

UNAPPROVED MINUTES
PLANNING COMMISSION

January 13, 2016

A regular meeting of the Planning Commission of the City of Salem, Virginia, was held in Council Chambers, City Hall, 114 North Broad Street, at 7:00 p.m., on January 13, 2016, there being present all the members of said Commission, to wit: Vicki G. Daulton, Bruce N. Thomasson, Jimmy W. Robertson, Samuel R. Carter, III, and Denise P. King with Vicki G. Daulton, Chair, presiding; together with James E. Taliaferro, II, Assistant City Manager and Executive Secretary, ex officio member of said Commission; William L. Simpson, Jr., Assistant City Engineer; Benjamin W. Tripp, Planner; Judy L. Hough, Planner; Mary Ellen Wines, Zoning Administrator; and William C. Maxwell, Assistant City Attorney; and the following business was transacted:

The December 16, 2015, work session and regular meeting minutes were approved as written.

In re: Hold public hearing to consider the request of H2V Properties LLC, property owner, for rezoning the property located at 201 West Main Street (Tax Map #122-1-5) from RSF Residential Single Family District to DBD Downtown Business District

The Executive Secretary reported that this date and time had been set to hold a public hearing to consider the request of H2V Properties LLC, property owner, for rezoning the properties located at 201 West Main Street (Tax Map #122-1-5) from RSF Residential Single Family District to DBD Downtown Business District; and

WHEREAS, the Executive Secretary further reported that notice of such hearing had been published in the December 31, 2015, and January 7, 2016, issues of the Salem Times Register; and

WHEREAS, staff noted the following: the subject property consists of one parcel located at the northwest corner of the intersection of Lewis Avenue and West Main Street; the total acreage is approximately .3 acres, and the property is occupied by a one-story vacant office building; the applicant states that he and his partner would like to turn the building into a co-working office space, similar to a co-lab; this concept involves a shared office environment that is used by independent individuals, often with their own business; the users benefit from proximity to other creative individuals and their ideas and hopefully this results in synergy that fosters entrepreneurship; the Zoning Administrator has determined that this activity is

consistent with the "Office" use type, which is a by-right use in DBD; the Future Land Use Map designates this property's future use as "Downtown"; and a portion of this property lies within the Floodway boundary; and

WHEREAS, Justin vanBlaricom, property owner, appeared before the Commission explaining the rezoning request; he presented the Commission with a handout for his presentation of the property and also of the second item on the agenda; he stated the building shown on the handout is clearly not a single family residential building, which is the current zoning; the building was built and used as office space as long as he can remember; he recently purchased the building and found out that zoning was single family and was grandfathered for business use; he feels the DBD Downtown Business District zoning is a more fitting description, and it is the future land use designation for this area; further, it is the last building in downtown Salem; the proposed use is to make it much like the Grandin Co-Lab, a co-working space; he noted that he was born in Salem, grew up in Roanoke and went to Roanoke College; he believes that a lot of young people from the area who go to Roanoke College move away for a couple of years, much like he did; he was gone for 10 or 11 years and just recently moved back to Roanoke; he thinks that there is a good opportunity to keep some of the Roanoke College students in town, if they can have a place to operate a business while they are in college; he also thinks the facility will work well for people who work out of their homes that do not have office space; his wife worked from home for years and with three children around, it is a little tough to get work done; these type of co-working environments allow people to have office space and a mailing address without the expense of having to rent a huge space; he further discussed the handout showing the exterior and interior concepts; they are working with the Building Official to make sure they meet the criteria with regards to renovating; part of the building is in the floodway so there are restrictions as far as how much can be done to renovate it; they are working to make sure that they stay within the 50% of the assessed value of the building; and he further discussed the renovations and repairs to the building; another reason for the rezoning is that there is not a lot of parking on the property; the parking is in the back, and there are eight or nine spaces maybe; in this type of establishment as opposed to normal office space the majority of the people are using public transportation, bikes, and walking from the neighborhood in order to operate their business; further, they are not all there during normal business hours rather at different times of the day; so, the parking should not be an issue with a lot of people from Roanoke College, etc., who will come by bike or walk; he has spoken to Roanoke College and they have their center for entrepreneurship coming up; one of the restrictions at Roanoke College is that students cannot operate a business on campus; he expects that this would also apply at most public and private universities; so the students will learn and have their programs, etc. at that facility, but they will not be able to operate their

businesses so they will send them to this facility and hopefully some

of them will stay in town after school and grow the business to where they need to move it other properties in Salem; and

