

The regular meeting of the Beaufort County Planning Commission (hereinafter “Commission”) was held on Tuesday, December 2, 2003, in County Council Chambers of the Beaufort County Administration Building at 100 Ribaut Road, Beaufort, South Carolina.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr. Jim Hicks, Chair
Mr. Alan Herd
Mr. Mike Zara

Mr. Jerome Goode
Mr. Cecil Martin, Jr.

Ms. Joy Guyer
Mr. Vernon Pottenger

MEMBERS ABSENT: Mr. Ben Johnson, III, Vice Chair

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS PRESENT: None

STAFF PRESENT:

Mr. Anthony J. Criscitiello, Planning Division Head
Ms. Delores Frazier, Long-range Planner
Ms. Barbara Ann C. Childs, Administrative Assistant to the Planning Director

CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Hicks called the meeting to order at approximately 6:04 p.m.

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

REVIEW OF MINUTES: The November 5, 2003, meeting minutes were reviewed and one correction was noted on page 4, last paragraph, fourth line to read: “...kudos to the Pathways Connect and Greater Bluffton Pathways organizations for their work...” **Motion:** Mr. Pottenger made a motion, and Ms. Guyer seconded, **to accept** the November 5, 2003, **minutes as amended**. The motion was passed (FOR: Goode, Guyer, Herd, Martin, and Zara; ABTAINS: Pottenger).

CHAIRMAN’S REPORT: Chairman Hicks noted that annual elections for the Commission chair and vice-chair would occur during the January 2004 Commission meeting. Chairman Hicks asked the Commission to consider electing a Southern Beaufort County representative for either the chair or the vice chair.

PUBLIC COMMENT on Non-Agenda Items: Ms. Wendy Zara acknowledged that a lot a work was involved in the Okatie plan, but she recommended not approving the plan since most of the proposed rezoning involves rural areas. The tenants of the Comprehensive Plan say rural areas should be preserved. A southern regional plan is being developed, so the Okatie plan should wait till the southern regional plan is completed. County Council will have third reading of the Planned

Development (PD) ordinance and it should pass. The PD ordinance is intended to rezone rural areas. The Comprehensive Plan will have to be amended simultaneously with each PD rezoning. The Okatie plan does not fit the Okatie area.

SOUTHERN BEAUFORT COUNTY MAP AMENDMENTS/REZONING FOR HIGHWAY 170 PROPERTIES FROM THE ACADEMY FOR CAREER EXCELLENCE (ACE) SOUTH TO U.S. HIGHWAY 278, BUT EXCLUDING OLD FIELD, RIVER'S END AND RIVER'S BEND SUBDIVISIONS AND THE OKATIE COMMERCIAL CENTER

- A. The Beaufort County Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map Amendment from Rural Service Area to Residential/Light Commercial Area**
- B. The Beaufort County Zoning Map Amendment from Rural (R) and Rural-Residential (RR) to Suburban (S) District zoning**
- C. The Text Amendments to the Beaufort County Zoning & Development Standards Ordinance/ZDSO, Appendix O, Highway 170 Southern Corridor Overlay District (adds new overlay district standards)**

Mr. Criscitiello briefed the Commissioners.

Public Comment:

1. Mr. Reed Armstrong of the South Carolina Coastal Conservation League recommended shelving the Okatie plan until the Southern Regional Plan is completed. The residents objected to the plan. The overall density will increase nine-fold with this Plan. Say no to this Plan. Let this massive rezoning lie until the Southern Regional Plan is completed. (His written comments were given for the record.)
2. Ms. Barbara Marhoffer has two grandchildren at Okatie Elementary School. She objects to high density around the school because it might bring unwanted influences. She does like the idea of the pathways and the river buffers.
3. Mr. Roberts Vaux, an attorney representing some property owners in the area, commended the staff on the Plan; however, the Plan can be improved. The area residents at the last community meeting suggested some good ideas. The proposed 22 commercial acres in the vicinity of the school should be moved to the northern part of the tract away from the school. He suggested zoning the property to prevent apartments, except those over commercial businesses. The setback from the river should be averaged greater than 100 feet, not a fixed 100 feet, and become parks. He suggested a flat maximum density of 4-1/2 units per acre, not 8. By removing the high density and apartment uses, and having a buffer along Highway 170 and setting larger river setbacks, the Plan will be acceptable. He suggested an open dialogue between the staff and the property owners. Be responsive to keep landowners from fleeing to municipalities for PDs.

