



Friends of Carefree, there were a meeting of the Carefree Planning & Zoning Commission last evening at 5PM.

Planning & Zoning Commission Meeting, March 14, 2016 at 5:00PM

Commissioners Krahe and Sperl were absent. Public participation consisted of Jim Van Allen and John Traynor.

Item 1, Approval of Minutes: The January 11th minutes were approved, 5 - 0.

Item 2, Work Session-Discussion: Per the agenda, *"The intent of this work session is to conclude the conversation concerning definitions and requirements regarding building heights for residential and commercial structures."* In contrast to the 3 prior "workshops" neither form based code nor substantially taller building heights were considered. However, *"The current proposal is designed to simplify how residential building height will be measured and returns commercial building heights to the original maximum building height of thirty feet." [It should be noted that, in 2004, the P&Z set the height limit to 24 feet.]*

Town Planner, Stacy Bridge-Denzak discussed a draft of the proposed Zoning Text Amendment, explaining the rationale for clarifying how Residential and Commercial building height will be measured. In reference to raising commercial building height to 30 feet (*from the current 24 foot limit*) she said there was 'support' for the 30 foot standard. Apparently the change is intended to provide designers/developers more flexibility in planning new structures. The Galleria was cited as an example of the type of building design that would be possible with a 30 foot height standard. Other than the desire for more height by developers, and the current recommendation by the town administrator and town planner, I didn't hear any other support for the 30 foot height.

When discussion was opened to the public Jim Van Allen addressed the Commission. He thanked staff for making the meeting packet available well in advance and said he hoped the practice would continue. He commented that some things seem to disappear from meeting to meeting, noting that the staff proposals of the 70 foot height presented in October and the 50 foot height presented in January are gone. He suggested that maybe there is a "Houdini" in Town Hall that makes things disappear. Jim advised the commissioners that a successful hotel could be constructed at 30 feet as long as the parking was below ground. He then thanked the Commissioners for their due diligence and determination to not destroy our town. He also took issue with the language used in a recent blog suggesting we stirred folks into an "emotional tizzy". ***[Both Jim and I want to thank all of you who attended the January meeting in order to express your opinion of those staff proposals. Although 'change' is important to some, maintaining the character and charm of Carefree is far more important to residents than appeasing developers.]***

The final draft of the currently proposed text amendment will be presented at the next P&Z meeting and, if then approved by the commissioners, it will be forwarded to the Town Council for action (possibly in May).

“All change is not growth, as all movement is not forward.” – Ellen Glasgow

Item 3, Announcements: Once the proposed Zoning Text Amendment discussion was completed I submitted a request to speak slip, explaining I had a question not directly related to the current Text Amendment. I recounted that on several occasions, and at different public meetings, the height associated with the prior Text Amendment (approved in 2006 or 2007) was never clearly specified. No staff member, council member, or commissioner could recall if the height was 46 or 48 feet. I searched the town codes and zoning regulations without success in locating the actual height approved. Town Administrator Neiss explained that the height was included in the development plan submitted by the developer last year. I remarked that the developer had originally submitted a plan when the prior text amendment was originally approved but he did not proceed. Mr. Neiss explained that a revised plan was submitted and approved last year. When I asked again what the height was in that plan, Mr. Neiss said he didn't remember but it was in the plan. I asked if the development plan was subject to a Public Records request and was told that is was; I'll file a request and try to locate the approved building height for the Easy Street Condo project. Stay tuned. ***[Once a proposed Text Amendment is reviewed & approved by the P&Z it is forwarded to the Council for action. If approved by the Council only the staff reviews the Development plan; the P&Z is no longer involved. I find it distressing that the original Text Amendment, granted years ago, allows a developer to determine building height. By contrast, the currently proposed Text Amendment contains very clear specifications as to height limits and other grading factors associated with height.]***

Item 4, Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at approximately 5:30PM.

Respectfully submitted by Jim Van Allen and John Traynor

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