

A meeting of the Beaufort-Port Royal Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPC) was held on **March 18, 2019 at 5:30 p.m.** in the Beaufort Municipal Complex, 1911 Boundary Street. In attendance were Chairman Bill Harris; Commissioners Robert Semmler, Judy Alling, and Jim Crower; David Prichard, City of Beaufort planning and Rob Merchant, Beaufort County planning. Commissioners Caroline Fermin and Mike Tomy were absent.

In accordance with the South Carolina Code of Laws, 1976, Section 30-4-80(d) as amended, all local media were duly notified of the time, date, place, and agenda of this meeting.

Chairman Harris called the meeting to order at 5:34 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

### **MINUTES**

**Commissioner Semmler made a motion, second by Commissioner Crower, to approve the minutes of the February 18, 2019 MPC meeting. The motion to approve the minutes as submitted was approved unanimously.**

### **REVIEW OF PROJECTS FOR THE CITY OF BEAUFORT**

#### **RECOMMENDATION/OPINION about light pole standards and/or appropriate zoning in the vicinity of 41 Robert Smalls Parkway**

*Applicant: City of Beaufort*

Mr. Prichard said according to the Beaufort Code, the maximum height of light poles in transect districts is 15' above grade, and in conventional districts, it's 25'. As there is a transition to newer development patterns, 15' seems like it would be "a lot of poles," he said, while there could be fewer poles if they were taller. He asked if the 15' limit is still appropriate in a large parking lot. Mr. Prichard said the city is asking for the MPC's recommendation on 15' poles in pedestrian-oriented spaces and 25' or higher poles in spaces that are auto-centric.

Commissioner Semmler said in the Staples lot, the light poles are very tall – taller than 15' feet. Mr. Prichard said they are higher than 25', and he has heard they're 41', but he hasn't measured them. As the trees in parking lots grow taller and fill out, Commissioner Semmler said, which the trees in the Staples parking lot are doing, taller light poles are not in the trees' way, which they might be if the poles were only 15' tall.

Commissioner Semmler said in this parking lot, there are "8 different variations of light poles," and his other concern is whether a developer who wants to change the height of light poles in a parking lot, "will . . . do all the light poles." Mr. Prichard said not necessarily. If a developer is redeveloping an entire shopping center – as this one will "eventually" be – s/he might, he said. Publix wanted a certain foot-candle, he said, and wanted to use 28.5' poles. They didn't want to use 15' poles because of cost, but Mr. Prichard thinks the 15' poles are like streetlights, and they aren't full cut-off. He asked if the MPC feels 15' is appropriate for a parking lot, as it is for a pedestrian space.

Mr. Prichard showed a graphic of a 15' pole with a 5'6" person standing 5' from the pole to show the difference between it and a 25' pole that is 20' away. The latter would seem "less domineering than a 15' pole," he said.

Chairman Harris said the poles in the City Hall parking lot are 15', which he found "pretty surprising."

Mr. Prichard showed a graphic of Beaufort Plaza in the Civic Master Plan, with the vision of it not being a traditional parking lot, but "much more of a pedestrian-type space." This vision might happen at some point in the future, but during transitions, the parking lots in strip-malls would "still be somewhat auto-centric." He showed a "conceptual strip mall retrofit" of parking lots from the Civic Master Plan.

Chairman Harris said he feels great about trusting staff's judgment on what is pedestrian-centric and what's auto-centric to make the light pole height determination.

Mr. Prichard said the movie theater and auto parts store would be torn down, Publix would be set back. Some of the strip mall's stores will remain, but there will be liner stores up near Robert Smalls Parkway. He said the Civic Master Plan is for 100 years, and he doesn't know how long it will be before the mall example on the far right would happen. Chairman Harris said there are strategies, which take place a step at a time, to turn strip malls into shopping villages.

