

Planning Commission



Minutes for the Thursday, September 16, 2021, Study Session

Members of the Planning Commission

Dr. Christine Crawford

Chair

Bob Bigger

Bob Clark

JoAnn McKie, Vice Chair

Leonard Carter, Jr.

Timothy V. Key

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** – 6:00 p.m.
2. **Comprehensive Plan Update- Historic and Cultural Resources, Natural Resources, & Priority Investment**

Mr. Tommy Paradise explained the 8.1 first goal was to Expand the arts and other cultural resources. Expand creative arts, cultural events and resources offered in public space and city programs which support them and make sure these are goals that the Planning Commission wants to keep or change them and modify as they are gone through.

8.1.2 The first phase is to promote local artists. The NA Artists Guild will continue to identify and work to promote local artists. Partnering with local artists to create public art, or exhibit their work in community centers, City Hall, and Downtown businesses will identify the City as a place that is friendly to the arts.

Mr. Larry Watts asked that on the historical parts if anyone does this type of work and what exactly was the goal. Mr. Tommy Paradise explained that this is a goal in the next 5-10 years the City would like to achieve. And it may not be workable today. Mr. Watts realizes that they've been understaffed and doesn't think it will take a full-time person to do this. Mr. Paradise explained it depends on how it is determined and places getting certificates to get approval for their work and that type of thing, there's a lot of background that goes into that and a lot of work to it. He agreed and said like Aiken's structure. Mr. Paradise said you would want a person that believes in the cause, devoted

to it and has good talking skills and can deal with people. Mr. Watts said he doesn't know of anyone in the City that's interested in this for as long as he has been in business renovating old houses the interest is just not here as far as the historical standpoint. And someone to spearhead this project and stand behind it as it moves forward. He does believe it's an integral part of a city to like historical buildings which are well preserved. And he has seen too many instances in the City has encouraged or required them to be renewed if they are damaged. He has not seen the desire to preserve and protect the old heritage.

Mr. Paradise explained that if it's adopted and put on the goals and we get the marching orders, or if it's not on the priorities that we get from administration.

Mr. Key asked how would a group or concerned citizen, retired and not a zealot but really wanted these old buildings to be protected and participate to help the City with this project. Mr. Paradise stated that they would need to look at on a case by case basis of what the resources are, what they bring to the table and how they could assist us, what liabilities we might be putting on them and what liability would the City may be incurring and is this the direction in which the City wants to go with at that particular time. All of this would be hashed out behind the scenes and then they would counsel with meetings to see if they want to do it or not.

Mr. Key asked if we could put in the guidelines for the application process because you have some city's which have assistance instead of just having words on a page. He states he does not see in the foreseeable future that we would have the resources to be able to have staff to lead this project. He said we should get help from the general public.

Mr. Paradise says what he is talking about is the bigger picture. He doesn't think the appropriate place for the application would be in goals. He thinks it should be that the City should have a place where an organization wants to be involved in any particular service that they could apply and be heard. He doesn't think this is the place for that piece.

Mr. Larry Watts suggests that in the historical district to at least have a review before structures are taken down to consider the historical significance of the structure before being demolished and then have something put up that is totally out of character for the neighborhood. That was the overall thought process behind the Neighborhood Preservation Overlay. He doesn't think the preservation of the historical part of the city would be hard. Mr. Paradise asked if they would like to add that as a goal. Mr. Watts said that's one thing as a City they could do is to at least have a review before tearing anything down. As of right now, anything could be torn down.

Mr. Len Carter thinks it will be difficult to do the things they want but would like to put it in procedure to have a review before any demolition of old buildings.

Mr. Key suggests that the listing should be listed and prioritized and funding should be allocated for maintenance and preservation. Funding can include grant historical tax credit and/or City monies. He states we are still in the review process. He doesn't feel like there should be a motion to be able to put that in the review process.

Mr. Bigger asked if we had the comprehensive plan in place but and if they are just reviewing and is it official or just revising every few years.

Mr. Paradise explained that the Comprehensive Plan is indeed a plan. It is not a regulatory document. So you have the items in the plan so you take those items up and Council passes ordinances and resolutions. And this document has to be in place in order to have land developer regulations.

The next Section 9.1 is to preserve and expand the tree canopy: adopt regulations and coordinate between City departments to preserve and plant more trees.

Mr. Watts states that the City will have to not be so willing to annex new construction properties to protect the woodlands. Everything that's being built is going on slab houses but there's a lot of runoff and detriment to the streams. He does like that ideas being presented but he foresees other problems.

Mr. Paradise explained that the construction business is not what it used to be.

Mr. Key compares Charleston or Savannah downtown and they know what they want. North Augusta is still trying to find our identity and we don't need to be similar to a bigger city. We need to identify what we want to be in 50 years. We need to decide what we want to be and then decide how to progress.

The next section 10.1 is to create strategies to implement the growth and development goals for public and private investment. Mr. Paradise asked if we were implementing the January reporting. Members have not ever done this to date. Mr. Paradise says we run on the fiscal year and that begins in July and should we be doing this at the end of the fiscal year instead.

Mr. Key stated that they have never gotten with City Council about recommendations.

3. Questions about agenda items (if needed)

Mr. Watts had a question about the shrubbery and what type they were picking out. Mr. Paradise said we missed it and he didn't know about the change in plans and Mr. Zeazer said it needs to go back to the Planning Commission and he brought him the plans which had been changed and they stated that bushes needed to be there and the business came back with bushes. Mr. Paradise said they may have spoke with Libby or Kuleigh before but have not reached out to Mr. Paradise. Mr. Watts said Roy must not have known and Mr. Paradise confirmed that he deals with the public spaces.

Mr. Paradise would like to know the height at maturity and he thought it said 8-10 years. Mr. Watts said it takes about 15-20 years to reach maturity. He doesn't remember the room they had from fence to curb. His concern is that it takes a long time and then it really is never going to get up to the fence. The thought behind it was that by the time the fence fell down the shrubbery would be big enough to conceal the lot.

Mr. Paradise said the Planning Commission could certainly say no but Mr. Watts said he doesn't feel strongly enough to say no.

Mr. Key said he couldn't figure out what type of fencing and he said he definitely need screening and he read the motion and he seconded it about the screening so it doesn't need to be something that just satisfies us, it needs to be something that's important for that area.

Mr. Watts asked if someone would be there to represent the McKie's. Mr. Paradise explained that Ms. McKie recused herself so she won't be there. Mr. Watts had an agreement they had with the City back in the 80s or whenever it was done. Mr. Paradise stated it was not an agreement, it was a court order. Mr. Watts said he only saw the last part of it, something about the city would not require a rezoning. Mr. Paradise explained that basically they could have whatever was across the street. If across the street turned commercial or so much of it turned commercial, they could have commercial on their side of the road. Mr. Watts just wanted clarification. Mr. Paradise explained that property was annexed under the petition method, they opposed it, took the City to court and when Judge Peoples wrote the order that was all the history Mr. Paradise is aware of regarding this case.

Mr. Key stated that in regards to the rezoning and the mixed use if all the potential properties could be placed there. Mr. Paradise said he would be prepared.

4. Adjourn – The meeting was adjourned at 7:04pm by Mr. Key.