

A joint workshop between the Apalachicola City Commission and the Apalachicola Planning & Zoning Board was held on Monday, April 12, 2010 at 5:00 PM at the Apalachicola Community Center, #1 Bay Avenue, Apalachicola, Florida.

Present: Mayor Van Johnson, Commissioner Jimmy Elliott, Commissioner Brenda Ash, Commissioner Frank Cook, City Administrator Betty Webb, City Clerk Lee Mathes, Building Official Gene Osburn, Grants Manager Cindi Giametta, Leon Bloodworth, Dieter Ambos, Tom Daly, Curt Blair

Visitors: Geoffrey Hewell, George Coon, George Mahr, Pam Mahr, Robin Vroegop, Arta Quattlebaum, Cindy Clark, Fred Vogt

Workshop opened by Mayor Johnson.

Leon Bloodworth stated this joint workshop has been called to discuss the architect fee schedule. Mr. Bloodworth reviewed architect fee models. Mr. Bloodworth stated that Planning & Zoning wants the architects to review everything within the City. Mr. Bloodworth stated that fees can be set by resolution, and the fees will be reviewed and adjusted annually.

Curt Blair stated some expertise is needed with all the architectural changes that are occurring in the historic district. With the imposed architect fee schedule, this changes the process of applying for a permit drastically, and there will be feedback and ramifications.

Mr. Bloodworth stated the permit approval process will be slowed down. Planning & Zoning has not really been doing what we should be doing. A certificate of appropriateness should be issued first along with submittal of site plan and elevation plans. Mr. Bloodworth stated we need to start educating the public on the new process, but the long term benefit will outweigh how long it will take to get a permit.

Mayor Johnson read excerpt from blog that was posted on his website.

Mr. Bloodworth stated that architects have been selected and are historically certified. Most people won't even come into contact with this. Major renovations and new construction people are engaged with contractors and builders. Only major renovations and new construction will have to deal with architect process.

Geoffrey Hewell stated the Planning & Zoning Board has been trying for a long time to get some expert help.

Commissioner Ash what happens in an emergency situation.

Mr. Bloodworth stated people can get their houses safe and repair as needed for emergency situations.

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Commissioner Ash stated that for low income home builders, this just adds onto the fee of building a home.

Mr. Bloodworth stated whether it's a SHIP home or whatever; the fee will only be \$400-\$500 dollars. That costs can be absorbed into the mortgage. The fees are very affordable and when it is broken down into a 30 year mortgage, the costs are just about unrecognizable.

Commissioner Cook stated that the architects can help with the cost efficiency of homes, and in a lot of cases, the homeowner might be saving money. House has to be compatible with the neighborhood, and the City has a reputation of being a historic town and that alone raises the property values. The fees will costs, but it is also helping in keeping the property values up. Fees can be waived on a case by case basis.

Mr. Bloodworth stated the option of waiving the fees will always exist.

Dieter Ambos stated the fees can easily be absorbed into a mortgage.

Commissioner Ash stated she doesn't want people to be afraid of building a home. When people are already on a tight budget, these fees can make or break what people can afford.

Discussion held concerning low income building.

Mr. Bloodworth stated the architects don't make the decision on whether or not to waive a fee.

Mayor Johnson asked what the time line on implementing these fees is. People need to be educated first.

Mr. Bloodworth stated the Builder Association is concerned with the process change, so they will definitely be informed.

Mayor Johnson stated we need a general education program to let people know the reason behind the fees.

Mr. Ambos stated the builders and realtors need to know the process.

Commissioner Ash stated the lenders also need to know the process.

Mr. Blair stated he was not aware that the fees could be adopted by resolution.

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Ms. Webb stated that building permit fees are adopted by resolution.

Mr. Bloodworth stated the building permit process confuses people. People are not sure what they need a permit for; people are not clear on what is structural and nonstructural. Architects are going to review everything and not charge for it.

Tom Daly stated that architects can encourage the homeowner to help make better decisions.

George Mahr stated that the fees should be a lot less if the home is not in the historic district.

Mr. Daly stated that Planning & Zoning is not trying to dictate to the homeowners on what they can and can't build. We are just trying to find some compatibility.

Mr. Bloodworth stated that the area outside the historic district is the transition area.

Robin Vroegop stated people don't want to be told how their house is going to be designed. Ms. Vroegop addressed concerns on proposed fees. Ms. Vroegop stated that education is the key for people understanding the new process.

Mayor Johnson stated we want to make sure we bring the public along in this process.

Mr. Bloodworth stated we can hold public workshops. It will take some time to get the new applications in place.

Mr. Blair stated he is concerned that we are moving too fast. Mr. Blair suggests to just starting with reviews to keep the fees down and gradually move ahead. Mr. Blair stated that when this starts, he is afraid there is going to be a lot of opposition.

Mr. Bloodworth stated that a lot of people will never get charged.

Mr. Daly stated the monetary impact is very small.

Mr. Bloodworth stated that Planning & Zoning is not doing things in the right order. The architects are bringing some guidance so that Planning & Zoning will make better decisions.

Mr. Hewell stated that Planning & Zoning is trying to protect the property value of homes, and it is time Planning & Zoning has a process to work with.

Commissioner Ash stated the public needs to be well educated on this process.

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Commissioner Elliott we do have professionals involved, but people really need to be informed and educated on this process.

Commissioner Cook stated acquiring the architects is a great idea, and the only fair way to do it is to pass the fees down to the homeowner. On occasion fees will have to be waived.

Mayor Johnson stated he just wants to make sure the people are well educated.

Mr. Bloodworth stated public workshop will be held.

New power poles along Water Street discussed.

Joe Taylor outlined the establishment of Historic Apalachicola, Inc.

Workshop adjourned.

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Van W. Johnson, Sr., Mayor

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Lee H. Mathes, City Clerk