

**Town of Walden**  
Walden Planning Commission  
January 23, 2025

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

The regular monthly meeting of the Walden Planning Commission (WPC) was called to order at 5:30 PM by Chairman Bill Trohanis. The sign-in sheet showing interested citizens in attendance is attached as an exhibit (Appendix A) to these minutes.

**II. ROLL CALL**

Town Administrator Mariah Prescott called the roll, noting the presence of Tom Bartoo, Angela Cassidy, Tim Hilvers, Joe Robbins, Jr., Werner Slabber, Bill Trohanis, and Dawson Wheeler. Ashley Gates, Walden's consultant from Southeast Tennessee Development District (SETD), was also present.

**III. ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

Chairman Bill Trohanis requested to move #IX, New Business, in front of VIII, Unfinished Business. Mr. Trohanis also noted that #IX (b), "Subdivision Regulation Amendment Regarding Public Sewer and Decentralized Wastewater Systems," will be removed from the agenda.

COMMISSIONER WERNER SLABBER MOVED TO APPROVE THE AGENDA WITH THE ABOVE-NOTED CHANGES FOR THE JANUARY 23, 2025 MEETING, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER ANGELA CASSIDAY, UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED BY THE WALDEN PLANNING COMMISSION.

**IV. CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES – DECEMBER 05, 2024**

Commissioner (Comm) Angela Cassidy noted that the beginning time of the meeting needed to be corrected and also requested that a note be made in the minutes that the WPC did not meet in October or December of 2024. Chairman Bill Trohanis noted that Comm Werner Slabber was also referred to as "Chairman" in the minutes. These changes were noted and have been made.

COMMISSIONER JOE ROBBINS, JR. MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF DECEMBER 05, 2024, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER TOM BARTOO, AND UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED BY THE WALDEN PLANNING COMMISSION.

**V. TOWN ADMINISTRATOR REPORT**

The Town Administrator Report was given by Mariah Prescott. She noted that the Design Review Commission is continuing to work on reviewing, updating, and finalizing the Design Review Standards. Ms. Prescott is hopeful that Article 1 will be ready for viewing by the WPC at the February meeting.

**VI. COMMUNICATIONS FROM CHAIR AND COMMISSIONERS**

Chairman Bill Trohanis welcomed everyone and expressed his hope that everyone had a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

## **VII. HEARING OF PERSONS HAVING BUSINESS WITH THE COMMISSION**

Catherine Colby spoke on the matter of Walden's award-winning Land Use Plan. She stated her belief that, just because a property is designated as appropriate for high-density development, it should not be an automatic "shoe-in" by the WPC. She is also concerned about re-zoning being considered for a property before Design Review Standards and other crucial documents (such as the Tree Ordinance) are fully completed.

Mr. Tony Wheeler spoke on the agenda item that was removed, #IX (b). He stated that the WWTA is working on enhancing restrictions and updating regulations regarding these types of waste systems.

## **VIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

### **a. Request to Rezone 2315 Taft Highway from R-1 Residential to TC-R Town Center Residential**

Comm Joe Robbins, Jr. requested that citizens wishing to speak on this matter be allowed to do so prior to any discussion occurring among commissioners. It is clarified that the WPC's by-laws allow for a three-minute limit on each speaker. Ashley Gates gives a summary of the rezoning application, which is attached as an exhibit to these minutes (Appendix B). The SETD staff recommendation is for approval with the condition that the developer provide a landscaped buffer between all developed areas and the abutting properties.

Comm Werner Slabber questioned whether a Traffic Impact Study would be required. Ashley Gates noted that the Design Review Commission has recommended that all Taft Highway developments have a traffic study completed.

Town Attorney Sam Elliott clarified that the only item before the WPC during this meeting is whether or not they will affirm their previous action to grant the rezoning request.

Chairman Tom Bartoo stressed to the WPC members that what was before them right now was just the request to rezone. Any planning or approval of design would fall to the Design Review Commission.

