



COUNTY COUNCIL OF BEAUFORT COUNTY  
**Beaufort County Community Development Department**

Beaufort County Government Robert Smalls Complex  
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The regular meeting of the Beaufort County Planning Commission (hereinafter "Commission") was held on Monday, March 4, 2019, in Council Chambers, County Administration Building, 100 Ribaut Road, Beaufort, South Carolina.

**Members Present:**

Mr. Robert Semmler, Chairman	Dr. Caroline Fermin	
Mr. Randolph Stewart, Vice Chairman	Ms. Diane Chmelik	Mr. Kevin Hennelly
Mr. Harold Mitchel	Mr. Ed Pappas	

**Members Absent:** Mr. Jason Hinchler and Ms. Cecily McMillan

**Staff Present:**

Mr. Eric Greenway, Community Development Director  
Mr. Robert Merchant, Assistant Community Development Director  
Ms. Melissa Peagler, Long-range Planner  
Ms. Diane McMaster, Senior Administrative Specialist

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

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Chairman Semmler led those assembled at the library with the pledge of allegiance to the flag of the United States of America.

**CITIZEN COMMENTS:** There were none.

**REVIEW OF MEETING MINUTES:** The Commissioners reviewed the January 7, 2019, meeting minutes. Dr. Caroline Fermin made a motion to accept the minutes as written, and Ms. Diane Chmelik seconded the motion. The motion carried (**FOR: Semmler, Stewart, Fermin, Chmelik, Hennelly, and Pappas; ABSTAINED: Mitchell; ABSENT: Hinchler and McMillan**).

**CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:** Chairman Semmler noted that Mr. Robert Merchant would speak regarding updates to the Comprehensive Plan.

**Southern Beaufort County Map Amendment / Rezoning Request** for R600 022 000 011A 0000 (4.25 acres at 175 Fording Island Road, Bluffton, SC) from T2R Rural to C5 Regional Center Mixed Use; Applicant: Laura Lewis

Ms. Tammy Sauter is representing the property owner, Ms. Laura Lewis. The property is adjacent to the Hilton Head Honda dealership, a C5 Regional Commercial property. Community Development Staff are in favor of the rezoning request and will consider changing the Future Land Use designation during the Comprehensive Plan update process. The current Future Land Use designation is Community Commercial, and the proposed Future Land Use designation is Regional Commercial. It was noted that the back side of the 4.25 acre tract is wetland. The property is currently for sale; the owner requesting the zoning change in hopes of increasing the property's value.

Ms. Rikki Parker, Coastal Conservation League, asked the Commission to consider something more appropriate than the C5 Regional Center Mixed Use designation. She stated that rural zoning was no longer appropriate but pointed out there was still residential development in the nearby area. Ms. Parker suggested a C3 Neighborhood Mixed Use designation. (A letter from Ms. Parker dated 03/04/19 regarding the rezoning request has been made a part of these minutes.)

Chairman Semmler asked for a motion regarding the rezoning request. Mr. Randolph Stewart made a motion to approve the rezoning request from T2R Rural to C5 Regional Center Mixed Use, and Chairman Semmler seconded the motion. It was determined there was no recommendation pending. Therefore, Mr. Ed Pappas made a motion to deny the rezoning request, and Mr. Kevin Hennelly seconded the motion. The motion to deny the request carried by a 4:3 vote (**FOR: Pappas, Hennelly, Chmelik, Fermin; AGAINST: Semmler, Stewart, Mitchell; ABSENT: Hinchler and McMillan**).

Mr. Robert Merchant discussed procedures for the Comprehensive Plan and explained that State Legislation mandates updates to the Plan every ten (10) years and reviews every five (5) years. Our current Comprehensive Plan was adopted January 2011, and the update process is just beginning for adoption of the new Plan in January 2021. We have been approached by the Town of Bluffton to join in their rewrite efforts and have also contacted the City of Beaufort, Town of Hilton Head, and Town of Port Royal. At this time, the coordination amongst jurisdictions is still in the planning phase but would be very beneficial to all involved. The jurisdictions will meet with their respective Council members in March 2019 requesting support for the coordination of efforts proposal.