4. Mr. James Scott of the Cherry Point area suggested a compromise. In 1997, the Comprehensive Plan was a compromise. He was amazed at the discussion on increasing the density along Highway 170, which is finally safe for driving. Highway 170 is a dam. Should we consider breaching the dam by building on the Beaufort County side just because Jasper County is spoiling their lands? Why not build a federal prison and rescind the billboard law, like Jasper County? Why do Beaufortonians have to spoil the County with development? He moved here 20 years ago. Those large landowners had a chance to rezone, but they didn't want to pay the higher taxes.
5. Ms. Joanne Sherwood of the Cherry Point Area noted the handout at the community meeting that stated the 73% increase in population from 1990 to 2000. The Town of Bluffton is taking the land to increase their tax base. The recommended 8.5 units per acre will be used more readily instead of the minimum 4 per acre. The University will need student housing; however, college students should not be next to an elementary school. She recommended following Jasper County's moratorium on development. Our County Council is increasing the density in the rural areas. High traffic and high-density housing will jeopardize elementary schoolers. Professionals will not move to high-density housing. People in support of the Plan had large tracts of property that were available for sale. She is not opposed to low-density residential units; she is opposed to commercial development in the area.
6. Ms. Kathy Scott, a 32-year Beaufort County resident, is against the rezoning. The Plan does not justify the rezoning. The planning staff reasonings were all known when the County Council adopted the Comprehensive Plan in 1997. The school district placement of the Okatie Elementary and the Tax Increment Finance (TIF) district are not acceptable reasons for the Okatie Plan. The majority vote is against the Plan.
7. Mr. John Helstrom agreed that development would creep out to the area. The community must come together with a plan acceptable to all. Buckwalter prices are high. There should not be apartments near the school. A traffic problem will occur with the high density of 8.5; 4 single-family units per acre should be the maximum. He is concerned that approved homes will flood the market and remain unoccupied, and lower property values. Smart development should be considered.
8. Mr. Joel Pritchard is in favor of, but does not agree entirely with, the plan. He understands the concerns regarding apartments and increased density. Four of the six large landowners are in favor of this Plan. He knows that the Cherry Point residents have concerns for their elementary schoolers.
9. Mr. Joe Dugan, a Cherry Point resident, noted that most residents at the community meeting were against the Plan. Once adopted, the developers will have the upper hand in zoning. Let the property owners work out variances in rural zoning and County Council can work out the details. Table the Plan until a better solution that is agreeable to all can be formed.
10. Mr. Terry Lassiter has elementary children. Beaufort County has an opportunity to filter water and not ruin the river. The river provides food and recreation to the people. The additional docks from the Sun City Subdivision may ruin the river. Consider the children; notify their parents of this Plan by sending notices through the schools. High density should

not be near elementary schools since the affordable housing atmosphere usually has high occurrences of domestic disturbances. Do not allow commercial uses next to the school. Wait for the results of the Southern Regional Plan. Focus on the river.

