

Planning Commission



Minutes of the Thursday, May 17, 2018 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 May 17, 2018, 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, JoAnn McKie, Larry Watts and Briton Williams. Commissioner Tim Key arrived at 7:04 p.m. Also in attendance were Tom Zeaser, Director of Engineering and Public Works; Kuleigh Baker, Engineering and Planning Secretary; B. Todd Glover, City Administrator; Chief John Thomas; City Council members; the press and public.
3. **Approval of Minutes** – The minutes from the Study Session and Regular Meeting of March 15, 2018 were approved as transmitted.
4. **Confirmation of Agenda** – There were no changes to the agenda.
5. **Application RZM18-001– Rezoning** – A request by the City of North Augusta to rezone ± 2.41 acres of land located at 1220 and 1220 ½ Georgia Avenue, Aiken County Tax Parcels: 007-07-06-003 and 007-07-06-004 from R-14, Large Lot, Single-Family Residential to P, Public Use. The purpose of the rezoning request is to convert the lots for use as a new fire station.

A. Public Hearing – Chairman Burnett opened the public hearing at 7:03 p.m. with a review of the citizen participation guidelines.

Mr. Zeaser introduced the application for rezoning submitted by the Department of Public Safety on behalf of the City of North Augusta and stated it was customary for city-owned properties to be zoned P, Public Use.

City Administrator Todd Glover said in 2009 the City began looking at locations for a new Public Safety Station and Headquarters including vacant and abandoned properties that could be repurposed. Thirteen properties were considered, most within one of the overlay districts. The properties on Georgia Avenue were purchased with

sales tax money and would allow Public Safety to provide coverage to the Rapids and Savannah Barony subdivisions within the 2 mile coverage area for Insurance Services Office ratings. He recognized that a change in the 2008 North Augusta Development Code requires the City to rezone city-owned property to P, Public Use and answered questions from Commissioners regarding issues with the current station location and potential sites for a new station.

Chief John Thomas said the safety of the citizens is his top priority and that he sees the proposed location on Georgia Avenue as the most central location to reduce response time and avoid the need for two new stations. He answered questions from Commissioners about ISO ratings, response times, the current stock of fire safety equipment, and reciprocal agreements with Augusta-Richmond County.

Darren Prickett, Project Engineer at Johnson, Laschober & Associates, P.C., 1296 Broad Street, Augusta, Georgia answered questions from the Chairman about the proposed footprint's noncompliance with the Neighborhood Preservation Overlay District and the historic resources assessment conducted by JLA.

Ken Powell, 320 Clay Street began a presentation from the public outlining his issues with the proposed design in support of the retention of the Neighborhood Preservation Overlay District.

Steven Bryant, 129 Butler Avenue noted areas of the North Augusta Development Code that would not allow for the proposed design of the public safety station. He said he had an issue with the sally port and drive-thru functionality within a residential neighborhood. Mr. Bryant noted that the infill development would be inconsistent with the existing historic district as outlined in the Comprehensive Plan and increase the amount of non-contributing structures in the Georgia Avenue National Register Historic District to approximately 20 percent.

Dave Leverett, 121 Butler Avenue said the site was particularly sensitive because it is very similar to the 1914 map of the City of North Augusta in terms of current street names and layout. He outlined various historic sites in each section of the original plan for the city that offer striking vistas, including the site subject to the application at hand.

Dione Carroll, Carroll Law Offices, 107 Pendleton Street NW, Aiken, South Carolina expressed her opinion that the purchasing and rezoning process had not been conducted according to the NADC and found the application incomplete and noncompliant. A report compiled by Carroll Law Offices was distributed to the Planning Commission.

John Menger, 315 West Martintown Road stated his family had a long history in the City and was reluctant to see what would become of the historic Palmetto Lodge site.

Perry Holcolmb, 1891 Green Forrest Drive questioned the City's statements that fire trucks are more difficult to move up Georgia Avenue rather than downhill and stated he felt the application was being rushed.