Mr. Greenway suggested adopting an implementation element for the Plan rewrite to categorize zero to two-year, two-year, five-year, etc. goals. The Commission would be updated by Staff annually regarding goal status.


**NEW/OTHER BUSINESS:**

**Other Business:** The next regularly scheduled Planning Commission meeting will be Monday, April 1, 2019, 6:00 p.m., Council Chambers, County Administration Building, 100 Ribaut Road, Beaufort, SC.

**ADJOURNMENT:** Chairman Semmler requested a Motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:50 p.m. Mr. Kevin Hennelly made the motion, and Mr. Ed Pappas seconded the motion. The motion carried (**FOR: Semmler, Fermin, Stewart, Mitchell, Chmelik, Hennelly, and Pappas; ABSENT: Hinchler and McMillan**).

**SUBMITTED BY:**

  
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Diane McMaster, Community Development Senior Admin Specialist

  
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Robert Semmler, Beaufort County Planning Commission Chairman

**APPROVED:** April 1, 2019



March 4, 2019

Beaufort County Planning Commission  
County Administration Building  
100 Ribaut Road  
Beaufort, SC 29902

Re: Southern Beaufort County Map Amendment/Rezoning Request for R600 022  
000 011A 0000

Dear Beaufort County Planning Commissioners:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed Southern Beaufort County map amendment and rezoning request. The applicant has applied to rezone the 4.25-acre property at 175 Fording Island Road from T2R Rural to C5 Regional Center Mixed Use. The property is located south of the Graves Property. The waterfront portion of that parcel was purchased with funding from the county's Rural and Critical Lands program in 2013. The remainder, known as Pepper Hall, is scheduled for residential and commercial development. In addition, this property is located north of the town of Bluffton's Buckwalter Planned Unit Development and west of Berkley Hall's golf course. Two car dealerships are also located near the applicant's property.

The Comprehensive Plan's future land use map identifies the properties along this portion of US-278/Fording Island Road as either Neighborhood/Mixed-Use or Community Commercial. The staff report seems to acknowledge that the proposed rezoning is not "consistent with" and does not "further[] the goals of the Comprehensive Plan," pointing out that "[t]he zoning is more in line with the Regional Commercial land use designation." This rezoning is in conflict with the Comprehensive Plan's future land use map and should be carefully scrutinized by this committee.

The staff report states: "Due to the amount of traffic on...Highway 278 (Fording Island Road) and the adjacent Regional Commercial zone and uses, it is unlikely that residential rural uses will continue to be the best use of the property." While a more modest up zoning may be appropriate along this portion of Fording Island Road, it is not a foregone conclusion that the area can or should convert to Regional Commercial uses. The property's northern boundary is Berkley Hall's golf course. That land use is unlikely to change in the near future. To the south is the Town of Bluffton's Buckwalter Planned United Development. According to the Buckwalter Concept Master Plan, the area adjacent to the proposed rezoning is slated for a small amount of commercial development, but is largely wetlands. To the west, Buckwalter is slated for residential development. Farther east, is Rose Hill. Bluffton's zoning beyond Rose Hill is General Mixed Use. To the north, Pepper Hall is slated for residential and mixed-use development. In other words, it is far from a forgone conclusion that the area will eventually



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transition to Regional Commercial; rezoning the property to C5 Regional Commercial at this juncture would be premature. A rezoning to allow for greater flexibility in land use may be appropriate, but jumping from T2 Rural to Regional Commercial is a step too far.

The Conservation League also has concerns about the impacts of reassessing large portions of the US-278/Fording Island Road corridor. Staff's recommendation does not clearly define how much of the corridor's future land use map should be reevaluated; however, any redrawing of future land use map in this portion of the county should be carefully scrutinized. This area is at the headwaters of the Okatie River and is approaching full build out. The river is already impaired due to high levels of fecal coliform. Beaufort County knows full well the impacts of development and impervious surface on water quality. This commission should approach changing the future land use map in this area with caution.

In conclusion, a rezoning on this small property may be warranted. No doubt the land uses along US-278/Fording Island Road, particularly in this area, are no longer rural. However, up zoning the property to C5 Regional Commercial, may be a step too far, particularly given the proposed residential, mixed use, and golf course uses located nearby.

Sincerely,

Rikki Parker  
Project Manager  
Coastal Conservation League