

Planning Commission



Minutes of the Thursday, February 18, 2016 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 February 18, 2016, having been duly publicized, was called to order by Chairman Woods Burnett at 7:00 p.m. Chairman Burnett noted that this was the first regular meeting for newly-appointed Commissioner Briton Williams and welcomed him to the Commission.
2. **Roll Call** – Members present were Chairman Burnett and Commissioners Bob Clark, Tim Key, JoAnn McKie, Larry Watts and Briton Williams. Commissioner Len Carter was absent. Also in attendance were Scott Sterling, AICP, Director of Planning and Development; Christine DeCamp, AICP, Planner; the applicants and their representatives; members of the public; and the press.
3. **Approval of Minutes** – The minutes of the Regular Meeting of January 21, 2016 were approved as written.
4. **Confirmation of Agenda** – There were no changes to the agenda.
5. **Application RZM 16-001** – A request by John P.R. (Philip) Green, representing Vintson Construction Company, to rezone ±0.51 acres of land located at 495 Ponce De Leon Avenue, Tax Parcel Number 007-14-17-003, from PD, Planned Development to R-7, Small Lot Single-Family Residential. A Planning Commission recommendation to City Council is required.

Public Hearing – Chairman Burnett briefly reviewed the Commission's public participation guidelines and opened the public hearing at 7:02 p.m.

Mr. Sterling reviewed the application as outlined in Staff Report RZM 16-001.

Kevin Kosh, Southern Partners, Inc., 1233 Augusta West Parkway, Augusta, the applicant's representative in place of John P.R. Green, briefly reviewed the map amendment request and the applicant's plans to subdivide the property and redevelop it for small-scale residential use.

There were no public comments.

Chairman Burnett closed the public hearing at 7:07 p.m.

Consideration of Application RZM 16-001 – Commissioners discussed the general intent of the proposed rezoning, the applicant's' plan for future use of the property, and current and future redevelopment in the Ponce De Leon/Sikes Avenue area.

Commissioner Watts moved to recommend that the City Council approve the request by John P.R. (Philip) Green, representing Vintson Construction Company, to rezone ±0.51 acres of land located at 495 Ponce De Leon Avenue, Tax Parcel Number 007-14-17-003, from PD, Planned Development to R-7, Small Lot Single-Family Residential.

Commissioner McKie seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

- 6. Application RZT 16-001** – A request by Robert Rollings to amend Article 3, Zoning Districts, of the North Augusta Development Code. The applicant requests the deletion of Line 1 of Table 3-8, Corridor Districts Established, and also the deletion of Section 3.8.4, G, Georgia Avenue Overlay District. A Planning Commission recommendation to City Council is required.

Public Hearing – Chairman Burnett opened the public hearing at 7:09 p.m.

Commissioner Williams disclosed two items of information: first, he leases a building owned by Mr. Rollings, the applicant, and second, Mr. Rollings is one of his clients.

Mr. Sterling reviewed the application as outlined in Staff Report RZT 16-001.

Robert Rollings, 817 River Bluff Road, the project applicant, reviewed his request to amend the North Augusta Development Code by deleting the Georgia Avenue Overlay District, stating that: the District has not met the goals outlined in Section 3.8.4.1 of the Code; the creation of the Overlay District has made all downtown properties non-compliant; the cost of compliance with the Overlay standards is expensive because of its design requirements (for example, window glass percentages, pediments cornices) that force property owners to price tenants out of the downtown; and the District is rigid and does not permit waivers. Mr. Rollings argued that the establishment of the Overlay District in 2007 (effective 2008) represented a zoning change and downtown property owners were not properly notified prior to adoption of the Code. Finally, when asked, Mr. Rollings stated that, without the Overlay District, future downtown development could be achieved that would be in line with Jackson Square.

Commissioners asked questions and commented on the following: alternatives if the Georgia Avenue Overlay is eliminated; forms of stimulus (financial and other) that have

been used, either publicly or privately, to stimulate downtown development; whether any of the Overlay requirements have ever been waived; streetscape and new traffic/parking patterns in the downtown that could result if the City can regain local control of Georgia Avenue; the goals and proposals that will be included in the pending rewrite of the Comprehensive Plan and how they may impact downtown, for example, new traffic patterns that could narrow Georgia Avenue to make it more urban and pedestrian-friendly. It was noted that these goals are in the current Comprehensive Plan. Commissioners acknowledged that some of the current Overlay requirements may be difficult to meet, but stated that the overall intent of the District should be maintained.

Mr. Sterling and Mr. Rollings responded to all questions and comments.

The following members of the public commented on the text amendment Application RZT 16-001:

Richard Fletcher, 1 Shadowmoor Court, stated that downtown buildings, with shared walls, are often more economical to construct than standalone suburban commercial structures and property values for all downtown property owners are better protected by the existence of the Overlay District. Mr. Fletcher gave examples of “good urban buildings” and cited examples of other communities (26 out of the top 30 cities in South Carolina) that have overlay districts, design review boards and similar mechanisms in place. He asked that the Georgia Avenue Overlay District be preserved.

Lark Jones, 629 Stanton Drive, stated that he is neither in favor of nor opposed to the text amendment. He cited the amendment application as an indication that the Development Code as a whole needs to be reexamined and amended as needed to be sure it meets the goals of the City.

Dr. John Smith, 531 Georgia Avenue, stated that downtown development regulations, while tough, are manageable. He encouraged the idea of providing stimulus to encourage future growth. He asked that the Georgia Avenue Overlay District be modified, not deleted.