After comments from the public, the City Administrator clarified that the City is attempting to get the ladder truck into the district that would cover the new, taller buildings being developed downtown. He said they understand the history of the City and have tried to make the planning respectful of the citizens and neighborhood. The funding is currently for the fire station, not the entire headquarters.

With no further comments from the applicant, public, or staff, the public hearing was closed at 8:57 p.m.

B. Consideration of Application RZM18-001 by Commission

Commissioner Clark asked about the timing of the project for the fire station and Mr. Glover confirmed there was currently only funding in place for the fire station.

Commissioner Watts said he struggled with this application because there would be no way to please both the public and the City. He said the Palmetto Lodge fire was an unfortunate loss of a historically significant structure for the City and felt the City should have rezoned the property before the purchase. He expressed concern over the traffic on the curve of Georgia Avenue and suggested the city consider areas near Exit 1 that are seeing growth for the location of a new fire station.

Commissioner Carter stated if you took away the zoning and overlay issues he still did not feel like the Georgia Avenue location was a good fit for a new fire station.

Commissioner McKie echoed Commissioner Watts' remarks, stating she felt that this decision was difficult because they want to do what is best for the City's interest but the Planning Commission has to honor the public's opinion. She would like for the City to be open to looking at new ideas and following the Comprehensive Plan's outline for appropriate infill.

Chairman Burnett felt the location is not the best option for the citizens. He reminded everyone that when the current development code was approved, it was designed for Knox Avenue to be the main commercial district and that the Neighborhood Preservation Overlay District was put into place to preserve residential structures for a gradual change to office space. He said anything zoned for P, Public Use must comply with the overlay and he does not feel like the fire station is sensitive to the historic district.

Commissioner Key said the NADC and Comprehensive Plan are their guiding documents that keep the Planning Commission from having to make an emotional decision and that the current codes do not allow for the proposed fire station.

Commissioner Williams agrees that the City needs a new fire station and public safety headquarters but regrets the City's communication with the public. He believes the Neighborhood Preservation Overlay District should be preserved in this area, especially given the citizen input into the history of North Augusta.

Commissioner Clark stated he thought it would be a good location for the fire station if the regulations of the Neighborhood Preservation Overlay District were not in place.

Commissioner Watts made a motion to deny the request by the City of North Augusta to rezone ± 2.41 acres of land located at 1220 and 1220 ½ Georgia Avenue, Aiken County Tax Parcels: 007-07-06-003 and 007-07-06-004 from R-14, Large Lot, Single-Family Residential to P, Public Use. Commissioner Key offered a second and the motion passed unanimously.

6. Application PP18-001 – Major Subdivision Plan – The Retreat at Walnut Village – A request by Charles Blackston for approval of plans for a townhouse development located near Walnut Lane and Northside Drive.

Mr. Zeaser said the project came before the Planning Commission as a concept plan called Walnut Village. The Retreat at Walnut Village will be the first phase of that development, with 86 single-family, attached townhouses broken into up to three building phases. Staff is reviewing revisions from the project engineer.

Commissioner Williams recused himself from the project application.

Chairman Burnett said he did not recall a consensus being reached in regard to the project's connection to Cherry Laurel Drive but felt the neighborhoods should have connectivity per the Comprehensive Plan and would not be supportive of a stub-out.

Lawton Harbeson, Civil Design Solutions, 371 Main Street, Warrenton Georgia and Charles Blackston, Developer, 30 Mason Court, North Augusta answered questions about the stub-out. The connection will eventually be made by Meybohm in future phases of the development, but Mr. Blackston does not own the property in question to be able to complete the connection.

Mr. Zeaser said making the connection to Cherry Laurel Drive is important for mail, garbage, fire and future public services and that it is the recommendation of the staff to require the connection instead of a stub-out.

Commissioner McKie said she did not see how you could force the developer to purchase the property in order to make the connection and that the property owner would need to be held responsible in the future for completing the work.

Chairman Burnett clarified with the developer that there would be street trees installed, not canopy cover.

