

A work session of the Beaufort City Council was held on October 15, 2013 at 5:00 p.m. in the Beaufort Municipal Complex, 1901 Boundary Street. In attendance were Mayor Billy Keyserling, Council members Donnie Ann Beer, Mike Sutton, Mike McFee, and George O'Kelley, and City Manager Scott Dadson.

In accordance with the 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

Mayor Keyserling called the work session to order at 5:00 p.m.

MAIN STREET BEAUFORT, USA ANNUAL UPDATE

LaNelle Fabian, Executive Director of Main Street Beaufort, made a presentation about her organization. They are now a not-for-profit subsidiary of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. She described the four-point approach, and said they cover approximately 148 blocks of downtown Beaufort. She said the boundaries are river-to-river and Boundary-to-Ribaut.

In 1989, Ms. Fabian said, many potentially detrimental things happened, but downtown Beaufort survived them: Hurricane Hugo, Operation Desert Shield, the first Wal-Mart opened in Beaufort, the first snowfall in 20 years on Christmas Eve, parking fees and fines were raised, and street preachers. In spite of these things, 12 new businesses opened in downtown Beaufort, Ms. Fabian said.

She reviewed the Main Street Beaufort mission statement and its funding sources. The Shrimp Fest and A Taste of Beaufort brought in more than \$357,000, and 23% of it went back into the Main Street Beaufort budget for downtown revitalization, Ms. Fabian said.

Ms. Fabian reviewed the group's top priorities. She went on to describe the group's promotion efforts. She said the awning project was very successful, as was the window dressing workshop. The dolphin project was both successful and unsuccessful, in that people liked the dolphins so much, they took them home.

Business Development worked with the Redevelopment Commission on the day dock and is working on Wi-Fi for downtown, LK said. She described the group's "task squads." The Executive Committee's task squad builds and maintains partnerships with other groups and organizations. The Promotion Committee is comprised of task squads for advertising, website development, festivals, events to get people coming downtown, and the farmers' market, which has had some issues, so people are looking at it to determine how to improve it, according to Ms. Fabian. The Design Committee task squads include way-finding signs (they hope to have the first piece of it done by Thanksgiving); a discounted sign project for downtown businesses (a project similar to the awning project, which will offer discounts for signs for businesses); the downtown dolphin project, which people liked, and they would like to attempt again but putting the dolphins "in more unreachable spots," Ms. Fabian said.

Ms. Fabian said Business Development Committee task squads include USDA grants, including business expansion to determine what businesses need in the way of training to help them grow their businesses; they are also applying for a grant through USDA for getting businesses to use their upper stories; Wi-Fi downtown, which has been discussed for a long time, and Hargray has now decided to focus on municipalities this year, Ms. Fabian said, so they will discuss how to fund it soon, and they plan to do it in phases, beginning with Waterfront Park; a parking token program, which can potentially be done year-round and could ultimately replace the holiday parking program.

Ms. Fabian concluded that the task squads have been very effective for Main Street Beaufort.

Councilman McFee asked how quickly tokens can get implemented, and Ms. Fabian said December, if they “hit no speed bumps.” Councilman Sutton said he doesn’t want this to get “micro-managed by council.” Mr. Dadson said if the city is to fund it, staff will need to be involved.

Ms. Fabian said there are two funding options and passed out a handout. Option A is for the city to purchase 10,000 tokens, and Option B is for Main Street Beaufort to purchase them and put the Main Street Beaufort logo on one side and sell the other side for business logos. They can be delivered 10 days after art is approved. They are also asking the businesses that have a City of Beaufort business license to purchase the tokens for 50 cents each (for an hour of parking, usually \$1.00). These two things are what staff and council would need to discuss. Ms. Fabian said they need time to prove this will work and for businesses to give out the tokens, so they are going to request the usual holiday parking from city council.

Councilman O’Kelley said they shouldn’t give up the holiday parking in his opinion. Mayor Keyserling asked if it was 168 businesses that were in downtown; Ms. Fabian said the total was 235 approximately in the downtown district. Mayor Keyserling asked how many were Main Street Beaufort members and Ms. Fabian said they have 130 businesses as group members. Mayor Keyserling asked how many of them had City of Beaufort business licenses because “businesses sometimes say that Main Street Beaufort doesn’t speak for them.” Mayor Keyserling said if half the businesses downtown aren’t members of Main Street Beaufort, it raises a question.

Mayor Keyserling asked if Ms. Fabian has any ideas about getting the greater downtown area to not run a \$600,000 deficit. He asked if the marketing study can be translated into growth. He said he doesn’t know that Wi-Fi will help grow businesses. The tokens will help grow businesses, but only the ones that are here now. He thinks that doesn’t address a retail study, retention, and recruitment. The Lowcountry Economic Alliance has bought software and the Chamber of Commerce hasn’t decided if it will participate yet. Mayor Keyserling said also they need to get regional support for the Waterfront Park, in addition to what they get from festivals and events. Mayor Keyserling said Main Street Beaufort gets more than \$100,000 from public entities and parking that doesn’t benefit non-Main Street Beaufort members.

Ms. Fabian replied that Main Street Beaufort has perks for its members, but they “do activities to benefit all of downtown in the majority,” not just members. Mayor Keyserling said anybody downtown benefits, but if they’re not committing energy and time, they aren’t really buying in.

