

Amid zoning hearings, hope for affordable housing

By MARK ROGERS mrogers@sanfordherald.com Aug 21, 2021

During the Sanford City Council meeting on Tuesday, council members had a number of large economic development issues to discuss when it came to zoning, but several items weren't the usual type of requests.

Sandwiched between discussions over the rezoning of 153 acres in the N.C. 87/U.S. 421/Rosser Road area for shopping and a large housing development — and rezoning of land in the Tramway area for commercial purposes — were requests by local groups working to do something about Sanford's affordable housing crisis.

Among the items discussed was an application to rezone a 1.35-acre portion of a 16.93-acre tract of land with frontage along Washington Avenue from R-6 to MF-12. City Planner Rachel Mann said the rezoning would allow higher density residential units, including multi-family units.

Brick Capital Executive Director Kerry Bashaw spoke on behalf of the project, saying that the plans were to build a 16-unit apartment complex in the area.

"We're hoping to start in the spring on Phase 1," he said. "In Phase 2, we'll concentrate on single-family lots."

Habitat for Humanity Executive Director Kimberly Rau echoed Bashaw's statements.

"We need housing of all types," she said. "We need affordable housing in Sanford."

Brick Capital also asked the city to close several alleys prior to the purchase of other properties being sought for affordable housing. The council held hearings on the closing of an unopened 20-foot alley between South Vance Street and Hudson Avenue and to consider closing an alley between Hudson Avenue and Vance Street.

"Brick Capital is looking to build housing there," Bashaw said. "We're hoping to build at least four homes."

Following a motion by Councilman Byron Buckles, the closures were approved.

The city also examined the application for a Community Development Block Grant — HUD funding — that would be used for neighborhood revitalization. A second public hearing for that will be held in October.

"We want to encourage you to go with the Block Grant," Rau told the council. "It helps citizens who are low income."

Hamer Carter, president of Outreach Mission of Sanford, also spoke out in support of the CDBG, saying it would help the homeless in transition. He said they were behind the grant and future projects for affordable housing. There are 186 people on the waiting list for housing, Carter said.

Bashaw also spoke on behalf of the grant.

"For us to do in the community what we do, it takes grants," he said.

Mayor Chet Mann also spoke out in support of the grant process and the projects.

“We have the opportunity to do some really good things,” he said.

During its meeting, the council also:

- Approved conveyance of city-owned lot H2, Boykin Avenue and Block A lots 6 and 1A, Price Street to Brick Capital Community Development Corporation for construction of affordable housing.
- Approved conveyance of city owned lots 10, 11, 12, and 13, Block F, on Crestview Street to Habitat for Humanity of Sanford for construction of affordable housing.
- Voted to approve a contract for \$16,000 between the city and Partners for Impact, LLC — consultant for S3 Housing Connect.
- Voted to temporarily close Moore Street between Carthage and Wicker streets during the Streetfest Music Series, which begins on Thursday.
- Voted to close portions of several streets for the upcoming Carolina Indie Fest scheduled Sept. 17-Sept. 19.
- Appointed John Dean to the Sanford Parks Commission for a term that expires on June 30, 2022.