

# North Augusta



*South Carolina's Riverfront*

## MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 11, 2023

*Briton S. Williams, Mayor*

*Jenafer F. McCauley, Councilmember – Mayor Pro Tem*

*David B. Buck, Councilmember*

*Pat C. Carpenter, Councilmember*

*David W. McGhee, Councilmember*

*Eric H. Presnell, Councilmember*

*Kevin W. Toole, Councilmember*

## **ORDER OF BUSINESS**

The Public Hearing for the Proposed Development Code Rewrite was streamed for public viewing online at: “City of North Augusta – Public Information” on [www.Facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com) and “City of North Augusta Public Information” on [www.YouTube.com](https://www.youtube.com).

## **PUBLIC HEARING**

The September 11, 2023 Public Hearing for the Proposed Development Code Rewrite began at 5:30 p.m. Members present were Mayor Williams, Councilmembers Brooks, Carpenter, McCauley, McGhee, Presnell, and Toole. Also in attendance were James S. Clifford, City Administrator; Rachelle Moody, Assistant City Administrator; Kelly Zier, City Attorney; Tommy Paradise, Director of Planning and Development; Kevin Whaley, GIS Analyst; and Jamie Paul, City Clerk.

### **Public Comments:**

Tiffany Heitzman, Executive Officer for Home Builders Association Greater Aiken-Augusta Region, stated that on behalf of the Association they are supporting the requests that Jason Whinghter who sits on their Government Affairs Committee and will be speaking on their behalf.

Jason Whinghter, representing Home Builders Association Greater Aiken-Augusta Region suggested changes on the proposed development code rewrite. Attached are the comments in detail. **(See Attachment #1)**

Mayor Williams stated he appreciates the suggestions and that Council will look over in detail.

The Public Hearing adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

### REGULAR MEETING

The special called meeting of the City Council of the City of North Augusta of September 11, 2023 having been duly publicized was called to order by Mayor Williams at 5:30 p.m. and also streamed online for public viewing at "City of North Augusta – Public Information" on [www.Facebook.com](http://www.Facebook.com) and on the City YouTube page: "City of North Augusta Public Information" then adjourned at 6:00 p.m. Per Section 30-4-80, (e) notice of the meeting by email was sent out to the current maintained "Agenda Mailout" list consisting of news media outlets and individuals or companies requesting notification. Notice of the meeting was also posted on the outside doors of the Municipal Center, the main bulletin board of the Municipal Center located on the first floor, and the City of North Augusta website.

Members present were Mayor Williams, Councilmembers Buck, Carpenter, McCauley, McGhee, Presnell, and Toole.

Also in attendance were James S. Clifford, City Administrator; Rachele Moody, Assistant City Administrator; Kelly F. Zier, City Attorney; Tommy Paradise, Director of Planning and Development; Kevin Whaley, GIS Analyst; and Jamie Paul, City Clerk.

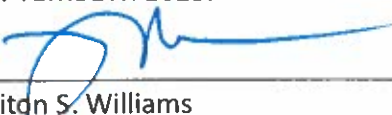
**ITEM 3. PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT: Ordinance No. 2023-15 Adopting the North Augusta Development Code, Chapter 18 of the City of North Augusta, South Carolina Code of Ordinances, Providing for New Zoning and Land Development Regulations and Updating the City-Wide Zoning Map Accordingly – First Reading**

No discussion or motion made on item 3.

**ITEM 4. ADJOURNMENT**

The special called City Council meeting adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

APPROVED THIS 18<sup>th</sup> DAY OF  
SEPTEMBER 2023.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Britton S. Williams  
Mayor

Respectfully submitted,

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Jamie Paul  
City Clerk

## Article 4

### 4.12 subsection 1, 2, 3, 4: R-14 R-10, R-7 and R-5 (pg. 22-25)

As an option - consider allowing up to a 20% reduction in lot area (reduction in the minimum sq footage of the lot). If the developer/builder elects to reduce the lot area by up to 20%, the common area/greenspace in the development shall be increased by the same square footage removed from the lot area. If lot area is reduced, allow the impervious area of the lot to increase to 50%. Still keep the max density and min lot widths the same per zoning district.

Many buyers do not want large yards to take care of.

Allows developer/builder additional flexibility in lot layout.

Could reduce the infrastructure the city takes ownership of if the developed portion of a tract of land is more condense.

Ability to decrease lot area works well with infill development and could help preserve additional buffers and greenspace within the development.

### 4.12.3 R-7 (pg 24)

Consider allowing townhome and single-family-attached a minimum 20ft lot width. Or as an alternate consider 50% of those townhome or single-family-attached lots to be reduced to 20ft in width, the remaining 50% must be 24ft or wider.

