



City Council Worksession Meeting Minutes – Electronic Meeting

March 9, 2021

I. CALL TO ORDER

5:00PM

Mayor, Stephen D. Murray III

All members of Council in attendance (Phil Cromer, Neil Lipsitz, Mike McFee, Mitch Mitchell and Mayor Murray)

II. DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Application for Grant to address Stormwater and Rising Sea Level issues - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Bill Prokop, City Manager, gave a brief background about why contact was made with the Army Corps of Engineers, to discuss the issues regarding the Rising Sea Levels, King Tides, and the flooding issues that we have experienced in the past. He pointed out that The Point and the Downtown area will be the most effected by rising sea levels. Permission is being sought from Council to move forward with a letter to the Army Corps of Engineers to see if the City qualifies for one of their programs. Mr. Prokop stated that this organization has been working closely with the City of Charleston regarding their problems with this same issue.

Nancy Parrish, Chief of Planning, U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, stated that in previous talks with Mr. Prokop, and Reece Bertholf, Fire Chief and Assistant City Manager, they feel that the City needs a larger scale solution to address the problems that exist. They recommend a General Investigation Study be done. This is a Feasibility study that is done over a 3-year period to determine the type of solutions that the Federal Government could invest in to help with the problems. The cost of this study is capped at 3 million dollars, in which the Non-Federal Partner is responsible for half. They would look at all the ways that the issues could be addressed and come up with a plan that would provide the most benefit that the Federal Government could get from the investment.

Interim Mayor Pro Tem, Cromer, asked what part of the contributions could be in-kind, or does it have to be all cash.

Nova Robbins, Project Manager, U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, stated yes. Work in-kind payments are allowed in all phases of the project.

Councilman Lipsitz, asked if Stormwater was addressed in the outcome of the study as needing improvement, would that be included in the project. Ms. Parrish replied no, it would not be incorporated in the plan.

Mayor Murray asked about the permitting process and how it might compare to the Mossy Oaks Stormwater Project that took about 3 years to even start the work. He wanted to know if going this route will help expedite that process. In addition, he asked once a plan has been approved, what did they feel was an estimated time frame that work could begin.

Ms. Parrish stated that yes, going this route, it would be sooner, since approval has already been granted by the Federal Government as an authorized project through Congress during the permitting process. Regarding the Mayor's second question, she said that a realistic estimate would be anywhere from 5 to 7 years.

Reece Bertholf, Fire Chief and Assistant City Manager asked if there was a better route for the City to go given our environment, financial capacity, and the problems that exist from Sea Level Rise and King Tides.

Ms. Parrish stated that maybe a smaller plan such as Financial Assistance to States might work, but this would only help with Engineering. There would be no assistance with designing the project or help with construction.

Interim Mayor Pro Tem, Cromer, asked if this was a request for sending in a letter of application, and if so, is this something that must be voted on to do so.

Mr. Prokop stated that this was to inform them of the application process and inquire if Council is on board for this to be done. A formal vote is not needed to send off the application, but it will be required once a proposal comes back.

The general response from Council was to proceed.

B. Homeless Proposal - Beaufort County Health and Human Services.

Fred Leyda, Beaufort County Health and Human Services Director stated that homelessness is a broad term and they wanted to give Council a clearer picture and speak about the different types of people that would fall into this category and how the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) refers to the homeless population.

Ben Boswell, Beaufort County Health and Human Services, stated that HUD has two different categories. One being sheltered and the other unsheltered. He stated that in Beaufort County, we currently have 100 people that fall in the unsheltered category. He went on to give some statistics in other categories. He stated that this data came from Charity Tracker, which is used by local charities in the community, like Help of Beaufort.

Mr. Leyda stated that there needs to be a position created that will work with all the local Municipalities that can reach out to this population and build a relationship with them. Someone that can gain their trust and respect. He stated they have reached out to the Town of Hilton Head, Town of Bluffton, and the Town of Port Royal, and that Beaufort County is considering the employment of a full-time person. Mr. Leyda stated that this position would require someone with a bachelor's degree in Social work. This is a multi-jurisdictional problem, and he hopes all can come together in making this happen.

Councilman Mitchell, commended Mr. Leyda and his staff for recognizing this issue and making an effort to work with all the Municipalities to help combat this problem.

