MEMORANDUM

To: Planning Commission

From: Anne McClung, Planning and Building Department Director

Date: November 26, 2019

Subject: UPDATE on requests by the Virginia Tech Foundation for redevelopment at 220 Gilbert Street including RZN 19-0007 - Request to amend existing Downtown Commercial zoning, CUP 19-0006 - Request for addition height up to 100’ in the DC district, and RZN 19-0008 - Request to amend existing North End Special Signage District ROW19-0001 - Request to vacate Town-owned right-of-way

At the November 19, 2019 Council work session, there was discussion regarding all of the North End/Gilbert Street mixed-use development requests. Several items were brought up that required further consideration and response from the applicant or staff. The responses are outlined below.

To assist Council in review of the application materials for the different requests, the applicant has provided revised applications for each item. The applicant has incorporated all of the changes that have occurred to date so the revised application materials reflect the most current proposal on all of the requests. The revised applications, dated November 22, 2019 and received November 26, 2019 are posted to the Town website.

The Gilbert Street/North End projects are on the December 3, 2019 work session agenda. Council has not yet reviewed the proffer statement for the rezoning including conditions applicable to the Conditional Use Permit request. Staff anticipates going through the proffers and conditions at the work session in addition to responding to any other questions Council may have. The proffers can be found in the revised rezoning application at the end of the submittal on unnumbered pages 50-52.

RZN19-0007 AMENDMENT TO DOWNTOWN COMMERCIAL ZONING AND CUP19-0006 FOR ADDITIONAL HEIGHT

- Gilbert Street and Turner Street Pedestrian Improvements
  The applicant has incorporated the commitment to the Turner Street and Gilbert Street pedestrian improvements on page 17 of the revised application. The improvements are also shown on Sheets #L100, #L200 and #AZ-100 in the revised graphics package. These documents reflect the improvements as presented by staff at the November 19th work session.

- Prices Fork Road Transportation
  As discussed at the November 19th work session, the applicant is proposing a cash proffer to address the warrant for a turn lane and taper on Prices Fork Road to mitigate vehicular project impacts as identified in the Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA). The cash proffer is offered in lieu of the construction of the vehicular improvements. The funds would be used to support mode shift and improved pedestrian and bicycle travel on the road segment of Prices Fork Road from the North Main St. roundabout to Toms Creek Rd. As previously noted, the Town is working with WRA on infrastructure improvements to improve pedestrian and bicycle travel and safety in this corridor.
The language for the cash proffer is proposed as follows:

“In lieu of providing a turn lane into the site entrance on Prices Fork Road and an acceleration lane on Prices Fork Road for vehicles exiting the site warranted by the Applicant’s Traffic Impact Analysis, Applicant shall pay to the Town of Blacksburg within one hundred and twenty (120) days of site plan approval for the Gilbert Street Mixed-Use Building site development an amount equal to Two Hundred Fifty-Thousand and 00/100 ($250,000.00) for use by the Town of Blacksburg for pedestrians and bicycle improvements within Downtown Blacksburg along the Prices Fork Road corridor between Tom’s Creek and the traffic roundabout.”

- **St. Luke and Odd Fellows Hall**
  - Council asked for verification of the setback distance on the north side of the building facing Odd Fellows at the elevated building projection. The building setback at ground level is 90’. The graphic in the revised application package (AZ-105) shows the building projection at 15’ 6”, which would be a setback of 74’ 6” from Odd Fellows Hall. The building has two step backs at higher elevations where the setbacks would be approximately 104’ and 118’.
  
  - The applicant has continued working on a Memorandum of Agreement with the Blacksburg Museum and Cultural Foundation (BMCF), the Virginia Tech Foundation and the Town. The agreement covers the interior and exterior tribute to the New Town community, design and maintenance of landscaping, access and use of the greenspace areas and parking for meetings at Odd Fellows Hall. The applicant and the Town Attorney will provide more information on the agreement status at the work session.

**RZN19-0008 NORTH END SPECIAL SIGNAGE DISTRICT AMENDMENT**

- At the work session there were concerns about the proposed 60 square foot sign size proposed for wall signs for larger tenants (leasing 12,500 sq. ft. or greater). In response, the applicant has reduced the large tenant signage to 40 sq. ft. at ground level. The rooftop restaurant/event facility signage would remain at 60 square feet.

- Examples of signage were requested by Council in order to better evaluate the size of the wall signage requested. Staff was not able to find an exact 60 square foot wall sing. Examples for comparison include the following:
  - McClain’s sign interior to First and Main commercial center is 48.52 square feet in area.
  - Trebel sign on Country Club Drive across from South Main Kroger’s is 75 square feet

**ROW19-0001 REQUEST TO VACATE TOWN-OWNED RIGHT-OF-WAY ALONG GILBERT STREET AND PRICES FORK ROAD**

- At the work session there was the suggestion of expanding the right-of-way exchange to include more land around Odd Fellows Hall. The applicant has opted not to provide any additional land area around Odd Fellows Hall. A graphic showing the current and proposed Town ownership is included in the graphics package for the revised application (Sheet #C700).

**Attachments**

- Sign illustrations