Commissioner Crower said some of the poles on the Staples end of the lot in question don't work. He asked if there is value in reusing the poles that are already in the parking lot. Mr. Prichard said he doesn't know. He's only seen part of the development plan for this mall, and he can't recall what the developer wants to do with those tall poles.

Mr. Prichard said this issue began because Publix, which is going into a site on this property, wanted the taller light poles, but it would apply to other redevelopments, too. This developer's design is to have 15' poles near the street and the liner buildings, he said, and where the sidewalks go from the liner buildings to the existing buildings.

Commissioner Semmler asked what kind of motion they should make; he feels they should defer to the planning director in this matter. Mr. Prichard said the MPC could make a recommendation for the city to amend its ordinance to allow the planning director to make the decision about pole heights used in pedestrian- versus auto-oriented areas.

Commissioner Alling said that there would have to be a limit on the pole sizes. There was general agreement with this. Mr. Prichard said the maximum height is 25' now, but the taller poles are about 28.5': usually a 25' pole on a 3' or 3.5' pedestal. He added that he doesn't know why the pedestals are used.

There was a discussion about maximum and minimum heights to recommend. Chairman Harris said he was surprised at how high a 15' pole is when he stood beside one. Mr. Prichard said he likes the 12' to 30' range. He discussed how the feeling of the poles' heights changes with a person's proximity to them.

Commissioner Semmler asked if Mr. Prichard needs language for light pole heights in new developments as opposed to in redevelopment sites. Mr. Prichard said he just wants to change the standards and not make them specific to redevelopment.

Commissioner Alling said a 25' pole lights 20', which is "a long way." Mr. Prichard said yes, but a parking spot is 19'. Commissioner Alling said it would light the *width* of 4 cars. Chairman Harris said there are still rules about the minimum and maximum amounts of light that each pole's lamp can generate, and those standards will remain the same in the code.

Mr. Prichard said he could go to city council's meeting the following night and tell them what the MPC discussed and recommended. He said he'd come back to the MPC with the ordinance amendment, and then the commission could vote on the actual language.

Commissioner Crower wondered if there were "actual guidelines that need to be considered," e.g., how many lights there are, how frequently they are spaced, etc. Chairman Harris said each project's lighting plan is based on the things Commissioner Crower is suggesting, and those plans have to be approved.

#### **UPDATE OF CITY COUNCIL ACTIONS**

Mr. Prichard shared the schedule for the Comprehensive Plan update. A public meeting about it will be held April 8 at City Hall in the planning conference room, he said, and he'd like to bring it to the April 15 MPC meeting. After that, it would go to city council for its assessment on April 23 at 5:00 p.m. He said the City of Beaufort would partner with other jurisdictions on the Comp Plans.

On February 26, city council authorized the city manager to open negotiations on the marina lease with Safe Harbor and supported a resolution on the Spanish Moss Trail connector, Mr. Prichard said. There was a lot of discussion about the preferred route that was presented, and language particular to it was removed, so it is more general to "a trail connecting the Spanish Moss Trail to downtown." Council was in favor of the connectivity, he said.

City council also authorized the city manager to enter into a contract with McSweeney Engineers for repair of the pilings under Waterfront Park, Mr. Prichard said.

At the March 12 council meeting, Mr. Prichard said city council approved on first reading the release of TIF II funds, to be used along with CDBG funds, on the Greenlawn Drive

streetscape project.

**REVIEW OF PROJECTS FOR BEAUFORT COUNTY**

**ZONING MAP AMENDMENT/REZONING REQUEST for R100 029 000 0046 0000, 10.69 acres at 126 Broad River Boulevard from C3-Neighborhood Mixed-Use District (NMU) to C5- Regional Center Mixed-Use District (RCMU)**

*Owner: 10 Frontage Road, LLC*

**Rob Merchant** said the county is bringing forward an amendment to the zoning map for a property at 126 Broad River Boulevard. It is within the growth boundaries of unincorporated Beaufort County. He showed the property and surrounding properties on an overhead map. The applicant is interested in changing the zoning from C3-Neighborhood Mixed-Use District to C5-Regional Center Mixed-Use, Mr. Merchant said.

