



MEETING MINUTES

Planning Commission

April 27, 2021

6:30 p.m. Zoom Virtual Meeting

Commissioners Present: Todd Dixon, Sean Ives, Lamar Matthews, Gregory Williamson, Paul Yingling

Commissioners Absent:

Ex Oficio Member: Mayor Jane Newberry

GMF Staff: Julia Simmons, Zachary Trainor

[Link to Zoom Video Recording](#)

Agenda Item	Motion/Discussion	M/S	TD	SI	LM	GW	PY	JN
1. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL	Chairperson Dixon called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM. Role call as reflected, above.							
2. ADDITIONS, DELETIONS, & CORRECTIONS TO THE AGENDA	Item #6 was deleted from the agenda.							
3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES- March 9 th , 2021 Meeting.	Motion to approve the minutes of the March 9, 2021 meeting as posted. Motion passes unanimously.	GW/LM	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
4. Public Comment	<p>Sherri Hopper spoke about the purchase of the fire house and turning it into a wedding venue.</p> <p>Chairperson Dixon responded regarding the process and possible concerns.</p> <p>Commissioners Williamson, Matthews, and Yingling commented in support of the project.</p>							

5. Public Workshop and Community Input Meeting - Zoning and Land Use Code Rewrite.	Staff presented highlights from survey results. Discussion notes are included below the meeting minutes.							
6. Trustee Liaison Report on Board Action and Matters of Comprehensive Plan Implementation. Katharine Guthrie, Board of Trustees Planning Liaison	Deleted from Agenda							
7. Housekeeping and Announcements	After discussion, the Planning Commissioners set May 25 th as the target date for the presentation of the annotated outline. Chairperson Dixon commented that if the outline is not ready, then the June 8 th regular meeting could be the date for the presentation.							
8. Adjournment	Chairperson Dixon adjourned the meeting at 7.49 PM.							

Discussion Notes

1. **What is one topic from the PowerPoint presentation that resonated with you? What are some challenges you have experienced with the existing code; what would make it easier to “do the right thing?”**

Public comment

- Ann Esch Brought up the topic of sewer systems. The age of the cess pools are a looming problem. Does GMF have any further regulations? This concern resonated with her.
 - Chairperson Dixon agreed that this is also a concern for him and talked about replacement concerns and El Paso County and Teller County Health Departments for requirements.

- David Douglas: Spoke about concerns around fire mitigation and the need for enforcement. He brought up that many old structures are not hardened against fire and the need for clarity about what is reasonable to require people to harden their property. Fuels mitigation on public property. He emphasized the need for practical and reasonable for frontline defense.
- Chairperson Dixon commented about Wildland Urban Interface code policies or ordinance presented to the Planning Commission.
- Rocco Blasi talked about how some people may be unaware there is a code and that the Town should improve visibility and encourage outreach and education to make people aware of the code. He said that the code should be simple and enforceable. Mr. Blasi brought up the concern for liability for GMF if code is not enforced. He spoke in support of moving some items to administration approval and that health and safety are priority. Mr. Blasi suggested that the town look to the compressive for guidance. He also commented in support of taking inventory of cess pools and available land for development.
- Commissioner Ives shared that people that speak to him around town are frustrated with the process of permitting that is slow due to requirements and that simplifying the code would be a positive development.

What are challenges with the existing code?

No public comment on this topic.

- Commissioner Williamson commented that there are roughly 700 homes in GMF and he estimated that 80% are more than 50 years old. He talked about how that relates to fire issues and the rights of property owners. He spoke about how the town government exists to serve the community and the need to be sensitive to existing conditions. How can we help people mitigate to the best of their ability? Commissioner Williamson again emphasized the need to understand the community and ask how we can best support people and that we should be consistent with what we do.
- Chairperson Dixon talked about his recent building challenges including septic system, topography, and retaining wall. He commented about the wait time with the town government and engineering, which delayed the process for a couple months.
- Chairperson Matthews commented that people are trying to do the right thing and are frustrated with the process. She spoke about needing to take some of the bureaucracy out of the process to make it easier for businesses and people to comply with the regulations.
- Mayor Newberry brought up the point that ideas are coming up that aren't a part of the Land Use Code or enforcement, and that the discussion should focus on the Land Use Code. She spoke in support of simplification of the code and administrative approval and for clear guidelines so that everyone understands without gray areas.

