



COUNTY COUNCIL OF BEAUFORT COUNTY  
**BEAUFORT COUNTY PLANNING DIVISION**

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A special joint meeting of the Beaufort County Planning Commission (hereinafter “Commission”) and the Metropolitan Planning Commission (hereinafter “Metro Commission”) was held on Monday, June 4, 2012, in County Council Chambers of the Beaufort County Administration Building at 100 Ribaut Road, Beaufort, South Carolina.

**Commission Members Present:**

Mr. Jim Hicks, Chair	Mr. Robert Semmler, Vice Chair	Mr. Charles Brown
Ms. Diane Chmelik	Ms. Mary LeGree	Mr. Edward Riley III

**Commission Members Absent:** Mr. Ronald Petit, Mr. E. Parker Sutler and Mr. John Thomas

**Metropolitan Commission Members Present:**

Mr. Joe DeVito, Town of Port Royal Representative and Chair  
Mr. James Crower, Town of Port Royal Representative  
Mr. Bill Harris, City of Beaufort Rep.  
Mr. Jim Hicks, Beaufort County Representative  
Ms. Alice Howard, City of Beaufort Representative  
Mr. Bob Semmler, Beaufort County Representative

**Staff Present:**

Mr. Anthony Criscitiello, County Planning Director  
Mr. Robert Merchant, County Long-range Planner  
Ms. Barbara Childs, Admin. Asst. to County Planning Director  
Ms. Libby Anderson, City of Beaufort Planning Director  
Ms. Linda Bridges, Town of Port Royal Planning Administrator

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

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** County Commission Chairman Hicks led those assembled in the Chambers with the pledge of allegiance to the United States of America.

**CHAIRMAN’S REPORT:** County Commission Chairman Hicks welcomed the audience and the Metropolitan Planning Commissioners. He noted that the joint commissions would be hearing the rail-trail project. He explained the meeting process to the audience. The purpose of the meeting: 1. That the Commission must verify, by law, that the project is within the capital improvements program (CIP); 2. To adhere to an agreement between the County and the municipalities—City of Beaufort and Town of Port Royal—regarding the rail-trail project base design will be used throughout the trail; and 3. To bring a recommendation regarding the base design before the respective Councils for their final approval.

**PUBLIC COMMENT** for items other than agenda items: No comments were received.

**SPANISH MOSS TRAIL – DEPOT ROAD TO ALLISON ROAD PROJECT; AND PROPOSED TRAIL BRANDING, AMENITIES, SIGNAGE AND STANDARDS**

Mr. Anthony Criscitiello, the Beaufort County Planning Director, noted that this project has been in the making for a long time. The trail is supported in the County Comprehensive Plan and the Northern Regional Plan. The project is ready for the inaugural portion of the trail to be established. Beaufort-Jasper Water and Sewer Authority (hereinafter BJWSA) and Mr. Dean Moss, in particular, placed the rail-trail into a rail bank. BJWSA is allowing the community to engage in this long awaited vision. Mr. Criscitiello introduced Mr. Dean Moss, formerly of BJWSA.

Mr. Dean Moss, working with the Friends of The Spanish Moss Rail Trail (hereinafter Friends), noted that the first section of the trail will run from Allison Road to Depot Road. The Friends have a generous benefactor to bring the project to completion quicker than usual. Mr. Moss introduced Mr. Ed McBrayer of the PATH Foundation (hereinafter Foundation) and a master trail builder around Georgia. Mr. Moss noted that Mr. McBrayer will give a presentation that deals solely with the trail and its design, and will not address the issues related to the abutting properties to the trail. Those issues are important to the community, but should be addressed at a different forum. The trail design determined tonight will affect the trail from the Sands in Port Royal to the Whale Branch River.