Mr. George Simmons has relinquished his time to Mr. Gary Smith. Mr. Smith recited the history of this site, purchased in 1996 by William Raines, and has previously sought permission for a high-density development on this property. The Walden Board of Mayor and Aldermen have denied his application for such a development on two previous occasions. Mr. Smith is opposed to the rezoning due to safety, traffic, water runoff, and sewage issues. Mr. Tony Wheeler is also opposed to the rezoning request, citing concerns over sewage management.

Ms. Andrea Mynatt yielded her time to Ms. Grace Mynatt. Grace Mynatt's comments were submitted in writing to the Town of Walden, and they are attached as an exhibit to these minutes (Appendix C).

Mr. Geof Workinger is concerned about the arrangement of the buildings on the property. He feels that the structures are too close to Taft Highway and may be violating the required setbacks. He asked for clarification on the setbacks.

Mr. Jack Kruesi spoke in support of STEP waste systems, and invited the WPC to visit his site. Mr. Kruesi gave his additional time back to Mr. Geof Workinger, who continued to want clarification on the required setbacks. Comm Dawson Wheeler asked Mr. Kruesi how many homes he had developed in the Wild Ridge subdivision, and Mr. Kruesi answered "59." The waste system in Wild Ridge was approved by nine different agencies.

Mr. Colin Johnson spoke on behalf of the developer / applicant. Mr. Johnson stated that he is not opposed to conversations regarding the density on the property in question. Current density is 2.77 units per acre.

Comm Angela Cassidy noted her concerns over “major mathematical errors” that impacted the topography reported on the original application. Comm Cassidy noted that the Town has received the following:

- 64 signatures from Walden residents against the proposal
- 19 signatures from non-Walden residents against the proposal
- 5 signatures from unknown residences against the proposal
- 4 signatures from Walden residents for the proposal
- 2 signatures from non-Walden residents for the proposal
- 1 signature from an unknown residence for the proposal

Comm Joe Robbins, Jr. stated his concerns about the STEP waste system that would be utilized for a high-density development. Comm Robbins is also concerned about the definition of “open space,” which he feels is unclear. In closing, he stated his concerns for public safety and an enhanced traffic risk.

Comm Tim Hilvers noted his concerns surrounding challenges regarding wastewater. He feels the WPC, DRC, and Board of Mayor and Aldermen should fully complete their due diligence prior to a decision of this nature being made.

Comm Dawson Wheeler stated that he chaired the committee that completed the Land Use Plan in consultation with Keith Covington. He noted that this proposal involves one small piece of high-density development.

Comm Bill Trohanis recognized all of the work that had been done by Ashley Gates and SETD. Mr. Trohanis stressed that the rezoning of this property is the only issue before the WPC at this meeting.

#### **1. Consideration of zoning condition to limit density – Commissioner Robbins**

COMMISSIONER JOE ROBBINS, JR. MOVED TO APPROVE THE APPLICATION FOR REZONING AT 2315 TAFT HIGHWAY WITH THE CONDITION OF A DENSITY LIMIT (ONE RESIDENCE PER ACRE), SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER ANGELA CASSIDY. A SHOW OF HANDS WAS TAKEN FOR THE VOTE. THE MOTION FAILED WITH THE FOLLOWING RESULTS:

In Favor – Comms Angela Cassidy, Joe Robbins, Jr., and Tim Hilvers

Opposed – Comms Bill Trohanis, Werner Slabber, Dawson Wheeler, and Tom Bartoo

Comm Angela Cassidy stated her concern that the WPC is “putting the cart before the horse,” as they are looking at making a decision prior to all ordinances being in place.

COMMISSIONER WERNER SLABBER MOVED TO APPROVE THE APPLICATION FOR REZONING AT 2315 TAFT HIGHWAY WITH THE CONDITION RECOMMENDED BY SETD, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER BILL TROHANIS. A SHOW OF HANDS WAS TAKEN FOR THE VOTE, THE MOTION PASSED WITH THE FOLLOWING RESULTS:

In Favor – Comms Bill Trohanis, Werner Slabber, Dawson Wheeler, and Tom Bartoo

Opposed – Comms Angela Cassidy, Joe Robbins, Jr., and Tim Hilvers

Comm Tim Hilvers stated his concern that a precedent was being set. Town Attorney Sam Elliott noted that there was no precedent, legally speaking. The WPC is just voting on one application.

