

Planning Commission



Minutes of the Thursday, November 16, 2017 Regular Meeting

Members of the Planning Commission

Woods Burnett

Chairman

Leonard Carter, Jr.

Bob Clark

Timothy V. Key

JoAnn McKie

Larry Watts

Briton Williams

1. **Call to Order** – The regular meeting of November 17, 2016, having been duly publicized, was called to order by Chairman Woods Burnett at 7:00 p.m.
2. **Roll Call** – Members present were Chairman Burnett and Commissioners Len Carter, Bob Clark, Briton Williams, Larry Watts, JoAnn McKie. Commissioner Key arrived at 7:08 p.m. Also in attendance were Amanda Sievers, Interim Director of Planning and Development; Kuleigh Baker, Engineering and Planning Secretary; City Councilman Jimmy Adams, the applicants' and their representatives; and members of the public and the press.
3. **Approval of Minutes** – The August 17, 2017 Regular Meeting minutes were approved as transmitted.
4. **Confirmation of Agenda** – There were no changes to the agenda.
5. **Application RZM 17-002 – Rezoning** – A request by property owners Carol Ann Bostick, Marsha Blandenburg, Patricia Kinard, and Dorothy P. Kitchens to rezone ± 2.81 acres of land located along W. Martintown Road and Observatory Avenue, Tax Parcels: 007 07 07 003, 007 07 07 001, 007 07 01 002, and a ± 0.51 abandoned strip extending from Clay Avenue to W. Martintown Road from R-14, Large Lot Single-Family Residential to R-7, Small Lot Single-Family Residential. The purpose of the rezoning request is to convert the existing lots to smaller lots for future residential development.

Presentation by Applicant –

Pat Kinard, 512 Fox Haven Dr., Aiken, introduced herself as a part owner of the subject property. She outlined a brief history of the Butler and Blandenburg families and requested that the Planning Commission allow them to build something nice on the property to honor her family's dedication to and love of North Augusta.

Bill Hixon, 770 Murrah Rd., North Augusta, the applicant's representative and owner of

Hixon Insurance went over details of the interest in the property that has been for sale for the past 3 years from both commercial and residential developers. He noted there has been an increase in interest from seniors desiring smaller yards and lot sizes. The proposed houses would fall in the \$250,000 range. Mr. Hixon noted non-residential uses that could be developed in the existing R-14 zoning and stated that the proposed infill was compatible with the goals of the 2017 Comprehensive Plan.

Public Hearing – Before opening the public hearing, Chairman Burnett reviewed the meeting participation guidelines with the public. The public hearing was opened at 7:13 p.m. Chairman Burnett reminded the public and Planning Commission that the decision of the rezoning is a recommendation to City Council.

Ken Powell, 320 Clay St., began by saying that he was able to speak with many of the surrounding property owners and they respect the business opportunity available from the sale and development of the land and would not be opposed to a maximum of 8 homes that would be feasible with the current R-14 zoning. He opposed taking 3 lots from the surrounding R-14 zoning to create the proposed R-7 zoning within an existing, established neighborhood and opening the door for duplexes, townhomes, and other incongruous development if the developer does not hold to his word. Mr. Powell discussed potential traffic hazards at the Observatory Ave., Georgia Ave., and Martintown Rd. intersections. He also discussed potential stormwater issues that have not been explored prior to the rezoning application.

Mike Hitchler, 1300 Georgia Ave., former President of the Olde Towne Preservation Association, expressed his concerns about changing the character of the neighborhood's historically significant architecture and unique large lot size. He also expressed concern about the traffic increase from new housing along with the proposed public safety station on Georgia Ave.

John Menger, 315 Martintown Rd., requested that the developer preserve the established trees and natural beauty of the land at the top of the hill that is unique to the City. He also provided a history of the site as an astrological viewing vista which resulted in the street names for Observatory and Sidereal.

London Smith, 1402 Observatory Ave., spoke to the unique character of the houses as his main draw to purchasing a home in North Augusta. From an economic standpoint, he questioned what would happen to his home value if the proposed neighborhood needed repairs and homeowners were not as willing to do renovations that are not stand alone residences.

Allen LaFavor, 125 Butler Ave., confirmed with the Planning Commission that the NADC allows duplexes and townhomes in the R-7 zoning and that the rezoning decision would not hold the developer accountable for the proposed single-family detached housing. He also pointed out that the 2017 Comprehensive Plan calls for connectivity between neighborhoods and the proposed road would end in a cul-de-sac. Mr. Burnett confirmed

that the Planning Commission cannot control the specific design details of the appearance of future homes because it does not serve as an Architectural Review Board.

