

Planning and Zoning Commission
City of Blanco
Minutes of Special Meeting & Public Hearing
June 24, 2021

Members: Susan Moore, Christine Anderson, Trey Priour, Loris Perkins, Brandon Carlson, Neil Neyens, Heinz Roech

REGULAR MEETING

1. The meeting was called to order at 6:35 p.m.

2. A quorum was established.

Commissioners Moore, Anderson, Priour, Perkins, Carlson, Neyens were present.

3. Announcements

No Announcements

4. Public Comments:

No Public comments

OPEN PUBLIC HEARING

1. Discussion (No Action) related to proposed Zoning Map

Opening comments from Susan Moore.

In the past we have had 2 Town Halls, and a public hearing. This is the final public hearing for Planning and Zoning on the Proposed Zoning Map. Once P&Z has approved the new zoning, it will then go to the City Council for a public hearing before deciding on passing or making any adjustments to the map.

The Town Halls were very informative, we had some great comments and insight which we tried to take into consideration. We've already made some adjustments. Some of the comments received were:

Leave the 2014 map as it is and don't do anything. Do away with zoning, we don't want any zoning. No low income housing. One major issue we heard was, no more than 3 units per acre.

For reference, the 2014 map didn't define each residential zone, (R1, R2, R3). If you looked at the map, you would only know if your property was in residential. The proposed updated map clearly shows each zone by color. All zones are in line with the UDC Code and the Comprehensive Master Plan. The R5 Zone (Yellow) is very much like the MX Zone on the 2014 Map. The R5 zone has expanded your ability to do what you want with your property and tells you in more detail what you can do. We were also asked to designate the Historical District which is shown with diagonal blue marks in the district. Some folks did not want public parks. We tried to stay realistic with the map, so we didn't designate a park area, but the R5 Zone allows a park anywhere in that zone. Property tax was another topic, zoning does not affect your property tax, you are taxed by how your property is being used. Your property cannot be annexed without your approval or request. We reduced the area for R3 (6 units per acre) after hearing citizen remarks. R3 and R5 areas are denser than other zones. The further out from the city, the lots are larger and less dense.

We appreciate you and the feedback from the citizens. We hope we have heard you and this makes it better for our citizens and keeps Blanco the diamond of the Hill Country.

Opening comments from Neil Neyens.

We all live here, and we tried to accommodate everyone's needs. We are not here to try to destroy your property. We want Blanco to be a good place to live.

The public hearing is open with a 5-minute time limit per person. You can have multiple times to speak after another has had a chance to speak. We want to hear as many people as we can.

1st Speaker – Candy Cargill

You probably already know my stance on R5. I appreciate all the work you have put into it. You are right, you can't please

everyone. I want to share a conversation I had with the county commissioner. They get 5-6 people a month coming to the county wanting to make their lots bigger in Rockin J. This just reinforces my stance that people don't want to move to Blanco to be in high density. Although, I know we need some affordable housing because not everyone can afford 3 or 2 acres for a house. There must be a way we can help people and have both things. Still keep Blanco Beautiful.

2nd Speaker – Mike Ethridge

My property East of town, (pointed out in Brown) along Hwy 165 which is Agricultural. City has fixed the water multiple times. Also, property was annexed even though I was against it they have not provided any services. Commissioner Moore directed Mr. Ethridge to seek the City Council on these issues.

3rd Speaker – Dan Murrah

Thank you for your hard work. I know you volunteered, and I appreciate what you are doing. Some of the push back you are getting is due to when the people bought their land, they thought they knew what they were getting. I know we have a housing shortage and so what I would like to say to you, as a group, is that there is more than one factor involved in the housing shortage. One way to approach this is market forces which you can't do anything about. The other way is for you to try to zone things to make the difference. I grew up here, played football against Dripping Springs, Marble Falls and surrounding cities; they have grown and now is the time that market forces have forced their way here and we are next and nothing anybody can do will change that, I don't think. What worries me, we don't want what happened to Kyle, Texas to happen here. So, in your attempt to do something about the fact that housing is unaffordable, to say you can build 5 houses on an acre maybe a solution that will help everything, I don't think it will. So, let's be careful in the decisions and the way we approach this and say, "do we have too much green" (R3). Are we really going to push housing cost down by having high density? I don't think that would work. Visualize the size of lot that 5 per acre (R3) would be. Making the lot smaller will not solve the housing issue. A fifth of an acre is what is allowed in the green zone. It is tiny and it is not going to help Blanco. I know your intentions are good, but this will not fix the housing in Blanco. Market forces will outweigh anything you all do. Unless you start building apartments somewhere you will not solve this housing problem.

4th Speaker – Ken Welch

I am not a Blanco citizen or a Blanco County citizen, but I care about Blanco and do business in Blanco. I think you have done a great job and really appreciate your transparency and having hearings, as that is the way government should run. When I look at your map, I see very little multi family housing. We have trouble getting teachers as we have no place for them to live that they can afford. Not just teachers, its jobs period. Companies don't move here because there is no place for employees to live. There is a lot of land in Blanco County, if people want to build a mansion there is a lot of land, they don't have to live in the city to get a great big lot. What I'm saying is, I don't see a lot of multifamily, and I don't know what the requirements would be on multi family but perhaps you could consider making some rental property available. They don't necessarily want a house; they just want a good place to live where they can get good jobs. I do think Blanco is going to grow, whether you like it or not, so you need to have housing that people can afford.

