

A special meeting of the Beaufort County Planning Commission (hereinafter "Commission") was held on Wednesday, April 10, 2002, in the County Council Chambers of the Beaufort County Administration Building at 100 Ribaut Road, Beaufort, South Carolina.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Mr. Jim Hicks, Chair	Mr. Jerome Goode
Ms. Margie Jenkins	Mr. Matt Margotta
Mr. Thomas Mike, Sr.	Mr. Mike Zara

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Mr. John Abney	Ms. Joy Guyer
Mr. Ben Johnson, III, Vice Chair	

**EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS PRESENT:** None

**STAFF PRESENT:**

Mr. Anthony J. Criscitiello, Planning Director  
Mr. Ian Hill, Historic Preservationist  
Ms. Barbara Childs, Administrative Assistant to the Planning Director

**CALL TO ORDER:** Chairman Hicks called the meeting to order at approximately 6:00 p.m.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Chairman Hicks led those assembled in the pledge of allegiance.

**REVIEW OF MINUTES:** The minutes of the March 13, 2002, Commission meeting were reviewed. No corrections were noted. **MOTION: Ms. Jenkins made a motion, and Mr. Goode seconded, to accept as written the minutes of the March 13, 2002, meeting. The motion was carried (FOR: Goode, Hicks, Jenkins & Mike; ABSTAINED: Margotta).**

Chairman Hicks explained the meeting procedure to the audience.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

1. Ms. Alice Jones, noting the inconsistency of the newspaper ads would cause confusion to the public, recommended using the wording in the legal ad for both ads.
2. Ms. Wendy Zara, commenting on the Cultural Resource element, reiterated her earlier request to address access to historic sites, fishing sites, and cemeteries. The Staff responded that the Community Preservation/CP plans would address this topic. Ms. Zara said that many sites are not within CP districts and, of those CP plans completed, none have addressed the access issue.

3. Ms. Pat Green asked for clarification on family compounds on St. Helena Island. She noted several properties on St. Helena that had not been owned for 50 years, but had several homes added in recent years. She is concerned that the multiple number of septic tanks on an acre of land would harm the waterways. She noted such discrepancies on Dulamo Road, the corner of Highway 21 and Heckley, Harbor Breeze Drive, and Ladson Road.

### **NATURAL RESOURCES ELEMENTS OF THE BEAUFORT COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

Mr. Criscitiello briefed the Commissioners. 51% of the County is tidal wetlands. Protective natural resource measures taken by the County included the adoption of the County's 1999 Zoning and Development Standards Ordinance, 2000 dock ordinance, 2001 sea turtle lighting ordinance, 1998 Best Management Practices/BMP manual, and the rural and critical lands program; and participation in the Special Area Management Program/SAMP funded by NOAA funds. Of the 46 recommendations in this element, 31 are completed or underway. Mr. Criscitiello gave detailed information on all the recommendations.

*Note: Mr. Zara entered the meeting at approximately 6:28 p.m.*

#### **Staff Recommendations for consideration by the Commission:**

1. Coordinating and implementing SAMP recommendations should be guided by a multi-jurisdictional group of County, State and municipal officials to advise local and county governments.
2. Protecting resources on a site by determining site suitability; using accurate, timely surveys; and requiring resource delineations and review by qualified County personnel as pre-application requirements for each development request.
3. Establishing criteria for siting golf courses near river quality overlay districts/RQOD to protect the water quality.
4. Assessing point source discharges and improving treatment prior to discharging to the Whale Branch River.

#### **Public Comments:**

1. Ms. Lynn Corliss is concerned since a Charleston area study has shown that a 10% increase in development can show an adverse effect on estuaries. She assumed that the Light Detecting & Ranging/LIDAR will update the 1988 data on the percentage of land developed in Beaufort. She has heard that 80% of commercial and recreational species we depend on live in the estuaries. It is important to move forward with the RQOD boundary ordinance to protect the estuaries since 50% of the County is tidal wetlands. She applauded Council for passing the lighting ordinance to protect the loggerhead sea turtles.
2. Mr. Reed Armstrong of the S.C. Coastal Conservation League commends the authors of the natural resource element on identifying and addressing major issues, which have been verified by other studies. He agrees with the points raised, especially the continual degradation of the waters. He urged the County to continue maintaining an environmental leadership in the state since the Federal and the state governments seem to

