Kate)**

Kate Hayes had taken out all survey respondents from Cedar Mountain to ensure that the answers and priorities matched the overall county results at the request of community members at the previous meeting. She will be sending out copies of the survey results along with the minutes package from the meeting. She discussed that the residents of Cedar Mountain who responded to the survey were predominately retirees at 51% and the next highest category were full-time employees at 29% of respondents. Almost half of the respondents in Cedar Mountain characterized the rate of growth in Transylvania County as about the right amount of growth. When asked what the most important asset was in the county to be supported or maintained, many people answered the natural resources, scenic beauty, small town/rural atmosphere, quality of life, and the environment, but Kate discussed an overall summary of the answers. When asked what businesses people would or would not like to see more of, there was a resounding majority who did not want to see big box retail, but people did want to see medical/healthcare and small businesses. Kate also summarized answers to what people would like to see that is not in the county now such as better internet/connectivity, access to activities, and better land use enforcement. Residents of Cedar Mountain did not want to see new roadways constructed, but rather focus on safety improvements and routine road and bridge maintenance. There was a question on what people would like to see changed in the county and several answered zoning plans/standards, increases in small business, and slower growth. The final question that Kate discussed involved ranking how important many categories would be to county residents such as air and water quality, healthcare, and education which all ranked as a high priority. Candy Gray mentioned that it is important that there

was consistency between both surveys, of the original steering committee and the Cedar Mountain residents who completed the 2025 Comprehensive Plan survey.

There were concerns about the speed limit being 55 along areas of 276 and attendees questioned the committee if there was a way through DOT that those could be lowered. Lucia Gerdes stated that it was not in the purview of the committee, but she suggested they submit complaints directly to NCDOT. Curley Huggins asked if by the community adopting a plan, could the Small Area Plan influence DOT in these matters? Jason Stewart said it added weight to the discussion and shows there is a plan for potential growth instead of it being an undesignated rural area. Mark Tooley stated he would bring the matter up at the next Transportation Advisory Committee meeting. Lucia Gerdes said it would need to be enforced by highway troopers and that it wouldn't matter without enforcement. She stated it's scary for people to back onto 276 from the front of her building because you are blindly backing into a 55 MPH zone. The Whistlestop has had accidents and they have better sightlines.

#### **B. Land Use Options (Overlays, etc.) (Jason)**

Jason Stewart reiterated information that the committee had already received about what the county and the Planning Department regulate. Potential land use regulation tools included the following: lighting requirements, lot coverage, parking, stream buffers; landscaping, stormwater, setbacks, height limits, design guidelines for facades, and uses permitted by special approval or by right. Jason brought examples of ordinances to share with the group that we would discuss at our next meeting. The local examples included Jackson County's Cashiers Village Plan, Pisgah Forest Zoning, the Town of Mills River design guidelines, and Blowing Rock. The ordinance from Cashiers is very specific with diagrams and specifications for environmental standards and access in addition to structural requirements and what is prohibited. Pisgah Forest includes an Open Use District and a Corridor Mixed Use District which goes through a permit process. Tom Oosting questioned if the Planning Board had difficulty passing the zoning district. Jason did not have an answer because he was not here at that time. Mark Tooley was on the Planning Board at the time and the process took two years. The original concern was that the area was going to be brought into the ETJ and residents wanted the county to regulate the area instead. Mark stated that the Corridor Mixed Use is a little stricter on uses and includes requirements such as setbacks and buffers. One example of a parcel that has gone through the permitting process is Brevard Academy. The Blowing Rock design guidelines consider how you design things to look. It is something the committee could consider with architectural design guidelines. Jason stated that the next step is to decide how little or how much the committee wants to regulate and what they want their community to look like. He advised to think about what to make permitted or non-permitted to reach a starting point for the potential plan. Curley Huggins said there was a lot to think about. Mark Tooley also mentioned the recent scenic corridor designation and signage limitations to include. Jason said they could always adopt stricter guidelines. Mark brought up the Pisgah Forest Zoning area and said that it was a brutal process while he was on the Planning Board. Candy Gray asked if we could use things that have already been agreed on? Mark Tooley referenced Bob Twomey's comments about voluntary or regulated and said that Dollar General won't listen to voluntary standards. Candy mentioned that they have a construction goal to have a business every five miles, but Lucia said they can't keep the ones they already have staffed. Mark would propose regulations and Candy would agree. Jason Stewart said rural communities wanted to look like Abingdon, VA, but they went through guidelines in the 70's. He added that large box stores won't voluntarily add expenses to their bottom line unless they are asked to do it and there is a threshold they have to adhere to. Clint added from the audience that another Dollar General didn't do the signs like they were going to. Terry asked who is collectively deciding what businesses in Cedar Mountain would look like; would it be a committee decision or something else? Curley wants the community's involvement and guidance because the committee needs their help and

input. Curley believes that involvement is imperative and worth the effort. Clint let the group know that they had been added to the community center's calendar for the next meeting on January 28<sup>th</sup>; there is an officer meeting the previous Saturday and they can announce it at this meeting. Tom asked if there was a way to generalize what the themes and pros and cons were throughout the Pisgah Forest process. Mark said this process was different because the community is asking for it and members have a stake in it compared to the Planning Board at the time. Curley stated that the steering committee's work already accomplishes how the plan will fit into the focus areas of the comprehensive plan. He said what they would have to do will fit into those areas and it's fairly general, not as brutal as Pisgah Forest. Candy stated that it needed to be done whether it was brutal or not; the group needs to have a plan moving forward or let them build up like Dollar General. Tom would like to see voluntary compliance, but Candy would vote against that. They are there to make business and get customers; it has to be regulatory.

