

The regular meeting of the Beaufort County Planning Commission (hereinafter "Commission") was held on Monday, February 4, 2008, in County Council Chambers, the Beaufort County Administration Building at 100 Ribaut Road, Beaufort, South Carolina.

Members Present:

Mr. Jim Hicks, Chair	Ms. Diane Chmelik, Vice Chair	Mr. Brian Flewelling
Ms. Mary LeGree	Mr. Frank Mullen	Mr. Ronald Petit
Mr. Edward Riley III		

Members Absent: None

Member Vacancies: Two (At-Large representative--formerly Alan Herd since November 2007, and formerly Vernon Pottenger since February 1, 2008)

Staff Present:

Mr. Anthony Criscitiello, Planning Director
Ms. Barbara Childs, Admin. Asst. to Planning Director

CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Hicks called the meeting to order at approximately 6:05 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Chairman Hicks led those assembled in the Chambers with the pledge of allegiance to the U.S.A. flag.

REVIEW OF MINUTES: The Commission reviewed the December 3, 2007, meeting minutes. The following changes were noted:

1. Page 1, Public Comment on items other than agenda items, replace the last sentence to read: "She asked that the Commission include a component to include the October 2007 U.S. Law entitled the Gullah-Geechee Cultural Heritage Act. She noted that she and 14 others are serving on a Federal Commission regarding this Act."
2. Page 3, first paragraph, third sentence should read, "Mr. Tedder noted that there was no need....".
3. Page 6, third paragraph, second sentence should read, "The church is located on Trask Parkway;"

Motion: Ms. LeGree made a motion, and Mr. Flewelling seconded, **to accept the December 3, 2007, minutes as amended.** The motion was **carried unanimously** (FOR: Chmelik, Flewelling, Herd, LeGree, Mullen, Petit and Riley).

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT: Mr. Vernon Pottenger resigned from Planning Commission due to family health reasons. The Land Management Committee is aware of his resignation and will recommend to County Council a replacement.

PUBLIC COMMENT for items other than agenda items: None were received.

SOUTHERN BEAUFORT COUNTY MAP AMENDMENTS FOR THE FOLLOWING PROPERTIES LOCATED ON THE EAST SIDE OF HIGHWAY 170 IN THE OKATIE AREA:

- **R-600-13-3, 3A, 3B and 61 (101.36 acres to be known as Okatie Marsh PUD, located directly south of the River's End Subdivision); Applicant & Owner: La Casa Real Estate and Investment, LLC**
 - **Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use from Rural Service Area to Neighborhood/Mixed-Use Area**
 - **Zoning/Rezoning Request (with 64,800 square feet of commercial space and 395 dwelling units) from Rural (R) Zoning District to Planned Unit Development (PUD) Zoning District**
- **R600-13-6 (119.25-acre tract to be known as Osprey Point PUD, located directly south of the proposed Okatie Marsh PUD and north of Okatie Elementary School; Applicant & Owner: James Y. Robinson / Lowcountry Partners III, LLC (also known as LCPIII, LLC)**
 - **Comprehensive Plan/Future Land Use from Rural Service Area to Neighborhood/Mixed-Use Area;**
 - **Zoning/Rezoning Request (with 204 single-family homes, 102 "live/work" residential units above retail/office spaces, 221 multi-family units, and 25 acres of non-residential uses) from Rural (R) Zoning District to Planned Unit Development (PUD) Zoning District**
- **R600-13-8C—a portion of (63.54 acres to be known as River Oaks PUD, located south of the proposed Osprey Point PUD and east of Okatie Elementary School); Applicant: James Y. Robinson / ARD Hilton Head, LLC**
 - **Comprehensive Plan/Future Land Use from Rural Service Area to Neighborhood/Mixed-Use Area**
 - **Zoning/Rezoning Request (with 118 single family dwelling units/cottages, 146 multi-family units/apartments in two 3-story buildings, a clubhouse, a 66-bed nursing home, a 10,000-square foot rehab facility, a 1,500-square foot chapel, and other ancillary uses) from Rural (R) Zoning District to Planned Unit Development (PUD) Zoning District**

Chairman Hicks noted that the Commission would review the master plan that included the three PUDs.

