

# Planning Commission



## Minutes of the Thursday, March 18, 2021 Regular Meeting

*Members of the Planning Commission*

Briton Williams

*Chair*

Leonard Carter, Jr.

Timothy V. Key

Larry Watts

Bob Clark

JoAnn McKie

Dr. Christine Crawford

1. **Call to Order** - The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.
2. **Roll Call**- Members present were Chairman Briton Williams, Commissioners Timothy Key, JoAnn McKie, Larry Watts, Dr. Christine Crawford, Bob Clark, and Leonard Carter.
3. **Approval of Minutes** – February 18, 2021 Study Session and Regular Meeting were approved, as written.
4. **Confirmation of Agenda**- There were no changes to the agenda.
5. **Application MW21-021 Sweetwater Freestanding Emergency Department**- a request by UHS Sweetwater (Aiken Regional) for a waiver from the landscaping requirements of the North Augusta Development Code Section 10.7.
  - a. Consider of the waiver request by the Commission.

Mrs. Hodges stated that the applicant asked for one additional tree relocation to be added to the waiver request. Mrs. Hodges stated that there was a drawing of the revision that would be presented at the end of the discussed section.

The agent for this project, Mr. Ty Cole, was present on the meeting and stated his name and address for the record. Mr. Cole explained that the previous developer of the parcels planted trees around the perimeter of each parcel per the agreement with the City of North Augusta and the landscaping requirements. Mr. Cole stated that there are four trees located at access points for their project that they would like to replant in another location. Mr. Cole said that

there are three additional trees to relocate from Austin Graybill Road to allow a clear view of the Freestanding Emergency Department to patients. Mr. Cole stated that the purpose of the waiver request is to relocate a total of seven trees and replant them in different locations.

Mr. Cole answered questions from the Commissioners and provided more details on the project's relation to Aiken Regional.

Chairman Williams explained each of the five criteria to determine a waiver request to the Commission. With a motion by Chairman Williams and second by Commissioner Watts, the motion to approve waiver MW21-021 was granted unanimously, subject to the four conditions listed on page 8 in the staff report.

6. **Application SP21-001, Sweetwater Freestanding Emergency Department** – a request by UHS Sweetwater (Aiken Regional) for approval of freestanding emergency department on a ±4.5 acre tract parcel 010-10-10-003.
  - a. Consideration of the Major Site Plan by the Commission

Mrs. Hodges stated that this site plan is associated with the waiver that was previously discussed and they are close to receiving approval from all of the review departments in the planning process.

Mr. Cole explained that the plan was the proposed layout that was featured in the presentation and Chairman Williams asked about the proposed timeframe to open. Mr. Cole stated that the proposed timeframe was on a six month schedule and they are looking at being open by the end of the year. Commissioner Carter asked Mr. Cole if the facility would be a 24 hour facility and Mr. Cole stated that it would be a 24 hour facility, seven days a week.

Commissioner Crawford asked about the level of trauma care that the emergency room would provide. Mr. Cole said that he could not answer the question, but Mr. Michael Hall, CEO of Aiken Regional Hospital, could answer it. Chairman Williams asked Mr. Hall to state his name and address for the record. Mr. Hall stated that Aiken Regional is not trauma certified but the hospital is working towards a Level III trauma center, so the Freestanding Emergency Department would not have a trauma department associated with it. Mr. Hall explained that the FED would have emergency physicians that are boarded in Emergency Medicine, with CT diagnostic and lab. Commissioner Key asked if the FED would have a Certificate of Need. Mr. Hall said that the hospital received a Certificate of Need.

Commissioner Key made a motion to approve application SP21-001 with the conditions listed in the Staff Report. Commissioner Clark offered a second and the motion was approved unanimously.

7. **Presentation of Audit Report:** North Augusta Development Code Rewrite project; presented by Orion Planning and Design.
  - a. Request for general endorsement or considerations for revisions prior to City Council review

Mrs. Hodges stated that the North Augusta Development Code Rewrite Steering Committee has provided their initial feedback on the audit report. The Audit Report states the summary of findings, recommendations on how to use the audit, and recommendations for the draft. Mrs. Hodges stated that the consultants are looking for an endorsement or general direction from the Commission or anything that needs to be corrected. Mrs. Hodges said that it will be forwarded to City Council to keep them informed on the progress of the project. Mrs. Hodges said that they are halfway through the North Augusta Development Code Rewrite.

Mr. Bob Barber and Mrs. Carol Rhea from the Orion Group presented a summary of the Audit Report results. Mr. Barber stated that they organized the Audit Report in to two parts: the Code characteristics, with the formatting of the Code and the findings and recommendations and the core findings and the recommendations and findings in relation to the core content of the Code. Mr. Barber explained the table of contents in the audit report and summarized each chapter of the audit report. Mr. Barber explained the language structure and format of the Development Code with abundant redundancies, with examples of abundant footnotes and extraneous materials. Mr. Bob also mentioned a hypothetical situation for a variance and how to navigate the code.

