

MINUTES OF THE TUPELO PLANNING COMMITTEE

CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS | CITY HALL

MARCH 3, 2025

Absence of Officers: The president, chairman, and vice chairman were absent, so there was a motion to elect acting officers.

Elections:

Leslie Mart was elected as acting chair of the meeting.

Lindsay Leake was elected as the acting recording secretary.

Opening of the Meeting:

CALL TO ORDER:

Ms. Mart called the meeting to order. Scott Davis led the invocation, and Patty Thompson led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Committee Overview. Each member and staff member introduced themselves. Tanner Newman, Director of Development Services, Aaron Washington, Victor Flietas, Leslie Mart, Lindsay Leak, Patty Thompson, Scott Davis, Ben Logan, City Attorney, Mandolyn Shurden, Zoning Technician, and Pat Faulkner, City Consultant, were present.

REVIEW NOVEMBER 4, 2024 MINUTES

The minutes from the previous meeting were reviewed. Scott Davis made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Lindsey Leake. The motion passed unanimously.

OPEN REGULAR SESSION:

REPORT OF COUNCIL ACTION:

Mr. Newman confirmed no updates from the City Council's actions since the last meeting.

OLD BUSINESS:

None

NEW BUSINESS:**FLEXVAR25-01 for 499 South Gloster**

The Department of Development Services received an application for a flexibility variance to allow an additional freestanding sign at Midtown Point for Urologic and Cardiology Associates.

Mr. Newman stated that the department reviewed the request and found unique circumstances. The Midtown Point property was originally developed as a commercial mall with specific sign restrictions.

The property has limited frontage and unique difficulties in obtaining adequate sign exposure for its current tenants, particularly medical offices.

The city recommends approval of the request, as it addresses these difficulties.

Applicant #1 (Kyle Fallon, CEO of Urologic):

Kyle discussed how the current signage is inadequate for wayfinding, especially when trees are in bloom, making the signage hard to see. Urologic and Cardiology practices, which serve a significant number of patients, struggle with location visibility. Mr. Fallon stated that the new sign would replace the current one, with added electricity for nighttime visibility. The sign would also benefit Cardiology Associates, who also face visibility issues.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

None.

COMMITTEE DISCUSSION:

Mr. Davis asked whether the sign would be for just Urologic or both Urologic and Cardiology. The applicant confirmed it would be for both.

Mr. Flietas asked a question regarding the typical patient age group for Urologic services, and the applicant confirmed that most patients are 50+ years old and come from outside Lee County.

There was further discussion about the sign's location and landscaping from Ms. Mart and Mr. Leake, with the possibility of adding landscaping around the sign.

Ms. Mart expressed support for matching the sign design with the existing Midtown Point sign to maintain uniformity. Ms. Mart and the committee also suggested that additional directional signage be added at a three-way stop on Robert E. Lee Extended to help guide visitors to the correct entrances.

The motion was made by Victor Flietas to approve the variance with the following conditions: The sign design should match the existing Midtown Point sign. Directional signage should be placed around the intersection of Robert E. Lee Extended and Gloucester Street, approximately 4-6 feet in size, to assist visitors in finding the businesses.

The motion was seconded by Lindsey Leake and passed unanimously.

Tanner Newman advised the applicant of his next steps, which included working with Marilyn Vail to finalize sign specifications and coordinating with Chris Mills regarding the directional signage.

TA25-01:

Text amendment proposes adding golf driving ranges as a use by right in the Regional Commercial (RC) Zone District.

Public Notice: A public notice for the proposed text amendment was issued by the Department of Development Services in the Northeast Mississippi Daily Journal. No responses were received from the public.

Mr. Faulkner provided the staff analysis, emphasizing that the Regional Commercial zoning was originally designed for high-impact, car-oriented businesses in areas with strong transportation infrastructure. Over time, retail conditions have changed, and there's a need to bring in more active and entertainment-based uses to keep the shopping district viable. A golf driving range, which doesn't currently exist in the area, is seen as a fitting addition that would attract people from the surrounding region.

Mr. Newman stated that the motivation for the text amendment comes from an inquiry by a prospective developer looking to build a mini Top Golf facility. This development is very close to breaking ground, with the only hurdles being the text amendment and a utility easement.

PUBLIC DISCUSSION:

None

COMMITTEE DISCUSSION:

Mr. Newman asked Mr. Logan if there was anything he would like to add regarding the development.

Mr. Logan responded by highlighting that the proposed changes certainly meet the legal requirements, particularly in terms of a "clear and convincing change in circumstances." He explained that when the development code was adopted in 2013, and even before that, with the comprehensive plan, the area in question was primarily undeveloped land. At that time, there was no road in place, and the land was either farmland or wooded, especially near the National Stage in the northern part of the area.

Mr. Logan continued by emphasizing that the development and infrastructure being built in the area now constitute a significant change in circumstances. This, he noted, makes the proposed redevelopment both legal and appropriate. He also pointed out that, while the threshold for adding a new use to this area might seem high, it is nonetheless an appropriate use given the changes that have occurred in the region. He referenced the work done with TSC and the rezoning efforts along that corridor as further evidence of how the area is evolving.

Ms. Mart had a concern about the proximity of the proposed golf driving range to residential areas, with potential concerns about lighting. Mr. Newman stated that the developer has agreed to maintain a substantial green buffer of existing trees and wooded areas to mitigate any impact on surrounding areas. Additionally, all lighting and other development requirements would be handled during the plan review process.

Ms. Mart inquired whether the text amendment for the added line item would require any specific provisions, such as a statement regarding a buffer zone.