This rezoning request came to the MPC in December 2016, Mr. Merchant said. The MPC didn't recommend rezoning the property, commenting that the C3-NMU zoning seemed to allow multi-family housing, and that some of the barriers to multi-family development should be removed. Since that time, he said, county council removed a requirement that multi-family housing in C3 has to be in mansion apartments with no more than 6 units per building, but now there are new restrictions. A third story on the apartments would be allowed, Mr. Merchant said, but it can't have "a complete floor plan with the other stories."

The applicant came back to the county and "is interested in developing more units on that site," Mr. Merchant said. Several conditions have led staff to reconsider its recommendation for this property. For one thing, there has "been a lot of movement on affordable housing . . . regionally," and a report commissioned by the county makes recommendations for a "certain number of housing units within certain price ranges," which the proposed housing would fit into, he said. Also, the county adopted, within the C5 district, "affordable housing density bonuses," which allows "no density cap" within the development, Mr. Merchant said, though things like parking, stormwater, and maximum building height would work to cap the density. This gives developers "incentive to commit to a certain number of the units" being affordable, he said.

For those reasons, staff is recommending this map change, Mr. Merchant said. Also, the rear portion of this property is very low, dipping down to 5' or 10' above sea level. A large portion isn't usable in the back, he said; the developable portion is in the front.

Mr. Merchant said the county's planning department recommends the rezoning but would consult with City of Beaufort planning staff about whether annexation would be feasible for this parcel; it doesn't seem like it would be for this project, but they want to give city staff an opportunity to look into that and to weigh in on whether the proposed zoning is consistent with the Northern Beaufort County Regional Plan. The next step would be to take this to the county's planning commission, he said.

Dr. **Andy Burris** is the applicant, Mr. Merchant added, and he is present at the meeting if the commissioners have questions.

Commissioner Semmler asked if there would be a fill requirement on the low-level marsh portion of the property. Mr. Merchant said he believes most of it's a jurisdictional wetland, so that's not a consideration.

Commissioner Semmler said he remembers when this rezoning came to the MPC 2 years ago. Commissioner Alling asked how many units would be permitted with the zoning change. Mr. Merchant said in C-5 District, density is 50 dwelling units per acre, so they could get about 150 units. Dr. Burris said they were planning for 126 units, but they stopped planning because of district restrictions. Parking and stormwater would be limiters, he added. Commissioner Alling feels 3 stories would be fine in this location.

There was general agreement about the need for affordable housing. Commissioner Crower asked about the 80-unit limit and if it has to do with affordable housing. Mr. Merchant said there are restrictions in C3 that keep the impact of multi-family housing down in single-family housing subdivisions. In the old county code, they restricted it to 5 units per acre, but in the new code, rather than limiting impact by density, the county developed a cap. The restrictions on multi-family would not exist if the zoning were changed to C5, he said.

Commissioner Alling said she drove through the property and found it "almost residential." She doesn't feel multi-family housing would infringe on any of the single-family residents' privacy for example, because the area has "a hodgepodge of stuff." Mr. Merchant said there are a lot of non-residential uses, and there are some abandoned buildings, but he wouldn't call the area "commercial." There is a road network nearby to support the nearby commercial area, he said.

**Commissioner Alling made a motion to recommend the change in zoning to C5-RCMU. Commissioner Crower seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

Mr. Merchant said county staff has been discussing the possibility of coordinating efforts to update Comp Plans with other jurisdictions for "a lot more consistency across the board."

Northern Regional Planning Implementation Committee meets Friday at 9:30, Commissioner Semmler said. Mr. Merchant said they plan to distribute a draft of the Lady's Island Plan then.

There being no further business to come before the commission, **Commissioner Crower made a motion to adjourn**, and the meeting ended at 6:21 p.m.