

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

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 Vice-Chairman McNally.

REVIEW OF MINUTES

Commissioner Zara made a motion to approve the minutes of the February 3, 2011 meeting as written. Commissioner Waldrop seconded the motion. **The motion passed unanimously.**

REPORTS

Finance Committee

Commissioner Zara said the committee had reviewed the 2011 budget with information from the city about potential reductions from funding sources in the budget. They may renegotiate a lease, for example. They looked at the CIP (Capital Improvements Program) and those things that are not in the budget presently. 2017 is the furthest projection; there is a Redevelopment Incentive Fund, and whether some of those funds could be used to offer development for infill and aid in rehab in the downtown area was discussed. They looked at the different TIF districts and the schedule for those. FY2011 starts July 1, Commissioner Zara said.

Commercial Development Committee

As Commissioner Goodman was absent, Commissioner Kase reported. The committee will make assignments for the concepts in question on the Carnegie Building; Commissioner Goodman is taking that one, he said. Commissioner Kase is taking the Tully Building and has been researching its value. Redevelopment in the block will dictate the value. There is a meeting forthcoming on the King Street property. The value will depend on the use of the building next to it. They did not receive responses to the City Hall RFP, which Commissioner Kase said is not surprising. They may discuss it with the county for swapping or list it as for sale. They may lump together parcels. The options are wide open, he said.

Residential committee

Commissioner McNally said March 9 will be the Residential Committee meeting. On the agenda will be review of goals and priorities set at the recent retreat:

1. Get a portion of or a full project done in 12 months
2. Complete feasibility assessment on the pilot project at 1407 Duke Street
3. Work with Office of Civic Investment on a housing assessment needs
4. Work with the Finance Committee of the Redevelopment Commission on funding sources

5. Work on incentives discussed at the retreat re: streamlining permits so developers will want to come to Beaufort
6. Prioritize projects
7. Review ordinances and recommend plans of action for removal of dilapidated buildings and save those that are historically significant
8. Develop a calendar for all of these activities

Bladen Street Project

Commissioner McNally said they are finishing up with the appraisals. James Berry contacted Libby Anderson on the Trask property, and there will be initial appraisals.

Boundary Street Redevelopment Update

Josh Martin said the Office of Civic Investment is continuing work on the first phase of the Boundary Street Redevelopment Project. It will be at Robert Smalls and Boundary. He showed a graphic of the area they are attempting to have approved by SCDOT. Commissioner McNally asked about a property resulting in a large combined triangle of land; Mr. Martin said there should be a right-of-way swap with the DOT and a private property owner.

Public workshop by the Office of Civic Investment: CMP Sector 1

Ms. Lauren Kelly showed a map of Sector 1, which she called “a work in progress.” There are many projects being considered, she said. They are trying to help inform the decisions such as Commissioner McNally spoke of as to what projects should be pilot projects. She showed parcels owned by the city and county. Streetscape projects and a variety of others are being looked at for the first project or into the future.

Mr. Martin elaborated on the type of data that has been acquired and how it can be searched. Ms. Kelly says they began by mapping the projects in the comp plan. The public workshops with neighborhood associations followed, and the various city sectors were broken down. The Office of Civic Investment asked specific questions about things like infrastructure; this was detailed in a handout that was given out. It was a compilation of the general comments in the first 2 public workshops and the walking tour through the neighborhoods. The information was put into their maps, and she also showed a table of each of the neighborhoods and the specific information obtained listed under each in the chart.

Ms. Kelly said the data has also been translated into a project chart listed by planning sectors for the whole city. This details how the city can use the information on a variety of levels, such as in budgeting, public-private partnerships, etc.

Mr. Martin said policies, procedures, and processes have been subjects of interest they have heard about. They are shadowing a developer on a project downtown to learn about how this works from start to finish “to go vertical,” especially downtown, i.e., coding, zoning issues, etc. After the charette, for the first sector master plan, recommendations will come out immediately. The testing of the code is trickiest in this area, Mr. Martin said. They are looking at policy, pilot projects, infrastructure and “pre-packaged deals,” he said. At the charette, there

will be “vision visuals,” Mr. Martin said, but there will also be more substantive information on how it can be made to happen. Ms. Kelly said the Office of Civic Investment has recorded the comments of those who have attended their meetings from the public.