Mr. Ed McBrayer thanked the Commissions for meeting jointly to accommodate his group's presentation. His group began in Atlanta 20 years ago when a group of people realized that biking/walking trails were needed for a better quality of life and it was prior to the (1996) Atlanta Olympics. He commended Mr. Moss and the Friends for organizing to work on the trail project. Mr. Kennedy, one of the Foundation board members and a member of the Cox Family, asked Mr. McBrayer to review the Beaufort area to determine if Foundation funding could be provided for the rail-trail project. Mr. McBrayer, after visiting and assessing the area, agreed that funding was possible and the Foundation authorized for a one-mile area between Allison and Depot Roads to begin the trail project. Mr. Kennedy also asked the Foundation to build a portion of the trail near Clarendon and Mr. McBrayer discovered three (3) miles that start at Laurel Bay Road. The Cox Family Foundation gave a total of \$600,000 for the Allison to Depot Roads section and a \$600,000 challenge grant for the Laurel Bay-Clarendon portion of the trail. The Foundation will mentor the Friends for the 1-mile section and help to raise funds for the challenge grant.

Mr. McBrayer then presented a power-point presentation to the Commissions. He noted that the design/implementation team included Ward Edwards Engineering, Kaizen Collaborative and Atlas Surveying. It is their hope that the 1-mile section will be built before the end of 2012. Mr. McBrayer also noted milestones of the Foundation—including building 170 miles of trails in Georgia with \$105 million from private and public funding.

He noted that the trail would be a 12-foot wide concrete trail (5 inches thick) that will support emergency vehicles, if needed. Trail mile markers will include the trail logo. The existing railroad depot building will serve as a focal point of the trail, with parking for trail users and related retail uses in the building such as refreshments and bike repair. There will be signage with trail information and trail etiquette. There will be locked bollards/safety guards to keep non-emergency vehicles from using the trail—the emergency vehicles will have a key to unlock the bollards. There will be bump outs on the trestle for fishermen so that cyclists/joggers can pass safely. He also noted that public art, benches, trash cans, bike racks and rest areas could be planned in the future and sponsored by community groups. Road and sidewalk crossings will be marked with highly visible coloring to remind the public of the trail's existence. He expects to meet with the City of Beaufort and the Ocean Coastal Resource Management (OCRM) this week. The design plans are scheduled to be finished by the end of June. The Foundation would like to start work on the project the day after Labor Day. Mr. McBrayer also stated that the Foundation was a non-profit agency and their only motivation was to help the Friends with this trail.

Chairman Hicks asked that the team members take notes during the public comment period on questions being asked by public so that Mr. McBrayer may respond accordingly after the public comment session.

#### Public Comment:

1. Mr. Thomas Logan, a City of Beaufort resident, noted the recent anniversaries in Beaufort-- 300-year anniversary of the City of Beaufort and the Carteret Methodist Church and 100-year anniversary of the Presbyterian Church. Mr. Logan noted that he and Ms. Dot Gnann, a former County councilperson, believe that history should not be rewritten but held in high esteem. The railroad and the right-of-way meant a lot to Beaufort. The railroad provided support to farming and the U.S. Marine Corps recruit depot. The railroad was chartered in 1857 for passenger and produce deliver, and completed in 1872. The line was called the Magnolia Route in 1877, according to the newspaper article in the Tribune (the predecessor to the Beaufort Gazette newspaper) because a number of magnolia trees were planted along the route. Mr. Logan noted that there still exist a number of magnolia trees on the line. He believed magnolias should be planted along the trail by citizen groups. He asked that the trail be named after the Magnolia Line.
2. Mr. Frank Fable, a cycling advocate, noted that Hilton Head Island received the Bicycle Friendly Award—silver level. He serves as a member of the Palmetto Cycling Coalition. Cycling has become the new golf. The County continues to make advancements for bicycling. Hilton Head Island has biking as one of its economic engines. Retirees are looking for active communities. Every great community has a signature hole. Hilton Head Island's is the 18<sup>th</sup> hole in Harbourtown. This pathway is Beaufort County's signature hole.
3. Ms. Eddie Rodgers loved what she saw today (presentation) and Mr. Logan's history lesson. She asked that the Commission give serious consideration to naming the trail as Magnolia Trail. She wondered if maintenance has been budgeted by the City and/or the County.
4. Ms. Cecily Doerr noted that the Garden Clubs of Beaufort would be interested in beautifying the trail areas. As a history buff and a research librarian, she appreciated tying the name Magnolia Line to the trail. She thinks the plan is wonderful. The trail could be used for evacuation purposes.

After asking those present to show a hand of support, Chairman noted that the public present in the Chambers unanimously supported the trail.

Mr. Moss noted that the City would be responsible for the one-mile trail, with the County being responsible for some things.