Discussion included the Southern Beaufort Subcommittee meeting atmosphere (no voting quorum with two of three subcommittee members present, large number of attendees where 3 were in favor and most in opposition to the Plan); the comments from tonight's public hearing that reflect the comments given at the subcommittee meeting; the substantial growth in Jasper County that will include a five-lane Smith Road; the proposed density being higher than Community Preservation (CP) Districts; the development of the Southern Regional Plan; the choices of action by the Commission for a County Council generated action (this Plan); the desire of the preceding planning staff to maintain a rural quality of life for the area; the Planned Development (PD) ordinance that will allow higher density and might eliminate all rural areas; the correlation of road development and density increases; the Commission taking a stand on the issue to let County Council know their concerns regarding this Plan; growth requiring available housing; considering compromises so that development guidelines for the area in place before the adoption of the PD ordinance to protect the community; the incorporation of the community desires of lower density, no apartments and no affordable housing; and the rationale for this rezoning.

MOTION: Mr. Martin made a motion, and Ms. Guyer seconded, **to return the Plan to staff for the incorporation of the community desires and support.** Discussion included the staff process to involve the community desires and support of the motion. The motion **was passed** (FOR: Goode, Guyer, Hicks, Herd, Martin, and Pottenger; AGAINST: Zara).

Note: Chairman Hicks recessed the meeting at 7:55 p.m. and reconvened at 8:13 p.m.

TEXT AMENDMENTS TO THE BEAUFORT COUNTY ZONING & DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS ORDINANCE (ZDSO), APPENDIX D, COMMUNITY PRESERVATION/CP AREAS, SECTION 1, AND TABLES 1 AND 4 (deletes references to CP areas that have completed community plans or have been rezoned)

Mr. Criscitiello briefed the Commissioners.

Public Comment: None were received.

MOTION: Ms. Guyer made a motion, and Mr. Herd seconded, **to recommend approval** of the text amendments to the Beaufort County Zoning & Development Standards Ordinance (ZDSO), Appendix D, Community Preservation (CP) Areas, Section 1 and Tables 1 and 4 that delete references to CP areas that have completed community plans or have been rezoned. The motion **was passed unanimously** (FOR: Goode, Guyer, Herd, Martin, Pottenger and Zara).

TEXT AMENDMENTS TO THE BEAUFORT COUNTY ZONING & DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS ORDINANCE (ZDSO), ARTICLE V: TABLE 106-1098, GENERAL USE TABLE, AND SECTION 106-1397, TEMPORARY OUTDOOR SALES (adds limited standards for Roadside Stands to address location, signage, access, and the sale of items other than produce; and permits Roadside Stands as a limited use in the Urban, Commercial Suburban, and Commercial Regional Zoning Districts)

Mr. Criscitiello briefed the Commissioners.

Discussion included clarification on abandoned stands, the livelihood and culture of Beaufort County, allowing craft roadside stands on St. Helena, and delete the phrase “such as...” in Section 106-1397(c)(5).

Public Comment: None were received.

MOTION: Mr. Martin made a motion, and Mr. Pottenger seconded, **to recommend approval** of the text amendments to the Beaufort County Zoning & Development Standards Ordinance (ZDSO), Article 5: Table 106-1098, General Use Table, and Article V, Section 106-1397, Temporary Outdoor Sales (adds limited standards for Roadside Stands to address location, signage, access, and the sale of items other than produce, and permits Roadside Stands as a limited use in the Urban, Commercial Suburban, and Commercial Regional Zoning Districts). The motion **was passed unanimously** (FOR: Goode, Guyer, Herd, Martin, Pottenger and Zara).

OTHER BUSINESS: None were discussed.

ADJOURNMENT: Mr. Martin made a **motion**, and Mr. Zara seconded, **to adjourn** the meeting. The motion **was carried unanimously** (FOR: Goode, Guyer, Johnson, Herd, Martin, & Zara). Chairman Hicks adjourned the meeting at approximately 8:24 p.m.

SUBMITTED BY: _____
Barbara Ann C. Childs, Admin. Assistant to Planning Director

Jim Hicks, Chairman, Beaufort County Planning Commission

APPROVED: **January 6, 2004, as amended** (additions are underlined)