

A meeting of the Beaufort Redevelopment Commission was held on February 3, 2011 at 5:00 p.m. in the Beaufort Municipal Complex, City Hall Planning Conference Room, 1911 Boundary Street. In attendance were Chairman Jon Verity, Commissioners Martin Goodman, Ed Barnhart, Mike McNally, Pat Kase, and Keith Waldrop, Mike McFee, Wendy Zara, and Henrietta Goode, and Scott Dadson, City Manager and Shirley Hughes, Assistant City Manager.

In accordance with South Carolina Code of Laws, 1976, Section 30-4-80(d), as amended, all local media were duly notified of the time, date, place, and agenda of this meeting.

### **CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m. by Chairman Verity.

### **REVIEW OF MINUTES**

Commissioner Barnhart made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 6, 2011 meeting as written. Commissioner Goodman seconded the motion. Commissioner McFee abstained. **The motion passed unanimously.**

### **REPORTS**

#### **Finance Committee**

Commissioner Zara reported that the committee had met the week before, and she passed out minutes from that meeting. She said the committee is looking at the specific expenses being incurred and working on a budget, determining revenue, etc.

Commissioner Zara said as far as housing financing is concerned, they had gone to the Housing and Finance Agency the previous day to meet the director, her deputy, and the woman in charge of all the programs. They determined that there is little money available, apart from loans from individual banks. They have a good relationship with the Lowcountry Housing Trust. When they deal with 501c3's, they only want to deal with those that have "capacity." Those are the not-for-profits that have the ability to carry through with programs.

Commissioner Zara said they have funding available for individual homebuyers; Beaufort County is a targeted county, and they don't have to be first-time homebuyers. Commissioner McNally said there are several programs available at Bank of America and Wells Fargo, for example, where a homebuyer is certified after a class. Commissioner Waldrop said there are ways the standard mortgage program could meet some needs Beaufort has, particularly the Northwest Quadrant, for low-interest financing and down payment assistance.

Commissioner Waldrop explained another program for locking in rates at 6 months and the housing trust fund which is funded with a portion of the real estate transfer tax. Grants are available for up to \$20,000 for rehab of owner-occupied residences for those at 50% less than median income. Because of the real estate market, there's not *as much* money available today, but there is still some. Commissioner Zara said there's an emergency fund allocation. The meeting was interesting, she said. Few grants have been made in this area, Commissioner

Waldrop said. Commissioner Zara said they don't have the money they used to, and for what they do have, they're picky about whom they deal with.

Commissioner Waldrop said the federal home program dollars flow through the state agency and whatever 501c3 would go through LCOG and submit their application for a home program allocation. He went on to explain the degrees of flexibility in income for rehab and new building. Commissioner McNally said they discussed the new batch of \$260 million from the treasury for the repair of owner-occupied homes with owners at 50% of median income. Each unit can be granted up to \$20,000 for repairs to bring them up to code. As long as the income is at 50% for the next 5 years, every year, a fifth of it is forgiven, so the encumbrance is eventually forgiven.

It would take a significant investment to get involved with a recognized 501c3, Commissioner McNally said. Commissioner Zara said the advantages are great for dealing with a 501c3 that has the expertise and experience. The Lowcountry Housing Trust could be a potential partner, Commissioner Waldrop said, and part of what the committee is looking at. There might be others, as well.

#### **Historic Structure Rehab Committee**

Commissioner McNally said on their pilot project, 1407 Duke Street, they had a full committee meeting, including Ms. Hughes, Mr. Ramsey, Libby Anderson, Donna Alley, Pete Palmer, Mr. Martin and Naomi Leeman from The Lawrence Group. The title for the property has been found clear by the city attorney's office. An agreement in principle has been reached with the one surviving owner. The agreed sales price is \$30,000. The city attorney is preparing a draft resolution for the Frogmore Lodge members to sign. The title company is okay with such a resolution. Based on this, the city can move ahead to secure an option on the property.

The budgets were disappointingly high, Commissioner McNally said. He and Mr. Ramsey reviewed them. The builder "went overboard on a lot of things." The foundations need some repair, for example, but he considered it all as needing to be replaced. The committee agreed that they should go back to the builder with more specifics as to the scope of the work for the restoration that's desired. If the revised estimates are \$250,000 or less, they should get architecture plans and try to get bids. There was discussion of doing the project along with a work force housing project, but they decided to work on one building at first. The finance committee should still seek funds for the project.

