



COUNTY COUNCIL OF BEAUFORT COUNTY
Beaufort County Community Development Department

Beaufort County Government Robert Smalls Complex
Physical: Administration Building, 100 Ribaut Road, Room 115
Mailing: Post Office Drawer 1228, Beaufort, SC 29901-1228
Phone: 843-255-2140 / FAX: 843-255-9432

The regular meeting of the Beaufort County Planning Commission (hereinafter "Commission") was held on Monday, February 5, 2018, in County Council Chambers, the Beaufort County Administration Building at 100 Ribaut Road, Beaufort, South Carolina.

Members Present:

Mr. Robert Semmler, Chairman
Mr. Jason Hinchler

Ms. Diane Chmelik
Mr. Ed Pappas

Mr. Kevin Hennelly

Member Absent: Dr. Caroline Fermin, Mr. Harold Mitchell, Mr. Randolph Stewart/Vice-Chairman, and Vacancy (St. Helena Island representative/formerly Marque Fireall)

Staff Present:

Mr. Anthony Criscitiello, Community Development Director
Mr. Robert Merchant, Assistant Community Development Director
Mr. Eric Greenway, Intèrim Community Development Director
Ms. Barbara Childs, Administrative Assistant to the Community Development Director

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

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Mr. Semmler led those assembled in the Council Chambers with the pledge of allegiance to the flag of the United States of America.

REVIEW OF MEETING MINUTES: The Commissioners reviewed the December 4, 2017 minutes.
Motion: Mr. Jason Hinchler made a motion, and Mr. Ed Pappas seconded the motion, **to accept the minutes as written.** The motion **carried (FOR: Chmelik, Hennelly, Hinchler, Pappas, and Semmler; ABSENT: Fermin, Mitchell, Stewart, and Vacancy/St. Helena Island representative).**

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT: Mr. Semmler apologized in advance for his illness, should he have any coughing fits during the proceedings. He noted that the Lady's Island Area Plan Steering Committee would meet on February 20, with a public meeting on February 21—the location to be announced at a later date. The Beaufort County Council Leadership and Strategic Planning sessions will be Friday and Saturday, February 9 and 10, at the Disability and Special Needs Building. *(Note: The sessions actually will be held in the Conference Room, Buckwalter Regional Park, 905 Buckwalter Parkway, Bluffton, SC.)*

Mr. Anthony Criscitiello introduced his replacement--Mr. Eric Greenway. Mr. Greenway started on January 22. He will replace Mr. Criscitiello upon his retirement on May 1, 2018. Mr. Criscitiello stated that Mr. Greenway is a competent planner who will guide and influence the government in the future. Mr. Criscitiello noted that Mr. Robert Merchant has assisted in the transitioning between Mr. Criscitiello and Mr. Greenway. Mr. Criscitiello said he looked forward during his transition to retirement to assisting the Community Development department and providing guidance to County Council and the County Administrator.

Mr. Eric Greenway said he looks forward to working with the Commission. He is excited and honored to be chosen to follow in the footsteps of Mr. Criscitiello, as his role transitions. He stated he is not carrying a title because he is in a support function through the transition. We have a strong planning department in Beaufort with very capable people. Mr. Greenway is glad to be a part of that team to continue the great things that have been started. The Commissioners enthusiastically welcomed him.

PUBLIC COMMENT on non-agenda items: None were received.

DAUFUSKIE ISLAND (DI) PLAN UPDATE

Ms. Deborah Smith, a Daufuskie Island Councilmember and Chairman of the DI Plan and Code Committee, briefed the Commission. She noted that two DI property owners who have donated their services pro-bono in updating the plan. She appreciated the interest the Commission has in this project.

Ms. Beverly Davis with RS&H, noted that she along with Sonny Timmerman of Complete Communities, and Ecological Planning Group were part of the consulting group of the project. She briefed the Commission on the specifics of the project and the forthcoming steps. The update is a DI Council initiative. She noted the on-going public participation, development of character areas, and the draft plan is underway. Hurricane Irma cause some delay. They have held two community workshops with 35 attendees each. They have issued two community surveys, and provided an update to the DI Council. The first survey remarkably generated almost 400 responses, with 50% from Haig Point, 20% from the Historic District, and 46% of full-time DI residents. She gave details of the first survey, including the top three things about DI--the geographic location with no bridge, the quietness, and the slower pace of life. They have developed a Final Vision that she shared with the Commission. The group collected data of existing conditions. There are 2,400 parcels on the island, 71% are undeveloped. Approximately 64% of DI are at high risk of flooding. They mapped community resources and zoning, and looked at the character areas. About 40% of DI are in PUDs. At the second community workshop, the attendees were divided into three working groups. The results of the second survey agreed with most of the character areas and the overall strategies recommended by the consulting group. The next steps include developing the draft plan update. Another community workshop is planned to reveal the draft plan.

