

**Public Hearing Minutes
Spruce Pine Town Council
Monday, May 9, 2022**

A public hearing of the Town Council was held on Monday, May 9th, 2022. Present were Mayor Darla Harding and Council Members James Acuff, Rocky Buchanan, Jackie Rensink and Larry McKinney. Staff in attendance included Darlene Butler, Shelley Buchanan, Billy Summerlin, Rick McDonald, Michael Wood and Crystal Young. Others attended, including Chad Donahoo, Jim Phillips, Jessie Phillips, Anthony Mullins, Phillip Hise, Bette English, Alan English, Ethan Hollifield, Peter Franklin, Jeffrey Harding, Jeff Harding, and Halley Burleson.

PUBLIC HEARING

Mayor Darla Harding opened a public hearing to solicit and receive public comment regarding a zoning change request from James Phillips/ Yancey Timber Resources LLC. Mr. Phillips has requested that 40.92 acres (Parcel ID #0799-05-18-4028) be rezoned from R1/ Residential to I/Industrial.

Jim Phillips distributed topography maps to the citizens present and the Council. He explained that as he is looking ahead to the future, he feels this is the right direction for him. He noted he has no concrete plans for the parcel; however, the property obviously borders industrial businesses currently and he believes it only makes sense to rezone this land should he decide to sell the parcel. Mayor Harding asked what access there is to the land. To which Jim replied the only access at this time is off of South Dale Street. Council member Rocky Buchanan asked Mr. Phillips if his intention is to sell the 40.92 acres to Feldspar or Sibelco if rezoned. Mr. Phillips replied that if he decided to sell Sibelco and Feldspar would be the audience he would entertain.

Town Clerk Shelley Buchanan introduced, and read aloud, a letter submitted for public comment from Stuart and Lisa Jensen at 153 Rogers Street in opposition of the rezoning request. This letter is incorporated by reference and attached to these minutes.

Mr. Jeff Harding addressed the Council in opposition of the rezoning request. He noted that although his property is not within 100 feet of this parcel, his property value and quality of life could possibly decline. He noted the only access to this property is a road that is only 15 feet wide with twelve homes on it. He shared his concern for these homeowners if an industry tried to use that road for large trucks or equipment. He made the point he is not opposed to business or industry in the area as he is a Mitchell County commissioner, but is opposed to anything that would be a detriment to the community. He noted the decrease in tax revenue the Town of Spruce Pine and Mitchell County would receive as a possible outcome if the rezone is approved.

Mr. Phillip Hise asked Darlene Butler to explain exactly what rezoning this land to Industrial means. Darlene referenced the Town of Spruce Pine Zoning Ordinances and read the definition of Light Industrial and Heavy Industrial. Mr. Hise then asked Mr. Phillips to clarify which he is requesting the property be rezoned. Mr. Phillips replied his intention is for it to be rezoned to Light Industrial.

Mr. Anthony Mullins expressed his concern that the rezone would take 100 feet of his property. The Council explained to Mr. Mullins the letter he received was simply notifying property owner within 100 feet of the parcel and that no one would be taking any of his property.

Mr. Peter Franklin requested that if the rezone is denied that the Council consider granting Mr. Phillips incentives to develop this land into housing as he believes Spruce Pine is in desperate need of additional housing for people wanting to move into the area.

Mr. Ethan Hollifield expressed his concerns as an adjoining property owner and outdoor preservation expert. He explained that this area and the mountains are so rapidly changing our children won't recognize the area. He believes this land needs to be used for something of value that protects the natural environment. This is the reason people visit and move to this area.


Ms. Starli McDowell presented the Council with a copy of the Recreation Economy Strategic Plan for Mitchell County. She would like to see the environment and outdoor recreation areas kept intact. She wants to keep the natural beauty of the mountains.

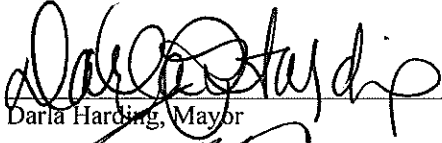
Mr. Alan English addressed the Council as an adjoining property owner. He has leased this land for years from Mr. Phillips and feels he knows the property better than anyone. Although he is concerned about the value of his home decreasing and the possible implications of an industry like Sibelco or Quartz Corp owning the property, he feels that if this could benefit Spruce Pine and keep young people from having to leave the area to find jobs then the rezone should be approved. He noted this change could possibly help Spruce Pine grow and add reasons for people to stay here.

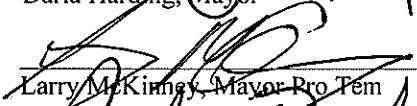
Mayor Harding stated she would be in favor of tabling this request until it can be discussed further. Council Member James Acuff asked if South Dale Street is the only access to the property. Mr. Phillips answered, that it is. Mr. Phillips also acknowledged that it would be impossible to bring large equipment or tractor trailers in and out of South Dale Street.


ADJOURNMENT


With no more comments, Mayor Harding closed the public hearing.

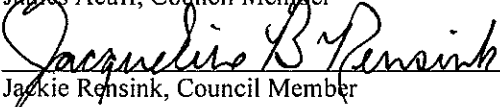

Shelley Buchanan, Town Clerk


Darla Harding, Mayor


Larry McKinney, Mayor Pro Tem


Rocky Buchanan, Council Member


James Acuff, Council Member


Jackie Rensink, Council Member