- provide less consideration in this area. He asked that the watersheds be considered in protecting the water quality. Include the municipalities as partners in watershed analyses and protections. He noted a study that clearly showed that docks and bridges across the marshes disturb and kill the marsh grass that is part of the food chain process in the area. Expansion of the dock ordinance to include protection to all of the waterways, instead of just the tidal creeks. Strengthen the RQODs. There have been numerous variance applications from the River Protection Overlay District/RPOD--33 in 2001 and this year the pace is similar. The majority of these variances have been from Planned Unit Developments/PUDs.
3. Mr. Robert Robertson read his impassioned comments regarding the life of a barrier island—from flourishing as an undeveloped land to being scarred by developers for profit to being hopeful that the current population would renourish the land to support future generations.
  4. Mr. Skeet Burris, a forester, commented on Policy 5.1. He suggested that forestry should be promoted. The County should help forest land owners to maintain their working forests. Such profitable forest owners are less likely to convert their property for development purposes. Working forests help to prevent open sprawl, to preserve open spaces, to protect the groundwater resources, and to maintain a healthy wildlife population.
  5. Mr. Brad Burnam commented on:
    - a. Policy 4.2.1 should include isolated wetlands to prevent wetland destruction;
    - b. Policy 4.2.3, wetland mitigation: Preserve our natural wetlands instead of using wetland mitigation as a development tool; such mitigation should be used as a last resort. Also clarify the wording “provide opportunities for wetland mitigation”—is it intended to encourage mitigation or simply to be included in the element.
  6. Mr. Bill Marscher, chairman of Clean Water Task Force since 1995, was pleased to see the Special Area Management Plan/SAMP moving from OCRM jurisdiction and into the County for implementation. SAMP cuts across jurisdictional lines. OCRM’s work was easy compared to what the County must do. He strongly supports the recommendation for a citizens group to oversee the proper implementation of the SAMP. He is concerned that staff is not supporting the citizens desires, as evident by the recent Graves rezoning. The citizens group should be a mixture of citizens and governmental officials, like a modified Beaufort County Transportation Advisory Group/BTAG. (Chairman Hicks thanked Mr. Marscher for his continued work on water quality.)
  7. Ms. Alice Jones said it is important not to go too far because everything in that water depends on what comes off this land. If we kill the first of this chain, we kill everything. We could end up with a dead sea. She read a portion of an article from the South Carolina Game & Fish that supports her statements. She stressed that we can clean waterways up too much.
  8. Mr. Chris Bickley, the Director of Lowcounty Council of Governments, supports the staff recommended multi-jurisdictional advisory body with membership from the municipalities in the County and the surrounding counties.
  9. Mr. Jake Martin, a Bluffton resident, commended the staff’s work, supported Policy 4.2.2 regarding subtracting wetland areas, and requested clarification on Policy 4.2.3 regarding developing opportunities for wetland mitigation.

