

**TOWN OF WEST POINT  
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING  
SEPTEMBER 1, 2021**

**I. Call to Order**

The West Point Planning Commission held its regularly scheduled meeting on Wednesday, September 1, 2021. Chairman Brockwell called the meeting to order.

Members Present: James Brockwell, Chairman  
Britney Ball, Vice-Chairman  
Mary Montague Sikes  
James Vadas

Members Absent: James Hudson, III  
Stuart Daniel  
Teresa Glidewell

Staff Present: Holly N. McGowan, Director of Community Development  
Andrea Erard, Town Attorney  
Shari Carnell, Recording Aide

**II. Review of Agenda**

There were no changes to be made to the agenda.

**III. Citizens Address the Commission**

Chairman Brockwell opened the floor to any citizen to address the Planning Commission.

Garland Jenkins, 3470 Southern Avenue, stated he was disappointed with the August Planning Commission meeting. The Planning Commission had a quorum and did not vote.

Chairman Brockwell closed the citizen's address.

**IV. Old Business**

A. Special Use Permit, Case # SUP2021-01, Virginia Vranian Trust, Homestay

The Community Development office received a Special Use Permit application submitted by Rafael Guroian for property owned by Virginia Vranian Trust. The applicant requests approval of a special use permit for the operation of a homestay located at 590 River Road, taxmap number

63A1-3-U in the R-1 Zoning District. A public hearing was held on August 4, 2021. The Planning Commission deferred the case until the September 1, 2021, meeting.

Chairman Brockwell opened the floor for public comments beginning with the applicant.

1.) Rafael Guroian, 1800 Salisbury Drive Midlothian, VA 23113, stated, gratitude toward the Planning Commission for allowing him to address the commission. Mr. Guroian stated the Vranian family is committed to the Town of West Point and showing support for the town.

Mr. Guroian stated family would like to maintain and preserve the residence for future generations by preserving the property and will avoid any additional impact in the area from further development. Mr. Gurian said, "Like our neighbors, we appreciate the surrounding area and we care about the community. The Vranian Homestay would only be offered to individuals with a number of safeguards in place to ensure the integrity of our community such as limiting the number of guests on the property." Mr. Guroian provided the Planning Commission members with a new plat to show additional parking where off-street parking will be mandated by anyone who stays at the house.

Mr. Guroian stated his family still intends to use the property located at 590 River Road for residential purposes and the application submitted complies with residential use and the intent of the R-1 Zoning District. Mr. Guroian stated the application submitted does not preclude the intended use. Mr. Guroian stated any conditions or restrictions the Planning Commission want in place will be followed.

2.) Theresa Redd, 690 River Road, stated she opposed the special use permit application SUP2021-01. It is not a permitted use in the R-1 Zoning District and a business should not be allowed in the R-1 Zoning District.

3.) Sheree Hilton, 4090 Azalea Crescent, stated she opposes the special use permit application. It is not a permitted use in the R-1 Zoning District and does not support the Town Code for the R-1 Zoning District.

4.) Timothy Brown, 3800 Camellia Drive, stated he opposes the special use permit application. Mr. Brown said, "Conditions are not the right fit for a business use and the road is an estimated 16ft in width which has trouble supporting the current traffic."

5.) Terry Hall, 350 West Euclid Boulevard, stated she is new to the area and what attracted her to the Town of West Point was the community and the people. Ms. Hall stated she did not want to set a precedence for more air bnbs to come into the area every time a house in the neighborhood goes on the market because it risks losing what makes the Town of West Point a wonderful place. Ms. Hall stated she opposes the special use permit.

6.) Brenton Bohannon, 710 River Road, stated his comment is the same as the previous meeting. The applicant will not be living on the property and renting it out. It will solely run as a business and the applicant's family will occasionally stay at the residence. Mr. Bohannon stated if this special use permit is approved investors will think there is money to be made in this area and will buy houses in the area with the intention of creating air bnbs. Mr. Bohannon stated he is opposed to the special use permit.

7.) Charles Redd, III, 690 River Road, stated this special use permit application for a homestay in the R-1 Zoning District is not a homestay/air bnb. The intentions of the applicant by the several revisions made to his narratives all yield the same results; it is a business. Mr. Redd stated the applicant mentioned at the previous meeting if he does not receive approval for the homestay, he would sell the lots for development. Mr. Redd stated he would prefer the applicant sell the lots for development because the R-1 Zoning District is zoned for single family dwellings and whoever buys the properties would build a house on those properties. Mr. Redd opposes the special use permit.

8.) John Harper, 510 West Euclid Boulevard, stated he was unable to attend the August 4, 2021, Planning Commission meeting but he did submit a handwritten statement to Ms. McGowan stating he and his wife Eleanore's position on opposing the special use permit application as well as their concerns. Mr. Harper stated allowing a business in the R-1 Zoning District would set a precedence for the area and it would have an impact on the community and the river front. Mr. Harper stated his concern is regardless of what restrictions are put in place renters of the homestay will not abide by those rules. Mr. Harper stated that he is opposed to the special use permit because he believes it will set a precedence that will create the possibility for air bnbs/homestays along River Road.

9.) Virginia Blaska, 790 River Road, stated she recently moved to River Road from Lee Street in February due to the community and less traffic. Ms. Blaska stated that before she retired, she commuted every day from West Point to Chester and does not understand if the applicant loves this property the way he describes he could move here and commute. Ms. Blaska stated she opposes the special use permit.