With the core findings and recommendations, Part II is the Regulatory Content, with a portion exposing the use patterns and how they are organized, being difficult to implement because the nature of their organization and their lack of clear purpose on what they are intended to do.

Overlay districts were discussed and a lot of input was received by the community. Mr. Barber stated that in the audit, it was mentioned to convert Overlay Districts to Base districts and to eliminate the complexity of the overlay districts.

Mr. Barber stated that planned developments make up a large portion of North Augusta. Some of those plans have been developed over a long period of time, from the mid 1980's to current, with previous ones having sketchy and limited information. The contemporary planned developments have more precise details. The audit explains how legacy planned developments are handled and addressed in the development code.

Mr. Barber mentioned nonconformity provisions and conditional uses, with conditional use codes scattered about the current code and Mr. Bob states that they iron it out.

Mr. Barber stated that there is a section of emerging trends that is mentioned in the audit, with Housing Choice and Affordability, Transportation Choice, and Communications and Communication Infrastructure.

Audit Implementation is shown during the presentation, with every one of the summary points are listed. One of the columns is the Degree of Difficulty, with each section being marked on the Degree of Difficulty.

The Regulatory Content's Degree of Difficulty increases because if the conversion of overlay districts to base districts, it will be a more involved process.

The Appendix has six appendices that represent the work of the audit, with summarized comments, survey results, and tables.

The end of the audit has an example revised table of contents, if given the greenlight to implement the audit, the revised table of contents will be used with the summary recommendations, to task out workflow for the code rewrite based upon the recommended table of content.

Mr. Barber's final comment is when they begin to write a code, something will shift or change, or additional information will come to light. Mr. Bob stated at the end that the audit is a roadmap for the code rewrite team to move forward in the right direction, but not for every comment mentioned in the audit.

Chairman Williams commended Mr. Barber and Ms. Rhea on putting together the audit. Chairman Williams gave the rest of the Commission an opportunity to ask questions, with no questions asked by the rest of the Commissioners. Chairman Williams asked Mr. Barber a few questions about the Audit and the comprehensive plan. Chairman Williams asked about the comprehensive plan and the matrix and stated there seems to be a missing connection between the comprehensive plan and the code. Mr. Barber stated that the comprehensive plan was implemented after the North Augusta Development Code; the code was written in 2010 and the comprehensive plan was implemented in 2018, so there would be an expectation that the plan would not be as responsive to the Development Code. Mr. Barber said that North Augusta has a comprehensive plan in the future and the development code needs to correspond with the comprehensive plan. Mr. Barber stated that they devised a method to see what the comprehensive plan is calling for that the development code is not implementing.

Commissioner Crawford asked if affordable housing be tackled as a part of the audit because it will be a part of what comes next as an emerging issue. Mrs. Hodges stated that there is a start on the comprehensive plan next year, with contracts being signed to get started, with being incumbent on staff bringing back the information to the Commission.

Commissioner Clark stated that he likes the general approach to the rewrite of the development code is very good.

There were no more questions about the audit for the Development Code rewrite.

Chairman Williams asked for feedback from the Commission to move forward with the Development Code rewrite.

Commissioner Crawford complemented the approach and the thoroughness of the audit. Commissioners Carter, Watts, Clark, Key, McKie joined by Chairman Williams all voted unanimously on moving forward with the Development Code rewrite.

**8. Staff Report**

a. February Performance Report

Mrs. Hodges stated that the February monthly report was included in the Planning Commission packet. Mrs. Hodges stated there has been positive movement on the SCDOT studies. Mrs. Hodges stated that the comprehensive plan update has been approved, with contracts signed and will be introduced to the Commission at April's meeting. Mrs. Hodges asked the Commission if they wanted to have a meeting to get set up an introduction to the project and delegate priorities or do the Commission want it set up as a study session. The Commission agreed unanimously to have it in a study session to have time to discuss it thoroughly.

Chairman Williams mentioned introducing the new staff, secretary of Planning, La'Stacia Reese. Chairman Williams asked about the planning schedule for next month's meeting. Mrs. Hodges stated that the Planning Commission will have several cases for next month. Commissioner Clark asked about in-person meetings and Ms. Hodges stated that at the last City Council meeting, the month of May might be the month of in-person meetings, pending the public response. Commissioner Clark also asked about how receptive were the City Council to the Martintown Study Corridor. Mrs. Hodges stated that the Council seemed very receptive and there were not many in-depth questions about the study. Mrs. Hodges stated that she hopes that the project will be going in front of City Council at the next meeting. Chairman Williams stated that he listened to the meeting, as well.

**9. Adjourn**

With no objection, Chairman Williams adjourned the meeting at 8:10pm.

As Approved April 15, 2021

Respectfully Submitted,

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