Mr. Newman responded that the necessary buffer requirements are already addressed within the development code and building code. He clarified that this amendment is specifically a text amendment to the development code, allowing the proposed use (in this case, a driving range) to be permitted within the RC (Recreation and Conservation) zone.

Mr. Newman further explained that while the text amendment changes the zoning district to allow this use, it does not equate to approval for this specific location or site. He emphasized that the vote tonight is strictly related to amending the zoning district to allow a driving range as a permitted use in that district, and all other development requirements would still apply.

Motion to approve made by Scott Davis. The motion was seconded by Aaron Washington. The committee unanimously approved the text amendment.

The next step is for the Department of Development Services to work with legal counsel to draft an ordinance for the City Council. The council will hold a public hearing before officially adopting the amendment into the development code.

This is a relatively straightforward amendment that opens the door for new, active entertainment uses in the RC Zone and aligns with evolving trends in retail and commercial development.

URBAN RENEWAL DISTRICT EXPANSION:

Mr. Newman stated that the present amendment adds a 17-acre tract of land, located off South Spring Street, between two railroads and extending to Elizabeth Street. This area, which was once the site of a large complex of warehouses, has been vacant for some time. The structures that once stood here were ultimately demolished, leaving behind an underutilized space in the heart of our city.

Mr. Newman said a new redevelopment concept has been proposed to revitalize this area and transform it into a vibrant mixed-use development. The vision includes both commercial and residential purposes, ensuring that the area serves as a hub for both business and community living. This project promises not only to breathe new life into this former industrial site but also to provide much-needed housing and commercial space to meet the growing needs of our city and as a part of this effort, Mr. Newman said they envision parks, walking trails, and public spaces that will create a balanced environment for residents and visitors alike. The redevelopment will also include infrastructure improvements, offering enhanced connectivity and access to surrounding areas.

Mr. Newman asked Debbie Brangenberg to come to the podium to provide further details on this exciting development.

Applicant #1) Debbie Brangenberg (254 S Front Street) Ms. Brangenberg presented a presentation of the development of Fairpark and where it began, and the improvements over the years to see the prosperity of the area and downtown. Ms. Brangenberg stated they have had the opportunity to amend and expand the Urban Renewal District, and the presentation gives more information on that and where they are, and the plans to go forward.

Mr. Logan said the city council at the February 18th meeting declared certain real property to be blighted and suitable for an urban renewal project. Mr. Logan stated that this development represents a significant opportunity to enhance and develop the 17-acre tract of land located off South Spring Street, between two railroads and extending to Elizabeth Street. The process involves the third amendment to the urban renewal plan, a document that has evolved. This marks the first time an additional area has been added to the urban renewal plan.

Mr. Logan stated a public hearing has been scheduled for April 1st to further discuss this development. In preparation for the hearing, they have directed that notice be published twice, and will allow a 30-day comment period. Additionally, asking for a finding tonight that the amended and restated urban renewal plan aligns with the city's comprehensive plan.

Mr. Logan stated as part of the resolution the committee received that the City Council has agreed that everything is correct about the resolution, except a correction needs to be made to Exhibit B, as it inadvertently suggests that future development may be financed using urban renewal bonds and while it is possible that bonds could be issued in the future, there are no current plans to do so. Mr. Logan said the amendment intends to reflect the city's history of fiscal responsibility, particularly with projects like Phase 4 of the residential development, which has seen success in terms of building affordable yet quality homes.

COMMITTEE DISCUSSION:

Mr. Flietas asked the staff if the committee would be voting on two motions tonight. The first motion is whether the urban renewal plan is consistent with the general development plan for the city. Mr. Logan confirmed that this was correct.

Mr. Flietas then asked if the second finding is related to the actual approval and passing of the resolution. Mr. Newman clarified that the second motion refers to the approval of the resolution itself. Mr. Newman explained that in the resolution, the reference to the proposed third amended and restated urban renewal plan indicates that it conforms to the comprehensive plan for the city's overall physical development. Mr. Newman also noted that the resolution recommends approval of the urban renewal plan as it is presented. Mr. Newman stated that he would ask if, in this resolution, it would state exhibit A and needs to be amended as exhibit B. Mr. Newman stated that Mr. Lindsey Leake needs to be added as acting chair.

Mr. Newman further emphasized that the resolution will cover the necessary findings required for both motions and the approval of the urban renewal plan.

Ms. Mart inquired whether there would be additional walkways over the railroad, similar to what was done off Front Street toward the Ellen Building, and whether features like that would be incorporated into the project. Mr. Newman emphasized that such improvements would be beneficial and fine as part of the overall development.

Mr. Newman responded affirmatively, explaining that there will be a preliminary plat presented to the planning committee for consideration. Mr. Newman said this plan will outline key infrastructure elements, including sidewalks and other pedestrian features. Mr. Newman also noted that the

Greenway Trail is an integral part of this project, helping to enhance connectivity within the development.

Mr. Newman added that the streets and infrastructure will be carefully planned and reviewed, and the committee will receive a formal request to approve the preliminary plat once it has been finalized.

Mr. Flietas made a motion to approve the resolution of the City of Tupelo Planning Committee, recommending approval of the proposed third amended and restated urban renewal plan, with the amended Exhibit B, which includes changes to the language in paragraph six regarding financing, as proposed today.

The motion was seconded by Scott Davis. The committee then voted unanimously to approve the motion.

NEXT MEETING:

Work session March 31st at 5:15

Public meeting April 7th at 6:00

Motion to adjourn made by Ms. Thompson, seconded by Mr. Flietas.