

# Planning Commission



## Minutes of the Thursday, March 3, 2016 Called 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 called meeting of March 3, 2016, having been duly publicized, was called to order by Chairman Woods Burnett at 7:00 p.m.
2. **Roll Call** – Members present were Chairman Burnett and Commissioners Bob Clark, Tim Key, JoAnn McKie, Larry Watts and Briton Williams. Commissioner Len Carter joined the meeting at 7:15 p.m. 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. **Confirmation of Agenda** – There were no changes to the agenda.
4. **Application RZT 16-003** – A request by North Augusta FORWARD, Inc., represented by Charles B. Martin, to amend Section 3.8.4, entitled “G, Georgia Avenue Overlay District” in Article 3, Zoning Districts, of the North Augusta Development Code. A Planning Commission recommendation to City Council is required.

Prior to any discussion, Commissioner Williams disclosed his position as a member of the North Augusta FORWARD, Inc. Board of Directors. He stated that his position did not constitute an ethical conflict that would require his recusal.

**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 RZT 16-003.

Charles B. Martin, Chairman, North Augusta FORWARD, Inc., the project applicant, provided a statement that summarized the organization’s position on the current Georgia Avenue Overlay standards and current issues in the District. He stated that North Augusta FORWARD’s proposed text amendment would be a first step toward downtown revitalization. Following adoption of the text amendment, which generally alters the Overlay language from standards to guidelines, he proposed a second step, a

coordinated effort among City staff, the Planning Commission, the City Council, North Augusta FORWARD, downtown property owners and other interested parties to develop a common vision for the downtown and possibly a more comprehensive text amendment. He proposed that the second step take place in conjunction with the Comprehensive Plan update that is currently underway.

Public comments were received from the following attendees:

Terri Turner, 118 West Arlington, spoke against the proposed amendment, stating that would be difficult for staff to equitably review development plans without measurable compliance standards. She stated that the City should wait for the Comprehensive Plan update and make changes based on the goals included in the Plan.

Terra Carroll, President of the North Augusta Chamber of Commerce, 406 West Avenue, invited the Planning Commission to become involved with the work of the Chamber and its members.

Lark Jones, 629 Stanton Drive, and also a downtown business owner, briefly reviewed the City's downtown development over the past 30 years. He stated that North Augusta's downtown has been and may remain focused on personal service businesses rather than retail and that additional restaurants are needed. Mr. Jones provided a statement listing eight revisions/talking points that could offer more flexibility to current and potential downtown property owners.

There were no other public comments. Chairman Burnett closed the public hearing at 8:20 p.m.

**Consideration of Application RZT 16-003** – Commissioners asked questions and commented on the following: the next steps in downtown development; alternative outcomes if the Georgia Avenue Overlay standards are revised to read as guidelines; the amount of developable and available land and buildings in the Overlay; forms of stimulus (financial and other) that have been used or could be used, either publicly or privately, to stimulate downtown development; the legal definitions of the words “shall” and “should”; and conflict management if a developer fails to address Overlay guidelines. 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 that, if the Georgia Avenue Overlay District requirements are to be modified, that a clear and consistent vision is required as a starting point. They requested a meeting with City Council and other interested parties to begin the visioning process. Commissioners also generally agreed that the Georgia Avenue Overlay District wording may need to be changed but should be maintained as

requirements rather than options, stating that development without standards risks both lawsuits and errors with long-term impacts.

**Commissioner Key moved to recommend that the City Council deny the request by North Augusta FORWARD, Inc. to amend Section 3.8.4, entitled “G, Georgia Avenue Overlay District” in Article 3, Zoning Districts, of the North Augusta Development Code**

**Commissioner McKie seconded the motion. The motion passed on a 6-1 vote, with Commissioner Williams voting no.**

5. **Application SP 16-002** – A request by the Aiken County Board of Education for Preliminary Major Site Plat Approval for North Augusta High School’s Phase 2 Renovation.

Commissioner Watts recused himself from Planning Commission discussion and consideration of this agenda item due to a past contractual relationship with the applicant and left the dais at 8:40 p.m.

Mr. Sterling reviewed the application as outlined in Staff Report SP 16-002. The applicant proposes the construction of two new buildings on the high school site.

Tilden Hilderbrand, P.E., Hass and Hilderbrand, the applicant’s engineer for both Phase 1 and the current project, briefly reviewed the project to date as well as the renovations planned in Phase 2 and future Phase 3. He offered to answer any questions that Commissioners may have.

Commissioners offered comments and asked questions about the two-step major site plan review process; project completeness requirements; the proposed renovations and building elevations; and the project timetable.

Mr. Sterling, Mr. Hilderbrand and Jeffrey Reynolds, the project contractor, responded to all questions and comments.

**Consideration of Application SP 16-002 – Commissioner Key moved to approve the Preliminary Major Site Plan for North Augusta High School’s Phase 2 Renovation.**

**Commissioner Clark seconded the motion. The motion passed 6-0, with Commissioner Watts’ recusal.**

Commissioner Watts returned to the dais at 8:57 p.m.

6. **Application SP 15-003** – A request by Next Chapter Holdings, LLC for Preliminary Major Site Plan approval of Sweetwater Commons, Phase 2.

Mr. Sterling reviewed the application as outlined in Staff Report SP 15-003, stating this project is an extension of the original Sweetwater Commons project approved by the Planning Commission in September 2014. Phase 2 is expected to add 23 rental units. As part of his review, Mr. Sterling provided photos of some of the current construction on the site.

There were no comments from the applicant's representatives.

Commissioners offered comments and asked questions about the two-step major site plan review process and project completeness requirements. Commissioners requested that a baseline assessment of the Franklin Branch basin be completed as part of the staff's Final Major Site Plan review.

Mr. Sterling responded to all questions and comments.

**Consideration of Application SP 15-003 – Commissioner Carter moved to approve the Preliminary Major Site Plan for Sweetwater Commons, Phase 2.**

**Commissioner Watts seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

- 7. Application SP 16-001** – A request by North Augusta Riverfront, LLC and the City of North Augusta for Preliminary Major Site Plan approval of GreenJackets Ballpark.

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

Todd Glover, speaking on behalf of the City, one of the project applicants, briefly reviewed the project and offered to answer any questions that Commissioners may have.

Commissioners offered comments and asked questions about the two-step major site plan review process and project completeness requirements; the results of the project traffic study and any proposed mitigation efforts; and the project timetable. Questions were asked and answered about the adequacy of proposed parking as well the shared parking agreements that will be in place to serve the stadium and the other uses planned for that phase of Hammond's Ferry. Current timbering activity on Phase B land was also discussed.

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

**Consideration of Application SP 16-001 – Commissioner Key moved to approve the Preliminary Major Site Plan for GreenJackets Ballpark subject to the following conditions:**

1. **Prior to Final Major Site Plan approval, the Phase B Major Subdivision Plan shall be approved and the Final Plat shall be approved and recorded.**
2. **Prior to final Major Site Plan approval, the applicants shall comply with the remaining technical issues identified in staff reviews and comments in accordance with the applicable development standards of the NADC.**

**Commissioner Williams seconded the motion. The motion passed 6-1, with Commissioner Watts voting no.**

8. **Adjourn** – With no objection, Chairman Burnett adjourned the meeting at 9:44 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

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