

**TOWN OF LA CONNER
PLANNING COMMISSION ZOOM MEETING
February 16, 2021**

The Planning Commission meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m.

Commissioners present: Bruce Bradburn, Rick Dole, Marna Hanneman, Carol Hedlin.

Commissioners absent: Liz Theaker.

Staff: Marianne Manville-Ailles, Michael Davolio, Ramon Hayes, Scott Thomas.

Members of the public: 6.

CONVENE:

- *Roll Call*
- *Introduction of Michael Davolio new Planning Director*

Planner Marianne Manville-Ailles introduced new Planning Director Michael Davolio. Planner Kevin Cricchio decided that the job was not for him. Fortunately, Davolio was still available and willing to work for La Conner. He has pretty much taken over the day-to-day planning and Marianne is just finishing up the density changes.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

None.

MINUTES:

Commissioner Hedlin moved to approve the January 19, 2021 minutes. Seconded by Commissioner Hanneman. Motion carried 4-0.

OLD BUSINESS:

- *MONA Presentation – options for repair/maintenance of south wall.*

CJ Ebert said that since the last meeting, architect David Hall has produced two examples of historic design for the south wall and Tom Beckwith has put together a dossier on what a rainscreen is. A rainscreen is a cladding that goes against the exterior of the building that allows for moisture to evaporate behind it. This is important, because most buildings are built tightly and if moisture gets into the wall, it gets trapped and either rots or gets inside the building or both. The south wall is in dire need of repair and the

reason the Museum of Northwest Art is doing this presentation is because they need the Town of La Conner's concurrence that their design is appropriate so MONA can raise money to do the improvement. The rainscreen is done with furring, a textile fabric that's against the building and cladding on the outside. The cladding can be a number of materials including wood, metal, cement board and brick. Another reason MONA is seeking the Town's concurrence is because the museum is built over the property line onto the neighboring US Post Office property and they want to be able to show the USPS what needs to be done and why to get their concurrence as well.

The first option for the south wall keeps the recessed areas between the parapets whereas the second option flattens that out somewhat with reduced recesses. Both options include a continuous roofline, gutters and a rainscreen and allow for the roof and the HVAC system to be replaced separately, which is different than the original proposal which involved extending the parapets out. CJ prefers the second option with the reduced recesses but both of these new options mirror the existing shape of the building, will be less work and will be less costly.

David Hall added that he thought a lot of the problems are caused by the flashing in the recessed bays between the parapets because water gets blown into them and runs down the wall. Having one continuous shed roof will capture a lot of that weather. He also preferred the second option with the reduced recesses, since there will be less flashing. He said that they could modulate even further by using different materials in the recessed bays. Tom Beckwith agreed that option two has the best design.

Commissioner Dole asked whether the gutters will have a way of filtering so they don't have to be cleaned. Ebert said that they haven't gotten that far yet but the gutters are doable. Commissioner Bradburn asked if the only incursion onto post office property would be above ground and wouldn't reduce their parking. Hall said that it shouldn't affect it, but the further the roof could be extended away from the wall, the better. However, they don't have a lot of options because of the easement they'll have to get. Bradburn also asked if partial fill in of the bays will increase space for the museum. Hall said that it could, but there is not an existing floor, so that would be more work. Commissioner Hanneman asked about the materials that MONA intends to use. Hall said that they want to use siding with battens or similar on the upper portion. The lower portion would be horizontal cedar siding and the roof would be metal. Commissioner Hedlin asked how deep the recesses are currently and how deep they would be with infill. Hall said currently it's about 3-4 feet, reduced it would be 8-12 inches. Ebert and Hall also said that the current dry fire suppression system which is on the exterior of the building is corroding from the inside and needs to be replaced.

Planner Marianne Manville-Ailles and the Planning Commission both said that the proposal seems reasonable and is sufficient for MONA's fundraising. Approval cannot be guaranteed, but once MONA has acquired their funding, they can then submit actual plans for historic design review and assuming no major changes, the approval process should be easier. Mayor Hayes said that if MONA is looking to document the Planning

Commission's assent to the concept, that the meeting recording is available upon request. Marianne also said that the minutes will be available as well.

NEW BUSINESS:

- *Public Hearing 2021 Code Updates*

Planner Marianne Manville-Ailles reminded everyone that looking at the density changes predates the Hedlin Ballfield rezone and they apply on a townwide basis. She summarized the staff report. The proposal is for revisions to the Municipal Code to amend the density and setback provisions and some miscellaneous code cleanup. It applies throughout the Town of La Conner and is a non-project action. The code changes were sent to the Department of Commerce for agency review. No comments were received from any State agencies. The notice of application, determination of non-significance and final determination of non-significance were sent out to complete the SEPA requirements and this hearing was also advertised in the paper.

