

City of Charleston Planning Commission

March 15, 2017

Observer: Leah Pedersen

Key [Agenda](#) Items:

- The Planning Commission was briefed on affordable housing based on results from the December 2016 review of the City of Charleston Century V 2010 Comprehensive Plan Update in an early special session (observer was unable to attend).
- Request for subdivision concept plan approval for Bennett's Bluff (Fort Johnson Rd – James Island) TMS# 4280000013 & 040 – 30.99 ac. 86 lots. Zoned Single-Family Residential (SR-1). Owner: First Baptist Church Applicant: Hussey Gay Bell
 - First Baptist Church originally intended to build a school on the site, but was asked to build elsewhere by the city, and has a long-standing memorandum of understanding with the city.
 - City Councilwoman Kathleen Wilson requested a deferral citing lack of community involvement in planning what would be a new 86-dingle family home development. A member of a neighboring community association supported her request, voicing concerns about possible increased flooding, light pollution, and crime.
 - The planning commission approved the concept plan, but with the recommendation that the applicant meet with neighbors to discuss concerns.
- Request for subdivision concept plan approval for L&M Tract (Brownswood Rd – Johns Island) TMS# 3120000056, 166, 193 & 194 – 31.059 ac. 70 lots (corrected from 71). Zoned Single-Family Residential (SR-2). Owner: L&M Family Associates LLC Applicant: Seamon, Whiteside & Associates, Inc.
 - Two Johns Island residents spoke in opposition to the plan, citing a lack of city planning as demonstrated by River Road traffic that is beyond capacity at busy times, a lack of schools to support the Johns Island population, and overburdened sewer systems.
 - The representative of the development company noted that their current zoning allows 7.1 units per acre, whereas their proposal is well under the limit, with only 2.5 units.
 - The plan was approved unanimously, with one abstention, with the Commission noting that it is not within their authority to make decisions based on traffic concerns.
- Request for subdivision concept plan approval Avenue of Oaks (5th Ave – West Ashley) TMS# 4180600028 & 115 – 9.99 ac. 42 lots. Owner: Crescent Homes LLC. Applicant: Seamon, Whiteside & Associates, Inc.
 - The overall plan will develop two existing properties into one neighborhood, removing existing mobile homes from one of the properties.

- An HOA-supported pathway will serve to preserve the existing ally of oaks, and as a trade-off for the larger preserved open space, it will be a cluster development, allowing more flexibility in set-backs and lot sizes.
- A resident of downtown Charleston stated that the area is becoming “less desirable every day,” and made a general request that development be restricted.
 - The Commission approved the plan, and recommended that the resident bring his concerns to City Council.
- Request to approve Farr Street Extension (Daniel Island) TMS# 2750000182 – 12.66 ac. 3 lots. Zoned Daniel Island Residential (DI-R). Owner: Greystar GP II, LLC. Applicant: Seamon, Whiteside & Associates, Inc.
 - Facing neighborhood criticism on their original plan to connect to connect two dead-end roads through their parcel, Greystar worked with neighborhoods and resubmitted their proposal. Rather than building the connecting road along the marsh, the road will now be build at the rear of the parcel.
 - Six Daniel Island residents voiced concerns including insufficient notice given to neighbors, insufficient requirements to get input from neighbors (acknowledging that the development company worked with them in this case), questions about the accuracy of current property tax zones, the size of the planned residential building, the timeline for building the road, and the safety of neighborhood children with increased traffic.
 - The developer noted that with a 7500 unit limit, their plan will be well under what is allowed, they will be helping to preserve a greenway and other spaces, and that they expect the road to be complete in 16 months or so.
 - The Commission unanimously approved the plan, and referred residents with concerns to City Council.
 - Rezoning #2 – 5, all located at/near 1522-24 Grimball Road, to be changed to SR-1, single family resident, in line with surrounding properties.
 - A James Island resident spoke against high density development, noting that recent development has increased flooding issues.
 - The Commission approved the rezoing, noting that SR-1 is the lowest density zoning other than Conservation.
 - Proposed Ordinance to change to the downtown Accomodations Overlay Zone
 - The big event of the night was discussing a proposed ordinance to limit a number of downtown buildings that are currently, theoretically, allowed to be converted into hotels (50 rooms or less), to be removed from the hotel overlay in an effort to preserve the character of the city and, in the case of some of the buildings, existing residential housing supply.
 - 18 representatives and citizens commented, mostly to oppose the changes, with reasons primarily focused on the somewhat arbitrary selection criteria, insufficient notice given, and the expected negative impact on property values.
 - A few neighbors pointed out that they supported limiting hotels downtown, but found it curious that the city would, while limiting a new group of

properties from becoming hotels in the future, allow a planned hotel (bordered by Hayne, Anson, Pinkney and Market Streets) to move forward. This plan combines two properties subject to the existing 50 room limits in to a 150-room hotel. A member of a neighborhood association also noted that the plan submitted relied on an assumed traffic impact of zero, because the city doesn't currently collect traffic data.

- The Commission petitioned the audience for ideas on how to better address the city's hotel development issue, and received the following suggestions:
 - Collect traffic information
 - Special exceptions to existing zoning should be subject to an actual test
 - Limit building count rather than room limit
- Based on the strong resistance shown by potentially-affected property owners and representatives, the Planning Commission hosted a follow-up meeting on Thursday, March 30th, where the proposed ordinance ultimately was voted down by the Commission. A summary of that meeting is available via the following Post & Courier [article](#).