

**Town of Mills River  
Minutes of the Planning Board  
Tuesday, December 3, 2019**

The Town of Mills River Planning Board met on Tuesday, December 3, 2019, at 7:00 PM in the Mills River Town Hall. Board members present were: Brian Kimball, Randy Austin, Dennis Wilson, Ryan Perry, Carolyn Moore, Cheryl Janoski, Sherri Hill, Jim Foster, and Matt Holloway. Staff present were Town Planner Brian Burgess and Tax Collector/Deputy Town Clerk Aurelie Taylor. There are no open seats on the Board and a quorum was present.

Chairman Brian Kimball called the meeting to order and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Adjustments/Additions to Agenda:** None.

Dennis Wilson made a motion to approve the minutes from October 1, 2019; the motion was seconded by Carolyn Moore and the motion passed by unanimous verbal assent.

**Public Comment:** No public comment.

**Old Business:** No Old Business

**New Business:**

**A. Special Use Permit SUP-19-03 Mills River Elementary Sign**

Town Planner Brian Burgess went over the highlights of the staff memo, the text of which appears below:

**STAFF REPORT**

Planning Board, Tuesday, December 3, 2019

**Title:** **Special Use Permit S-19-03: Mills River Elementary Sign**

Planning Board will offer a recommendation to Town Council in consideration of Special Use Permit S-19-03.

**Speaker:** Brian Burgess, Town Planner

**From:** Planning

**Approved by:** Daniel Cobb, AICP, CFM, CZO, Town Manager

**Background**

On November 13, 2019 the Town of Mills River received an application for a Special Use Permit (SUP) for the installation of a freestanding sign, with electronic changeable copy, at Mills River Elementary (Attachment A). The site is located at 96 Schoolhouse Rd. (Attachment B).

This type of permit requires quasi-judicial proceedings as defined in North Carolina General Statute 160A-388 for approval.

**Discussion**

Mills River Elementary is located within the Residential (MR-30) zoning district, which allows for freestanding signs up to 10 feet tall and 40 square feet<sup>1</sup>. These types of signs are considered by-right and do not typically require approval beyond administrative review (staff). However, this particular request includes a manual changeable copy sign, which is permitted only with the issuance of a SUP<sup>2</sup>.

Electronic changeable copy signs may be up to 32 square feet and not more than 40% of the freestanding sign area<sup>3</sup>.

The applicant, Chad Auten (Principal for Mills River Elementary) is requesting to replace the current manual changeable copy sign with a total area of 12.65 square feet (Attachment C). This is roughly 33% of the allowable size. The sign is located along the road frontage of Mills River Brewery, between the main entrances and is outside of the required sight triangle.

The North Carolina Department of Transportation and Mills River Fire Department were consulted as part of the review of this sign. Both agencies are satisfied from a safety perspective with the size and location of the proposed sign.

**Policy Analysis**

No existing adopted policies of the Town apply to this request.

**Fiscal Impact**

N/A.

**Recommendation**

The Staff has reviewed this request and recommends approval.

**Attachments**

- A. Application
- B. Site Map
- C. Sign Design

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<sup>1</sup> Town of Mills River Code of Ordinances – Section 154.259

<sup>2</sup> Id. at 154.260

<sup>3</sup> Id at 154.260.A.1

The Board asked questions of Mr. Chad Auten, the Principal of the school, about what would be posted on the sign (pictures or just text), whether it could be turned off at night, and what it might be used for in the summer when school was out. Mr. Auten assured the Board that it would not have pictures, it would be turned off at night, and only used in the summer for school news.

Randy Austin made a motion to send the Special Use Permit, SUP 19-03, Mills River Elementary Sign to Town Council with a favorable recommendation for approval with the condition that the sign be turned off between the hours of 6pm and 7am. The motion was seconded by Jim Foster and passed by unanimous verbal assent.

**B. Steering Committee Appointment**

Town Planner Brian Burgess explained that since Planning Board member Randy Austin has been elected to Town Council, there is now 3 members of the Council on the Making Mills River Steering Committee. Three members of Town Council represents a quorum, which effectively makes every Steering Committee meeting a Council meeting. It also means that the Planning Board no longer has representation, therefore, he's requesting that a member of the Board volunteers to be on the Steering Committee. After a short discussion, Brian Kimball volunteered.

Councilman Elect Randy Austin then expressed his appreciation to the Planning Board for the opportunity to serve as a member as well as the opportunity to represent the citizens of Mills River on Town Council.

Additional Items - There was some general discussion/questions on signs.

As there was no further business to discuss, Jim Foster made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Carolyn Moore seconded the motion and the motion passed by unanimous verbal assent.

Respectfully submitted,

Aurelie Taylor, CTC  
Tax Collector/Deputy Town Clerk