

The regular meeting of the Beaufort County Planning Commission (hereinafter "Commission") was held on Wednesday, July 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. Ben Johnson, III, Vice Chair  
Ms. Joy Guyer  
Mr. Matthew Margotta

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Mr. John Abney  
Mr. Mike Zara

Mr. Thomas Mike, Sr.

**EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS PRESENT:** None

**STAFF PRESENT:**

Mr. Anthony J. Criscitiello, Planning Director  
Ms. Barbara Ann C. Childs, Administrative Assistant to the Planning Director

**CALL TO ORDER:** Chairman Hicks called the meeting to order at approximately 6:02 p.m.

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

**REVIEW OF MINUTES:** The minutes of the June 12, 2002, Commission meeting were reviewed. No corrections were noted. **MOTION: Ms. Jenkins made a motion, and Ms. Guyer seconded, to accept as written the minutes of the June 12, 2002, meeting. The motion was carried (FOR: Goode, Guyer, Hicks & Jenkins; ABSTAINED: Margotta).**

**CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:**

1. **Parks, Recreation & Open Space Element Review:** Chairman Hicks asked the status of Mr. Zara's recommendation to contact the School District for comments on this element. Mr. Criscitiello had contacted the School District Superintendent's office and is awaiting their reply to schedule a meeting.
2. **Economic Development Element Review:** The review will not occur until after the selection of an Economic Development Director. Instead of a hasty review by the newly selected Director, Chairman Hicks offered that the Commission could recommend accepting the previous recommendations with an option to return at a later date with additional recommendations. Mr. Criscitiello will offer the option to the newly hired Director.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** None was received.

**AFFORDABLE HOUSING ELEMENT OF THE BEAUFORT COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

Mr. John Payne, the County's Affordable Housing Administrator, briefed the Commissioners. He clarified some misperceptions from last month's meeting: the County has coordinated with government and local lenders who are willing to work with the County, there are local leaders willing to serve on the non-profit board, there have been numerous public meetings to discuss the affordable housing problem, and the County's administration has done all the preliminary work and awaits County Council support and guidance. When he moved to Beaufort in 1999 he observed the non-existence of affordable housing and an ongoing battle between the opponents and the proponents of growth. Limited developable land in the County, stringent Zoning & Development Standards Ordinance/ZDSO requirements, impact and tap fees, and high housing demands with a decreased housing supply have created the high housing costs. Beaufort-Jasper Water-Sewer Authority/BJWSA has almost doubled their cap and tap fees. The County has shown its commitment to protecting its natural resources. Let's work together to help the County's valuable human resources—the working people. Affordable housing is an attainable goal and it is working in Bluffton. Growth proponents and opponents should compromise toward a working affordable housing program for the community. Affordable housing assistance with fees and zoning is also recommended. Mr. Payne looks forward to working with the Commission on future affordable housing initiatives.

Mr. Payne indicated the changes in the Policy 1.5 recommendation. Having talked to the Planning staff, he was assured that the in-house staff would be able to complete this recommendation.

**Public Comment:**

1. Ms. Pam McFarland, Town of Bluffton Planning Director, submitted comments to the Planning Department earlier today on this element review. The Town of Bluffton has achieved some successful public/private partnerships in providing affordable housing under \$124,000. Her response to Chairman Hicks' question on the Town's policy on keeping those units affordable since numerous resales usually drive the costs above the affordable level was that The Town of Bluffton does not have such a policy. She suggested investigating other communities on their success in affordable housing and having the County and the municipalities to work together on this issue. (Mr. Payne noted that a soft second mortgage is another tool to keep the housing cost affordable.)
2. Mr. Bob Anderson, of the Lowcountry Community Development Corporation, described his company's training program for homebuyers that may lead to financial assistance from the S.C. Housing Trust and the Federal Home Loan Bank. The program started two years ago and has 30 success stories to date. He noted that two developers have assisted in the program. State funding for this program has decreased and he would like the County to assist in accountability of the funding going into and returning from the SC Housing Trust. It is rewarding to offer housing to unexpected buyers. He serves as the advocate for the applicants.
3. Mr. Chuck Hollie, the Deputy Town Manager of the Town of Hilton Head and a United

Way board member, noted that the United Way has offered to help the County with a volunteer team to write up its housing needs assessment. From the standpoint of the Deputy Town Manager, he believes that the County's in-house staff, with its heavy daily workload, would not be able to do the assessment as thoroughly as the United Way's team.