Commission discussion included how the plan affects Planned Unit Developments/PUDs (*Ms. Davis stated that the plan is focused outside of the existing PUDs since the PUD requirements were set when they were approved. Mr. Criscitiello stated that the plan takes over when the PUD is silent on regulations.*), and concern that the lighting at the Savannah ferry port would adversely affect the DI environment/wildlife.

Mr. Semmler thanked Ms. Davis for the presentation.

PORT ROYAL ISLAND STREET RENAMING OF THE EASTERN PORTION OF CRYSTAL STREET AT THE BEGINNING OF THE RIVER WATCH POINT SUBDIVISION TO BE RENAMED WATCH POINT (INVOLVING 5 PARCELS IN THE STUART POINT AREA); APPLICANT: RIVER WATCH POINT HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION (AGENT: MR. KEVIN JOHNSON)

Mr. Robert Merchant briefed the Commissioners. Crystal Street is a paved road and becomes unpaved at the River Watch subdivision where a white gate crosses the road. He noted that the five property owners involved had no issue with the street name change.

Commission discussion included querying whether paving the dirt road would be problematic-ownership or maintenance-wise (*Mr. Merchant said no, and went on to explain the street renaming process.*), and querying whether "Point" was a normal nomenclature in County street names.

Applicant's Comment: Mr. Kevin Johnson, the applicant, stated that E-911 is under the impression that the street renaming would be Watch Point. (*Mr. Semmler said he had seen Point at other places also.*)

Motion: Mr. Jason Hinchler made a motion, and Mr. Kevin Hennelly seconded the motion, **to approve the Port Royal Island Street Renaming of the eastern portion of Crystal Street at the beginning of the River Watch Point Subdivision to be renamed Watch Point (involving 5 parcels in the Stuart Point area).** No further discussion occurred. The motion carried (**FOR: Chmelik, Hennelly, Hinchler, Pappas, and Semmler; ABSENT: Fermin, Mitchell, Stewart; and VACANCY: St. Helena Island representative.**)

TEXT AMENDMENT TO THE BEAUFORT COUNTY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CODE (CDC), ARTICLE 3, SECTION 3.3.50 REGIONAL CENTER MIXED USE (C5) ZONE STANDARDS

(TO ALLOW HOTEL TO APARTMENT CONVERSION ON UNIT TO UNIT BASIS); APPLICANT: MICHAEL KRONIMUS

Mr. Robert Merchant briefed the Commissioners on the text amendment. The new owners of the Bluffton Suburban Lodge, located east of Lowe's along Highway 278, behind MacDonald's, are interested in turning the extended-stay hotel, unit for unit, into efficiency apartments. The building was built in 2000. The project is located in the C5 regional center mixed-use district where hotels and multi-family uses are permitted; however 150 units on 3.13 acres is problematic since the multi-family use density is 15 units per acre. Staff recommended a text amendment; however, Staff made several provisions including the hotel having existed for five years rather than using the amendment to bypass the density issue, building code issues being separate from the CDC, and parking issues with hotels requiring 1 space per room versus 1.25 spaces per apartment. The existing site has parking issues. Traffic impacts for apartments are considered nominally greater than a hotel. Staff recommends approval since smaller units could possibly provide a niche in the lower-end housing supply. He noted that the county is going through a housing needs assessment and the results may expand or move this amendment to another zoning district.

Commission discussion included whether the owner did a market research on the demand of studio apartments.

Applicant's Comment: Mr. Michael Kronimus, the applicant, noted there was a huge demand for that type of housing in that location. Service staff levels are not being met on Hilton Head Island; work force housing is needed. These units are 500 to 700 square feet. We can combine the rooms to form 1-bedrooms, since most are studio apartments. A parking issue exists. Workforce housing is the aim; however, some tenants won't have vehicles, so parking may not be the problem since there is access to a major thoroughfare for tenants to take a bus or Uber.

