

Berryville Apartment Project Sidetracked

Val Van Meter
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BERRYVILLE— “We’re getting there by a very circuitous route,” the Rev. Daniel Garrett said Tuesday night.

He was talking about a plan to build a 60-unit senior apartment complex, similar to the Mary Hardesty House, near it in Battlefield Estates.

Garrett spoke during a public hearing, hoping to persuade the town Planning Commission to recommend that the Town Council approve a rezoning that would change a little more than 12 acres off Mosby Boulevard from business use to “older person residential.”

But the goal was sidetracked when Town Planning Administrator Christine Dunkle told the commission that Town Attorney Robert Mitchell wanted changes in the wording of the proffers that accompanied the rezoning request.

And he wanted it signed.

The proffers, which were reworked to reflect earlier criticisms of the request, hadn’t gotten back to the representatives of the Virginia United Methodist Housing Development Corp. in Locust Grove.

Garrett, retired from Duncan Memorial United Methodist Church in Berryville and a resident of Battlefield Estates, is the chairman of CASH (Clarke Affordable Senior Housing).

He said the United Methodist Church in Virginia had identified the need for affordable housing for seniors three decades ago.

Mary Hardesty House, one result of its efforts, showed that the corporation has “met the test” of providing safe, affordable housing, Garrett said.

Commission members appeared prepared to support the rezoning, but the unsigned contract for the offers to mitigate impacts of the development stopped them.

“I feel strongly that this is the proper place for OPR” zoning, said Commissioner Robert Ferrebee, “but it would be unwise to ignore the advice of the town attorney.”

Commissioner John Lincoln moved to schedule another public hearing at the July 23 meeting, provided that the signed proffer is returned by July 13 — then the members could also take up a request for a special-use permit for the development.

The commissioners also want to look at the preliminary site development plan, but, Dunkle said, the town attorney has stated that a different body — the joint town/county Berryville Area Development Authority — has the right to approve site plans, under an agreement between the two jurisdictions.

Commission Chairman Harold Rohde suggested that the two might hold a joint public hearing, but Ferrebee said he would prefer to have the commission hold its own and make a recommendation to the BADA.

Under state guidelines, the Town Council needs to get the commissions' recommendation for consideration by its August meeting.