

ELIZABETH BAKER
Mayor

HARRY R. CASH
Town Attorney

MATTHEW W. JUSTICE
Town Manager



CLAY CRUMBLISS
Vice Mayor

ANDREW GARDNER
Councilmember

J. MILES JORGENSEN
Councilmember

CHARLES POSS
Councilmember

Town of Signal Mountain

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SIGNAL MOUNTAIN, TENNESSEE 37377
423-886-2177

PLANNING COMMISSION REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETING MINUTES

Signal Mountain Town Hall

5:30 pm, March 5th, 2026

- ☒ Andrew Coyle, Chairman
- ☐ Charles Poss, Vice-Chairman
- ☒ Monica Baker, Secretary

- ☒ Elizabeth Baker, Mayor ☒ Jacob Levy ☒ Marcia Cooper
- ☐ Vacant ☒ Jon Garvich ☒ Austin Scofield

Also Present: Harry Cash, Town Attorney; Garrett Haynes, Planner; Candi Barthelemy, Executive Assistant

I. Call to Order 5:31pm

II. Approval of Minutes

January 8th, 2026.

Commissioner Schofield (AS) moved to approve minutes, Commissioner Cooper (MC) Seconded. Approved.

February 5th, 2026.

Commissioner Elizabeth Baker (EB) moved to approve minutes, AS Seconded. Approved.

III. Old Business (summary below, details found in online Recording)

I. Shackleford Ridge Road – Preliminary Plat (Ragan Smith)

- **Developer Presentation – related to recently issued UES Geophysical and Geotechnical report (located on PC webpage)**

Derek Kilday with UES Professional Solutions provided relevant area history as related to mining, and that much of the mountain had been successfully developed over such mines. He noted that historically found not unsafe if proper investigation and precautions were taken. He provided additional handouts, referencing blowups of report Figure 17, mapping of landmarks adjacent to developed areas and historical, and historical mining related

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activities in the area. He noted they did document review and geophysical work; added data; completed soil test boring all reflected in report. Borings proposed were situated from document review and any anomalies. Mr. Kilday reported in take-away that the risk in developing is no greater than for other properties that have been successfully developed elsewhere on the mountain. He indicated data didn't show any houses over voids. Phase 2 wasn't looked at because there were no documented mines on that portion and they had good understanding of coal seam locations.

EB noted several apparent minor inconsistencies in the report needing correction, and queried analysis of several indications. Mr. Kilday answered several questions related to approach used, e.g., did document review to identify general area, then did borings in any areas of concern for most accuracy. Other information used more for targets, borings for accuracy. He provided reasoning for including/excluding elements and considerations.

AC noted while PS was not receiving public presentations today, that there had been a very large amount of public communication/comments which the PC had heard and he had carefully considered.

- **Town Staff Review of Development**

Garrett Haynes, the Town staff planner, summarized progression of the Shackleford Ridge development review to today, as well as his view of the development. The concept plan was received late last year, plat review early this year, discussion and public comment, tabling until today awaiting the geotechnical report, and a planning workshop a week ago. His recommendation looking at the plat, zoning requirements is the same since reached in February – questions and requirements had been addressed, he recommended approval of the plat.

- **Planning Commission Discussion**

In broader context to all the information provided for making decision, Chair Andrew Coyle (AC) expressed appreciation for Mr. Haynes efforts, and he and Mayor Baker (EB) noted the many inputs received from the public, the importance of sharing their views, and appreciation for the healthy discourse.

EB made a Motion to approve the preliminary plat with 2 conditions: first, to continue to investigate a second entry access path and second, related to the CES report, to undergo a peer review and correction of errors noted. AC seconded the motion.

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Commissioners further discussed a second access, noting that it was desired but not required for development of less than 200 homes, and that there were other subdivisions without a second access. While recognizing it wasn't required, all agreed to the motion to continue to look at.

Regarding the broader development decision, EB indicated that even if someone didn't want the subdivision, it is important to uphold the existing ordinances. If ordinances are not aligned with what community needs, they can be changed in the future but can't be forced differently on developers today. That could result in lawsuits that would require use of Town funds that is not in the best interest of the Town.

Commissioner Jacob Levy (JL) read text of subdivision regulations (2-105.601, items 2 and 3) addressing "detrimental to the public safety, health or general welfare..." and "...approval of the plat is not in best interest of the Town...", pointing out both are open to interpretation.

EB referenced the workshop discussion regarding decisions cannot be arbitrary, and her extensive efforts reviewing attorney general opinions and case law. On those bases, she believed a denial of the plat would be found arbitrary.