Mr. Criscitiello briefed the Commission on the consolidated master plan that included the three PUDs that will affect slightly more than 284 acres in the Highway 170 Okatie area. The Development Agreement Committee wanted to avoid a piece-meal and disjointed development. It wanted a cohesive and integrated community which is before the Commission tonight. The plan contains mixed use neighborhood center of 6.25 acres. 144 acres south of the three PUDs

have been included in the calculations for land use and development in the master plan. The overall density is 3.1 units per acre, or 3.9 if the assisted living from the Rivers Oaks PUD is added. The assisted living portion of the master plan is assessed and taxed as commercial property. The open space is 44.7% as opposed to the required 40% in Rural zoning-- the open space includes the wetlands, buffers, stormwater ponds, parks, common areas and the recreational facility. The development pattern allows children to walk to school or have the family to shop or have recreation nearby. Mr. Criscitiello showed a short film regarding the benefits of a walking community and neighborhood planning. He then gave the details for each PUD. The Okatie Village will not be a gated community and the public may use the passive park, the trails, and the crabbing dock. Public water and sewer is available for the area and will be made available to the 20 residential units along the water. The Planning staff gives weight that Okatie Elementary will be the nucleus of the neighborhood. Approximately 20 residential lots along the Okatie will have their rural lifestyle altered by the development, but will benefit from the overall concept. All letters obtained from Beaufort-Jasper Water and Sewer Authority, SC Electric & Gas, and the fire district state that they will be able to serve the area. The Beaufort County School Superintendent Valerie Truesdale is generally sympathetic with the concept. The buildout will add over 6,000 daily two-way trips to the surrounding roads. The PUDs will preserve a majority of the wetlands, and will provide a river buffer of 175 feet long and no less than 50 feet at any one point. The Okatie Village Master Plan blends three unique PUDs into one seamless village.

Applicants' Comments:

1. Mr. Roberts Vaux, a representative for the Okatie Marsh PUD, noted the favorable staff report. When the Okatie Marsh PUD was before the Planning Commission in the past, their plan was lauded but their request was denied. The County asked for a joint analysis and planning with the two other PUDs. The 3 PUDs offer a range of housing costs, provide a park and exceed open space requirements to form a real community. Ten Okatie Elementary School students live near the school, whereas the remaining students are bussed from other areas. He lauded the teamwork between the applicants and the County regarding this joint plan.
2. Mr. John Thomas also lauded the teamwork. The smart-growth basics are consolidated growth with walking capabilities for the residents. He showed a power point presentation regarding the Village Plan. He noted the benefits including remaining in the area throughout one's lifetime, walking and bike paths, streets that accommodate a variety of users, green areas in the community and public transportation hubs. Okatie Elementary now serves as an overflow school and will move toward neighborhood school status over a period of time. The commercial area will provide a village center for the community. Ms. Chmelik asked for clarification on the parcels that are in the Master Plan but are not part of the three PUDs. Mr. Thomas responded that his clients asked for an overall plan to include the area not within the purview of the PUDs.

Public Comments:

1. Mr. Reed Armstrong of the Coastal Conservation League noted that the Southern Regional Plan should have been the guiding document when reviewing these PUDs. These proposals seem to meet the land use and natural assets goals with design features such as mixed use development, interconnectivity, limited access points, walkability,

- generous open space and wetland protection, parklands, recreational facilities, stormwater management, and river buffers that exceed County standards. The proposals seem premature and jumps ahead of some of the goals of the Southern Regional Plan—specifically preparation of a joint land use plan of the uncommitted lands in Southern Beaufort County, establishment of baseline standards for PUDs and development agreements, establishment of joint corridor review procedures, and demographic and growth capacity models. This development should await implementation of such joint efforts of the Southern Regional Plan.
2. Mr. James Scott, a Cherry Point resident, expressed concern since the Okatie Marsh PUD had been turned down three years ago. The voters, who refused to approve transportation tax dollars one year, gave their approval the next year. Those tax dollars were diverted to extend the Bluffton Parkway which opened more land for further development. The Okatie Elementary School placement was not for developers to develop the surrounding rural land. If the School Board badly placed the school, then it is the school board's problem and not the taxpayers' problem. Leave the safe environment for the students at Okatie Elementary. The School Board is asking for a tax increase to build more schools. Overcrowded and substandard schools are not the answer. There are 16 portable classrooms at Okatie Elementary. The added traffic lights on Highway 170 and the stormwater into the rivers are other negatives. The area taxes are dedicated to the college and the County will not benefit from this development.
 3. Ms. Kim Statler with the Lowcountry Economic Network noted that her organization tries to create a product that brings quality businesses to the area. This plan offers a mixed use element which is key to bringing a quality workforce that will bring economic development to the area. She noted that the Network has turned away several businesses that do not fit in the projected growth development for the area. This plan meets and exceeds the Network's standards.
 4. Ms. Karen Heitmann, the founder of Greater Bluffton Pathways and a SC "Safe Routes to Schools" instructor, was impressed by the Village Plan. Zoning in Beaufort County has isolated residents requiring them to drive to various locations. Children have fewer opportunities to move around. Hilton Head and Bluffton's pathways have attracted many to their areas. Smart planning will be turning around unhealthy trends with walking and biking pathways. The area between Charleston and Savannah will be part of the East Coast Greenways.
 5. Mr. Joe Dugan, a resident on Cherry Point Road, thinks the Plan is wonderful and beautiful; however, it is a terrible place for it. After being presented earlier, it was resoundly rejected. This plan appears the same as in the past. The public sentiment was overwhelmingly against the plan. Highway 170 is a bottle-neck. Okatie Elementary is grossly overcrowded. To approve this plan without funding for an additional school is like putting the cart before the horse. It's a wonderful plan, but it's not the right place or the right time for it. 12,000 homes and 2,000 parking spaces will do more damage to the waterways than the deer in the area. He noted that the Council in 2003 wanted to initiate PUD standards to provide Council with the flexibility to make best use of land planning and promised reliance of public sentiment when reviewing proposed PUDs. The public resoundly rejected the PUD standards. It's a wonderful sales pitch, but just a sales pitch.