#### **Bladen Street Project**

Commissioner McNally said the appraisals are being started on 2-7-11. Ms. Anderson believes it will take about 2 weeks. The "review appraisal" must be done; LCOG is requiring it. That person will make up just compensation values for each easement. The Redevelopment Commission will appoint someone to negotiate with each of the owners, using the easement appraisals as a guideline for negotiations. The engineering consultant was at the meeting. The changes to the plan to eliminate some parking have been completed, and they're awaiting the final negotiations. The expectation is that these things will move along quickly. When the project is

finished, leftover grant money can be paid back to the city for those payouts to purchase easements. If the easement prices are too expensive, the parking will have to be dealt with on a lot-by-lot basis. The goal is late spring of this year.

Commissioner McNally said they discussed the CDBG for \$500,000 to rebuild Duke Street. If it's done on time – by 12-12-11 – they can get another \$500,000 grant without reapplying, so they need to move the first one along.

### **Build Beaufort Consulting Team**

Chairman Verity said the Office of Civic Investment is the new name for the consultants' group, formerly known as Build Beaufort and The Lawrence Group.

### **Boundary Street Redevelopment Update**

Mr. Martin showed the Boundary Street Plan diagram and reviewed the dimensions of the first phase of the work.

- The speed reduction to 35 mph needs to happen because of the design at Robert Smalls and Boundary Street. The lower the speed, the closer they can get to the plan. The DOT's first response was to go to 40 mph, and they are working with the county to get DOT to take it down to 35 mph. Commissioner Goodman asked how far back the speed reduction needs to be. Mr. Martin said they're questioning all the approaches to this intersection. Mr. Dadson said they're only concerned about the areas between Neil and the intersection and between the railroad crossing and the intersection. The state said there was an opportunity to step the speed down further out. The city didn't object to that. The city with the county will press to try to get 35 mph in the sections they want.
- Mr. Martin said the city has accepted control of the streets necessary for the plan.
- The largest coordination effort is to bring all utilities into a bank, and that's been designed. The construction is being thought of as "undergrounding as they build." It's necessary to see all the improvements or lack thereof in order to continue the projects momentum.
- As private property is realigned, there will need to be acquisition of many rights-of-way.
- Conceptual studies are being done to see that the rail-to-trail program works, and there should be some designs by next week. Chairman Verity asked the time frame/potential start date. Mr. Martin responded that it would be late this year for Phase 1A contingent on DOT approval. They did approve the traffic study for the corridor and conditionally approved additional traffic signals for the corridor.

Commissioner Zara asked if the railroad right-of-way is being done in conjunction with the intermodal money. Mr. Martin said they "are trying to figure out how all of the intersections would work."

Commissioner McNally asked about traffic circles. Mr. Dadson said city council reserves the right to make it a circle, but it's presently a T. The grass in front of the city hall is not meant to be there; it's there for whatever width is needed in the future for right-of-way and overheading.

Commissioner Goodman said the due date the RFP for the old City Hall is the end of February; no one came to the open house for the building. There is an interested party who couldn't come to the walk-through, but she is set to come in the following week. A major issue is that there are no drawings, no engineering, no environmental study, etc. They have indicated that if there's interest, the buyer can indicate the amount of due diligence they need, and the committee will work with them. Commissioner Kase asked, if money were required for an audit of those systems, if the Redevelopment Commission would pay that. Commissioner Goodman said nothing has been budgeted for that, and it is in the RFP that a buyer is responsible for that which can be reflected in their price. He went on to discuss what was discussed in the Commercial / Economic Development Committee meeting. Their goal is to find interested parties, and determine what they need to develop properties, and then be the catalyst to help them get that done.

#### **PRESENTATION ON CIVIC INVESTMENT MASTER PLAN WORK PLAN AND SCHEDULE**

Mr. Martin said the Office of Civic Investment will provide monthly updates. This month "they've been doing a lot of listening." He said **Lauren Kelly** would provide "a walk-through of the mapping process."

Mr. Martin explained the various sectors that would be surveyed. The tools used on Robert Smalls might be used on Lady's Island, etc., so they have been grouped accordingly. Also they have been working on a comprehensive list of every project that going on, is planned, or may take place. The map, Mr. Martin said, will eventually be interactive on their web site. He showed a diagram of the breakdowns for classification of the projects.

Mr. Martin said downtown is all east of Ribaut including downtown neighborhoods and Whitehall. The small area plans will "become a pre-approved route to move forward." Permitting is approved; Ms. Alley said they are interested in pre-approved plans in the historic district. There is a group of University of Miami school of architecture students who have been doing survey work. The full charette team will be here in March for a week, and they will "be drilling down." They will be making recommendations for the areas to be discussed. The chamber is working on streamlining permitting as their next initiative. The group can show how to do that with recommended changes. They might revisit incentives currently in the municipal code. They have been keeping a running list of "themes" they have been hearing, i.e., How would you do this? Where would you put this sign? How can we have pre-approved house plans? There may be an inventory of needs for existing parks, for example or a street plan for this area that might be able to afford a road diet.