Commissioner Key made a motion to approve the request by Charles Blackston for approval of plans for a ±86 townhouse development located near Walnut Lane and Northside Drive subject to the following conditions:

1. Prior to approval of the major subdivision, the applicant shall revise the plan sets and supporting documents that provides all required technical information identified in the staff reviews.
2. Prior to approval of the grading permit, the applicant shall provide the asphalt pavement design detail and calculations based on existing soil conditions within the road rights of way and projected traffic volumes.
3. The existing temporary easement that extends into the proposed development from Cherry Laurel Drive will remain in place until such time as the roadway connection to Cherry Laurel Drive is completed and dedicated to the City of North Augusta.

Commissioner Clark offered a second and the motion passed unanimously with Commissioner Williams recusing himself.

1. **Application PP18-002 – Major Subdivision Plan – Wando Woodlands, Section 6** – A request by Wando Partners, LP for approval of Section 6 of the Wando Woodlands Planned Development.

Mr. Zeaser said the application was for the next phase of the Wando Woodlands Planned Development, which has been approved by the Planning Commission.

Chairman Burnett requested a third condition be added to the application which would require an approved stormwater management permit due to previous grading and stormwater issues in prior phases of the development.

Philip Green, Southern Partners, 1233 Augusta West Parkway, Augusta, Georgia agreed to the condition and stated that the Stormwater Permit had already been issued. He confirmed that the site would utilize mass grading again.

Commissioner Watts asked Mr. Zeaser what the Engineering Department does to make sure the grading is compacted property to which he stated the City requires compaction testing on the site plan specifications.

Commissioner Key made a motion to approve the request by Wando Partners, LP for approval of Section 6 of the Wando Woodlands Planned Development subject to the following conditions:

1. Prior to approval of the major subdivision, the applicant shall revise the plan sets and supporting documents that provides all required technical information identified in the staff reviews.

2. Developer will show boundary of all lands proposed to be dedicated to the City of North Augusta with this phase.

3. Prior to approval of the major subdivision, the applicant must receive an approved Stormwater Management permit.

Commissioner Clark offered a second and the motion passed unanimously.

7. **Application SP18-002 – Preliminary Major Site Plan – River Falls Apartments – A** request by T. R. Reddy, I-20 Investors, LLC for approval of an apartment community located near Frontage Road and Martintown Road.

Mr. Zeaser said the proposed 240 unit apartment complex had previously been rezoned from PD, Planned Development to R-5, Mixed Residential by the Planning Commission and approved by the City Council. Staff has reviewed the proposed concept plan and will work with the Engineer to address any compliance issues with the final major site plan submittal.

Dan Rickabaugh, ZEL Engineers, 435 Telfair Street, Augusta, Georgia clarified the provided parking and requirements. The total parking for the entire development is 431 spaces: 360 resident, 60 guest, and 11 garage. The total for Phase 1 only is 284 spaces. He stated a traffic consultant had been hired but the Traffic Impact Study is incomplete.

Commissioner McKie asked if the developer and engineer were aware the SCDOT will be bidding out a red light project at the I-20 and Martintown Road interchange. Mr. Rickabaugh said they were aware and that the traffic consultant would be working with SCDOT on their recommendation.

Commissioner Carter confirmed with the Engineer that the only ingress/egress for the development would be on Frontage Road.

Commissioner Key made a motion to approve the request by T. R. Reddy, I-20 Investors, LLC for approval of an apartment community located near Frontage Road and Martintown Road subject to staff approval. Commissioner Carter offered a second and the motion passed unanimously.

8. **Staff Report** – Mr. Zeaser said the City has seen an influx of residential development requests and that the Hyundai Minor Site Plan off Jefferson Davis Highway is close to approval. Chairman Burnett thanked Mr. Zeaser for his work for the Planning Commission during his time as Interim Director.

9. **Adjourn** -- With no objection, Chairman Burnett adjourned the meeting at 10:19 p.m.

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Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Libby Hodges". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "L" and "H".

Libby Hodges, Director
Department of Planning and Development
Secretary to the Planning Commission