6. Ms. Kathy Scott opposes the proposal, but not the Plan. Cherry Point is a small rural community with well water and dirt streets. The residents want the area to remain as Beaufort County used to be. The proposed zoning will change the wooded acres to 1,252 dwelling units instead of the 92 under the current zoning. Three years ago the residents were shown the negatives. It's not the government's goal to give developers a profit. The citizens should not have their quality of life degraded. Beaufort is becoming a less desirable place to live. Runaway growth does not pay for itself. The government is not adequately controlling growth. Strive for quality, not quantity. Protect the quality of life for Beaufort County rather than the chosen few. It is not about the plan but for high density in the area.
7. Ms. Stacy Highdreck agrees with the other residents. It's a beautiful plan for North Carolina. Smart growth is building from the center outward. The School District is asking for more money that will not cover Okatie Elementary. She is tired being taxed. The developers bought the land knowing its rural zoning. She wants to know where the public services will be located. She noted that criminals know that they have plenty of time to perpetrate crimes and escape without police assistance in the area. She noted the trees would not being retained--how many trees would be left or would it be clear-cutted. She witnessed the clear cutting at the Oldfield subdivision. The video was wonderful, but the reality regarding childhood obesity is to stop buying videos and start having the children to play outside. A walkable community will not stop childhood obesity. There is a safety factor when people can access the community. Commercial shopping and carrying groceries with toddlers is not a good idea. Beaufort County has something other areas are losing, trees. High density is not for Beaufort County. She has 50 acres of rural land. Will she be given the same courtesy should she desire to develop? She showed some photos showing development and clearcutting.
8. Wendy Zara, a member of the Steering Committee of the Coalition for Smart Growth, noted that the group was pleased with the plan, but concerned that there are not enough details. Workforce housing is mentioned but what type and what will be the cost. A key problem is the lack of workforce housing. There is no mention of fees to cover school and road improvements. She recommends a development agreement to cover this plan. She noted that the ancillary development in support of Sun City will occur likewise here. She noted the DRT will determine development standards. She also noted discrepancies regarding the density and the number of residential units for the project. There are neither archaeological sites noted nor docks mentioned. A linear park is mentioned but in the buffer, therefore that is not a park. There is a difference between setbacks and buffers; what are the setbacks? The lakes look like an amenity, but are part of the stormwater management system. How may people will fish in alligator occupied lagoons because that's what will happen? Water quality monitoring should be mentioned. Who will be paying for the waterways to be monitored for degradation? Wetlands mitigation not mentioned. There is a vague statement regarding high land. It is a nice plan, but questions should be answered. Once the properties are rezoned, resales may occur and the lack of details may prove problematic. She asks the Commission to put the project on hold until the questions are answered.

Note: *Chairman Hicks recessed the meeting at approximately 7:35 p.m. and reconvened at approximately 7:45 p.m.*

9. Mr. Terry Laseter has three children at Okatie Elementary who loves taking nature walks in the area. The children at Okatie Elementary are encouraged to run around the school before recess. There is a lack of funding for recreational activities at the school. He personally poured concrete for a hopscotch area at the school. There are problems with police response and emergency evacuation. Beaufort County Schools are extremely behind the national average. 5,000 elementary students are expected and only one school is planned to accommodate 800 children. The school facilities do not work properly. His home is not part of the 20 homes affected according to the staff report, but his home will be seriously affected. There currently is a traffic bottle-neck on Cherry Point Road during school days. He believes there are many problems such as mandating sewer and water hookup, restrictive access to the waters, electrical power interruptions, potable water reductions, transportation, and future over development with neighboring properties becoming PUDs. It is problematic without knowing details to the PUDs. Developers can make money. Pinckney Point remains at 1 unit per 3 acres. Remember the children; they are the future of the community. Don't fail them as we have in the past. Do not make Highway 170 another Highway 278.

