

Mount Jackson
Town Council Special Meeting & Joint Public Hearing
October 7, 2024
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Special Meeting

Mayor Donnie Pifer called the Town Council meeting to order at 5:31 PM with Councilmembers Evelyn Burner, Judy Fultz, Todd Holtzman, and Rod Shepherd in attendance. Councilmembers Al Asbury and Bonnie Good were absent.

Also present were Olivia Hilton, Town Manager; Greg A. Beam, Assistant Town Manager; and Barbara Riggelman, Town Clerk. Guests were Vickie Baker, Brenda Foley, and Suzanne Porter. Evan Fedorko, Project Geographer for Downstream Strategies, attended the public hearing via Zoom.

Joint Public Hearing

1. RZ-01-2024: Request to Rezone 6091 Main Street from I-1 to B-1

Ms. Hilton stated that there were no further updates from Staff, who recommend rezoning. This will not create a zoning pocket and it will stay housing. Mr. Shepherd stated his approval for historic preservation such as this; restoring and renovating some of the distinctive homes in Mount Jackson is a good thing.

Ms. Porter commended Mr. Holtzman on his renovation efforts in town. She is a neighbor to the subject property; her and her husband spent a lot of time renovating their home. Preservation of old homes is extremely important to her. Ms. Porter inquired if Mr. Holtzman had plans to remove the trees on the property. Mr. Holtzman answered that there were no plans to remove any trees. Ms. Porter inquired how much renovation would be done on Mill Creek. Mr. Holtzman answered that there were no plans to do anything outside the current building structure. The addition on the back is built down into the dirt and is not worth saving, so the back 30+/- feet will be removed, leaving the original L-shaped home. The porch in the back is rotting away, so an addition on the back will be closed in to modernize it and the home will become 4 nice apartments. Aside from preserving the exterior, fixing the roof, painting, etc. there will need to be some sort of parking area on the other side of the home for the tenants. Mr. Holtzman stated that on the side adjacent to Ms. Porter, there is basically a cliff and the creek could be a nice place for fishing, but he did not see any work being done that would adversely affect the property in any way on that side of the house.

Mr. Hines asked for clarification that there is a stairwell on the rock wall below the house. Mr. Holtzman stated that the property comes down to Main Street and there is a very steep bank that goes down to the river. The stone wall has fallen down at least twice and another failure is imminent. Mr. Holtzman stated that he has been in discussion with VDOT regarding fixing the wall, which they do not want to do, but he is hoping to get something done before it falls down again. Were it to fall, it would not be replaced with a concrete wall; the same historic wall would be preserved, but in a way that it would not fall down again.

There were no further questions or comments.

2. SU-03-2024: Project Blueline Special Use Permit

Ms. Hilton introduced Mr. Fedorko, whom the County Development Office brought on board short notice to give a viewshed analysis of the subject property. Mr. Fedorko introduced himself and gave a brief background on Downstream Strategies. Mr. Fedorko shared viewpoints and digital mapping of the subject property, with 3D modeling of the proposed tanks and vegetation. Mr. Fedorko encouraged those present

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to physically visit the subject property to get a better view to make judgements as he utilized Google Street View and canopy density was very likely underestimated in the models.

Chairman Ambrose inquired what height the tanks were in the pictures that were shown. Mr. Fedorko stated that he was told the tanks would be 60 ft. tall when constructed and he referred to the drawings from the applicant as to the width. Ms. Hilton stated that there would be 3-4 silos depending on the height. The applicant could have 3 silos at 60 ft. or 4 with a 45 ft. height.

Ms. Baker asked what would be stored in the silos, to which Ms. Hilton answered that it would be plastic resin. Ms. Baker asked if that would be a liquid product. Ms. Burner inquired if new tanks would be installed. Ms. Hilton stated that Project Blueline currently has 60 ft. silos on the East Coast that would be relocated here, vs. 45 ft. silos that would come from Italy, taking a little longer to ship and being an added expense. Ms. Hilton answered that she was not sure if the resin would be in liquid or solid form but would be used to make plastic bottles. There will not be any negative environmental impacts.

Ms. Baker asked if there would be an increase in traffic. Ms. Hilton stated that Valley Fertilizer has downsized substantially, so this would be offsetting what had previously been there. The applicant anticipates 30-50 employees over several years. Mr. Holtzman stated that InterChange is currently in the same space and warehousing the same product for the same client. Ms. Baker asked if the subject property bordered Mr. Holtzman, who answered that it is between Rt. 11 and I-81, behind Valley Fertilizer. There is a big 180,000 sq. ft. warehouse and they would be taking 104,000 sq. ft. of that space. The property was warehousing before, with trucks coming and going to the same client. The applicant will be hiring people and actually manufacturing the product on site, so it should be a similar amount of truck traffic, and hopefully a few more employees coming to work every day.

