

A meeting of the Beaufort Redevelopment Commission was held on August 2, 2012 at 5:00 p.m. in the Beaufort Municipal Complex, City Hall Planning Conference Room, 1911 Boundary Street. In attendance were Chairman Jon Verity and Commissioners Mike McNally, Mike McFee, Alan Dechovitz, Keith Waldrop, Pat Kase, and Wendy Zara.

Martin Goodman and Henrietta Goode 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.

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

MINUTES

Commissioner McFee made a motion, second by Commissioner Zara, to approve the minutes of the July 5, 2012 meeting. The motion to approve the minutes as submitted passed unanimously. Commissioner Waldrop abstained because he was not present at the meeting.

REPORTS

Finance Committee

Commissioner Zara said they are sending out drafts of a joint letter to architects in regard to pre-approvals. An incentive guide is also being put together. In regard to affordable housing, there's a workshop on 8-15-12 from 10 am - 12 pm in City Hall that will cover subsidies for first-time home buyers. She expects that stakeholders will attend and then **Shirley Wilkins** plans to do evening and weekend counseling.

Residential Committee

Commissioner McNally said that **Eric Brown** is working with Bill Harvey on a contract in regard to Lafayette Street. He is also doing site due diligence in regard to soil, drainage, etc. Though it's moving slowly, it's moving long, Commissioner McNally said. He expects there should be a draft of the contract by the September meeting.

Commissioner McNally said Ms. Wilkins and he met with Consumer Credit Counseling Service in Savannah. They offer classes for first time home buyers. The service's representatives will come to the 9-6-12 Redevelopment Commission meeting and discuss their program.

Commissioner McNally is discussing the purchase of an historical house in the Northwest Quadrant with a local architect. There are ongoing negotiations, and the architect seems positive about acquiring the property. He's interested in doing small infill units in the back of the main house. Commissioner McNally has encouraged him to contact **Josh Martin**. The architect, whom Commissioner McNally did not name, has funding to do the job himself.

Commissioner Waldrop said in regard to the credit counseling, Ms. Wilkins felt like they might have gotten the cart before the horse in a development in Bluffton, so this time they plan to work directly with the homebuyers on what they need to qualify. Now, in Bluffton, they have a

pool of people from whom they will choose lottery-style. Here they will have to have income to qualify as well as taking classes.

Commissioner McNally said that **Scott Dadson** had asked him to review an extension of the Lawrence Group contract through the middle of next year, and they are close to getting through that. It should be sent to commissioners for review in a week or so.

Chairman Verity asked Mr. Martin if there was anything new in the Northwest Quadrant.

The project at 1409 Duke is a step closer, and the project is very alive, Maxine Lutz said.

Mr. Martin said the RFP for the Depot Road project has to be finalized; the survey is supposed to be done this week. The state road to the left at the end of Depot Road is going to be moved out of the state system.

Mr. Martin said they have been doing work on phases of the Rail Trail and how it will interact with the Boundary Street redevelopment and also at Beaufort Plaza. The county is moving forward more quickly with the second phase of the Rail Trail. Commissioner Kase asked if the design detail has been done for the Beaufort Plaza. Mr. Martin said it's finished and will be sent to Commissioner Kase.

Commissioner Zara said there's been discussion of private financing for a bridge over Highway 170. The county has reaffirmed that the trail will be the Spanish Moss Trail, Chairman Verity said. Commissioner Waldrop said in regard to the Depot and the Sector Two master plan, there was a neighborhood meeting and there will be another on August 13. Chairman Verity said the last meeting was productive and everyone felt good about it. Chairman Verity said the platted roads were connected, so he agreed with the neighborhood's concerns. Commissioner Kase complimented Chairman Verity on "re-framing" the debate. Commissioner Kase has said there have been questions about the city coming and taking their property through eminent domain. This is not the only group concerned. He thinks there needs to be more communication about the master planning process because there are a lot of misconceptions. Mr. Martin said he's seeing a lot of that with Boundary Street, too.

Chairman Verity said the last he heard about the Von Harten Building bakery, it was no longer in a stalemate. The deal is still in process, and he feels "there's light at the end of the tunnel."

Commissioner McNally said there was a Northwest Quadrant meeting to discuss the constant problems with older houses in the Northwest Quadrant and why no one comes into by and fix them up. A lot of the owners are absentee, he said, which is the main problem, and they want to keep it in the family and they need to be educated. He said people believe that their unrealistic ideas about the values of the homes which comes from the county assessments on the property. He thinks they should meet with county administrators and explain the problem.