Mr. Martin said **Naomi Leeman** and Ms. Kelly would walk through the data submitted to the Office of Civic Investment by various means thus far. **Reed Armstrong** asked if the tables and spreadsheets were available online, and Ms. Kelly said they will be on the website for the Office of Civic Investment soon; the address is www.beaufortcivicinvestment.org

Mr. Armstrong asked about the availability of infill parcels; Mr. Martin said he could let him know. Ms. Kelly said they mapped vacancies and properties for sale. Ms. Leeman reviewed the opportunities and challenges on the handout: they are general comments that apply sector-wide, she said, and they are detailed more specifically elsewhere. Mr. Martin said the grocery store concept has come up a lot and there has been discussion of how it could work.

Commissioner Zara suggested adding “biking safely.” Commissioner McNally asked about drainage issues; Ms. Leeman said drainage is listed in the more specific neighborhoods’ lists.

Randall Burch mentioned downtown water pressure. Ms. Kelly said they had heard of a restaurant whose size had to be limited because of water pressure. Commissioner Zara said they can pay to have water pressure increased. A member of the public suggested adding “sewage” to the list. Mr. Martin said a utility has provided all the locations of underground utilities. He said there’s “a difference between available utilities and ones that are on the lot.” Commissioner McNally asked about capacity limitations on any utilities. **Lisa Rentz** mentioned internet access in City Hall. A member of the public mentioned sign standards, especially for extraneous signs. Mr. Dadson said putting utilities underground is a challenge on Boundary Street, Mr. Martin said they’re looking at Bay Street and Ribaut Road and North Street and Ribaut Road for a utility plan for these streetscapes. In the form-based code, if they need utilities, there needs to be a utility master plan for where they should go.

A member of the public said she sees buildings that aren’t used, and some are falling down. Mr. Martin said this is covered in Housing under “structural,” and they have heard this many times.

CIVIC SPACES

Ms. Kelly said there are a variety of diverse civic spaces in Beaufort, such as open spaces and parks. They also included schools and colleges as civic spaces. Mr. Martin said USCB has been a popular topic: how it expands what happens with parking, student housing, etc. Commissioner Zara asked what “integrating TCL” meant. Mr. Martin said there have been suggestions that they could grow as one campus. Ms. Kelly said they had also discussed sharing student housing. Mr. Burch asked about the Marina as a civic space and said it should be included. Ms. Kelly said it is; though this is a general listing, it’s listed under “downtown.”

John Dickerson said the old City Hall needs to be considered for classroom space immediately. Mr. Martin said they have also considered it for student housing. Jane Upshaw wants to know

“the tangible increments and how they could happen.” Someone asked about the status of the federal courthouse. Ms. Anderson said Beaufort County owns it, and they have a long-term lease with the federal court system, though it’s under-utilized. **Demetri Baches** said schools are “institutional uses” which includes the old city jail and other civic buildings, too.

Mr. Baches said Seth Herring will conduct research on the retail and commercial component of Beaufort as a whole. It will involve a regional contextual analysis including Charleston and Savannah. Beaufort County will also be considered as it affects downtown, as will commercial uses that are over- and under-saturated as well as the ones that are working well. This will provide a comprehensive retail plan to take to the March charette. The various components of the strategy will be assigned to 25 members or so working on it.

Mr. Baches said the demographics and realities have changed for a grocery downtown; this is probably why there’s not one there. They will look at how to make it a reality in 5-20 years, he said. The policies and projects that will allow that sort of thing have happened in other cities that have gone through a similar process to the one underway in Beaufort. A discussion about this issue ensued generally. Mayor Keyserling said there’s a Piggly Wiggly in the greater downtown area. People need to shop there to get the types of products they want in stock. There is no sidewalk, but it serves a demographic that doesn’t have cars, etc. It will change with patronage and requests. Ms. Rentz suggested a stronger presence for a farmer’s market. A member of the public said those living on the islands want specialty grocery stores. Commissioner Goode said the Bladen Street area would be good for specialty stores, if it’s to be developed.

Ms. Kelly said they have been discussing different scales of retail. Commissioner Waldrop clarified the boundaries of downtown, which is not just Bay Street. Ms. Kelly said a goal is to widen the vision of downtown Beaufort.

Mayor Keyserling suggested adding “a connection to the water,” i.e., a rowing house, winter regattas, etc. From a retail point of view, a safer, more accessible sea wall should be looked at as to how it affects Beaufort. A woman suggested development of a cultural center that seats 4000. Ms. Rentz said supporting businesses that are here now is what brings larger facilities. Commissioner Zara mentioned the USCB PAC.

HOUSING

Ms. Kelly said they have heard a lot about duplexes and triplexes and small scale multi-family options that aren’t obvious throughout neighborhoods. Lafayette Square is obvious multi-family housing. People have said they like smaller scale multi-family housing. Commissioner Zara said growing the tax base should be added, and Mr. Dadson said diversifying it is key as well, as well as offering incentives for rehabilitation.