JL questioned what was in the best interests of the Town and expressed his opinion that development was detrimental and opposed by residents – mostly around impact to character of Town, public safety and traffic, school overcrowding, drive volumes, increased volume ride share up and down mountain. Therefore, he sees not in best interests of the Town.

EB noted that it could not be arbitrary and would need SME inputs. Need for expert opinion, not just public or commissioner opinions. For example, if the school board said the development was detrimental to safety, then not arbitrary. Need expert opinion.

A large challenge was noted where impacts are outside the realm of the development, things up to the county or Town to address. For example, the commissioners don't want traffic to be worse and need to aggressively go after grants; need to survey entire travel corridor; and move out of schools more effectively. But it doesn't fall in inner realm of the development, more in realm of county, town and state.

Commissioners noted need for public to voice their opinions and concerns as they have, but it is not the only basis.

The commissioners continued discussion of what they viewed would satisfy either of the 2 elements.

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JL indicated he would qualify that as supportable manageable growth of town in character as addressed with expression of the people. His views continued along the following lines as related to impacts that he would consider. In respect to various considerations, he would not include mining. Not tree canopy. Traffic is close call for some members of community not others. The broader traffic and school concerns, impact to enjoyment of area, public services impact, potential children bussing off, strike directly to detriment to safety, health and welfare of Town. While some issues are others' responsibility, doesn't mean the commission can't say what situation is, looking at as town is today. Preponderances of comment and emails, net of recent 6 supporting the development, appeared against public interest.

Commissioner Austin Scofield (AS) disagreed with that premise, noting that at the prior meeting where 20 people talked, half don't live in the Town. He noted a number of people sent emails and don't like this. On the order of 20-30. He respects those inputs. However, his family moved here in 1990 and over the years houses have been built in any available space. While some don't like, the other 8000 residents seem happy with houses on every flat space. Don't think this factors in. Traffic factors in. A matter of whether developers are in bounds of what rules are. That's it.

Commissioner Coyle shared concern of overcrowding but summarized thinking on related impacts of interest as related to requirements and PC decision. Points included how can fairly consider some of the mentioned elements when someone has complied with regulations. For example school is gray area, not proper to consider. Can't control school board. PC could deny development and then school board move to add wing to the school. Road will need to be addressed and he expects that it will be at some point. PC is not denial commission, here to make sure comply with regulations that city chose to implement. A problem if go above and beyond. He noted that the school will be crowded by single family homes over 5 years with or without subdivision. Concern that fire chief noted access doesn't comply with IFC, but other developments have been approved with same thing (single access). The added burden on public services and access conditions commissioners care about. But Town police chief and fire chief say they can absorb this. Denying would be arbitrary if the development complies with ordinances. Doesn't mean schools, trails, aren't important, or people's concerns aren't important. But PC is confined to the rules and regulations and case law that would take over if the development was denied; it would not be good use of Town resources if lawsuit occurred, no matter the well-articulated views of the public.

EB noted that approval doesn't mean issues don't matter. She noted the entire Town staff had signed off on the preliminary plat. This is not final vote on final plat. She trusts town staff to hold developers to applicable TDEC standards, Hamilton County requirements, and ordinances. Next phase, Garrett will also be involved. Basically, today just approving lots and roads. Numbers might get smaller as continue. In prelim planning developer adds as many lots as possible because they can't come back and add but can do less, so this makes sense.

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Commissioner Garvich (JG) noted that Town requirements were dated and updates (planning/zoning/land use) needed to be looked at. But the developer has substantially met everything that they had to meet. Also, there were things all would like to see such as school expansion and large amount of Town monies. But PC must vote on the facts, not what they might like to see.

JL noted plat denial wouldn't mean it couldn't be developed at all, just not in this manner, and that the interests of the Town are being considered against the technicalities which is "messy". EB noted that PC had to vote on what has been presented. He encouraged the PC to interact with the messiness of addressing both the interests of the Town and technicalities. JL also expressed a view that there are many things that can be done with the subject land, but his view that there were too many units on the land, likely driven by economic market analysis. He suggested that further analysis might find other options. JL concluded with his view that development is not in best interests of the Town even though meets the technicalities.

Chair Coyle reiterated EB's earlier Motion for conditional approval of the plat, with the two stated conditions - to continue to investigate second entry through good faith effort, and for the UES written report to receive peer review – and called for a vote:

For – Aye: 6
Against – Nay: 1
Motion Approved.

IV. New Business (None)

V. Motion to adjourn: Elizabeth Baker **Approved.**

Adjourn 6:21pm