

Planning Commission



Minutes for the Thursday, July 15, 2021, Regular Meeting

Members of the Planning Commission

Dr. Christine Crawford

Chair

Bob Bigger

Leonard Carter, Jr.

Bob Clark

Timothy V. Key

JoAnn McKie, Vice Chair

Larry Watts

CITIZEN ASSISTANCE: Individuals requiring special assistance or a sign interpreter to participate in the meeting are asked to please notify the Department of Planning and Development 48 hours prior to the meeting at 803-441-4221.

1. **Call to Order** – 7:00 p.m.
2. **Roll Call** –Present at the meeting were Chairman Dr. Christine Crawford, Vice Chair JoAnn McKie, Commissioners Larry Watts, Bob Bigger, Len Carter, Bob Clark, and Timothy Key.
3. **Approval of Minutes** – June 17, 2021 Regular Meeting- Commissioner Watts made the motion to approve the minutes with Commissioner Clark seconding the motion. Minutes approved, as written.
4. **Confirmation of Agenda**- June 17, 2021 minutes were approved unanimously.
5. **Application SP21-004 Public Safety Headquarters Sketch Plan Review**–
A request for preliminary review of site plans for Public Safety Headquarters (PSHQ) to be located on 4.45 acres located at 1208, 1220, & 1220 ½ Georgia Ave., consisting of tax parcel numbers 07-07-06-003, 007-07-006-004, & 007-07-06-005.

John C. Thomas, the applicant for the Public Safety Headquarters, turned the meeting over to Mr. Jim Clifford, City Administrator, to present the sketch plan review.

Mr. Clifford presented a PowerPoint presentation with various facts about the Public Safety Headquarters, stating that the City previously purchased property on Georgia Avenue for the proposed PSHQ/Courts/FS#1. Mr. Clifford was presented with the proposal in August 2020 from City Council to place the PSHQ on city owned property on

East Buena Vista Avenue, which is east of the current location of the Headquarters. Mr. Clifford said that during the due diligence of researching the cost to build on this property, the city has discovered that the cost will be significantly higher, with the cost being approximately \$850,000. Mr. Clifford wants to go back to Council and get their guidance with several options; with one being to place the PDHQ on the City owned property on East Buena Vista or the second option is to place the PDHQ on or reconsider the city owned property on Georgia Avenue from a cost standpoint. Mr. Clifford stated that the initial cost was a \$10.5 million project, but construction cost has rose significantly.

Mr. Clifford presented a sketch plan of the PDHQ on East Buena Vista, stating the site challenges, as 1.) a need for a retaining wall for the slope of the topography behind the site, 2.) the soil stabilization, 3.) lack of building expansion, 4.) lack of parking expansion, and 5.) an easement that runs through the property. Mr. Clifford said that these challenges will present a higher cost and wanted to explore the Georgia Avenue site.

The Georgia Avenue property was purchased with Capital Projects sales tax money, so building is limited. It can be developed on the current property or sell to another buyer; the property cannot be held for later development.

Mr. Clifford presented a Site Prep Side by Side Comparison of the cost for both sites at East Buena Vista and Georgia Avenue for the potential location of the PSHQ. The total cost for the East Buena Vista site development would approximately be \$2,184,211.33, versus the Georgia Avenue total cost would approximately be \$681,465.03.

Mr. Clifford's recommendation is to place the PSHQ on Georgia Avenue with a list of pros being: 1.) central location in the City, 2.) preferred location by Public Safety, 3.) lower overall cost to the City (\$842,746.29), 4.) expansion capability exists in future years, if needed; and 5.) allows for the legacy structures on Observatory Avenue to be maintained. The cons for placing the PSHQ on Georgia Avenue would be: 1.) delays the overall project at least 4-6 months, 2.) unknown if community is supportive of this new concept, and 3.) potential loss of commercial tax base.

The next steps are for the Georgia Avenue Site to present to City Council Resolution granting staff authority to present to Planning Commission for Public Zoning, provide sketch plan review to Planning Commission in July, community engagement with Punch and Judy Players, Historic North Augusta, neighbors, and develop plan for "legacy" buildings fronting Observatory Avenue. One of the risk decisions with the Georgia Avenue site is to provide guidance to designers to move forward on design work for Georgia Avenue Site (mitigates time loss). Mr. Clifford finished his presentation and asked the Planning Commission for any questions and feedback about the proposal.

Commissioner McKie asked about the soil stabilization at the East Buena Vista location and Mr. Clifford explained the process of the retaining wall and not impeding on the next person's property.

Commissioner Watts asked Mr. Clifford the reason why the City would not be able to maintain the Georgia Avenue site and Mr. Clifford stated that with the property being purchased with Capital Project Funds, you have to develop the property for its intended purposes.

A member of the community, Mr. Dave Leverette, had comments on the East Buena Vista tract that was being developed for the PDHQ and he is opposed to the PSHQ going on Georgia Avenue.

Another member of the community, Mr. Mike Hixler, commented on the proposed site of the PSHQ, and being opposed to the Georgia Avenue site being developed for the stated use because of the neighborhood being a quiet neighborhood and traffic concerns.

Mr. Steven Bryant commented on the proposed PSHQ site. Mr. Bryant stated that he wants the city to take many things in consideration before developing the proposed site for the PSHQ and make sure that the site is developed correctly.

Mr. Clifford responded to the public concerns and questions from the Planning Commission on both of the proposed sites for the PSHQ and stated that he is committed to the goal of developing the one of the proposed sites of the PSHQ. Mr. Clifford thanked the Planning Commission for their time to listen to the presentation.

Ms. Crawford recapped concerns around 1.) exploring the use of the tennis courts and other uses of properties and that information not being shared, 2.) there is some disappointment in the use and how the property is to be used and how it is to be handled according to the Capital Project sales tax, 3.) architectural historic district for the outside of the building and making sure the community has input and 5.) that both sides with the Planning Commission and Community of North Augusta develop traffic study and concerns along with continued conversation, which will be forthcoming.

6. Adjourn

Meeting was adjourned at 8:35pm

As approved August 19, 2021

Respectfully Submitted,



Thomas L. Paradise, Interim Director
Department of Planning and Development
Secretary to the Planning Commission