4. Mr. Tim Rentz, the president of Coastal Contractors, noted that his company has provided housing for the working person for over 45 years. He has been involved with the Affordable Housing Task Force. He believes many things have been accomplished. The County's Comprehensive Plan allows development North of the Broad River only in Burton and on Lady's Island so that is driving up the housing cost. It is impossible to find an area that costs \$1500 per acre. Mr. Rentz was a County Planning Commissioner at the passage of the Plan. That Plan asked for housing development with mixed income levels. He read the letter he wrote to Mr. Covington a year ago that expressed his concerns.
5. Mr. Chris Bickley, the Executive Director of the Lowcountry Council of Governments/LCOG and a member of the County's Affordable Housing Task Force, found that there are many willing to work on and support the County's affordable housing issue. Affordable housing is an important issue that needs the County's leadership and support.
6. Mr. Brad Samuels, an employee of SCANA Corporation and a member of the Affordable Housing Task Force, commended the hiring of Mr. John Payne. He urges the quick completion of the housing needs assessment. He noted that the Task Force considered mobile home communities. He offered his services in locating those who are capable of completing the assessment.

**Discussion and motions, by recommendations:**

1. **Policy 1.5 – Recommendation:** Staff will present a report to the Planning Commission to update the Comprehensive Plan's housing needs assessment with more current data (including the 2000 Census), indicate priority housing needs based on the assessment, and suggest affordable housing goals for the next five years.

Discussion included inserting word "future" before report, noted several people who were willing to do the work so why no use them instead of in-house staff, change wording to indicate.

**MOTION:** Mr. Margotta made a motion, and Ms. Guyer seconded, **to recommend approval of Policy 1.5 recommendation**, as written. The **motion was passed unanimously** (FOR: Goode, Hicks, Jenkins, Johnson & Margotta).

2. **Policies 1.6, 2.2, 4.3, 4.5 & 6.6 – Recommendation:** Refer these policies to the Affordable Housing Committee/AHC for consideration.

Discussion included adding the phrase "with a staff recommendation" in the recommendation, the intent is that Council should confirm their support on the Policies, that Policy 1.6 is policy issue and the AHC should be involved.

**MOTION:** Mr. Margotta made a motion, and Ms. Jenkins seconded, **to recommend approval of Policies 1.6, 2.2, 4.3, 4.5 & 6.6 recommendation to read: “Forward these policies to the Affordable Housing Committee for their determination on the viability of these policies.”** Further discussion included a concern that Policy 4.3 contained the possibility of property condemnation that may create a hardship between the military and the public, a concern that the AHC might not act too quickly on these policies, and the need for further review of Policy 1.6 where the County acts as a loan guarantor. The motion **was passed unanimously** (FOR: Goode, Hicks, Jenkins, Johnson & Margotta).

3. **Policies 1.2, 1.3, 2.5, 5.2, 5.3, 6.3 & 6.4 – Recommendation:** Keep these policies in the Comprehensive Plan.

Discussion included incentives, compromises, rewording the recommendation, and the diversity of the Council’s AHC with representation from the affordable housing and the conservation groups.

**MOTION:** Ms. Jenkins made motion, and Ms. Guyer seconded **to recommend approval of Policies 1.2, 1.3, 2.5, 5.2, 5.3, 6.3 & 6.4 recommendation, as written; and to change Policy 6.4. to read: “Promote the integration of the agendas of the affordable housing and the conservation advocates, by minimizing the conflicts and finding constructive ways to meet the goals of both advocates.”** The motion **was passed unanimously** (FOR: Goode, Hicks, Jenkins, Johnson & Margotta).

Chairman Hicks thanks those attending the meeting. He complimented the work of the County’s Affordable Housing Task Force.

Chairman Hicks noted that the County Planning staff would review the comments by the Town of Bluffton and forward the pertinent issues to the Planning Commission for consideration.

Additional discussion included applying for affordable housing grants, the possibility of the County working with the Lowcountry Community Development Corporation, and the extent of research on programs in other areas.

Chairman Hicks asked for confirmation that until a good housing needs assessment is done, nothing else can be done.

Mr. Payne stated that he has done work regarding board members for 501C3 group.

**OTHER BUSINESS:** None were discussed.

**ADJOURNMENT:** Mr. Margotta made a motion, and Ms. Guyer seconded, to adjourn the meeting. The motion was passed unanimously (FOR: Goode, Hicks, Jenkins, Johnson & Margotta). Chairman Hicks adjourned the meeting at approximately 7:14 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:**

**August 14, 2002**