

Minutes
Regular Meeting of the Planning Commission
City of Chattahoochee Hills, Georgia
March 11, 2021/6:30 pm

Call to Order

Chair Bob Simpson called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm. Present at the call to order were Bob Simpson, Patrick Johnson, Mark Prater, Jim Hancock and Jett Hattaway. Also present was Community Development Director Mike Morton and City Planner Cheryl Brooks.

Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Simpson led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Agenda

Mr. Prater made a motion to approve the agenda. Mr. Johnson seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Minutes

1. Approval of January 14, 2021 Regular Meeting Minutes

Mr. Prater made a motion to approve the January 14, 2021 minutes. Mr. Johnson seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Public Hearings

There were no public hearings.

Old Business

There was no old business.

New Business

2. Possible Foxhall Annexation discussion

Mike Morton, Community Development Director, started the discussion by stating the City has been in discussion regarding an annexation for Foxhall. Mr. Morton stated Carl Westmorland and Harrison Merrill from Foxhall will present the information.

Mr. Westmorland spoke first and started with discussing the history of Foxhall. He said that one of the reasons for trying to annex into the city was that the Douglas County development standards were more urban regarding street scape. He added that they were looking to have a rural feel which would match Chattahoochee Hills. Currently 300-350 corporate groups a year use the property.

Mr. Merrill, the property owner, added that the intention is to create a resort of resorts and that they are hoping to attract international headquarters due to the proximity to the airport. He reemphasized that the reason for annexing into the city is

to meet their objective of developing with a rural feel and not to have curbs and gutters.

Mr. Merrill stated Foxhall is approximately 1,100 acres which was originally intended for his children but ultimately decided to turn it into a resort. Mr. Merrill explained that for two years they worked with Douglas County and subsequently opened an event venue on the property. It hosts up to 150 weddings and 300-350 corporate groups a year.

Mr. Simpson stated that the project looks like a good fit for Chattahoochee Hills if done correctly and that there is not a lot of gap between Foxhall's approvals from Douglas County and our code.

Mr. Morton went over what will be requested, including an annexation, Zoning classification of HM-SD (Hamlet Special District) which would require a text amendment to allow a larger special district than the city currently allows. It will also require special administrative permits and special use permits.

Mr. Prater wanted to see the zoning for Douglas County to compare it to what they were asking for in the city. Mr. Morton stated he would provide a copy of Foxhall's Douglas County zoning.

Mr. Hattaway asked if the amenities would be open for public use or private use. Mr. Merrill replied that some of the uses such as skeet shooting, and ATV rides would be open to the public. However, there are about 15 lakes only for resort guests for fishing, field activities and field sports for resort members. Mr. Merrill also mentioned that they just finished a 6-million-dollar restaurant with meeting space and a sports bar. He said that the goal is to make the resort once complete one of the top resorts in the metro area.

Mr. Westmorland stated that they have not submitted the application and reminded the board that they will go through the normal process and are open to discussions.

Mr. Johnson asked if there was close to 70 % conservation. Mr. Merrill stated they were about 53% with fields, lakes, and slopes. Mike Morton pointed out that the city can only use the numbers on the survey and that quite a bit of land that might qualify as open space is not identified as open space on the survey.

Mr. Westmore stated he knows conservation is a significant issue and he understands that it will need to be resolved.

Mr. Johnson stated that he's concerned with the effect on other projects in the city if the city started to allow less preservation than what is required, and whether that would set a precedent.

Mr. Morton stated the applicant has a plan approved by Douglas County and that they are only seeking to build the same plan within our borders.

Mr. Prater asked what the benefit to the city would be. Mr. Merrill replied that the project fit in with Chattahoochee hills and that they have been working months to see what would and would not fit in the zoning.

Mr. Simpson stated that the project will be developed whether it is in the City or in Douglas County. It boils down to whether the city wants a say in the development or not. He added that he believes the city could work through it and it would make a revenue contribution to the city. He asked to set up a field trip at some point during the process for the planning commission members to see the property to understand the project more.

Mr. Hattaway stated he had been on the property and believed it would be a regional hub. He described the look of the place as rustic and mentioned the TDR process could help them meet the open space requirement for future development that the project could explore that option.

Mr. Johnson asked whether there had been discussion about TDRs. He pointed out that TDRs could offset the preservation percentage gap. Mr. Merrill stated their development densities do not require them to buy TDRs. Mr. Morton then went over entitlements sought by Foxhall.

3. Helicopter/airstrip regulation

Mr. Morton stated Ms. Brooks and himself conducted research on helicopters and airstrip regulations. Mr. Morton mentioned that the discussion at the city council retreat looked at four types of use.

Ms. Brooks went over the research and suggested the City think about supplemental standards for helicopters.

Patrick Johnson inquired how this became a topic of discussion. Mr. Morton said it started with a new property owner on Jones Ferry Road entering their property by helicopter. Some citizens grew concerned and asked about city regulation of helicopters. This lead to research into potential regulatory language because the city currently does not do much regulation of helicopters and airstrips.

Mr. Prater asked if we know how far off the property line the helicopter was from the neighbor?

Mike Morton stated there actually was no landing area constructed there.

-No action was necessary on this item.

These minutes are provided as a convenience and service to the public, media, and staff. It is not the intent to transcribe proceedings verbatim. Any reproduction of this summary must include this notice. Public comments are noted and heard by the Commission, but not quoted. This is an official record of the City of Chattahoochee Hills Planning Commission Meeting proceedings.

4. Planning Commission calendar

Mr. Morton went over the calendar dates for the rest for the rest of the year.

Mr. Johnson made a motion to recommend approval of the planning commission calendar. Mr. Hattaway seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Staff Reports

Mr. Morton mentioned updates on the following items:

- 1. Zoning Update- Mr. Morton stated he was ready to schedule city council one on one meetings before the final draft is released. He added that there were some questions the consultant wanted to ask the council first. He said he expected to introduce the draft following the meetings.*
- 2. Comprehensive Plan- The first steering committee meeting will be March 23, 2021 at noon.*

Adjourn Meeting

Mr. Prater made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Hancock seconded. During discussion Mike Morton asked Mr. Hancock if this would be his last meeting to which Mr. Hancock replied yes. Everyone thanked Jim for his service on the board. Motion carried unanimously. Meeting ended at 7:45 pm.

Approved this 13th day of May, 2021.

Bob Simpson, Chairman

Attest:

Dana Wicher, City Clerk