Interim Mayor Pro Tem, Cromer, reminded Council that one of the recommendations from the Affordable Housing Task Force was that the City work with other agencies in trying to help solve the homeless problem.

Mayor Murray stated that he feels it would be better if there was someone who was dedicated to building the one on one personal relationships that it would take to try and coordinate the resources that are available to them based on their personal needs.

C. Text Amendment regarding Demolition Approval Expiration.

Mayor Murray stated that Stacey Applegate and John Dickerson with the Historic District Review Board had brought to his attention that there is no time limit on demolition approvals and reached out to David Prichard, Community and Economic Development Directors, to bring it to his attention.

David Prichard, Community and Economic Development Director, stated that most development approvals are given a 24-month period with the ability to extend the permit 5 more times. He went on to state that there was no time limit for demolitions. Mr. Prichard suggests that the chart for Permit/Process Type Table 9.1.4 be modified by removing the words (no expiration for demolitions) under Certificate of Appropriateness, Major, under the Historic Preservation section.

Councilman McFee asked if there was any way of knowing if there are any outstanding permits that have been issued.

Mr. Prichard stated that since there was no deadline, they have not been tracked. He stated that there is a spreadsheet that they might be able to pull this information from.

Mayor Murray inquired about the extension periods and how those are handled.

Mr. Prichard stated that if the Code, or circumstances have not changed, then the extension is granted.

Attached, please find a letter from the Historic Beaufort Foundation regarding their feedback on this item.

III. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Interim Mayor Pro Tem, Cromer made a motion to go into Executive Session and seconded by Councilman McFee.

- A. Pursuant to Title 30, Chapter 4, Section (70) (a) (2) of the South Carolina Code of Law: Receipt of Legal Advice regarding the Burton Fire District.

No actions from Executive Session.

IV. ADJOURN

6:35 PM

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February 23, 2021

The Honorable Stephen Murray, Mayor
& Members of City Council
City of Beaufort
1911 Boundary Street
Beaufort, SC 29902

Dear Mayor Murray and Members of Council,

Historic Beaufort Foundation is appreciative of the time and effort the city commits to continuing the legacy of historic preservation in our community. Maintaining the architectural and historic character of the National Historic Landmark District requires careful and deliberate consideration.

Currently, demolition permits as included in the City's Code of Ordinances have no end date. We believe this must have been an oversight as this is practically unheard of in historic district zoning codes. HBF raised this concern with city staff early last year and believes action should be taken immediately. In February, the City's Historic Review Board (HRB) deferred action due to the late hour on a request from that board to City Council to address this issue among others with the Demolition Ordinance.

We respectfully request City Council take action to issue a moratorium on demolition requesters anywhere with the boundaries of the 304-acre National Historic Landmark District until a text amendment can be adopted.

Once a demolition permit is issued it should have a maximum time frame of 12 months and not be eligible for automatic extension. Re-application to the HRB for demolition in whole or in part would be limited to one 12-month period only. The owner should also have approved plans for new construction to ensure the streetscape is maintained and that vacant lots do not mar the cohesiveness of the historic district.

The language of the text amendment should also address the following:

- Demolition approval or permit shall not be transferable to another owner.
- Requests for demolition of contributing and non-contributing structures within the NHL District will include photographic documentation as well as historic, architectural and structural assessments.
- In any case involving the demolition or partial demotion or removal of a structure, before granting approval the HRB may call on the chief building official to provide a report on the state of repair and structural stability of the structure under consideration.
- In all applications involving the demolition or partial demolition or removal of a structure, provision shall be made for a public hearing as set forth in this Code.
- The HRB shall have the right to delay a request for demolition, partial demolition or removal of any structure, and shall take steps to ascertain what the City Council can or may do to preserve such structure, including consultation with private civic groups, interested private citizens and

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other public boards or agencies and including investigation of the potential use of the power of eminent domain when the preservation of a given structure is clearly in the interest of the general welfare of the community and of certain historic and architectural significance.

- The HRB shall have the power to deny outright the demolition, partial demolition or removal of a structure over 50 years old within the City's National Register listed historic district, and or listed on the 1998 Beaufort County Above Ground Resources Survey, whichever is greater.

I will be happy to answer any questions regarding this request look forward to working with you in the continued protection and preservation of our National Historic Landmark District.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Cynthia C. Jenkins
Executive Director

cc: William Prokop, City Manager

HISTORIC BEAUFORT FOUNDATION

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