Mr. McBrayer noted that there are three other Magnolia Trails around the country.

Chairman Hicks noted that he would not fathom naming the trail.

Mr. Logan noted that the existing railway mile posts could be used as the trail mile posts. He suggested keeping the mile markers contiguously numbered.

Chairman Hicks noted that the agreement between the County, the City of Beaufort, and the Path Foundation included maintenance issues.

Mr. Criscitiello noted that this trail is in keeping with the Comprehensive Plans of the County and the City of Beaufort. This project will be funded over a number of years.

Mr. Robert McFee, the County Public Services Director, noted that the trail plan is included in the County's adopted Capital Improvements Plan (CIP).

Discussion by the Commission included:

- looking forward to using the trail;
- the trail being funded by the CIP;
- having funds through a grant and matching County funds to continue the trail from Depot Road to Parris Island Gateway;
- the Town of Port Royal, through the port developer, had planned to build a trail from the port to the railway;
- the various trail sections that have been planned but funding is still to be received;
- the Friends of the Spanish Moss Trail as a volunteer group that would support the development of the trail and assist in the maintenance of the trail; and
- the relationship zoning has on the trail.

Metropolitan Chairman Joe DeVito asked to hear from the municipalities abutting the trail.

Ms. Libby Anderson, City of Beaufort Planning Director, stated the proposed trail is consistent with the City of Beaufort's Comprehensive Plan, and she looks forward to its completion.

Ms. Linda Bridges, Town of Port Royal Planning Administrator, echoed that the trail is consistent with and supported by the Town of Port Royal's 2009 Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Bill Harris (Metropolitan Commissioner representing the City of Beaufort) noted that this large endeavor will show just how multi-faceted Beaufort is. How does the community take ownership of the trail?

Mr. McBrayer noted that in Atlanta they have an “adopt a trail” program for group to participate. Each group’s contributions will be noted by signage along the trail. The Friends here should be contact for community groups who wish to support the trail.

Commissioner Robert Semmler asked if the trail name had been solidified or could the public make suggestions for the trail name.

Mr. Moss noted that he would concede to the consensus regarding opening the naming of the trail to the public.

County Councilperson Laura Von Harten noted that there was a County committee that determined the name of County buildings, roads, etc. She recommended that that Committee determine the name of the trail.

Mr. Criscitiello noted that renaming streets and roads was the responsibility of the Planning Commission; he was unaware of who had the responsibility of naming this trail.

Chairman Hicks noted that the Commission would not name the trail tonight.

Metropolitan Commission Chair Joe DeVito noted that the trail went through three different municipalities—Town of Port Royal, City of Beaufort and Beaufort County. He believes the appropriate name must be researched and he would prefer to leave the naming to the Friends of the Spanish Moss Trail.

Chairman Hicks noted that the purpose of this meeting was to review the design, determine the maintenance of the trail, and to forward a recommendation to the respective Councils.

**County Commission Motion:** Mr. Robert Semmler made motion to recommend approval of Spanish Moss Trail – Depot Road to Allison Road Project and Proposed Trail Branding, Amenities, Signage and Standards, with full recognition that this is the final design. Ms. Diane Chmelik seconded the motion. Discussion included considering naming the trail Magnolia Trail after the historic railway line on which the trail is to be built. The motion was carried unanimously (FOR: Brown, Chmelik, Hicks, LeGree, Riley, and Semmler).

**Metropolitan Commission Motion:** Ms. Alice Howard made a motion to recommend approval to the respective Councils of Spanish Moss Trail – Depot Road to Allison Road Project and Proposed Trail Branding, Amenities, Signage and Standards, with full recognition that this is the final design. Mr. James Crower seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously (FOR: Crower, DeVito, Harris, Hicks, Howard, and Semmler).

**OTHER BUSINESS:** None were discussed.

**ADJOURNMENT:** Chairman Hicks **adjourned** the meeting, with no objections from the Commission and the Metropolitan Commission, at approximately 7:06 p.m.

**SUBMITTED BY:**

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Barbara Childs, Admin. Assistant to the County Planning Director

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Jim Hicks, Beaufort County Planning Commission Chairman

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Joe DeVito, Metropolitan Planning Commission Chairman

**APPROVED:**        **September 6, 2012, as written**