Curley mentioned hearing from Lenoir and Faith; the committee has to be mindful of the folks who are from the area and be mindful of their property rights. The committee needs their support as well as the entire community. Bob Twomey questioned the incoming Dollar General on crop land—the richest and most productive soil in NC. The County is allowing them to come in and build up the property. Candy argued that the county pushes for jobs and tax base even if those jobs don't pay enough it's still jobs, but we are losing agricultural land. Mark mentioned that about all the land the county has left is flat and along the river. Lucia mentioned that the people who are more likely to build those structures are chains and not small businesses. Clint asked how the committee can create a plan and have teeth without zoning? How far can we take the written regulations? Emergency Management is serious about FIRM (Flood Insurance Rate Maps) and they have extreme rules; build and fill is not allowed, but in this case the landowner has an opportunity to sell the land and make money. Bob Twomey mentioned he can't win for losing and he referenced the community visit by Terry Foxx, the Western Floodplain Planner through the NC Department of Public Safety. Bob asked how we fight businesses that the community doesn't want?

Curley believed that we needed to promote workforce and education in the county and the possibility of a high-tech hybrid educational opportunity would be a boom for the families raising children in the area and wanting them to work close. He wants to see us hiring people that are hikers and bikers who appreciate the natural environment who would work with the community to preserve those types of things. There is a tremendous economic opportunity for young people to preserve Cedar Mountain. Lucia doesn't believe that the TEA (Transylvania Economic Alliance) is recruiting for Cedar Mountain because there is no interstate or water and sewer according to Mark. The workforce in Cedar Mountain might not make it an opportunity for TEA. Mark questioned if environmental health could help us with soil surveys so we can see where development can and can't happen. The water table will limit a lot of what can happen because places have to get a working septic system to operate.

Candy brought up how important it was for the public to get accurate information moving forward. There has been inaccurate information on Facebook about the small area plan such as trying to eliminate trailers or people will lose the use of their property. It's important for committee members to make sure that erroneous information isn't going out especially from those well known in the community. A committee member suggested sending updates to the Cedar Mountain news—little updates of what the committee is working on and what they've established so far. There is a strong group of those who feel it's their land and they'll do whatever they want on it. The committee can also spend a few minutes doing updates at the potlucks. Lucia pointed out that anyone could have applied to be on the committee who feels strongly about Cedar Mountain. Kalen Lawson added that it doesn't cost anything to put out accurate information. People will not show up until the final document is created.

Curley mentioned that he took Lenoir's comments as genuine concerns and a voice in the community we need to hear from. Jason said he could start a FAQ section on the Planning Department's website and a portion could be relevant to the small area plan and get the word out to the community.

Tom reiterated that the committee is talking about commercial development. Lucia mentioned that residential use is off-limits according to Mark and Joy, the previous planner. Tom mentioned that in order to assuage paranoia we need a two-tiered plan and the commercial node is one. Lucia wants the land use regulations for commercial properties applied to residential roads as well to prevent future uses; she specifically cares about lighting and signage.

Clint would give weekly status updates of the SAP if the committee wants that. Tom stated that every announcement would direct them to a FAQ page with the county to see what's happening. Tom also thought it might calm some fears if we specifically say it's not about residential. Curley thought that it would relieve concerns if people knew we were primarily talking about commercial uses. There was a question about tax rates to complete the work and Lucia stated the committee has no authority of tax rates and it is out of their purview as a committee. Candy mentioned that it is hard to get Cedar Mountain people to come out and talk at the meetings.

**C. Other/Discussion of Next Meeting Date**

The committee decided to cancel their December meeting and then meet again in January on the 28<sup>th</sup> at the Cedar Mountain Community Center. This will give them time to go through all the materials that Jason handed out at the meeting. Staff will compile questions and common themes for discussion points at the meeting. Clint has us on the schedule every 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday at the Cedar Mountain Community Center for the next several months.

**VI. Public and Board Member Comments**

A member of the audience referenced a turnpike road and Candy added the importance of preserving the old road and identifying the historical importance.

Members added that the idea of communication and transparency is crucial. Candy volunteered to be in charge of making that happen. They suggested a bullet summary to go in the Cedar Mountain News and Mark suggested adding a condensed version of the agenda as well.

**VII. Adjourn - Next Meeting date**

A. The next meeting is scheduled for January 28<sup>th</sup> at 6:00pm in the Cedar Mountain Community Center. There being no further business Tom Oosting moved to adjourn and Candy Gray seconded the motion, which carried unanimously. The meeting ended around 8:00pm.



Darby Terrell, Planner

6/23/2020

Date



Curley Huggins, Chair

6/23/2020

Date