Discussion by the Commission included a location clarification of Cherry Point Road in relation to the PUDs; a clarification on development agreements and impact fees for this Plan; a clarification on the workforce housing, the varying housing costs, setbacks, buffers, the trees that will remain, the 44.7% open space and the two planned community docks; the PUDs beings in the approval process prior to the adoption of the 2007 Comprehensive Plan; concern that medical or support facilities were not planned, the lack of details regarding the planned retail along Highway 170, the growth in Jasper County along Highway 170, keeping the nursing home density as commercial instead of converting to residential use, traffic and emergency evacuation problems may occur; the responsibility of maintaining roads and infrastructure within the PUDs after the developer is completed; the subdivision bonds requirements; the water quality monitoring details; the sunset provisions for PUDs to revert to rural zoning; the Development Agreement Committee process; maintaining the master plan quality for the overall Village Plan regardless of the complete build-out of each PUD; the County's recourse if ownership changes hands; and the affordable housing units that are missing in the Plan;

Mr. Roberts Vaux asked that affordable housing standards be changed by County Council to insure that a sliding scale profit from sales of such housing be funneled into the Affordable Housing fund.

Further discussion included the increased density because of the roads and schools impacts; the support of the Rivers Oaks development; the non-deviation from the approved plans; concern for additional upzonings in the area; the sprawl and uncontrolled growth that will present an unrealistic burden on the area residents; a desire to see a compromise between the developers and the existing residents of the area; concern for the lack of specificity for various elements; the needed nursing home facilities in the County; the belief that the existing residents would not be dramatically affected; the timeline of the proposed PUDs; the postponement of a Commission decision until the next meeting after infrastructure costs are presented regarding parks, libraries,

fire districts and law enforcement to support the proposed residents; and adding a caveat of stopping development until schools, law enforcement and roads are available;

Motion: Mr. Flewelling made a motion, and Ms. LeGree seconded, **to forward to County Council a recommendation of postponing a decision until the staff returns with infrastructure costs for parks, libraries, fire districts and law enforcement. The motion was approved unanimously** (FOR: Chmelik, Petit, LeGree, Flewelling, Hicks, Mullen, and Riley).

Note: Chairman Hicks recessed the meeting at approximately 8:40 p.m. and reconvened it at approximately 8:45 p.m.

Chairman Hicks opened up for public comments regarding the Okatie Village Plan. No further comments were received.

TEXT AMENDMENTS TO THE BEAUFORT COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

- Appendix K, Buckwalter Parkway Access Management Plan (new plan for the Buckwalter Parkway)
- Appendix L, Bluffton Parkway Access Management Plan (new plan for the Bluffton Parkway)

Buckwalter Parkway:

Mr. Colin Kinton briefed the Commission on the Buckwalter Parkway Access Management Plan. He noted that the Buckwalter and the Bluffton Parkways Access Management Plans were a culmination of the work between the Town of Bluffton and Beaufort County. The consultant, SRS Engineering, studied the Buckwalter Parkway to determine proposed connecting roads and traffic signals.

Public Comment: None were received.

Discussion included a clarification of accesses on the road, a recommendation of right-in and right-out only for the access points around Bluffton Town Center, and a clarification that properties would have access to the Parkway.

Motion: Mr. Petit made a motion, and Ms. Chmelik seconded, **to forward to County Council a recommendation of approval to add Appendix K, Buckwalter Parkway Access Management Plan to the Beaufort County Comprehensive Plan. The motion was approved unanimously** (FOR: Chmelik, Flewelling, Hicks, LeGree, Mullen, Petit and Riley).

Bluffton Parkway:

Mr. Colin Kinton briefed the Commission on the Bluffton Parkway Access Management Plan that includes proposed connecting roads and traffic signals. No left turns out will be permitted.

Discussion included a clarification on the procurement of land for the proposed feeder roads.

