

**Richlands Planning Commission**  
**Joint Public Hearing**  
**January 18, 2022**

**Members Present**

Barry Alley  
Michelle Elswick  
Elliot Joyce  
Randy Smith  
Richard Smith

**Staff and Town Officials**

**Present**  
Connie Allen  
Ashley Harris  
Jeff Hurst  
Bradley Pyott  
Nathan Keen  
John O'Daniel

**Guests**

Craig Earls  
Daniel Smith

- I. The meeting was called to order by Rod Cury at 5:30 pm.
- II. Randy gave the invocation.
- III. Pledge of Allegiance.
- IV. The meeting was turned over to Richard Smith.
- V. Blackstone Data:
  - i. Craig Earls spoke on behalf of Blackstone Data. Wanting to put in a small data center and corporate headquarters in the old News Press building. Office and computers
  - ii. Would like for the business to fall under the B-2 Corporate Use zoning instead of retail. Craig's ultimate goal would be to have a technology zone.
  - iii. If the council will not agree to B-2 zoning, is it possible to add that the business has the option to use the first floor?
  - iv. Really want to bring this company and jobs to this area.
  - v. Questions:
    1. Mike- What is your clientele?
      - a. All walks of life. Will use the fiber structure to support this business.
    2. Mike- How much equipment?
      - a. Will not have much equipment there due to lack of power access.
    3. Richard- Would you look at upgrading the power in the future?
      - a. Possibly or purchase a larger facility.
    4. Mike- How close are you to capacity?
      - a. Not there yet.
    5. Mike- Do you see capacity as being an issue?
      - a. Not for now. A building like that cannot support a huge operation.
    6. Mary Ann- How many employees do you envision in the future?
      - a. Possibly 5-10.
    7. Mike- What will those jobs be?
      - a. Hardware and Software primarily. Right now it is hard to get hardware.
    8. Rod asked John why the original request was denied.
      - a. B-2 zoning requires frequent foot traffic and this business does not meet that qualifications. For this reason, he wanted the commission and council to make the decision.
    9. Audience Comments:
      - a. None
    10. Motion to Close Meeting: Randy, 2<sup>nd</sup>: Barry, All voted Aye, Meeting Closed- 2. Lucky Duck- Vape Shop and Online Gambling
  - i. Entertainment Facility Conditional Use
  - ii. Daniel Smith spoke on behalf of Lucky Duck. Wanting to run a vape shop with gaming computers. Most gas stations have them and they are fully legal. There will be a hearing in May. If they are deemed illegal, they will be removed.

1. Rod- Internet Café?
  - a. Similar to the ones in a gas station but run on a desktop versus a machine. You purchase air time to play. It is optional to play.
2. Mary Ann- Do we have any more like this besides gas stations?
  - a. No
3. Mike- What is the difference between your gaming vs gas station?
  - a. Physical machine is the only difference. Gas stations use stand up machines and we use computers.
4. Richard B- What are your hours of operation going to be?
  - a. Comply with the city.
  - b. Standard place runs 9:00/10:00 am to 2:00am.
5. Richard B- Some places run 24/7. Do you foresee that?
  - a. We do not plan to run 24/7.
6. Richard S- We can set the hours of operation with the conditional use.
7. Richard B- We cannot override the state law of 24/7 if that is what it is.
  - a. I don't see that being a problem. I will do what you all want to do.
8. Mike- Will you sell alcohol?
  - a. We will provide snacks/food for no charge but not alcohol.
9. Public Comments:
  - a. Laura- Encourages the council to allow the business to open up. Any business is good for our town.
  - b. Daniel- Not from here but a friend wanted him to bring this here to give him something to do. Everyone he has told about it, has been excited about it.
  - c. Blake- Two businesses having trouble getting open due to outdated zoning and ordinances. Last looked at in 2013. We need to look at the process we need to do to approve these businesses. It should not take up to 120 days to have something approved. It is directly impacting current businesses and future businesses. Make it easier to do business here.

iii. Motion to close made by Barry. 2<sup>nd</sup> Michelle. All voted Aye and meeting closed.

Submitted by: Michelle Elswick, Secretary