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Recommendation of Review of Front Royal's Planning Department Policies & Procedures

On September 27, 2021, the Front Royal Town Council approved a private street to service a new 6-unit townhouse development for Chris Holloway Construction. Chris Holloway is Front Royal's mayor, but he was not present during the town meeting. Council's vote overruled a recommendation by the Planning Commission to deny approval. By law, Front Royal Town Council is not required to approve recommendations from appointed Boards and Commissions.

At the Planning Commission's September 15, 2021, meeting, a motion asking Front Royal's Planning Director to prepare a report on policy and procedures of the subdivision ordinance was approved. The motion focused on Chris Holloway Construction, Inc.'s townhouse project. Later, the Chairman of the Planning Commission asked the Town Attorney to conduct the inquiry. The Town Attorney proceeded with the review even though he works directly for and represents Town Council.

Following weeks of review, the Town Attorney concluded in his report that there was no wrongdoing by the Town Manager, Administration, staff, or Holloway Construction. While it appeared that more time could have been taken to review requests, the findings indicated that the mayor's company was not given priority over other projects.

During the time of the request of Holloway Construction, the Town was without a Planning Director and was in the process of filling the position. With a smaller staff, the Town Manager did not want any development projects delayed, so he offered assistance to Planning staff in moving all types of development projects forward, which included the Holloway Construction plans. The Town Manager is authorized to approve all projects following the Planning Department's review and recommendation, in addition to the Town Attorney's review.

Front Royal's Town Manager, Administration and staff are committed to following proper policy and procedures and will continue to do so in the future. In addition, the Town will be reviewing outdated policies and procedures to ensure consistency. The Planning Commission is scheduled to review the Town Attorney's report tonight.

*Planning Commission report attached.