

Town of Constantia Zoning Commission

Meeting Minutes – October 24, 2023

Call to Order

Chairman Peck opened the meeting at 6:00pm

Attendees

Voting members in attendance included:

- Chairman James Peck
- Dave Antos
- Martin Godzwon
- Dan Poné
- Sandra Retajczyk
- Sandra Tuori-Bell
- Sandra Williams
- Joe Markham
- Randall West
- Terri John
- Jeff Rumble
- Brien Connolly

Guests in attendance included: Frank Tomaino (Town Supervisor), Paul Baxter, Matt Johnson, and Amy Connolly (Secretary)

Members not in attendance included:

Introduction to Zoning for the Town

Chair Peck stated that for future meetings officials from the Town of West Monroe because they recently went through this process and have advice to impart.

Matt Johnson, from the Tug Hill Commission, gave an introduction to what zoning is and does for a town. As he has been with the THC for a number of years, he has seen zoning discussed for the Town of Constantia in the past but it never moved forward. He stated that he views it as a good thing that zoning is now moving forward. The zoning process will likely take a couple of years at least and Mr. Johnson plans to be at nearly all meetings once another obligation with conflicting schedule is completed in the next couple of months. Mr. Johnson provided a handout to all members outlining the process of creating zoning law. Members were also provided packets of zoning laws from other towns. Mr. Johnson recommended an informational video on the Tug Hill YouTube channel. Members were encouraged to read through and familiarize themselves with the Town of Constantia Comprehensive Plan, especially the land use sections, as well as the Town's Land Development Law.

Mr. Johnson explained to the board a bit more about what zoning is and what makes it different from the current Land Development Law. Zoning law accomplishes three things: regulates use of land, regulates density of development, regulates where buildings and other types of development can happen within a piece of property. The current Land Development Law accomplishes two of the three items but does not regulate land uses, zoning will designate areas for specific uses. The Land Development Law should be used as a base for the zoning law but changing outdated items and primarily adding the different districts.

Mr. Peck stated that he would email links to all commission members for the Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Law documents on the Town website but would print hardcopies for anyone who would prefer one. Staff at the County Planning Department will be a valuable resource and have expressed interest in attending some Zoning Commission meetings. The County would like to see some consistency throughout the towns' zoning laws. Mr. Peck mentioned that Constantia's County Legislator indicated that some financial support for the zoning creation might be available from the county but no details were given.

Mr. Johnson stated that the County will be a great resource because once the law is completed it will need to be approved by County Planning and their involvement could make things easier. Mr. Peck asked Mr. Johnson if he had any advice. Mr. Johnson stated that the group should stick to a schedule, have a work plan for each meeting, and try to avoid tangents. He distributed a work plan example to members. Step one for members is to think about what zones they will want to have and where they would be located.

Mr. Rumble asked how the zoning law would incorporate land owners' future use plans. Mr. Johnson stated that the maps in the Comprehensive Plan give a rough idea of where things are currently located (rural, hamlet, and waterfront) and are a good place to start. Hearings can be scheduled to get input from the public. At least one public hearing will be required prior to full adoption of the law. He recommended making some progress on the law before reaching out for public input.

Mr. Peck stated that in the past the Planning Board has had little participation in various efforts but hoped that might change. If there is greater public interest a different venue may need to be used for hearings. Grandfathering of land use will need to be addressed. Residents have expressed that they like being free to do as they choose.

Mr. Johnson outlined what he envisions as the remaining steps in the process. Step 2 would be to delineate the zones identified on a map. Step 3 is to determine allowable uses for each zone. Step 4 is determining dimensional allowances. Step 5 is to review all other language in the LDL.

Mr. Peck asked members what their opinions were on why the town needs zoning. Ms. Williams stated that she is not sure that the Town does need a zoning law but wants to learn more about what the differences are between Land Development Law and Zoning. Mr. Markham stated that as a waterfront community we can attract wealthy people and he wants to allow some investment but protect residents from being pushed out, protect the community while allowing progress. Ms. Retajczyk would like to prevent exploitation, preserve the character of the community while allowing growth. Mr. Peck stated that people should be able to do what they wish on their property, within reason and cited possible pollution on Scriba Creek. Ms. John stated that zoning would further formalize the LDL by expanding it and giving it more structure. Mr. Rumble stated that there is a fine line between protection and restriction and that they will need to be careful. Discussion between Mr. Peck and Mr. Rumble regarding Code Enforcement, safety, and property values.

Mr. Peck stated that the Comprehensive Plan has a number of valuable maps to review, created with census data. The Comprehensive Plan edit was taken on prior to the announcement of Micron, it will be important to establish structure of the community. Potential siting for affordable housing and developments will need to be considered. Noted that developers have already shown some interest in different areas of the town. Mr. Rumble questioned what the point would be in restricting. Mr. Peck stated that the law can encourage development in specific areas where the infrastructure is already in place to accommodate it. Areas where multi-family homes or apartment buildings can be located vs exclusively single family homes. Mr. Johnson stated that language of the law should not be exclusionary, such as not allowing affordable housing, but should let developers know what is allowed in each area.

Mr. Poné stated that the Town currently has a height limit on buildings. Wants to talk about industry and where light vs heavy industry would be allowed, how are they defined. Mr. Markham expresses that the impacts of the industry would define them (large trucks, noise, smokestacks). Some businesses in town have noise associated with them which have upset affected neighbors. Future businesses in town will need to take this into account.

Mr. Johnson stated that members should be cautious of trying to create too many zones with different uses. Towns of Hastings and West Monroe experienced negative effects after this mistake.

Members were asked to read over supplied materials, especially the Comprehensive Plan prior to the next meeting.

Adjournment

Dan Poné moved that the meeting be adjourned, seconded by Sandra Retajczyk. Members voted unanimously to adjourn at 7:00pm

Amy Connolly

Secretary

Town of Constantia Zoning Commission

Date of Approval