## **IX. NEW BUSINESS**

### **a. Special Permit Application for Anderson Avenue Lots**

Property owner James Garner spoke regarding this application. Mr. Garner and his sister own lots on Anderson Avenue. There is some confusion as to whether or not there are three or six lots, but these lots were originally platted in 1913. Access was to be provided via Anderson Avenue, which has never been constructed. The applicants are requesting access via the unimproved right-of-way to the originally platted lots. Because the lots are not accessed by a publicly maintained road, a special permit is required to build a residence. Mr. Garner and his sister are seeking to sell these lots, so they are requesting a special permit so that potential buyers will be able to build a home. SETD staff recommends approval.

COMMISSIONER WERNER SLABBER MOVED TO APPROVE THE SPECIAL PERMIT APPLICATION, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER TOM BARTOO, AND APPROVED BY A MAJORITY OF THE WALDEN PLANNING COMMISSION, WITH COMMISSIONER ANGELA CASSIDY ABSTAINING.

### **b. Subdivision Regulation Amendment Regarding Public Sewer and Decentralized Wastewater Systems**

This item has been removed from the agenda, as the Board of Mayor and Aldermen will determine the best path forward for this amendment.

### **c. Election of Officers – Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary**

SETD representative Ashley Gates takes over as temporary chairperson to lead the election of officers for the Walden Planning Commission (WPC), and she opened the floor to nominations for chairman.

COMMISSIONER WERNER SLABBER MOVED TO NOMINATE TOM BARTOO AS CHAIRMAN OF THE WALDEN PLANNING COMMISSION, SECONDED BY BILL TROHANIS. JOE ROBBINS, JR. MOVED TO NOMINATE TIM HILVERS AS CHAIRMAN, AND MR. HILVERS DECLINED THE NOMINATION. TOM BARTOO WAS APPROVED AS CHAIRMAN BY A MAJORITY OF THE WALDEN PLANNING COMMISSION, WITH COMMISSIONER ANGELA CASSIDY ABSTAINING.

COMMISSIONER DAWSON WHEELER MOVED TO NOMINATE TIM HILVERS AS VICE-CHAIRMAN OF THE WALDEN PLANNING COMMISSION, AND MR. HILVERS ACCEPTED THE NOMINATION. TIM HILVERS WAS APPROVED AS VICE-CHAIRMAN BY A MAJORITY OF THE WALDEN PLANNING COMMISSION, WITH COMMISSIONER ANGELA CASSIDY ABSTAINING.

COMMISSIONER TOM BARTOO MOVED TO NOMINATE WERNER SLABBER AS SECRETARY OF THE WALDEN PLANNING COMMISSION. WERNER SLABBER WAS APPROVED AS SECRETARY BY A MAJORITY OF THE WALDEN PLANNING COMMISSION, WITH COMMISSIONER ANGELA CASSIDY ABSTAINING.

### **d. 2025 Meeting Schedule**

It is determined that the meeting schedule for the WPC in 2025 will continue to be the fourth (4<sup>th</sup>) Thursday of each month with three exceptions.

- There will be no meeting in July.
- The November meeting will be on Wednesday, November 19<sup>th</sup>.

- There will be no meeting in December.

COMMISSIONER ANGELA CASSIDY MOVED TO APPROVE THE 2025 MEETING SCHEDULE WITH THE ABOVE-NOTED CHANGES, SECONDED BY TIM HILVERS AND UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED BY THE WALDEN PLANNING COMMISSION.

**X. ADJOURNMENT**

\COMMISSIONER WERNER SLABBER MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER ANGELA CASSIDY, AND UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED BY THE WALDEN PLANNING COMMISSION.

Chairman Tom Bartoo adjourned the meeting.



Respectfully submitted:  
Stacy Stewart



Approved:  
Mariah Prescott, Town Administrator



Approved:  
Tom Bartoo, Chairman