Public Comment:

1. Mr. Doug Robertson of Bluffton asked for a clarification on the locations of the access points. He noted that connectivity was vital. He asked that the land for the proposed feeder roads be donated to the Town to insure future road placements.
2. Ms. Fran Gillman, a 4-year Bluffton resident, understood that the Bluffton Parkway was the evacuation route so people would not have to use Highway 278. Each cut or access point allowed on the Parkway will stimulate growth and slow down an evacuation. She saw no need for the proposed cuts and non-traffic light accesses. (Mr. Kinton responded that all the lands are part of a proposed development and the developer will pay for the connector road.) She does not feel they should have a cut onto Buckwalter Parkway. When all the developments are built-out, the traffic will be problematic. (Mr. Kinton responded that access to the Parkway could not be prevented.)
3. Mr. Charlie Whetmore of the Town of Bluffton Council lauded Mr. Kinton's work on the Plans. A major concern was having the Sandy Point residents access the Parkways. All developers must show the Town of Bluffton how they will provide access to the Parkways. He noted that gated communities will ...
4. Ms. Rose Beach, a Laughton Station resident, is taken aback by development in the County. She asked for the type and results of the traffic study performed for the area. She agrees with Ms. Gillman's concerns regarding the numerous access points and their effect on evacuation. She asked the total cost and funding source of the proposed project.
5. Mr. Roberts Vaux noted that the people South of the Parkway must take a left turn to exit during an evacuation therefore a lighted intersection is needed. Town of Bluffton property owners have paid a fee and have received nothing. Please pass the plan.
6. Ms. Kim Abron, after seeing the Plan, supports the Plan.

Discussion included a clarification if the traffic signals were controlled or coordinated.

Motion: Mr. Flewelling made a motion, and Ms. Chmelik seconded, **to forward to County Council a recommendation of approval to add Appendix L, Bluffton Parkway Access Management Plan to the Beaufort County Comprehensive Plan.** The motion was **approved unanimously** (FOR: Chmelik, Flewelling, Hicks, LeGree, Mullen, Petit and Riley).

TEXT AMENDMENTS TO THE BEAUFORT COUNTY ZONING AND DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS ORDINANCE/ZDSO:

- A. **Article II, Division 2, Subdivision VI. Corridor Review Boards, Section 106-231(1). The Southern Beaufort County Corridor Review Board (to add the Buckwalter and the Bluffton Parkways to the list of designated highway corridors)**
 - **Section 106-231(1)e. Buckwalter Parkway**
 - **Section 106-231(1)f. Bluffton Parkway**
- B. **Article XIII, Division 2, Section 106-2796(h) and (i) -- Access management standards for Buckwalter and Bluffton Parkways, respectively (adds new development standards for the Buckwalter and Bluffton Parkways, respectively)**

Motion: Ms. Chmelik made a motion, and Mr. Flewelling seconded, **to forward to County Council a recommendation of approval of the Text Amendments to the Beaufort County Zoning and Development Standards Ordinance/ZDSO, Article II, Division 2, Subdivision VI. Corridor Review Boards, Sections 106-231(1)e and f that adds the Buckwalter and the**

Bluffton Parkways, respectively, to the list of designated highway corridors under the purview of the Southern Beaufort County Corridor Review Board. The motion was carried unanimously (FOR: Chmelik, Flewelling, Hicks, LeGree, Mullen, Petit and Riley).

Motion: Ms. Chmelik made motion and Mr. Petit seconded, **to forward to County Council a recommendation of approval of the Text Amendments to the Beaufort County Zoning and Development Standards Ordinance/ZDSO, Article XIII, Division 2, Section 106-2796(h) and (i) that adds access management development standards for Buckwalter and Bluffton Parkways, respectively.** The motion was carried unanimously (FOR: Chmelik, Flewelling, Hicks, LeGree, Mullen, Petit and Riley).

OTHER BUSINESS: Elections for Commission Chair and Vice-Chair for 2008:

- **Nomination of Commission Chair:** Mr. Petit nominated Mr. Hicks for chair. Ms. Chmelik seconded the nomination. Mr. Hicks opened the floor for additional nominations. No other was received. The nominations were closed. Mr. Hicks was elected as Chair unanimously.
- **Nomination for Vice Chair:** Mr. Petit nominated Mr. Flewelling for vice chair. Ms. Chmelik seconded the nomination. Mr. Hicks opened the floor for additional nominations. No other was received. The nominations were closed. Mr. Flewelling was elected as Vice-Chair unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT: Motion: Mr. Riley made a motion, and Ms. LeGree seconded, **to adjourn** the meeting. The motion was carried unanimously (FOR: Chmelik, Flewelling, Hicks, LeGree, Mullen, Petit and Riley). The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:37.p.m.

SUBMITTED BY:

Barbara Childs, Admin. Assistant to the Planning Director

Jim Hicks, Beaufort County Planning Commission Chairman

APPROVED: **March 3, 2008, as amended** (Additions are underscored.)