

**TOWN OF TALLULAH FALLS  
STATE OF GEORGIA  
PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION MEETING  
TOWN HALL, 255 MAIN STREET, TALLULAH FALLS, GA  
December 9, 2020, 6:00 PM  
MINUTES**

The Meeting of the Planning and Zoning Commission for December 9, 2020 was called to order at 6:02 PM by Chairman Stan Griffis.

PRESENT: Commissioner Stan Griffis, Chairman  
Commissioner Cristi Sheppard, Vice Chairman  
Commissioner Tresa Dyer, Secretary (via video)  
Commissioner Keith Knudsen

NOT PRESENT: Commissioner Barbara Rice (arrived later in the meeting)

A motion was made by Commissioner Sheppard to adopt the agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Dyer and was approved by vote.

A motion was made by Commissioner Sheppard to accept the minutes from the September 9, 2020 meeting as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Dyer and was approved by vote.

The first order of business was to discuss the land disturbance permit. Historically, Tallulah Falls has issued the permits. Chairman Griffis went to Habersham County and Rabun County and noted they both have procedures. Habersham required a permit be obtained before grading/clearing land and a sediment control plan is to be put in place for disturbances of more than one acre. Rabun required the sediment control plan before a permit is issued. Commissioner Dyer asked if Tallulah Falls issues a permit will the county also need to issue one. Chairman Griffis stated that he did not know. Mayor Early gave a brief history on the state EPD changes and Tallulah Falls decisions not to issue the permits any longer but never updated the ordinance. Chairman Griffis stated that the town was not in a position to issue and permits and required documentation with the resources it has today.

The next order of business was an open floor discussion for land disturbance permits by the public in attendance. Clint Irvin asked if a land disturbance permit would be needed for less than an acre and if Tallulah Falls decided to go that route would they need to hire for that position. Chairman Griffis reiterated that Tallulah Falls did not have the budget or resources to do that. Chairman Griffis stated that could be wrapped up in a tree ordinance. Commissioner Sheppard and Commissioner Dyer agreed.

Chairman Griffis presented that the P&Z Commission present to City Council that the town adopt state requirements for land disturbances and that further discussion was needed on the tree ordinance. Commissioner Sheppard made a motion to accept the proposal. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Dyer and was approved by vote.

The next order of business was to discuss the sign ordinance. Mayor Early stated there are three sections of regulatory documentation on signage. He stated that clarity needed to be given to the P&Z ordinance to be consistent. He stated Section 28 of the town ordinance and appendix A also had verbiage about signage. He further stated that there are two exceptions to the ordinances – state park signage and Georgia DOT signage. Chairman Griffis proposed tabling the discussion until the P&Z Commission has reviewed the current ordinances. A motion was made by Commissioner Rice. It was seconded by Commissioner Sheppard and was approved by vote.

The next order of business was to discuss a tree ordinance. Chairman Griffis asked Clerk Lapeyrouse her experience with tree ordinances. Clerk Lapeyrouse stated that they must be very defined and were enforced by staff. Chairman Griffis stated that Hartwell's tree ordinance required trees to be less than 4 inches in diameter and that if one tree was cut down, one must be planted within 25 feet of the cut tree. Clerk Lapeyrouse stated that the diameter is measured at breast height and that she had a copy of a tree ordinance. Chairman Griffis requested that she send it to the Commission.

The topic was opened for comments from the public. Clint Irvin asked if a tree ordinance was in place could a 6-inch diameter tree be cut for firewood if there wasn't another tree in a 25 ft distance? Mayor Early stated that the regulation would only affect certain zoning districts. Chairman Griffis stated that the intent would not be to ban freedom on property or building residences. Clint Irvin thanked him for the clarity and the option to replace it with a better tree. Keith Nelms stated that he is in favor of a reasonable ordinance and that the town should be prepared to hire expertise and a permit fee to cover the cost. Brian Irvin stated that he had issues with an ordinance regarding agricultural land. He also stated that property owners of residential plots needed to clear trees to access the land to decide if it was suitable for building and obtaining building permits. Mayor Early stated that Ronnie Davidson had been previously obtained by Brian Irvin's family for doing just that and that Davidson was an expert on seeing a property's potential for build sites without needing to clear cut the land. Clint Irvin stated that his understanding is that the intent of the tree ordinance is not to restrict access to a property owner. Chairman Griffis asked if anyone else had any questions regarding a tree ordinance. With no one else speaking, Chairman Griffis stated that the Commission would continue to discuss the ordinance and continue to get input from the public.

Chairman Griffis asked if there were any other open floor discussions for items of concern to citizens in attendance. No one spoke.

Chairman Griffis noted that items for future meetings were land ordinance, sign ordinance and a tree ordinance.

The next meeting of the Planning and Zoning Commission is scheduled to be Wednesday, January 13, 2021 at 6:00 PM.

**There being no further business before the Commission, a motion was made by Commissioner Rice to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Sheppard and was approved by vote.**

The meeting adjourned at 6:15 PM.

---

*Cristi Sheppard, Vice-Chairman*