Ms. Kelly discussed how the maps were built. She said they “have a fair amount of information from other groups.” They divided everything into five sectors and then subdivided those into the neighborhoods in that sector. They then analyzed what’s there: services, city and county-owned parcels, libraries, schools, open spaces, churches and parks, vacant lots and institutions. They identified all of the projects in the area, and she showed a map for those projects in this first sector. She said the first stage is almost ready to move to the next level. March 22 is the first charette, and they’d like to have everything ready.

Mr. Martin reviewed the dates of workshops and lectures leading up to the Sector Plan Charette. Chairman Verity said it would be helpful to know which meetings members of the Redevelopment Commission should attend. JW said it would be great if they attended the public workshops.

Mr. Martin described the particulars of some of the meetings and workshops. He said no municipalities have this level of detail as far as he knows, apart from New York and Los Angeles. He introduced the members of the surveying team working in conjunction with Historic Beaufort Foundation.

He indicated the measurements that were taken for each lot, and showed the level of information they will have for every parcel in the city. It will be coordinated into the Geographic Information System (GIS). It has a lot of detail, and that detail will be accessible through the county’s GIS system.

Mr. Martin said at the charette, the group is tagging every photo, so it can find anything that meets those particular criteria, i.e., every vacant lot in Higginsonville.

Ms. Kelly showed a projection of the various aspects of a draft of the website for the Office of Civic Investment. There was discussion of their means for building a database / e-mailing list. Chairman Verity asked how these websites would work together. Ms. Kelly said the web sites are in transition, so the easiest thing to do was to establish their own website. When the city’s is finalized, they will adapt to look more like it and then eventually be at [cityofbeaufort.org/Office of Civic Investment](http://cityofbeaufort.org/Office of Civic Investment). Commissioner McFee said the city’s site is incapable of handling much data at all.

Ms. Kelly said Mr. Martin is to have all the projects on a map with information as to who to contact, etc. These maps require a large amount of space to function. Mr. Martin said they want it to be “a one-stop shop” for each project.

**Demetri Baches** said everything that’s been shown is “preparation for the city to exude preparation and confidence to the outsider.” Very few other places are doing this except in components. Beaufort needs to be on the cutting edge. Mr. Baches said Beaufort needs to seem like it is way ahead because people will be moving here. Investors will feel that Beaufort is predictable for investment. The City of Beaufort should behave as if it were a master developer. Mr. Martin said there is coordination with Kim Statler at Lowcountry Economic Network; they

are doing their own survey of potential sites for investment, and they're now tag-teamed with them. The person they hired for that survey will walk through potential sites with the Office of Civic Investment group. They will be coding and zoning for development.

Mayor Keyserling used an example of a property owner on Boundary Street to indicate why this work is good. Developers will know what they can do, and properties are less likely to remain vacant. Commissioner Waldrop asked how the database will be kept current. Mr. Martin said it will be kept current. Mr. Baches said "We're city staff," and they will be responsible for the database, and if it's continued after two years and the city finds the Office of Civic Investment valuable, the office will continue to maintain it.

Commissioner Goodman asked where the Redevelopment Commission fits in with the Office of Civic Investment. Mr. Dadson said civic investment is the provenance of the Planning Commission and the Redevelopment Commission. The Office of Civic Investment is the Redevelopment Commission's staff. The city council has a lot of responsibilities, and civic investment is one piece of it. City council and staff's perspective is that they "must integrate all of these issues and make sure everyone is talking." Under that is current planning. When things are recoded, there are still review boards and processes. "The city has tightened up because of the lessening of building," Mr. Dadson said, and "they have had to create a platform for reinvestment over time." At the retreat, Mr. Dadson said, they "will determine how to leverage staff to get things done under the guise of the comp plan." The various boards need to develop strategies for getting the comp plan done. He said "rubbing and organizing needs to happen." They are trying to create support to allow them to leverage the opportunities together.

Chairman Verity said in the retreat, they will spend time and plan with the staff: "The goal is to put some meat on the bones of what they have already done." Chairman Verity indicated **John Williams** and said there are plans to update the city's web site; Chairman Verity is writing a letter. Mr. Williams assists the city with PR. The Redevelopment Commission will be "tabbed" on the main city web site, which will be "more robust." Chairman Verity said they'll be developing new protocols for communication.

Mayor Keyserling said city council feels communications are critical. City council doesn't want to interfere, but at the same time, council members are resources and "the software" because they are "on the streets" and get the phone calls from citizens. City council wants to help and "has all the control it wants" of the Redevelopment Commission.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to come before the commission, Commissioner Zara made a motion to adjourn, second by Commissioner Barnhart. The motion passed unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 6:29 pm.

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_

IVETTE BURGESS, CITY CLERK