10. Mr. George Johnston recommended a detailed annual, instead of a five-year, review of the County's natural resources similar to the Chesapeake Bay's State of the Bay report.
11. Ms. Wendy Zara, a Sheldon resident, commented on:
  - a. Section 1.3.1: For the sake of consistency with the Land Use element, she recommends reclassifying the CP district in the rural districts as rural investment areas instead of priority investment areas.
  - b. Section 1.4: The Comprehensive Plan specifically calls for 100-foot river buffers or customized dependent on the SAMP. She suggested interim standards by expanding the buffers in the sensitive area. She echoed alarm on the numerous RPOD waivers being heard by the Development Review Team instead of the Zoning Board of Appeals. The current Zoning & Development Standards Ordinance/ZDSO does not contain specific criteria for bridges (especially runoff) as the 1990 ZDSO.
  - c. Section 2.1.2: Integrated Pest Management Practices/IPMP for golf courses should be implement, instead of waiting for SAMP results. Beaufort's groundwater is so high and it doesn't take much to contaminate it.
  - d. Section 3.1.6: She believes golf course fairways were not suppose to be permitted in rural areas, and the current ZDSO does not count fairways as open space. Golf courses are a highly intense use of land and we should require Audubon standards for those courses in the headwater areas.
  - e. Section 4.2.3: The term wetland mitigation is an oxymoron. She explained the developers' practice of wetland mitigation where existing wetlands that are to remain intact are counted and those that are to be filled in are not counted. She urged tougher standards on this issue.
  - f. Section 4.2.6: The County's BMP manual allows developers to use existing wetlands as detention ponds.
  - g. She added that progress has been made, but more should occur with the SAMP.
12. Ms. Carol Tuynman reiterated Ms. Mary Dawson's comment that people are part of the cultural and the natural resources. The Comprehensive Plan and the ZDSO is needed. As the review of the Comprehensive Plan elements move into other elements, she is concerned that financial and political issues will influence the review instead of remembering the preservation of the cultural and natural resources. She noted the adopted County Council goals that included a Countywide growth capacity analysis. We need to look at density and the complexities of zoning. On item 1.1.2, she is concerned with preserving view sheds and viewscapes. Buffers need to have the diversity of all types of plants to keep the water in balance to maintain the existing sea-life and plant-life. She is concerned that the state does not allow the county to regulate forestry. Forestry practices do not encourage bio-diversity to give habitat to endangered species.
13. Mr. Joe Kline, a Dale resident, asked the Commission to ignore earlier references to reverting CP districts to rural districts. (Ms. Zara clarified her recommendation that CP districts should come under the classification more in keeping with their location – priority, transitional and rural)
14. Ms. Libby Barnes, the president of Greater Beaufort County Chamber of Commerce, commended the Commission and those who have been involved planning issues for their work and foresight. The preservation of the County's natural resources is extremely

critical in maintaining the uniqueness of the area. She asked that the Commission look at the vision for an economic base. We should balance the protection of the resources with providing economic opportunities for increasing the quality of life and sustaining the economic livability in the future.

Discussion included interim standards, instituting a 100-foot buffer requirement instead of waiting for SAMP results, considering BMPs for golf courses, recommending an evaluation of river buffer and setback variances to remedy the prolific dock variances, concern that some completed items could have further work done, protecting all County waterways, clarifying pest management practices for golf courses, public access to waterways and preservation of fishing/crabbing/shrimping areas, wetland mitigation as a last resort instead of an option, recommending a timeline for items, and the consolidation of point source into Whale Branch.

*Note: Chairman Hicks recessed the meeting at 8:00 p.m. and reconvened at 8:08 p.m. Audio recording is not available from this point to the end of the meeting.*

### **CULTURAL RESOURCES ELEMENTS OF THE BEAUFORT COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

Mr. Hill briefed the Commissioners on the Cultural Resource element recommendations heard at the March 13, 2002, Commission meeting; and the staff responses thereto. Mr. Hill noted that the County's Public Information Officer would place a speaker's list on the County website, the Grants Administrator should look into grants available and report to County Council, the County's emergency management plan was being created, the County's scenic highway plans will hopefully include Kinloch Road and the combined Marthin Luther King Drive and Lands End Road, the private property access issue involves legal questions which must be addressed, SCDOT is required to look at disturbances of historic and cultural resources prior to construction, and adding a bibliography was time consuming and low priority for staff. Mr. Hill further noted that staff required policy guidance from County Council on items requiring funding.

The Commission commended Mr. Hill on his work regarding responding to the comments from the last meeting.

**MOTION: Mr. Zara made a motion, and Mr. Margotta seconded, to recommend approval the Cultural Resource element with an amendment that the last sentence under Section 6.7 regarding "for public use" be removed. The motion was carried unanimously (FOR: Goode, Hicks, Jenkins, Margotta, Mike & Zara).**

**OTHER BUSINESS:** None were noted.

**ADJOURNMENT:** Mr. Margotta made a motion, and Ms. Jenkins seconded, to adjourn the meeting. The motion was carried unanimously (FOR: Goode, Hicks, Jenkins, Margotta, Mike & Zara). Chairman Hicks adjourned the meeting at approximately 8:26 p.m.

**SUBMITTED BY:**

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Barbara Ann C. Childs, Admin. Assistant to Planning Director

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Jim Hicks, Chairman, Beaufort County Planning Commission

**APPROVED:**

**May 8, 2002**