

**Minutes of the
New Bern Planning & Zoning Board
July 7, 2009**

The New Bern Planning & Zoning Board held a regular meeting in the City Hall Courtroom, 300 Pollock Street, on Tuesday, July 7, 2009 at 6:30 p.m.

Members present: Mr. Peter Moffett, Chair
Mr. John McClellan
Mr. Tripp Eure
Mrs. Janet Lamb
Mrs. Susan Moffat-Thomas
Mr. Harry Cotton
Mr. Tim Tabak

Members excused: Mr. Mark Best

Members absent: None

Staff present: Mr. Greg McCoy, Zoning Enforcement Officer
Ms. Annette Stone, City Planner
Mrs. Lorraine DiBella, Administrative Assistant

Prayer: A prayer for guidance was given by John McClellan.

Minutes: Minutes from the May 5, 2009 meeting were approved with motion by Mrs. Moffat-Thomas, second by Mr. Eure, and unanimous vote by the Board.

New Business

A. Consideration of a request to rezone, from I-1 Industrial District to C-3 Commercial District, a 0.61 tract at 300 S. Jimmies Creek Drive.

Staff, Mr. McCoy, described the application, saying the applicant Mitchell Brydge represents the property owners Gary and Phyllis Carpenter and requests rezoning of this 0.61 acre tract which is a vacant lot formerly a part of the Dunn Industrial Park. The applicant already has a building permit. The request is basically to down-zone the property to take advantage of C-3 Commercial setbacks which are less than exists in the current I-1 Industrial zoning.

Staff recommended approval of the rezoning request. The recommendation is based on the location of the subject tract, its compatibility with the Land Use and Thoroughfare Plans, and compatibility with the adjacent land uses.

Applicant Comments: Applicant Mitchell Brydge added that the developer of the property is faced with construction limitations due to existing drainage and utility easements on the site's front and rear, in addition to a 21' private right of way within the southern boundary. The proposed use, though not a consideration of the rezoning request, is for a commercial storage development. This is consistent with uses in the adjoining properties.

Public Comments: None

Board Comments: Chairman Moffett asked if staff is recommending any landscaping requirements. Mr. McCoy answered, they are working with the applicant to encourage appropriate landscaping along the secondary entrance to the Jimmies Creek Subdivision.

Motion was made by Mrs. Moffat-Thomas, second by Mrs. Lamb and unanimous vote of Board, to recommend approval of the request to rezone the subject 0.61 tract at 300 S. Jimmies Creek Drive from I-1 Industrial District to C-3 Commercial District as recommended.

B. Review and recommendation on final draft of the New Bern Pedestrian Plan.

Staff Annette Stone made brief introductory comments and presented Allison Carpenter of The Louis Berger Group, Inc, infrastructure structure and engineering consultants, Raleigh, NC. Ms. Carpenter capsulated the pedestrian plan including the following comments:

New Bern is a walkable city with a well-connected pedestrian network that provides safe, convenient, attractive and viable walking routes for all of its residents and visitors to access key local destinations. The Pedestrian Plan recommends future pedestrian-related projects and facility improvements in the City, as well as programs and policies that will support a pedestrian-friendly culture and help to further improve local walking conditions. The results of the Plan will be a safe, accessible pedestrian system that includes sidewalks, greenways and safe intersections, in addition to programs and policies that encourage residents and visitors alike to walk for health, recreation, fitness, cost savings and basic transportation.

Ms. Carpenter discussed the City's next step in the implementation of the pedestrian plan as beginning to immediately address the short-term priority program, policy, and project recommendations. At the same time, the City should also start to lay the groundwork for the longer term recommendations by developing relationships with potential partners such as the New Bern Chamber of Commerce, the Craven County Health Department, the North Carolina Department of Transportation and the Craven Regional Medical Center, among others, and by starting to budget for future projects. Most importantly, the City should continue its efforts to raise awareness about the importance of making a community more walkable in order to continue to cultivate support for more pedestrian improvements and programs. Residents, visitors, and local leaders should be familiar with the economic, health, and environmental benefits of a community in which there is less dependence on automobiles and more reliance on foot travel as not only a form of recreation, but also as a form of transportation.

As a small city anticipating significant growth and development, New Bern is in an ideal situation to develop a more walkable community. The City should capitalize on its location and its attractions, such as the RiverWalk Trail and historic downtown, to reinforce its existing pedestrian infrastructure with new projects and improvements. With careful planning, deliberate steps and persistence, New Bern can become an even more vibrant, livable community.

Public Comments: Kate Dixon, executive director of the Mountain to Seashore Walking Trail System, and renown author and hiker Alan de Hart, added brief comments in support of the pedestrian plan. Ms. Dixon said the state's Mountain to Seashore trail system is 940 miles long and New Bern is the largest city currently on the trail.

Board Discussion: Discussion followed with board members asking how certain data was gathered. Several pointed out their personal areas of concern, i.e. Neuse Blvd corridor by hospital, Bear Park

curbing, Creekside Park and School area. The need for safe walking routes to schools was discussed as was the critical need for sidewalks along Neuse Boulevard.

Motion was made with Mr. Eure with second by Mr. Cotton and unanimous vote of Board to support recommendation of the pedestrian plan to the Board of Aldermen.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned.

Peter Moffett, Chairman

Greg McCoy, Acting Secretary