Steven Bryant, 129 Butler Ave., said that the rezoning would change 80% of the permitted use type to be something other than single family residential. He noted issues with stormwater in the Pretty Run Basin, the need for additional utilities and infrastructure, and the inadequate distance of the proposed roadway from an existing intersection. Mr. Bryant asked the Commission to consider the following conditions if they decided to recommend the requested rezoning: single family detached housing, a buffer placed around any potential detention pond, native species planted around a fence on Martintown Rd. for screening, and front setbacks that match the existing homes.

Devon Howard, 200 Atlantis Ave., explained that along with the other issues expressed, her home is adjacent to the proposed site. The retention pond is the main concern. There are already existing issues with erosion and runoff. Ms. Howard further explained that her property is located in a low-lying area, and is very concerned with exacerbating the potential to an increased runoff situation.

Chairman Burnett called on staff to give a summary of the staff report. Ms. Amanda Sievers confirmed that the staff recommendation is in favor of the rezoning with the conditions of the neighborhood preservation overlay that would set the standards of the Staff review.

The public hearing closed at 8:00 p.m.

Consideration of Application RZM17-002 –

Glynn Bruker, 699 Heggies Ridge, Appling, GA said they would not proceed with engineering plans until the rezoning has been approved. The applicant confirmed for the Planning Commission that the lot width for the proposed rezoning is 40 ft.

Commissioner McKie asked if the applicant had plans to mass grade the property or if the development could be 1 story or 1 ½ story instead of 2 for screening. She also pointed out ongoing Martintown Rd. traffic issues in areas other than Observatory Ave.

Commissioner Key asked questions about connectivity, alley access, and the construction materials and architectural design of the concept houses in relation to the cost of the lots and projected construction cost.

Commissioner Williams asked about the placement of the subdivision entrance on Observatory Ave. and the need for a traffic impact study.

Commissioner Watts stated that he was not opposed to the number of proposed lots as much as the incompatible character of the presented home design within the existing historic district.

Commissioner Clark pointed out that the purpose of the meeting was to make a recommendation to city council about the rezoning without consideration of the design of any potential future infill.

Chairman Burnett noted the intent of the neighborhood preservation corridor overlay was actually to help areas transition to a commercial use while maintaining the character of the existing residential uses and that the previous request for a dental office in the existing structure was more compatible with the development code. He stated that it is also inappropriate to propose new high-density residential infill according to the NADC. He reminded the applicant that with the current R-14 zoning, a maximum of 8 lots could be built out and the majority of neighbors are not in opposition to the current zoning.

Commissioner Key made a motion to deny the proposed rezoning of the Blandenburg Property from R-14 to R-7. Commissioner Clark offered a second. Commissioners Burnett, Clark, Key, Watts, and Williams voted in favor of the motion with Commissioners Carter and McKie opposed.

6. Election of 2018 Officers – Chairman and Vice-Chairman –

Commissioner Williams nominated Chairman Burnett to serve as Chairman again in 2018. Commissioner Carter offered a second and the motion passed unanimously with Chairman Burnett abstaining.

Commissioner Watts nominated Commissioner Key to serve as Vice Chair in 2018. Commissioner Key declined the nomination.

Commissioner McKie nominated Commissioner Williams as Vice Chair. Commissioner Williams declined the nomination.

Commissioner Williams nominated Commissioner Watts to serve another term as Vice Chairman in 2018 with a second by Commissioner Key. The motion passed unanimously with Vice Chairman Watts abstaining.

7. Consideration of 2018 Meeting Schedule –

Mrs. Sievers and Chairman Burnett briefly reviewed the proposed 2018 Planning Commission meeting schedule. With a motion by Commissioner Key and second by Commissioner Clark, the 2018 Planning Commission meeting schedule was unanimously adopted as presented.

8. Staff Reports – Mrs. Sievers reported an increase in inquiries about future development, especially residential subdivision concepts. She stated that October saw an increase in Home Occupation Certificates of Zoning Compliance. Mrs. Sievers also reminded the Planning Commission about their annual 3-hour training requirement.

9. **Adjourn** – With no objection, Chairman Burnett adjourned the meeting at 8:42 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Amanda J. Sievers, Interim Director
Department of Planning and Development
Secretary to the Planning Commission