

Planning and Zoning Commission

May 28, 2024, at 10:00 a.m.

3608 Hwy. 246 (City Hall)

and Via Teleconference (Zoom)

City of Sky Valley, Georgia

MINUTES

THOSE PRESENT: Dan McAfee, Chairman, Don Germano, David Spears, Tony Allred, Jim Phelps, Mayor Hollie Steil, City Manager, Jason Streetman, Building Inspector, Jim Pyburn, Communications Specialist, Sherron Van Camp

THOSE ABSENT:

CALL TO ORDER: Chairman, Dan McAfee, called the meeting to order at 10:00 AM

1. Approval of Minutes

November 9, 2023, Don Germano made a motion to accept the minutes as written, seconded by David Spears, unanimously approved.

3. Approval of Agenda Don Germano made a motion to accept the agenda as written, seconded by Tony Allred, unanimously approved.

4. Election of Commission Chairman Don Germano made a motion to nominate Dan McAfee as the Commission Chairman, seconded by David Spears, unanimously approved.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

5. Review of the current tree cutting ordinance

City Manager Streetman reported that a tremendous amount of trees have been removed due to the development of property. Building Inspector Pyburn reported that he is familiar with the current tree ordinance. He also stated that due to a recent issue on Knob Drive, he will be strictly adhering to the current ordinance that requires homeowners to mark the trees being trimmed or cut, provide a diagram or plat of the lot, and notarized letter from landowner if trees are not located on the requestor's property. Jim Phelps introduced Jim Pyburn to an app called Land Glide that shows real time property lines while walking, etc.

Don Germano stated that the ordinance is good as it is written, but it may need to be tweaked. He also stated that the ordinance must be enforced properly at all times.

Jim Phelps suggested that the 25% of trees that are allowed to be cut on properties could be a hard fast rule with no exceptions. He stated that all violations should be \$1,000 per violation not “up to \$1,000). In addition to these fines, there would also be a permit fee x 2 if no permit application was submitted. Tony Allred added that perhaps a landscape designer’s plan be submitted for new builds. Chairman McAfee said that all good ordinances need to have an appeals process. Jim Phelps added that it is not really appeals that are needed; it would be variance requests if more that 25% of trees are to be cut.

Jason added that he thought new constructions could submit a land architect’s tree plan. Debie Dalhouse Curtis stated that a lot of work went into a draft plan several years ago because the current tree ordinance is contradictory. She said that Inspector Pyburn referred to several lots that have been clear cut for construction purposes, and that penalties are not being enforced. Jim explained that not many tree citations have been issued. He also stated that the footprint of the new home, the septic area, drain fields, and driveways make the 25% very subjective.

The committee tabled amending the ordinance at this time. He asked that the changes be written down and brought to the next Planning and Zoning Meeting.

6. Consideration of a new ordinance governing the use and installation of solar panels

Chairman McAfee stated that the state of Georgia is very pro-Solar, and we cannot deny solar power in Sky Valley, nor would he want to do so. The committee discussed various options regarding solar arrays, solar panels on roofs, and the effects that each could have on neighbors. Mayor Steil stated that she did not want to see stand-alone panels in front yards due to aesthetic reasons. Jim Pyburn mentioned that the panels could be a nuisance and infringe on others by causing glares, etc. Don Germano asked Jim Pyburn and Jason Streetman to research issues that could be problems for the committee address at the next meeting.

7. Consideration of a new ordinance prohibiting the use of unconventional building materials and/or construction methods

Chairman McAfee stated that Rabun County has been reviewing unconventional building materials and construction methods. At this time, no ordinance has been filed. He also stated that Sky Valley adheres to the International Building Code. Sky Valley also restricts homes under 1,750 square feet. Dan added that we could perhaps prohibit any component that wasn’t originally built for residential habitation purposes. Jim Phelps asked if the city could put a moratorium in place for now to curtail any issues that could arise before an ordinance is drafted. He asked Jason and Jim Pyburn to find out what the county has done. Mayor Steill said that she and Jason will be attending an intergovernmental meeting within the next few weeks, and they will discuss the issue with the other City Managers and Planning Commissioners. Debbie Dalhouse Curtis added that the Carl Vinson Institute could possibly serve as an

advisory panel to the Planning and Zoning Commission. Jim Phelps added that all laws must be enforceable, and perhaps the committee should discuss this issue with a law firm that specializes in municipal rules and regulations.

8. Review of the city's comprehensive plan and discussion of possible changes that will be necessary with the adoption of a new comprehensive plan later this year.

Rabun County's Comprehensive Plan is due to be completed by October 31, 2024. The committee reviewed the current zoning districts and the zoning in the 2019 Comp Plan. The two maps do not correlate. The committee agreed that they should, and plans are being made to update them both as needed for anticipated future development. Jan Mason, citizen, stated that she has done commercial and residential zoning in the past and questioned the use of land in Sky Valley. It was explained by Chairman Dan McAfee that future development could include high end multi-family condominiums with garages, some retail and office spaces that could benefit the citizens of Sky Valley. Mayor Hollie stated that surveys have been done in the past, and citizens agree that these things are needed and wanted. A professional planning group and a financial group have been working with investors to draw up a plan that will complement Sky Valley while offering services that will be beneficial to residents. Evergreen and the Old Lodge areas are in consideration for potential development.

City Manager Streetman said that a new sewer system would be necessary for growth to happen. Much of the land zoned as Park/Recreation could possibly be zoned as mixed use to include village commercial.

The next meeting will take place on Thursday, June 25, 2024, at 1:00 PM.

ADJOURNMENT Tony made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Jim Pyburn.

The meeting adjourned at 12:18 PM.

Respectfully submitted:

Sherron Van Camp, Communications Specialist