WHEREAS, Vice Chair Thomasson noted what he likes about this is that it keeps the young people here and hopefully they will cultivate a business that is successful and keeps them in the valley; Mr. vanBlaricom noted he absolutely agreed with him; and

WHEREAS, Commissioner King asked if the front entrance would be in the current location, and Mr. vanBlaricom noted that it would be at the same location; he further elaborated the entrances to the building; and

WHEREAS, Chair Daulton noted as opposed to a seasoned business owner that needs to have space is he hoping to attract more young people just starting a business; Mr. vanBlaricom noted he is hoping to have a good mix of both; he has talked with Jim Flowers of VT KnowledgeWorks, a business incubator in the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center, about having some programs for entrepreneurs to start up their business; he has also talked to Ariel Lev at the Grandin Co-Lab, and a lot of their business comes from people who were already operating a business but were working from their home; so he wants to have a place where they can also incorporate the younger people because a lot of what these co-working spaces drive is working together; this way the older established business owners can kind of mentor the younger ones; this is the concept of how the facility will work; he believes that it will work well in Salem as Salem is a very loyal place; he believes if the community can get behind it, then it will be a good way to keep some of the youth and entrepreneurs in town; and

WHEREAS, Vice Chair Thomasson noted with the synergy between creative people and legal people, we never know what can happen; and

WHEREAS, Chair Daulton asked how many people is he hoping to have at the facility – what would be the capacity; Mr. vanBlaricom noted that there are three different classes; there will be 5 or 6 private offices depending on what they do with one of those spaces; most of the revenue from an establishment like this comes from desk rentals so they will have a room with this type of setup; it will max out with probably 10 to 12 desk rentals; the third class will be memberships; he believes that it will be hard to get 30 memberships; he further discussed the setup of the facility, special events, and the number of people he might expect to be in the facility at one time; and

WHEREAS, Commissioner King noted that parking was a concern for her even though there is parking on Lewis Avenue; she stated that while she was there at the property she pulled around to the back of the building; she is concerned about the air conditioning units for the Glen Mary Apartments which are located adjacent to the parking for the building; she noted that it would be very easy to hit the units while trying to back up in the parking lot; Mr. vanBlaricom noted that he thinks that a large part of the parking area should be handicapped parking as it would not be fair for them to have to park on the street; he thinks the spaces will be limited; he further noted that the apartments are for sale or being sold so he will work with the new owners to make sure their property is protected as well; and

WHEREAS, Commissioner Robertson asked if there would be scheduling of time for the various parts of the building; Mr. vanBlaricom noted that this would only be done for the conference rooms; he noted with the memberships in this type of facility, there is no long term contracts; they will only have memberships up to the amount of desks they have in the facility; and then there will be a standard memberships which will be for the room that is like a lounge-type business environment; he noted that room is where a lot of the work gets done in this type of facility; further, there rarely are that many people who would be there at the same time; he cannot imagine having more than 30 people in the building at one time; Commissioner Robertson asked if a person rents a desk, then that is literally their desk until they decide to give it up, is that correct, and Mr. vanBlaricom noted this was correct;

WHEREAS, Commissioner Robertson asked if the area is locked, and Mr. vanBlaricom noted that the area is not locked but the desks do have locks; Mr. vanBlaricom further discussed security for the facility, etc.; and

WHEREAS, Chair Daulton asked if they would be installing telephones on the desks, and Mr. vanBlaricom noted that they are working on the phone systems; the private offices will have phone systems, but a lot of the young entrepreneurs have Skype and things such as this where they use a headset attached to their computers so there is not a real need for the infrastructure of phone systems; Vice Chair Thomasson noted they also have cell phones which have taken over the land lines; Mr. vanBlaricom noted that they will have access to printing, etc. on site; further, they will have coffee there as well, but the goal is not to compete with any local businesses in this regards; and

