

**MINUTES OF THE ST. MARY'S COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
CHESAPEAKE BUILDING * LEONARDTOWN, MARYLAND
Monday, December 10, 2012**

Members present were Howard Thompson, Chairman; Shelby Guazzo, Patricia Robrecht, Susan McNeill, Merl Evans, Martin Siebert, and Hal Willard. Department of Land Use & Growth Management (LUGM) staff present were Phil Shire, Director; Bob Bowles, Planner IV; Yvonne Chaillet, Zoning Administrator and Jada Stuckert, Recording Secretary. Deputy County Attorney David Weiskopf was also present.

The Chair called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES – The minutes of November 26, 2012 were approved as amended.

PUBLIC HEARING

Floor Area Ratio: In Chapter 32, "Property Development Standards," Schedule 32.2, "Modifications to Development Standards," modify the methods for achieving an increase in floor area ratio by exempting public and semi-public uses from complying with this regulation.

Ms. Chaillet indicated the Planning Commission held its public hearing on November 26, 2012. Mr. Shire stated subsequent to discussion the hearing was opened to public testimony, hearing none, the Planning commission directed staff to hold the hearing open until the next meeting on December 10, 2012 and return with answers to several questions raised by Planning Commission members.

Mr. Evans asked for more time to draft this amendment to make it clearer. Mr. Shire indicated staff could arrange a work session.

Chairman Thompson opened the hearing to public comment.

Ken Crouse of Crouse Engineering representing Faith Bible Church

Mr. Crouse explained that churches are getting bigger as their congregation grows therefore they need to expand their buildings. Mr. Crouse stated other jurisdictions have exemptions for institutional uses such as churches, private school, hospitals or uses described as responding to growth.

James Wickham, Pastor for Mechanicsville Church

Mr. Wickham explained that churches receive all their funding from donations therefore when it comes time to expand every penny counts. Mr. Wickham stated an amendment to the Ordinance to ease the Floor Area Ratio regulations is necessary or churches and fire departments to expand.

John Murdoch, member of Faith Bible Church

Mr. Murdoch stated when our numbers began to grow we began holding two services, and then three and each one was packed. Mr. Murdoch stated this is when we decided it was time to expand the size of the church. Mr. Murdoch stated churches contribute a lot back to the community.

Michelle Woods

Ms. Woods stated she does not understand why the Planning Commission is opposed to non-profits expanding. Ms. Woods stated non-profits contribute so much to the community and those in need. Ms. Woods stated if non-profits cannot expand they cannot help more people in need within the community.

Ken Crouse

Mr. Crouse clarified his testimony stating in every case where they had exemptions there was a caveat for TDR exemptions agreements. This way if the non-profit was sold or changed hands they would have to purchase the TDRs.

Chairman Thompson asked the crowd who is in favor of the text amendment. For the record the vast majority of the crowd raised their hand in favor of the text amendment.

Mr. Evans made a motion to close the hearing to public comment, leave the record open for 10 days to receive written comments and to table the decision to a later date in lieu of a pending work session and Ms. McNeill seconded. The motion passed by a 7-0 vote.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. Evans commented on the New Market Park and Ride new developments.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Jada Stuckert
Recording Secretary

Approved in open session: January 14, 2013

Howard Thompson
Chairman