PERMITTING AND PROCESSING

Commissioner Zara said all of the committees are advisory; Mr. Martin said all boards and commissions have appeals processes built into them. Commissioner Zara said the appeal

situation is already addressed. Commissioner McFee said there was concern about where appeals went to; Commissioner Zara said state law specifies that.

UTILITY INFRASTRUCTURE AND IMPACT

Mr. Martin said they learned a lot about this, particularly as to fees that are “one size fits all” and could be graduated, for example. Private development says that the city and other agencies want infill, etc., but the city needs to put money into the equation. Mr. Dadson said the relationship with other jurisdictions is a factor as well, as is commercial redevelopment, according to Commissioner Kase. Commissioner Goode said homes on the edge of being historic have been lost and need to be eligible now. Mr. Dadson said it has to do with the Northern Regional Plan; the county’s, Port Royal’s and the City’s “now calibrate with each other.” Planning is now regional, but thinking in a regional framework is tricky while maintaining the unique properties of Beaufort. The city doesn’t want to be so competitive as to edge up against other municipalities.

Mr. Dadson explained Transfer of Development Rights (TDR). Mayor Keyserling agreed with Mr. Dadson on the intergovernmental element, but he believes that nearly all of the impact fees are driven by the city conforming with the county and “the old way of doing things.” Mayor Keyserling said water and sewer were a huge incentive before they were sold. Mr. Martin said the administration of various programs can be very difficult for projects that seem great in theory and appealing to the neighborhoods. They need to seek a balance.

REGULATIONS AND BUILDING CODES

Ms. Kelly said there can be overlap between conservation districts and redevelopment plans. Financial feasibility is done 2.5-3 years ahead.

INCENTIVES

Commissioner Kase said on the lot by lot survey, they will see if the areas qualified for redevelopment incentives. Mr. Martin and Mr. Baches said that was a great idea. Mayor Keyserling said people don’t know about existing incentives and need to be educated at all levels from residential to commercial. The incentives should be both financial and in terms of predictability and timeliness of the process, which the city should be helpful in at no cost. A member of the public said there are state incentives for residential, even. People might have incentive to buy if they had that information beforehand. Another attendee said there need to be incentives for infill. Ms. Rentz said the incentives are on the Office of Civic Investment web site, and Mr. Martin said that can be used to educate realtors about incentives. Mr. Martin said Main Street Beaufort needs to update its “Doing Business in Beaufort” section and other information should be available for “owning a historic home,” etc. to spread the word.

Mr. Martin said there needs to be an easy way to update in the future. Ms. Rentz said she’d like to see incentives spread around into the Higginsonville area, not just the historic district; Higginsonville is included in the first sector. There was a suggestion to include TIF district money in incentives, and Mr. Dadson suggested the MCIP. Mr. Martin said any other suggestions can be submitted through the Office of Civic Investment web page or via his email.

SMALL AREA PLANS TO BE COVERED IN THE CHARETTE

Ms. Kelly showed the five study sectors in the city. Mr. Baches explained that the colored, highlighted areas are those they will pay closer attention to, and someone from the charette teams will specifically be assigned to them; everything in the sector will be studied. Mr. Baches went on to explain how the charettes will work. Mayor Keyserling said this master plan process parallels the comp plan but goes deeper. Mr. Baches agreed.

A member of the public asked about zoning changes to multi-family housing around the USCB campus. Mr. Baches said “everything’s on the table.” Another member of the public said the people who live there now should be consulted about that. A member of the public expressed concerns over students when they leave dorm housing and move into the city. Mr. Baches said they’re aware of those concerns, and that’s why those areas are highlighted. “The last phase of the change is the codification of the process” and the new processes associated with the code change; this is when the zoning would change, Mr. Baches said.

Ms. Kelly went on to show more specifically the other areas in the first sector and some of the potential areas and projects that the five groups would study. Mr. Martin said they have heard interest in what can be done on a lot-level, block-level, and then larger sites of improvements and infill “starting from scratch.”

Mr. Martin said the team meetings for the Redevelopment Commission during the charette are designated. Mr. Baches said every team will be working on everything simultaneously, so anyone could drop in any time. Mr. Martin reviewed and detailed the charette schedule for the public. Mr. Baches said nothing coming from the charette is final; work will go on in the months that follow. Mr. Martin said the next public workshop is March 8 at the Verdier House with Main Street Beaufort and Historic Beaufort Foundation.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the commission, Commissioner McFee made a motion to adjourn, second by Commissioner Kase. The motion passed unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 7:04 pm.

ATTEST: _____
IVETTE BURGESS, CITY CLERK