Additional Commission discussion included querying whether the intent is to market as workforce housing, concern with the lack of firewalls for apartments, fearful of unintended consequences since the text amendment could be used in other zones where hotels transfer ownership but property deterioration is not addressed, querying whether regional significance was addressed regarding notifying municipalities of the proposed text amendment (*Mr. Merchant said this amendment did not trigger the regional significance aspect so he had not notified the municipalities.*), noting the logical evolution from hotel to multi-family, noting the cramped and confined space of the specific inn that led to this proposed text amendment, concern that a density capacity has not been set, noting the lack of amenities for children on the site, concern that there are no schools within walking distance of the property and school buses access would be problematic, concern that the amendment would allow more hotel to apartment conversions throughout the County, desiring input from the School District and the municipalities, querying the average occupancy rate of area hotels, affirming that the municipalities have a desperate need for affordable housing, querying when the workforce housing assessment would be completed (*Mr. Merchant noted that the target draft was set for March 2018.*), querying how soon the Commission could receive input from the municipalities on the proposed text amendment, and noting that the Town of Bluffton had an Affordable Housing Committee.

Mr. Kronimus noted, in regards to firewalls, that that building codes requirement would be addressed in another process. In regards to other zones using the text amendment, only a small amount of zones would allow the hotel to multi-family conversion. Mr. Kronimus stated that parking at the proposed site would not be met with the existing regulations.

Mr. Merchant reiterated that the parking requirements can be increased or decreased by 20%, but the applicant must submit a parking study that will be reviewed by the County Traffic Engineer. He noted that the site has no access to the Bluffton Parkway or to the trail. He stated that the Staff doesn't want to create a parking problem because there is nowhere to park offsite.

Mr. Kronimus noted that the bottom line is if the text amendment is approved, it doesn't mean that project will be approved. This is truly a workforce housing opportunity. This is a C5 zone that is the most dense zoning

allowed in Beaufort County. He stated that the owner could raze building and build another unit with higher density on the 3.2 acre property. This location could be downzoned to a T-zone to allow a higher density. There are various items that must be met by Building Codes so there's a long way to go. The property is next door at a T4 zone with an unlimited density, but the parking calculation must be met.

Public Comment: None was received.

Motion: Mr. Ed Pappas made a motion, and Ms. Diane Chmelik seconded the motion, **to recommend to County Council a denial of the Text Amendment to the Beaufort County Community Development Code (CDC), Article 3, Section 3.3.50 Regional Center Mixed Use (C5) Zone Standards (to allow hotel to apartment conversion on unit to unit basis) because the Housing Needs Assessment had not been completed.** Discussion included a clarification of the motion. **The motion failed (FOR: Chmelik and Pappas; AGAINST: Hennelly, Hinchler, and Semmler; ABSENT: Fermin, Stewart, and Vacancy/St. Helena Island Representative).**

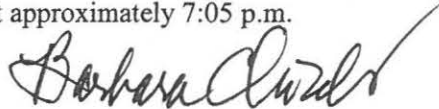
Motion: Mr. Jason Hinchler made a motion, and Mr. Kevin Hennelly seconded the motion, **to recommend to County Council approval of the Text Amendment to the Beaufort County Community Development Code (CDC), Article 3, Section 3.3.50 Regional Center Mixed Use (C5) Zone Standards (to allow hotel to apartment conversion on unit to unit basis) with the condition that input should be received from the municipalities that are affected and their respective affordable housing committees.** The motion passed **(FOR: Hennelly, Hinchler, and Semmler; AGAINST: Chmelik and Pappas; ABSENT: Fermin, Stewart, and Vacancy/St. Helena Island Representative).**

NEW/OTHER BUSINESS:

- **New Business:** Mr. Semmler noted that the annual elections for Commission officers would be held during the Commission's March 2018 meeting to insure that a large number of Commissioners are present for the elections.
- **Other Business:** None were discussion.

ADJOURNMENT: Motion: Mr. Ed Pappas made the motion, and Mr. Jason Hinchler seconded the motion, **to adjourn the meeting.** The motion **carried (FOR: Chmelik, Hennelly, Hinchler, Pappas, and Semmler; ABSENT: Fermin, Mitchell, Stewart; and VACANCY: St. Helena Island representative).** Mr. Semmler adjourned the meeting at approximately 7:05 p.m.

SUBMITTED BY:



Barbara Childs, Administrative Assistant to the Planning Director



Robert Semmler, Beaufort County Planning Commission Chairman

APPROVED:

March 5, 2018

*Note: The video link of the February 5, 2018, Planning Commission meeting is:
http://beaufort.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=3&clip_id=3628*