WHEREAS, Chair Daulton noted it appears there are several areas with printers or copy

machines set up, and Mr. vanBlaricom noted that this was correct; he wants it to be a modern

business environment, and he further discussed the printing, etc., and noted they are still working out the details; and

WHEREAS, Commissioner King noted that it is a neat idea, and it has worked really well in other cities; and

WHEREAS, no other person(s) appeared related to said request; and

ON MOTION MADE BY COMMISSIONER KING, SECONDED BY VICE CHAIR THOMASSON, AND DULY CARRIED, the Planning Commission of the City of Salem doth recommend to the Council of the City of Salem that the request of H2V Properties, LLC, property owner, for rezoning the property located at 201 West Main Street (Tax Map #122-1-5) from RSF Residential Single Family District to DBD Downtown Business District be approved – the roll call vote: all aye.

In re: Hold public hearing to consider the request of PLM Ventures LLC, property owner, for rezoning the property located at 1037 East Riverside Drive (Tax Map #248-4-2) from TBD Transitional Business District to HBD Highway Business District

The Executive Secretary reported that this date and time had been set to hold a public hearing to consider the request of PLM Ventures LLC, property owner, for rezoning the property located at 1037 East Riverside Drive (Tax Map #248-4-2) from TBD Transitional Business District to HBD Highway Business District; and

WHEREAS, the Executive Secretary further reported that notice of such hearing had been published in the December 31, 2015, and January 7, 2016, issues of the Salem Times Register; and

WHEREAS, staff noted the following: the subject property consists of a single parcel located at the intersection of East Riverside Drive and Apperson Drive; the property is adjacent to the Roanoke River Greenway and is currently vacant; across Riverside Drive is Aqua Pros, a pools, hot tubs and hearth business, and across Apperson Drive is a vacant restaurant; this request is to rezone the .675 acre parcel from TBD Transitional Business District to HBD Highway Business District; the new property owner would like to use the property to increase

usage of the greenway in Salem; he is proposing to make the building into a food truck dining room for patrons to eat as well as adding outdoor dining space; the facility also would be rented for paint nights/birthday parties/exercise classes on the greenway; under the current zoning designation, assembly halls are permitted with the approval of a Special Exception Permit; in the HBD zoning, assembly halls are permitted by right so the property owner would like to rezone the property; and

WHEREAS, Justin vanBlaricom, property owner, appeared before the Commission explaining the rezoning request; he noted that the property is located at the corner of East Riverside Drive and Apperson, and there is a metal shed which was used for a fruit stand for years and next door was an insurance office; he stated it was his daughter's idea to purchase the property so they bought it and have tried to come up with a reason to have it because it needed a lot of work; the floors and walls were all rotten from flooding in the past; they have removed the walls and floors and put on a new roof; he worked with Todd Sutphin, Building Official, again on what they could do to fix it up because the property is in the floodway also; so the idea they came up with for the property was that his family wanted a place in Salem where they could hang out; the greenway is a great public investment, and he read a study that was done a couple years ago which noted the greenway in Roanoke City had 120,000 users in that year and the greenway in Salem near Moyer Park had 77,000 users, he believes; this is pretty impressive considering that the greenway in Roanoke City goes by Rivers Edge and all those front facing properties; the greenway in Salem does not have a lot of those front facing properties, and this is one of the two or three properties remaining which have not been knocked down; so he wanted to save the building first of all so that it would not be torn down; obviously, it is not a charitable thing so they have talked about trying to make money with the property by having a food truck dining room; this idea came when he was eating at a food truck down in Roanoke City near the hospital; he could not hear the communication with the person he trying to order from because of the generators running; and then when he went to eat his food in the parking lot he was sweating and miserable; there are a lot of food trucks in the area now, and a lot of them park in Salem to get their food prepped, etc.; so he thought it would be great use for the food trucks to come to the property and they would be able to plug in and not have the loud generators running; with the property being right on the greenway, people could go for a walk on the greenway on their lunch break, and then have a climate controlled place to eat their food; in the winter, the trucks do not do a lot of business because of the weather, but if there is a place where people can go that is heated, it would make it more convenient; further, there are no parking requirements for patrons of the food trucks, and the health inspectors inspect the food trucks so this is a way to have a different restaurant every day of the week in one place; then the people who come to the food trucks can go for a walk and use