10.) Howard Hilton, 4090 Azalea Crescent, stated that he opposes the special use permit application. Mr. Hilton stated he believes the applicant's request is for business purposes and he does not want a business in the neighborhood.

11.) Betty Brown, 3800 Camellia Drive, stated she opposes the special use permit application. Mrs. Brown stated friends of hers from Richmond shared insight of what living next door to an air bnb is like, vulgar things very unpleasant.

Chairman Brockwell closed the public comment.

Chairman Brockwell opened the discussion and stated Mr. Vadas was unable to attend the August 4, 2021, Planning Commission meeting and was provided with a recording of the session. Chairman Brockwell stated during the meeting last month he was opposed to the special use permit application due to how the text is written and his understanding of someone must live on the property, but no one is living there. Chairman Brockwell said, "I'm not opposed to it for that reason and am willing to discuss it further."

Mr. Vada stated that he had some notes that he would like to review with the Planning Commission members. Mr. Vadas stated he would read his list out loud and if the Planning Commission member had any thoughts to contribute just let him know.

Mr. Vadas said, "There are several residents opposing the request."

Mr. Vadas continued, "The narrative has been revised several times with every negative reaction from the neighbors, with each revision, restriction, and limitations are changed or added and I find it difficult to believe that tighter restrictions will help pay the bills on the Vranian estate."

Mr. Vadas said, "Another concern is relying on a caretaker to take responsibility of the property, renters, compliance of rules being followed and how many people are on the property."

Mr. Vadas said, "Apparently, several family members do wish to keep the home in the family, this way they can come back to visit, family reunions, rejoice in the nostalgia, unfortunately with their family so spread out they may have to face the realization that they must sell the home or one of the family members must buy the home. It is obvious that those acting for the Trust had planned to see the home and property, otherwise why have the properties surveyed and subdivided in early 2021. Someone must have changed their mind and thought this was a better option."

Mr. Vadas continued, "Where should homestays be located? The Planning Commission and Town Council left the option open in many districts in the Town. Each possibility is to be decided on a case-by-case basis through the special use permit. Is this the right location? In my experience I have visited many types of homestays/ air bnbs throughout Virginia traveling for work and the Vranian home is not what you see when you think of homestay. The negative side of having a homestay in this location would be it is a narrow street on a dead-end road, with limited parking. If someone were to host a major event such as a wedding, the R-1 neighborhood allows for on street parking. What other conditions could you recommend be added to minimize the impact of the neighborhood? No more than five vehicles on the property at a time? No parking signs? No music being played at a wedding reception? I expect income would be greatly impacted."

Mr. Vadas said, "How often would the homestay be rented? How often would the homestay remain vacant? I believe the home would be vacant more often than it would be rented."

Mr. Vadas said, "I feel that the negatives outweigh the positives, the family is dispersed throughout the country and the income will not significantly benefit the Town. I do see the potential for a venue in Town that could host these types of events, but this is not the location for them. I am not in favor of approving this special use permit."

Chairman Brockwell stated the Planning Commission could add more stringent conditions than what is currently listed in the staff recommendation, however the no parking signs would not be fair to the adjoining property owner to have to see through out their community. Chairman Brockwell also stated most of the other concerns are addressed in the conditions of the special use permit staff report.

Mrs. Sikes stated if the applicant were to relocate to the Town as his primary residence and commute for his job, may aid in receiving approval for a special use permit for the homestay.

Ms. Ball stated the homestay regulations define homestay as an accessory or secondary use. In this case the applicant will use the homestay as the primary use. Ms. Ball said, "I interpret this to say it is not the secondary use, if someone was living in the Vranian house it would be

considered the secondary use but no one will be living there. Ms. Ball stated host, resident, or owner are compliant with Town code, but primary and secondary use is where the issue lies.

Chairman Brockwell stated he thinks it is a wonderful idea and with the staff recommendations some of the concerns would be addressed. For example, condition #12. In the event of a complaint regarding the homestay from a neighbor, the property owner shall use best efforts to address the complaint. If more than two complaints are received by the Town in a six-month period, this special use permit may be revoked by the Town. Chairman Brockwell stated other conditions can be added for example only five cars allowed on premises at a time.

Chairman Brockwell stated we also must take into consideration what Ms. Ball said regarding Town Code and the applicant would like for the homestay to be the primary use not the secondary use as the code says it should.

Mr. Vadas stated this does not mean a homestay does not belong in the R-1 Zoning District. Every special use permit case is different; it just does not work out in this instance.

Mr. Vadas made a motion on case #SUP2021-01, Virginia Vranian Trust, Homestay to recommend to Town Council denial of special use permit. Ms. Ball seconded the motion. Upon roll call vote, Chairman Brockwell, Ms. Ball, Mrs. Sikes, and Mr. Vadas all voted "Aye." No one opposed motion carried.

**V. Committee Reports**

There was no one present to give a committee report.

**VI Adoption of Minutes**

Mrs. Sikes made a motion to adopt the minutes from the August 4, 2021, Planning Commission meeting. Ms. Ball seconded the motion. All in favor responded, "Aye." No one opposed. Motion carried.

**VI. Motion to Adjourn**

Mr. Vadas made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Ball seconded the motion. All in favor responded, "Aye." No one opposed. Motion carried.

  
Chairman James Brockwell  
West Point Planning Commission

## Commissioner's Terms

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