

Toccoa Planning Commission (TPC) Regular Meeting
Thursday, March 17, 2022

The TPC held a regular meeting on Thursday, March 17, 2022 at 5:00 P.M. in the Second Floor Commission Room of Toccoa City Hall. The following were in attendance: Chairman Suzy Bellamy, Vice-Chairman Billie Thompson, Commissioner Angie Garland, Commissioner Tara Simmons, Commissioner Josh Rickman, Mrs. Connie Tabor, and Mr. Christian Hamilton. There were no absences.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Garland and seconded by Commissioner Simmons, the February 17, 2022 Regular Meeting Minutes were unanimously approved. Upon a motion by Vice-Chairman Thompson and seconded by Commissioner Rickman, the March 17, 2022 Regular Meeting Agenda was unanimously approved.

Reports

- 1) N/A

I. Old Business

- A. N/A

II. New Business

A. Blackwhit Partners, LLC for Property located along Addington Drive; Tax Map T37, Parcel Numbers 072 & 072A.

Mrs. Tabor stated that Applicant, Blackwhit Partners, LLC was requesting two zoning changes and a variance to the subdivision ordinance. She reviewed each item concurrently. Mrs. Tabor began by stating that the first request was for a rezoning of the property along Addington Drive (approximately 13.372 acres), Tax Map T37, Parcel Numbers 072 and 072A, Tract 1 and Tract 2, from *R-IA: Single-Family Residential District: Low Density* to *R-IB: Single-Family Residential District*. The second request was for a reduction in the minimum lot width from 80 feet to 65 feet for the new proposed Addington Knoll subdivision. The final request was for a subdivision ordinance variance request (as it relates to the Addington Knoll Subdivision) for a reduction in the requirement of the street Right-of-Way (ROW) of the new streets proposed as part of this project from 60 feet to 50 feet pending a full subdivision review and approval at a later date. Mrs. Tabor added that, for the purpose of the TPC meeting, these three (3) items would be voted on simultaneously at the end of the meeting. She elaborated on each item individually.

- i. **Rezoning Request: R-IA: Single-Family Residential District: Low Density to R-IB: Single-Family Residential District.** Mrs. Tabor stated that the definition of rezoning is “a change in the governmental classification and permitted uses of an area or piece of real estate.” She stated that the current zoning classification of R-IA allows for up to 4 homes per acre, with 10,000 square feet lots per home per acre. A change in the zoning classification to R-IB would allow for up to 5 homes per acre, with 8,000 square feet lots per home per acre. The applicant would like to utilize the property for the construction of a residential subdivision for a total of 44 homes. The proposed subdivision would feature detached single-family residential homes. Mrs. Tabor stated that subdivisions are allowed in R-IA and R-IB zoning designations, and thus, the applicant could construct a subdivision at this location and build up to 4 homes per lot, with the current zoning that is in place, pending a subdivision approval.
- ii. **Zoning Variance Request: Reduction in the Minimum Lot Width from 80 Feet to 65 Feet for the Proposed Streets.** Mrs. Tabor stated that the zoning variance request was for a reduction in the minimum lot width from 80 feet to 65 feet for the new proposed streets of Addington Knoll Subdivision. She added that the definition of a zoning variance is “the relaxation of the terms of zoning where such a relaxation will not be contrary to the public interest and where, owing to conditions peculiar to the property and not the result of actions of the applicant, an enforcement of the ordinance would result in hardship.” She stated that, for the sake of comparison, the Ironwood Subdivision (located at Hayes and East Doyle Street) is 80’ lot width; however there are older neighborhoods that have homes with lot widths of 65’ or less. Examples include East Doyle Street, Sage Street, Schaefer Court, Mitchell Street, Walnut Street, Savannah Street, Pauline Street, and Emily Street.

- iii. **Subdivision Ordinance Variance Request for a Reduction in the Requirement of the Street Right-of-Way (ROW) from 60 Feet to 50 Feet, Pending a Full Subdivision Review and Approval at a Later Date.** Mrs. Tabor stated that the applicant was requesting a reduction in the requirement of the street ROW of the new streets proposed as part of this project from 60' to 50', pending a full subdivision review and approval at a later date. She added that there are two subdivisions in the city with a ROW of 60': Ayers Creek and Quail Forest. She said that examples of streets with ROW widths less than required include: Cross Creek (50'), Addington Drive (40') until the curve (30'), Addington Court (40'), Pine Valley (40' – 50'), Wesley Circle (50'), Clearview (40'), Harris (40'), Orlando Drive (40'), East Doyle (40'), Ola (50'), Louise (40'), Skyline Drive (50'), Thomas (30'), Charles (30'), Nancy Drive (30'), and Cedar Lane (50').