Ms. Hilton stated that by right, the silos can go up to 45 ft. Either way, silos will be utilized, however the decision to be made was to either accept the proposed 60 ft. silos or say no, at which point the applicant would leave the special use permit process and approval would be done administratively. Everything else with the project has passed both the Town and the County administrative level, and this was the next step for the applicant. The applicant hopes to be up and running by January 2025. Ms. Hilton stated that she did not foresee the applicant leaving if the Town were to deny 60 ft. silos, they would just need to spend more money shipping smaller silos from Italy. Ms. Baker stated that basically the project is a done deal then. Ms. Hilton stated that the applicant moving to the area was, the 60 ft. silos was not. This would be determined by a vote from Council upon recommendation of the Planning Commission. Staff wanted to ensure that saying no to 60 ft. silos would not keep the applicant from leaving entirely, as this would be a solid industry for the Town. From what she has been told, it would not be a deal breaker. Mr. Holtzman stated that on the original letter of intent with the landlord, the applicant specified 30 ft. tanks, but then said thru negotiations that they did not want to hold the project up due to a tight deadline. Mr. Holtzman stated that he did not want to hold their project up, but he was in favor of encouraging them to go with their original 30 ft. proposal. While he is pro-business, Mr. Holtzman stated that small towns needed to protect their rural beauty. Referring to the models shown by Mr. Fedorko previously, Mr. Holtzman stated that some of these trees may not be evergreens and when they shed their leaves, the tanks would be more visible. The current warehouse is 30 ft. tall, so these proposed tanks would be doubling that height. Mr. Holtzman stated that if the applicant is worried about holding the job up, the Town could conditionally approve the proposed 60 ft. tanks to get the applicant operational, but give them 12 months to get 30 ft. tanks back in place to protect the viewshed. Ms. Hilton stated that when she had asked the applicant about a short-term

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approval, they had said this would not work for them. Basically, if they were to spend the money anyway, that would wait and do it now. The applicant told Ms. Hilton that 30 ft. tanks were no longer an option for them, so their backup plan would be 40 ft. tanks, which is still below the maximum allowable height of 45 ft.

Mr. Hines stated that the survey on the silos was dated 2019 from the State of Missouri, where the applicant built their first plant in 2018. These proposed silos could not have been the original for St. Louis, but they could have been the original for the plant in North Carolina, which was opened in 2020 in Red Springs. Ms. Hilton stated that the proposed silos would be coming from North Carolina. Mr. Hines stated that there are 2 silos at that location and inquired if they would be brought here and repurposed. Ms. Hilton stated that if the applicant needs to go with 40 ft. tanks, these would be manufactured in Italy and shipped here, as the US does not make the product that they would need. Ms. Miller inquired if 60 ft. tanks would be more economical for the applicant. Ms. Hilton answered affirmatively, and it would save money in the long-term. Chairman Ambrose stated that the Town has an ordinance for maximum height for a reason. Ms. Hilton stated that the silos could also be painted a green vs. the standard silver; this could be a conditional requirement for approval. Mr. Hines inquired into a geological survey for silo height. Ms. Hilton answered that the County said there were no concerns from an environmental standpoint.

Ms. Baker asked if there would be any issues with noise. Ms. Hilton answered that she didn't think there would be any difference. Mr. Holtzman stated that they would be working inside the building. Ms. Baker asked if there would be any effect on the resale of real estate. Ms. Hilton stated that she would not believe so. Mr. Hines stated that the only cause he could think of would be any EPA violations. Ms. Foley stated that it would be visible to the people living on the road next to it, and asked how visible it would be. Ms. Hilton answered that this was covered in the presentation. Mr. Hines stated that there were two spots of visibility – one on I-81 and one on Rt. 11, depending on whether the trees lose their leaves. Ms. Foley stated that she and Ms. Baker live on Nelson Street. Mr. Hines stated that he drove on Nelson Street, and there again it was just vegetation. Ms. Baker stated that it was very poorly kept vegetation. Ms. Hilton stated that the easiest way for each resident would be to go outside and see if they can see Valley Fertilizer and then to guesstimate adding either 10 ft. for a 40 ft. silo or doubling the size of the building for a 60 ft. silo. Ms. Hilton stated that her biggest thing was not to impede the water tower. Valley Fertilizer is in an industrial area, so she doesn't believe it will negatively impact sales as the damage is already done there. Size and quantity of tanks was discussed.

Chairman Ambrose inquired if there were any other questions. There were none and there were no speakers signed up to speak. Chairman Ambrose closed the Joint Public Hearing.

Mayor Pifer called for adjournment of the Town Council; motion was made by Councilmember Shepherd, motion seconded by Councilmember Fultz. The meeting was adjourned at 6:08 PM.

Barbara Riggelman, Clerk

Donald "Donnie" I. Pifer, Mayor