If the assessment were more realistic for the improvement portion of the property, when people get their reassessment, they will see what its actual value is. They also need to promote the infill programs by allowing them to keep the property but adding a rental unit to it. The county should be able to see that they will need to lower the taxes for awhile, but then they will be improved, and the taxes would go up. Commissioner McNally said there are about fifteen houses that need this sort of attention. Commissioner McFee said it could be limited to the at-risk houses. ML said they would support this at Historic Beaufort Foundation. Commissioner McFee said the Attorney General is looking at the issue of whether the assessments are able to be lowered or raised. Commissioner McFee said they would have to cover more than a select few properties, though endangered properties might be different.

Chairman Verity said in regard to the hospital, there has been discussion about Allison Road and Ribaut. They met with the hospital recently, and they intend to dramatically improve this corner on both streets, at least into the hospital property, Commissioner McFee said. Over time they will build that streetscape across their whole property, Chairman Verity said. The hospital recognizes the need to connect to the Rail Trail, too, Chairman Verity said, and they're in joint effort with them to do so.

Chairman Verity said there's an agreement with connecting the City Hall property to **Dick Stewart's** property next to it. A road is to be put in through where the dumpster is currently, and Mr. Stewart will get the property that is currently a park. It will be in the Boundary Street Redevelopment district, not Mr. Stewart's PUD.

Mr. Martin said the Hermitage Road meeting brought about 75 people, and he feels they are getting the word out with their sessions. They will have follow-ups as the construction is phased in. Also they are getting easements that will be needed on Polk Avenue. A firm will negotiate the purchase of the easements for the city and county. Until the final draft agreement is in place, they are reluctant to move too far forward, but it is supposed to come next week, they have heard. All the studies in regard to the NEPA permit have been finished, and once they receive the grant agreement, they'll be ready to go.

Boundary Street Redevelopment District

Chairman Verity said there have been letters to the editor in regard to Boundary Street and discussions are taking place with every individual and business that is affected. Mr. Martin said "This is not a new plan" since it's been around since 2004-2005; he wanted to clarify this "for the public's edification." Mr. Martin said they had received permission to use oak trees in the medians and planting strips instead of palm trees.

Chairman Verity said he was asked to serve on the Lowcountry Economic Alliance as Beaufort's representative. He attended his first meeting and reported that it is well-organized, and there's money in the budget for at least a year. They will reapply next year for \$67,000 for each economic alliance. The Commerce Park is the only place with the entire infrastructure in place

in order to bring business to Beaufort. The administrative staff of LEA will move their offices to the City Hall building in September.

LaNelle Fabian said Main Street Beaufort had emailed a letter to the Redevelopment Commission to reaffirm their support of the day dock. Main Street Beaufort had sent out surveys to merchants, she said. They want the Redevelopment Commission to co-host a merchant meeting at Waterfront Park to show how the day dock would look and to send someone to discuss it. There will be some boating demonstrations. There's no confirmed date yet, but they would like to do it on a Monday.

Commissioner Dechovitz said moving a cruise ship further up the sea wall 250-300' would mean that they would source water from the marina with a hose bib, and the city would have to make accommodation for that. Because they're there for a short time, the view issues would be minimal. Commissioner Dechovitz said they could have drawings by the August 20 to show.

Chairman Verity asked if in the Main Street Beaufort survey they had asked about the place to store kayaks, etc. She said they had only asked merchants their feelings about cruise ships and whether they would obstruct the view. Ms. Fabian said they sent out 100 surveys and got back about 30%. Commissioner Dechovitz asked what percentage found that the cruise ships were meaningful to their business. 85% were in favor of a day dock expansion, **Chip Dinkins** said. He added that only one out of 30 merchants thought the cruise ships were meaningful to their businesses.

Chairman Verity asked Commissioner McFee if the cruise ships asked for permission to dock, and Commissioner McFee said there's an agreement and they pay a dockage fee. Commissioner Dechovitz said yachtsmen are much more important to the economy than a cruise ship which generates little or no economic activity, uses city water, etc. Commissioner Kase said he feels that locals would embrace a day dock if it wasn't so hazardous to their craft, and Commissioner Dechovitz said they also expect it would bring in more regional business.

Mr. Dinkins said Main Street Beaufort is committed to this project. Commissioner Dechovitz said they are trying to get the rowing interests organized and part of the plan. They will be going to a Planning Commission meeting in the fall. There was a draft addendum to the master plan, and it's being refined now.

Ms. Fabian formally introduced the commission to Mr. Dinkins. September 5 is the Main Street Beaufort board retreat and anyone is invited, Mr. Dinkins said.

Mr. Martin said the closing date for the form-based code steering committee was July 31, so they are in the process of appointing that committee.

Commissioner Kase asked if Mr. Martin had implied that because the state has influence over the parking area at the Depot that meant that they had to acquire that before moving forward, and Mr. Martin said yes, but getting the streets from the state is the fastest part of the process.

There being no further business to come before the commission, **Commissioner Zara made a motion, second by Commissioner Dechovitz, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously,** and the meeting was adjourned at 6:06 p.m.