2. What would make it easier to do the right thing?

- Ann Esch asked the question, Is a variance an ordinance or a code?
 - Nina Williams answered that a variance is permission to make an exception to the land use code with strict standards and should be used very rarely.
- Ann commented that variances are common here in Green Mountain Falls. She suggested that variances might be handled administratively in some cases.

Commissioners

- Commissioner Yingling said that when explaining an issue to landowners, it could be done from the standpoint of how an action impacts others in the community and the environment as opposed to just having to follow the rules and having bureaucracy for bureaucracy's sake.

Do you agree with the preliminary survey results: some applications should be approved administratively (using specific guidelines) instead of requiring a public hearing process?

- Rocco Blasi stated that 17 responses to survey is not a good sample size and that hundreds of other people have a stake in the result and that survey responses all over the map. Mr. Blasi said that it is difficult to make accurate generalizations.
- Commissioner Matthews commented about simplification by moving some items to administrative approval.
- Commissioner Yingling spoke about the code requirements for approval of decks and how deck approval can be accomplished by administration.
- Commissioner Williamson brought up the Universal Building Code and how GMF is different from other geographic locations. Example: EPC code is not a good fit for our town. He commented that people love living in this town because of the historic and unique features. There is a need to rewrite the code but it has to address the specific needs of the properties that exist. Commissioner Williamson echoed the need to take inventory and the need to find out how many buildable lots there are as well as the age of existing homes. What happens when your deck or septic needs to be replaced? He brought up health and safety as priorities. In a universal sense there is not anything we can adopt that is already written that fits GMF so we should take a hard look and make sure what we write fits our community.
- Ann Esch asked if Green Mountain Falls could override a county regulation? If we get a variance from county? If cess pool fails you have to put in a septic system. She spoke about new technology and said that we are such a unique place in a valley. The idea of a looming cess pool problem was brought up.

- Chairperson Dixon said that we have an opportunity to group things so can be reviewed administratively if possible. Decks and fences that don't change the footprint, can this be done administratively? Pikes Peak Regional Building Department reviews for structural health and safety. He commented that we don't have the expertise for the structural elements, so we rely on larger entities with larger staff for problems with more complicated technical issues.

3. What types of housing and commercial development is most appropriate in GMF? Some themes that have been identified in preliminary surveys: density, building use and height, additional zoning designations, environmental constraints, parks and open space, natural hazards, tiny houses, incentivized commercial development.

- Rocco Blasi commented that he was looking at Comprehensive Plan vision, which is an appropriately sized safe community home to a mix of various uses. One of the specific strategies is to Update Land Use code to allow higher downtown density, higher lot coverage and apartments above commercial spaces. Incentivize downtown businesses. He brought up the idea of tiny houses. Does it make sense to build a tiny house when you have to fit septic and have larger lot? He commented that economic growth needs to continue as the costs of services increase.
- Chairperson Dixon commented that Rocco had made a good point regarding the limiting factors- which includes the cost of building, the price of lumber increase, and the limiting factor of sewage. The amount of land required for the septic system was roughly 1/3 of the building space. Not many lots can handle that space requirement. Hopefully, technology advances for smaller contained systems to meet requirements. A challenge of higher density is how to deal with wastewater and sewer system. Is it cost effective? He also brought up the budget that we have for the rewrite project, which he believes is roughly around \$70,000.
- Commissioner Matthews asked if the Planning Commission will receive updates on the status of the budget on the project. She requested updates on the budget during upcoming meetings.
- Rocco Blasi shared his concerns that the schedule seems aggressive.
- Chairperson Dixon answered that the plan is to get it to the Board of Trustees by the fall and the budget is a concern and wants to stay within the existing Planning Commission Meeting schedule, but is open to more special meetings if needed.
- Nina Williams explained next steps.
- After discussion, the Planning Commissioners set May 25th as the target date for the presentation of the annotated outline. Chairperson Dixon commented that if the outline is not ready, then the June 8th regular meeting could be the date for the presentation.