Next, Mrs. Tabor provided a brief summary of the type of home that would be built in the subdivision, as well as infrastructure. She stated that homes would be approximately 2,000-2,500 square feet with a 2-car garage. Sale prices would range from \$290,000 to \$320,000. There would be 5-8 different home plans with 3-4 elevations per plan. The exterior materials would include a mix of brick, stone, siding, shake, and board and batten. Homes would be for sale – not for rent. There would be no impact on the existing city's utility system. The developer would install curb and gutter. The existing street condition of Addington Drive is fair. According to Police Chief Mize, there have been 8 accidents at Addington and Big A Road over the past 2 years. There are three (3) other subdivisions in the city limits zoned R-IB: *Single-Family Residential District*.

Mrs. Tabor added that she had received an email from neighborhood residents, Pat and Bob Defenbaugh. She read the email: "It would drastically change the character and environment of the present neighborhood; it would create traffic problems on Addington Drive; it would endanger small children who have recently moved into the neighborhood; it would significantly lower their present property values." Mrs. Tabor also said that the planning department staff had received seven phone calls and one in-person visit regarding the development.

Chairman Bellamy asked if anyone representing the developer was available to speak. **Mr. David Elder, site engineer, business address of 123 Bear Creek Lane, Bogart, GA 30622**, of Red Rock Design, spoke. He stated that Red Rock Design had worked with Blackwhit Partners for a while. The property is 14.37 acres, and the current density is four (4) units per acre. He said that the proposed zoning would allow for five (5) units per acre. According to Mr. Elder, the density of the plan would actually cover 3.14 lots per acre, less than what is currently allowed. The narrower lots would allow for clustered development, which, in turn, allows for less road frontage and infrastructure maintenance. The units would be pulled into the center. Mr. Elder added that this is typical of a subdivision that utilizes sewer. He stated that the setback designed for the plan would allow for a conventional backyard (more of a rectangular lot). Mr. Elder added that 33% of the lots meet the R-IA lot size of 10,000 square feet. He stated that the requested reduction from a 60' ROW to a 50' ROW would allow for a greater buffer between the current homes in the neighborhood and the proposed homes. As the ROW off of Big A Road is only 40', the development would actually be giving another 5' ROW to allow for a 45' ROW off of Addington Drive. **Mr. Nat Ackerman, representing the owners, living at 6030 Tamarack Court, Alpharetta, GA 30005**, stated that this is a great opportunity and that it is his goal to invest in a "top-notch" community. The goal would be to maximize both profits and quality, with a skew toward quality. He stated that there is a need for growth in Toccoa, and that Addington Knoll will support this effort. He stated that the subdivision would also support the city through tax revenue and usage of natural gas. The homes would be stick-built onsite. There would be no manufactured homes placed there. The price point would be in the high \$200,000s to start. There would be a mandatory HOA to support maintenance of the subdivision. The developer would install curb and gutter and a full storm system. Homes would range from 2,000 square feet to 2,500 square feet. He also stated that they were looking at 44 homes (3.14 homes per acre). The higher density would not be new in Toccoa, as there are "hundreds" of homes on ¼ acre lots currently in the city.

Chairman Bellamy asked if any members of the audience had questions of the developer:

- i. **Mr. Dan Solla, living at 490 Addington Drive, Toccoa, GA 30577**, asked if the developer understood the name of the subdivision, as he had called it "Addison Drive" twice during his presentation.
- ii. **Mr. Ray LeCroy, living at 112 Nancy Street, Toccoa, GA 30577**, stated that there is a 3" water pipe on the property and wanted to know where the storm water would go. Mr. Elder responded that the subdivision will utilize best practices for storm water retention in accordance with state guidelines.
- iii. **Ms. Eulaine Daves, living at 585 Addington Drive, Toccoa, GA 30577**, asked if the homes would be built individually or all together. Mr. Ackerman stated that they would construct 4-5 homes initially. All 44 homes would not be built together. Ms. Daves asked if the homes would be sold before additional homes were built. Mr. Ackerman responded that this would not necessarily be the case.
- iv. **Mr. Bob Defenbaugh, living at 313 Addington Drive, Toccoa, GA 30577**, asked why the developers were not staying with the R-IA designation. Mr. Ackerman stated that this would not make financial sense. Mr. Defenbaugh asked what would happen to Addington Drive. Would it be widened? Mr. Elder stated that there is no need for this, as travel lanes are built according to city standards.
- v. **Mr. Lenny Cannon, living at 391 Addington Drive, Toccoa, GA 30577**, asked if any traffic feasibility study had been completed for the property. Mr. Ackerman stated that a traffic study had not been completed. Since the project was in the initial phases, additional work would begin after approval.
- vi. **Mr. Greg McFarlin, living at 420 Lawhouse Road, Toccoa, GA 30577**, stated that he is a county planning commissioner and would approve this project if it were in the county. He asked if any local subcontractors would be utilized. Mr. Ackerman stated that he hoped to work with both local subcontractors and the City of Toccoa.
- vii. **Mr. Richard Santiago, living at 116 Brookstone Drive, Toccoa, GA 30577**, wondered why the developer requested a rezoning to R-IB if the density of design would be 3.14 homes per acre, which would be allowed under the current zoning. Mr. Elder stated that the zoning classification change would be to allow for a lot change reduction from 10,000 square feet to 8,000 square feet.
- viii. **Ms. Tonya Hopper, living at 62 Addington Court, Toccoa, GA 30577**, asked if the land is developed and the builder comes, what would stop the builder from building homes at the city minimum requirement of 960 square feet. Mr. Ackerman stated that this would happen because of HOA regulations and the need to make money for the project.
- ix. **Mr. Myron McClain, living at 26 Thomas Street, Toccoa, GA 30577**, stated that the problem is with the change in neighborhood. He asked if a Georgia Department of Transportation study had been completed. Mr. Ackerman responded that this would be a question for the city. He also had storm water concerns.
- x. **Mr. Joel Strickland, living at 11 Addington Court, Toccoa, GA 30577**, asked why the plan was for 44 homes on the property and not a lower amount (perhaps 22). Mr. Ackerman stated this is because businesses must make money and the project needs to be economically feasible.
- xi. **Commissioner Garland** asked if the proposed HOA would meet federal guidelines. Mr. Ackerman stated that the project would not be completed without a proper HOA being implemented.
- xii. **Commissioner Simmons** further Commissioner Garland's question and asked if the new Quail Forest Subdivision had an HOA since Mr. Ackerman assisted with its purchase. Mr. Ackerman responded that an HOA was being put in place onsite.
- xiii. **Mr. Herman King, living at 358 Skyline Drive, Toccoa, GA 30577**, asked if the property had been purchased. Mr. Ackerman stated that it is under contract.
- xiv. **Mrs. Marcia McClain, living at 26 Thomas Street, Toccoa, GA 30577**, asked if trees would remain on site. Mr. Ackerman stated that the central section of the subdivision would be cleared, but the goal was to retain as many peripheral trees as possible.

With no further questions, Chairman Bellamy asked if any in the audience had any public comments in favor of or in opposition to the development:

- i. **Mr. Bill Good, owner of the property at 479 Addington Drive, Toccoa, GA 30577**, stated that he is neither for nor against the subdivision. He asked the Planning Commission to consider that they not make a final decision at the meeting. Chairman Bellamy responded that the final decision would fall at a later meeting of the Toccoa City Commission.
- ii. **Mr. Dan Solla, living at 490 Addington Drive, Toccoa, GA 30577**, stated that he had moved from Flowery Branch to Toccoa as a result of overdevelopment and traffic. He stated that he had moved specifically to Addington Drive to live in a beautiful, quiet neighborhood. He was concerned about the traffic in and out of the neighborhood and did not believe that the subdivision would suit the community.
- iii. **Mr. Travis Dobbs, living at 614 Addington Drive, Toccoa, GA 30577**, stated that he was not opposed to growth, but was opposed to growth in Addington Drive. He stated that the creation of the subdivision would lower property values and increase safety concerns. He added that the community needed to consider strategic growth. He stated that, like Mr. Solla, he had also moved from Flowery Branch. He asked the Commission to consider having an impact study completed. He suggested that property along the Toccoa Bypass would be much more suited to the creation of a subdivision.
- iv. **Ms. Yanielly Pressley, living at 97 Beechwood Boulevard, Toccoa, GA 30577**, stated that she had also moved from Atlanta in response to developments such as the proposed subdivision. She stated that traffic problems would abound and asked Commissioners to not lower community standards for the creation of this subdivision.
- v. **Mr. Lenny Cannon, living at 391 Addington Drive, Toccoa, GA 30577**, stated that all residents currently have to make a right turn into Quality Foods to leave the neighborhood at a stoplight. He stated that Quality Foods could close that entryway off at any point, and there would be no access to the street from the light. He stated that a feasibility study needed to be completed and what detriment it would have on their neighborhood.
- vi. **Mr. Bob Troup, living at 164 Pine Valley Drive, Toccoa, GA 30577**, stated that he is a real estate agent and has lived in Toccoa for close to 90 years. He added that he had sympathies with the neighborhood, but that this is a "crisis point" for Toccoa-Stephens County, and that if the community does not grow, it won't be able to keep up. He stated that housing is needed badly in Toccoa.
- vii. **Mr. Chris Addington, living at 2215 Earls Bridge Road, Easley, SC 29640**, stated that he is representing one of the parcels for sale, and that his family had lived in Toccoa for many years. He stated that, for a while, the property had been considered for commercial purposes, but it was his goal to see residential houses onsite.
- viii. **Mrs. Eulaine Daves, living at 585 Addington Drive, Toccoa, GA 30577**, stated that she lived on the cul-de-sac on Addington Drive and owned 4 acres. She stated that she was concerned with a density of 44 homes. She said that a traffic light was needed at the end of Addington Drive. She added that she agreed with Mr. Defenbaugh's email and that she was "all for growth."
- ix. **Ms. June Ponder, living at 100 Honeybee Lane, Seneca, SC 29678**, stated that she represented one of the parcels for sale. She said that she grew up on Addington Drive and her mother had always dreamed of developing that property. She stated that the plan for Addington Knoll was far better than anything her mother had ever considered. She added that the subdivision was in the best interest of the neighborhood and that houses and jobs were needed in Toccoa.
- x. **Mrs. Julie Paysen, living at 37 Boulevard, Toccoa, GA 30577**, stated that there are not individuals "knocking down doors" to build subdivisions in Toccoa. Most businesses in the community are faced with a housing challenge, and that "progress is progress." She added that these homes are desperately needed.
- xi. **Mr. Jason Swiney, living at 10 Addington Court, Toccoa, GA 30577**, addressed his concerns for traffic. He stated that the residents of Addington Drive aren't against strategic growth, and that the community does need

additional homes. He stated that the design for Addington Knoll is that of a “formula neighborhood” to generate profit. He asked if there was any way to install another traffic light at the entrance to Addington Drive.

- xii. **Ms. Kellie Austin, living at 137 Hayes Street, Toccoa, GA 30577.** She stated her support for the development. She said that if the 44 homes were built; then an increase in property values should be realized in the Addington Drive neighborhood. She stated there is no housing available in Toccoa.

Chairman Bellamy allowed Mr. Ackerman to address any concerns that had been brought up regarding the public portion of the meeting:

- i. Mr. Ackerman stated that declarations in a deed can encumber lots, and that these declarations can address minimum square footage requirements. He added that he has ties to the community and a quality builder would be selected. He stated that the subdivision would help bring new growth to the community. He said that he would be investing millions of dollars into Toccoa. There is a housing need to build homes in a mid-range sale price in Toccoa.

Commissioner Garland stated that she was concerned about Toccoa and asked if there was a possibility of connecting this subdivision to Skyline Drive. Mr. Ackerman stated that they had discussed this, and there did not seem to be any interest. Commissioner Simmons stated that she also had concerns, but that the community needs growth. With this, Commissioner Simmons made a motion to table the request for the rezoning and two variances until a traffic impact study and an environmental impact study could be completed. Vice-Chairman Thompson seconded the motion. It passed unanimously. The motion was made at 6:58pm.

III. Other Business

A. N/A

There being no further business, upon a motion made by Commissioner Simmons and seconded by Vice-Chairman Thompson, the Regular Meeting of the TPC was unanimously adjourned at 6:59 pm.

Chairman Suzy Bellamy

Community Development Director Connie Tabor