the greenway; they also have expanded this into wanting to have a place they could rent out for birthday parties, exercise classes, yoga classes, etc., and it makes a lot of sense where it is located; it will be concrete floor inside the building, so if does flood, it just be a matter of sweeping it out; further, there will be a patio area outside with steps down to the greenway; he noted that the Commission has the copies of the renderings of this building which he passed out earlier; with regards to the metal building, he has a tenant who would like to open up a produce stand there; so, people would be able to come, eat at the food truck, get their organic fruits and vegetables and then everyone is happy; and

WHEREAS, Commissioner King asked where he planned to put the parking; Mr. vanBlaricom noted from his understanding that he would need nine spaces due to the fact that a lot of people would be parking in other areas for the greenway and walking to this location; he noted that he can get nine spaces in the existing gravel parking located on the property but he cannot add more gravel; but a lot of the traffic will be coming from the greenway so it is not like he will need parking like a restaurant would need; and

WHEREAS, Chair Daulton asked if there is a reason why he cannot add more gravel, and Mary Ellen Wines noted that any new parking has to be paved; Mr. vanBlaricom noted there are also other regulations with regards to the floodway, i.e. FEMA rules, etc.; the easier decision was to see how many spaces they could get in the existing area; he wants to have enough parking and does not want to overwhelm it with cars so that people cannot see what is going on; he believes that most of the traffic will come from the greenway; hopefully it will be a destination that people will park in some of the public spaces that are already there, as well as the park right up the street, and then walk to his property; and

WHEREAS, Commissioner King noted it looked like there was only one bathroom in the drawing; she asked if there was only going to be one restroom; Mr. vanBlaricom noted that there would only be the one; he further noted that he has already had the building plans approved by the Building Official; because the building is only assessed at \$28,000, he has half of this amount that he can spend on improvements and adding another bathroom is an improvement and not a repair; to add another bathroom would take a substantial portion of the overall budget he has to put into getting the building open; and

WHEREAS, Chair Daulton asked if he was thinking different food trucks every day, and Mr. vanBlaricom noted that this correct; he further noted it would be like a different restaurant every day; Chair Daulton asked if it would be only one truck per day, and Mr. vanBlaricom noted that initially it would probably one per day unless there is a reciprocal agreement

between the food trucks; because he does not want people to compete against each other for the customers; he noted if there is an agreement, then there is possibly room for two trucks; and

WHEREAS, Commissioner Robertson noted the money that he has spent so far, but where will the income come from; will there be a rental fee for each vending truck that comes to the property; Mr. vanBlaricom noted it is a learning process for him; he would like to do a percentage of sales so it incentivizes vendors to come and try it out, but food trucks are a cash business so he would have to be fairly trusting, and this trust is built over time and not given overnight; so, it will probably start as a flat fee per a four hour block, a lunch block or a dinner block, and then it will transition to a percentage of sales once the trust is built up; he will also have income from the produce stand, vending and the facility rental; and

WHEREAS, Commissioner Robertson noted that he admires his opportunist vision, which is very impressive; he assumes the next thing if the trucks do well that he might be in that business, also; Mr. vanBlaricom laughed and noted that he does not have a desire to run a food truck; and

WHEREAS, no other person(s) appeared related to said request; and

ON MOTION MADE BY COMMISSIONER ROBERTSON, SECONDED BY VICE CHAIR THOMASSON, AND DULY CARRIED, the Planning Commission of the City of Salem doth recommend to the Council of the City of Salem that the request of PLM Ventures LLC, property owner, for rezoning the property located at 1037 East Riverside Drive (Tax Map #248-4-2) from TBD Transitional Business District to HBD Highway Business District be approved – the roll call vote: all aye.

There being no further business to come before the Commission, the same on motion adjourned at 7:27 p.m.

Executive Secretary

Chair