CLOSE THE PUBLIC HEARING 7:00pm

OPEN SPECIAL MEETING

New Business

1. Consider, discuss and take possible action on Proposed Zoning Map.

Commissioner Moore started the discussion, we just heard the gentlemen say he thinks that maybe the housing problem would be lessened if we had more multi housing. We heard loud and clear that the city doesn't want more affordable, apartment type housing. We heard that at every Town Hall and Public Hearing. When we look at that map, the green area is very close to the R5 and the City Center. From there out it is much less dense. We have a lot of blue (1 unit per acre) for people to build homes. Also, a lot of yellow – and you can build homes in the yellow zone. We have designated a small portion for R3; and R5 is primarily along 281 which is already high density. In my opinion, we are trying to split the difference and allow housing to be available. Commissioner Neyens commented, that in the R3 Zone, we can't assume that a developer is going to come in to build houses and sell them. Developers want to come in to build houses for B&B or rental houses. We can't assume that people will come in and build 5 houses per acre to live there.

Commissioners discussed changing some of the R5 (5 units/acre) on the East side of 281 to R1 (1 unit/acre). Area from 4th Street to San Saba. If changed to R1 (1 unit/acre), you could not put mixed units (office & residence) or more than 1 unit with out a variance. Citizens do not want variances. Zoning is difficult. Do we want to allow citizens more flexibility or less flexibility? After much discussion, the zone was changed to R2 (3 units/acre). This gave more residential for development and gained a little more control for approving what is developed in that area. Another point that was made, R2 and R3 must have special use permits in order to have a Bed & Breakfast. Another aspect, people can afford a rental but cannot afford to buy a house at cost of mortgage + Insurance + about 4% which doesn't address cost for repairs and other costs of that nature. Any owner or manager will tell you the hardest thing to find is quality employees. An extended discussion continued regarding the need for employees but not enough housing. Possibly need affordable housing even though the citizens may not want more of that in the city. Multiple conversations regarding the need for apartments and affordable housing continued.

A citizen spoke up regarding affordable housing. Have heard several speak against the idea of multifamily, they have been here for a long time. They are committed in trying to maintain the rural culture they grew up in. One thing I will say about affordable housing, is that they grew up in an affordable town. Blanco was a working-class town, and you didn't have to have 250K to get a house here when they were growing up in Blanco. Working folks can live right outside the city limits and take their money with them out of our city rather than spending it in Blanco or we can make spaces for nice apartments. Chandler Place is an attractive place and perhaps we need to have standards put in place, but I think it is imperative for our community to make a place for all social economic society to live and work together. Otherwise, we end up being a retirement community of old people. I think young people bring a lot of unity to a community that is really important. I would rather see an apartment complex inside the city limits that brings revenue to our community that affords teachers and young families a place to live rather than dense housing with 5 units/acre. A commissioner spoke, do we want to specify where we think an apartment complex should be allowed? Are we smart enough to know where a developer may want to build an apartment complex? Another commissioner stated, by providing a designated area for a complex we have some control over where it would be constructed and not next to a residential area. Connie Barron spoke regarding people moving into town. We don't get money from people moving into town. Very important to understand. Ad Valorem taxes are limited by state law. Many have exemptions for bees or animals on their property. People don't want their property tax going up. Taxes on residential properties do not help fuel our city. The more residences, the more infrastructure we must have in our city. Don't think that the residences will help fund our city, it will be the business's that help fund the future of our town with their sales tax revenues. People will be coming into our city to shop and eat at our restaurants and spend their money while they live outside our town and not increasing our infrastructure costs. (roads/schools/police).

A Commissioner made the point that Ordinances will put the teeth into the zoning map as to what can and cannot be developed on a property. Ordinances that control density/ height/ parking/ landscaping etc. will control types of development. Another citizen spoke regarding our focus. Infrastructure in this town is well behind what it should be. To focus on bringing people here that don't live here and don't pay taxes here at the expense of people that do live here and do pay taxes here, I think would be a mistake. Don't ignore us who pay taxes here, when we ask you to reduce the green, a 5th of an acre is not going to bring good people in or help our tax base. If someone builds an apartment complex outside the city limits, more power to them, let them come and eat. Don't forget the current taxpayer. We have people who live here and work in San Antonio or Austin. It is still more affordable to live in Blanco than S.A. or Austin. Another commissioner was concerned about the water and infrastructure. We must address that as it is a major issue. A commissioner stated it cannot be stressed enough; we need ordinances, and we need them quickly to solidify and support the proposed map and add strength to the direction of the city.

Commissioner Perkins made a motion that we accept the changes on the zoning map that we have and forward it on to the City Council. Commissioner Priour seconded the motion.

The Motion Passed Unanimously.

Adjourn

The special meeting adjourned at 8:00pm

Submitted by Susan Moore, Chairman, Planning and Zoning Commission