There were no other public comments. Chairman Burnett closed the public hearing at 8:03 p.m.

Consideration of Application RZT 16-001 – Commissioners discussed the history of the City’s downtown and its development; current and anticipated Comprehensive Plan goals related to the downtown; the establishment of the Georgia Avenue Overlay with the adoption of the current Development Code; the effect of the recent recession on all development, including development in the downtown area; and the pros and cons of the current Overlay requirements. Commissioners expressed some concern that the Overlay Standards, if made optional, even in part, could lead to a lack of clarity for applicants and to staff difficulties in development application management.

Commissioners generally agreed, if the Development Code as a whole is to be modified, that a clear and consistent vision is required as a starting point. Commissioners, as fellow members of the City's business community, agreed in part with some of Mr. Rollings' concerns, but stated that the Georgia Avenue Overlay District should remain, with possible revisions.

Commissioner Clark moved to recommend that the City Council approve the request by Robert Rollings to amend Article 3, Zoning Districts, of the North Augusta Development Code to delete Line 1 of Table 3-8, Corridor Districts Established, and also delete Section 3.8.4 G, Georgia Avenue Overlay District.

Commissioner Key seconded the motion. The motion failed on a 0-6 vote.

- 7. Application RZT 16-002** – A request by Brett Brannon to amend Article 3, Zoning Districts, of the North Augusta Development Code. The applicant requests that Line 1 of Table 3-8, Corridor Districts Established, be amended to change the southern boundary of the Georgia Avenue Overlay District from Clifton Avenue to Buena Vista Avenue. A Planning Commission recommendation to City Council is required.

Public Hearing – Chairman Burnett opened the public hearing at 8:26 p.m.

Mr. Sterling reviewed the application as outlined in Staff Report RZT 16-002.

Brett Brannon, the project applicant, was unable to attend the meeting and was represented by Robert Rollings. Mr. Rollings briefly reviewed the text amendment request stating that the southern boundary of the Georgia Avenue Overlay District should be Buena Vista Avenue since the two blocks between Buena Vista Avenue and Spring Grove Avenue are considered to be the historic downtown.

Richard Fletcher commented on the proposed amendment and, as owner of property in the downtown, stated his opinion that the Overlay boundary should either remain as defined in Table 3-8 or otherwise be extended southward along Georgia Avenue to include the Municipal Building.

Mr. Sterling and Mr. Rollings responded to all questions and comments.

There were no other public comments. Chairman Burnett closed the public hearing at 8:46 p.m.

Consideration of Application RZT 16-002 – Commissioners reviewed some of the comments made during consideration of Application RZT 16-001. They discussed what the historic downtown boundaries may be and whether the current Georgia Avenue Overlay boundaries are correct or in need of amendment. They also recalled earlier

discussions when the Overlay boundaries were set and requested background information from Mr. Sterling regarding differing interpretations of the true boundaries of Georgia Avenue's downtown.

Commissioner Watts moved to recommend that the City Council approve the request by Brett Brannon to amend Article 3, Zoning Districts, of the North Augusta Development Code to change the southern boundary of the Georgia Avenue Overlay District from Clifton Avenue to Buena Vista Avenue.

Commissioner Key seconded the motion. The motion failed on a 0-6 vote.

8. **Application SP 15-002** – A request by Bradley Aiken, LLC, for Preliminary Major Site Plat Approval for Edgewater Senior Apartments.

Mr. Sterling reviewed the application as outlined in Staff Report SP 15-002. As part of the Preliminary Site Plan approval, the applicant is seeking a waiver to reduce the required number of parking spaces from 84 to 70 spaces.

There were no comments from the applicant's representatives.

Commissioners offered comments and asked questions about the two-step major site plan review process; proposed building materials; age restrictions for the community's tenants; the applicant's parking waiver request; the developer's commitment to maintain ownership of the project for 30 years; and buffer requirements.

Mr. Sterling responded to all questions and comments.

Consideration of Application SP 15-002 – Commissioner Key moved to approve the Preliminary Major Site Plan for Edgewater Senior Apartments, including the applicant's parking waiver request to reduce the required number of parking spaces from 84 to 70 spaces.

Commissioner Clark seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

9. **Officer Election** – Commissioner Clark nominated Commissioner Larry Watts to serve as Vice-Chairman for the balance of 2016. Chairman Burnett seconded the nomination.

There were no other nominations. Commissioner Watts was elected Vice-Chairman for the balance of 2016 on a 5-0 vote, with Commissioner Watts abstaining.

10. **Staff Reports** – Mr. Sterling:

- Referenced the January monthly report as well as supplemental reading material included in the Commission agenda packet.

- Reminded Commissioners of the Called Planning Commission meeting on Thursday, March 3 at 7:00 p.m. The meeting will be preceded by a study session beginning at 6:00 p.m.

11. Adjourn – Chairman Burnett invited Richard Fletcher to the podium. Chairman Burnett, on behalf of the Planning Commission and the Planning and Development staff, presented Mr. Fletcher with a Resolution and a plaque in honor and appreciation of his 30 years of dedicated service to the Planning Commission. Mr. Fletcher spoke briefly, thanking his Commission colleagues and department staff for their hard work in support of the City.

Chairman Burnett adjourned the meeting at 9:07 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Scott Sterling, AICP, Director
Department of Planning and Development
Secretary to the Planning Commission