The amendments that are proposed are updates to the residential zone to allow for increased density and reduced setbacks as requested by the Town Council, as well as a couple of housekeeping items. At a joint Town Council/Planning Commission meeting in early 2019, Council established a work program item to review opportunities for increased density and setbacks in the residential zone. The planning commission spent several meetings looking at updating the Planned Unit Residential Development code but after much discussion it became apparent that this was not the direction the planning commission wanted to go and that a much simpler approach was needed. The current proposal removes the existing two-tier system for lot sizes and reduces the lots to 4,000 square feet. La Conner only has one residential zone, and allows for multifamily development with a conditional use permit. The provisions for multifamily were similarly reduced to be proportionate with the changes that were made to the single-family provisions. Driven by input from Council, setback reductions were made to both single and multifamily uses. The density increase that was allowed for the elderly was removed since the proposed density increase applies townwide and there wasn't even a definition of what housing for the elderly was.

The housekeeping items include a section of the code pertaining to the hearing examiner. When the code was updated last year some of the permits that were the purview of the hearing examiner were changed to be administrative. This section had detailed out the duties of the hearing examiner, so that was removed and now just makes reference to the permit table for the sake of simplicity in future updates. The final change was to the lot certification process to address unplatted lots and how they can be certified.

One comment letter was received from Linda Talman which she requested to read into the record during the public comment.

Public hearing for the revisions to the La Conner Municipal Code opened at 6:58 PM. Amy McFeely said that this is a significant change across La Conner and asked what is

the vision that is driving it. She has no issue with the smaller lot sizes, but is concerned about the reduced setbacks and how that will affect livability. She also has a problem with reducing the lot size for multifamily by 25% for the same reason. Catey Ritchie said that she feels similarly and that she also wanted to know how the town decided on these numbers and what were the comparisons that were used. She would like to see what that looks like visually on the ground. CJ Ebert said that he was a planning commissioner for the city of Everett for 16 years and that density is a tough issue. La Conner has nowhere to grow but up, and design standards are very important. It's pretty hard to have a small lot and still maintain the same setbacks.

Linda Talman read her letter into the record. She feels that a residence on a 5,000 square foot lot should have setbacks that are proportionately larger than the setbacks on a 4,000 square foot lot. There is no density gain in having the same setbacks on a larger lot; it will just result in a larger house. Larger setbacks will also enable more accessory dwelling units to be built, which does give a density bonus. Multifamily structures should have the old setbacks; there is no density gain in having them right up against a neighboring house. She said that design standards are important and would like to see pictures in the code for what the lot size and setbacks would look like similar to the examples in the historic section.

Mike Ritchie said that he agreed with Katie and Amy and thanked Ebert for his input. Ritchie said that this is a very important decision to make. He fully believes in having a vision and thanked everyone for their hard work on the code changes.

Public Hearing closed at 7:13 PM.

Commissioner Bradburn said that in initially looking at the PURD, it had proved to be too complicated for achieving increased density, so the commission had chosen to do this more simply through the zoning code and permitting, and it would be up to the person approving individual permits to ensure that they comply with the code. Marianne said that nothing would preclude the commission from adding some simple design guidelines that would help address some of the public's concerns. Bradburn also reiterated that this density update was driven by the request of council.

Marianne reminded the commission that the vision of the comprehensive plan drove this density change, as the town has a limited amount of land available for any use and at the last comp plan update was barely able to meet the residential accommodation for the projected population growth over the next 20 years. At the next periodic update in 2026, the town would be unable to accommodate any more growth and the commission would have to make some difficult choices regarding density increases in order to avoid that. Addressing density was necessary in order to implement the goals of the comp plan, but this is a process, and improvements can always be made.

Commissioner Hedlin said that McFeely made a good point about the reduced setbacks. Planner Michael Davolio added that he took a look at the countywide planning policies and that the proposed density changes are consistent with them and are the next

incremental step for La Conner to take. Commissioner Hanneman said that the commission had many discussions about these changes, and this is just the beginning and that one thing that the commission was concerned about was to make the requirements fluid enough that once the permitting process started, then they could address each individual thing. The other commissioners agreed with that sentiment.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hanneman to go along with the staff recommendation to recommend to the Town Council approval of the proposed code changes. Seconded by Commissioner Dole. Motion carried 4-0.

CLOSING COMMENTS:

Planner Marianne Manville-Ailles thanked the commission for all of their hard work. The commissioners thanked her for her guidance and said they are looking forward to working with Michael Davolio.

With no further business Commissioner Dole moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:33 p.m. Seconded by Commissioner Hedlin. Motion carried unanimously.

Chair

Date