We have numerous townhouse plans with widths less than 24 ft, which would allow for flexibility in design.

## Article 7

### Table 7.2 Plant Material specifications (pg. 97)

Keep allowances for large trees to be 2" min cal and small trees min 1" min caliper. Keep the current min height requirements the same as well (8' & 6')

Increasing to 3" and 2" will add approximately \$200 to \$300 per tree for the large trees and \$150 to \$200 per tree for the small.

Typical lot requires 1 street or subdivision tree, three large landscape trees and two small landscape trees which is a total increased cost of \$1400 range. This is builder cost.

Then a % profit added to that for the buyer and then the buyer pays for over the life of the mortgage.

The larger the tree is when it's planted, the longer it takes to adjust and start growing. A 2 " tree will generally be the same size as a 3" tree in 3 to 4 years and has a higher survivability rate.

Nothing stops a developer/builder from upsizing the trees to a larger size if they or the buyer wants the larger tree. However, buyers rarely request larger or more trees, they typically prefer to spend their money on upgrades inside the house.

#### 7.3.3.1.b Preparation of the landscape plan (pg. 97-98)

Also allow the civil engineer to prepare the landscape plan. This is common practice.

#### 7.6 Street Trees (pg. 106)

The heading for subsection 7.6.2 mentions subdivision trees but there is no further allowance for subdivision tree. Keep the allowance for subdivision trees. Or simplify (delete "street" and "subdivision") the language to require one large tree per 40 ft of frontage to be planted between the front of the house and the street.

Allow the requirement of planting of the tree(s) in the paragraph above be a requirement of the final CO of the house, not the developer/final plat and not to a Performance or Maintenance Warranty period or LOC. We do not typically include the landscaping in the homeowner warranty because it is up to them to run the irrigation properly and keep the plants alive.

Removing the trees from city responsibility and city ownership lowers city liability and expense.

### Article 9

#### 9.6.5.6 Subdivision entrance signs (pg. 145)

Under e.ii and e.iii remove the word "monument"

Monument in the current code is only defined by one picture and monument in the proposed code is not defined at all. Removing the reference to "monument" gives us flexibility in the design of the sign. Keep all other size and material requirements in place.

### Article 13.

#### 13.3.2 Protection and the increase in buffer width (pg. 184)

This proposed code would now require a 50ft undeveloped buffer and cannot be subdivided.

Current city requirements are 25ft buffer and DHEC 30ft buffer up to 45ft buffer for impaired streams. So there are already more stringent requirements by state law for streams/wetlands and waterways needing additional protection.

Taking of property

Implementing this increase in buffer width would be an additional hardship to developing infill projects.

Consider keeping regs as they are or allow the additional 25ft to be disturbed and replanted as part of the development process and included in the lot but place it in a “No Build” or “Setback” zone.

13.6.1 – Detention Pond screening (pg. 187)

Remove the proposed requirement for screening a detention pond. Leave this decision up to the developer to decide if spending the money to screen the detention pond is beneficial to the development or not.

Article 16.

16.8.2 – Preliminary approval (pg. 221)

Continue with the current practice that the staff report doesn't have a recommendation, but rather how the project fits within the development code or where it doesn't. You do hire staff for their professional expertise, but this opens the door for personal opinions to override whether the project meets the rules or not.

16.8.5 Guarantees (pg. 222)

Consider allowing surety bonds from a bonding company with a rating of B+ or higher as an alternate to Letters of Credit.

Letters of Credit require large amount of money to be tied up and counted against the developer's balance sheet. Banks don't like them because they're not part of the loanable balance sheet available to bank lending.

General comments:

- In the near future, consider the creation of a Planned Residential zoning classification. Many of the current residential neighborhoods have been developed under the PD zoning classification but because of state law and court cases, all PD zonings now are required to have some non-residential use included. Many of the neighborhoods we develop include a range of lot sizes which allows for a great mix of house sizes and styles which in turn creates a much more vibrant neighborhood.
- None of what we have proposed affects the construction standards of any of the infrastructure that will be deeded to the city. They also don't diminish the quality of the houses we build. They can however negatively affect the cost of the house to the consumer. To survive as developers and builders, we have to be extremely cost conscious – the consumer can only afford what they can afford. We can't raise prices just because we want to.

Buyers are going to say yes to everything they like if there is no associated price tag. When there's a price tag, they have to make the decision on what they can afford. Do they want more hardwood floors *or* more landscaping? Do they want granite countertops *or* pay for a larger street tree? Etc.

Our industry has to continuously change and adapt. For example, right now we're dealing with a mortgage interest rate that has more than doubled in the past 12 months coupled with the cost of construction up at least 30% since 2019. The payment on a house built today is more than double the payment on the exact same house built in 2016.