Nan Sutton suggested that they need to look at “particular business owners who don't buy in because they would never buy into anything.” She feels that it’s not half of the downtown merchants who don’t support Main Street Beaufort. Ms. Fabian said they don’t see it as something they can afford for the amount of benefit right now. Some people don’t care for Main Street Beaufort, but there are also a large number that can’t afford it right now. Mayor Keyserling said he’s asking if the structure is the right one to represent all of the merchants.

Charlie Williams, Main Street Beaufort board chair, said they need to look at this, and he sees both sides of the matter. Ms. Fabian said donations fluctuate, and they are also working on some bonuses that being a friend of Main Street Beaufort will offer. They have supportive friends, she said, and it grew when Main Street Beaufort added movies in the park, but then they were not attended, so they stopped it.

Mayor Keyserling said if there’s a new marina redevelopment, there could be a potential for 20-30 more retail businesses. He asked if she had thought about recruiting those through Main Street Beaufort. Ms. Fabian said that business development is part of the Main Street Beaufort mission. **Kevin Cuppia**, Main Street Beaufort’s Business Development Director, said they have invited Mayor Keyserling and **Jon Verity** to their business development meetings, and Mayor Keyserling recommended that they be given an agenda with the invitation; “council will respond to being told something specifically that they can do,” he said. Mr. Cuppia said **Dick Stewart** will be at the next Business Development meeting.

Charles Aimar said that “the Chamber of Commerce is more countywide,” while “Main Street Beaufort is more downtown.” If Ms. Fabian were given control of the parking, the membership would increase, he feels. Parking is still a difficult issue downtown that merchants are struggling with. Mayor Keyserling said Main Street Beaufort and the Redevelopment Commission were asked to come up with a plan for parking, and “the community and half the merchants hated the plan.” None of the revenues go in the city’s General Fund, but to the Redevelopment Commission and Main Street Beaufort for downtown development. When they let it run, council was excited about it, but it didn’t work, Mayor Keyserling said.

Mr. Aimar said again that if council let Main Street Beaufort control the money in the core commercial district, and the Redevelopment Commission in the other areas, “that would be acceptable.” Mayor Keyserling said the merchants have consistently said they need parking turnover to increase their business, and they have learned from significant amounts of data that with lower fees and no meters, they don’t get the turnover that they have today. Mr. Aimar said they must explore having the first two hours of parking free as in other towns. Mayor Keyserling explained why this wasn’t going to work in Beaufort. Councilman O’Kelley said people in Beaufort didn’t want a parking garage, which council favors.

Mr. Aimar said “maybe we don’t want meters anymore.” Councilman Sutton said that they have to have them because “the merchants won’t manage their employees,” who want to park close to their work, where customers should be parking. Councilman O’Kelley said originally it was the merchants who wanted meters.

Mayor Keyserling said that they had looked at “one-waying” on Bay Street, but that or diagonal parking don’t work. Parking is an everyday conversation, Mayor Keyserling said. Ms. Fabian said that there is confusion about what Main Street Beaufort’s role was when parking changed in 2009. Ms. Fabian said she and Mayor Keyserling will discuss it because she thinks that Main Street Beaufort’s role was never to come up with the parking plan; they held merchant meetings and did a survey to provide council information. She said they never would have accepted that role.

Councilman Sutton said in regard to parking tokens, it looks like a \$4,200 initial investment. He asked the cost to implement the initial plan. Ms. Fabian said that’s the cost to get the tokens shipped to them. He asked how hard it would be to get this program started at that point. Merchants who give out the coins will be giving free parking for the customers’ next trip downtown. As a merchant, he “would find a way to get that coin in customers’ hands.” If the merchants buy tokens for 50 cents each, it’s value is \$1.00.

Councilman Sutton said council has supported Main Street Beaufort for many years, and businesses that don’t belong “are just shooting themselves in the foot.” Parking tokens are a way for merchants to get the free parking that they say they want for their customers. The restaurants wouldn’t participate in the discussion about parking even though their employees’ parking downtown is part of the problem. He hopes it can be done without bureaucracy.

Mr. Cuppia said they should take the tokens’ cost “out of the economic restructuring budget.” Ms. Fabian said that’s what the question was: if Main Street Beaufort should fund it or if the city would fund it. Councilman Sutton said he doesn’t want to make that decision. Mr. Dadson said that’s a decision they can make themselves. Ms. Fabian said Park Beaufort would sell the tokens. Mr. Dadson said if Park Beaufort sells them for 50 cents, and they are worth \$1.00, they are making 50 cents, over and over. He supports that business model. Mr. Cuppia said they “have it in there that the tokens can’t be sold for a profit.” Councilman Sutton said someone will do that, and Mr. Dadson said they will have to deal with lot of issues.

Mayor Keyserling said there’s a \$400,000 budget. **Scott Myer**, Beaufort Clothing Company, asked why a merchant would buy these parking tokens. He said his store has two different kinds of customers: 70% of its customers are tourists. He would pay 50 cents “for locals who have stopped coming downtown” because, he feels, they don’t like to pay to park or can’t find space. Ms. Sutton said it’s the business’s judgment as to who to give them to. Mr. Myer said “the tourists would get upset” if they found out about the tokens. Mr. Dadson said if merchants gave them to tourists, too, tourists could feed their meters and get extra time downtown. Mayor Keyserling said Mr. Myer could focus on his in-town customers to get them to come downtown. Mr. Williams said the customer would have already paid to park downtown, and

this will be an incentive for them to come back and park for free. Ms. Fabian said people don't come downtown because they don't want to pay to park or because it's not convenient for them to park.

Councilman Sutton asked about Wi-Fi cameras. There's free internet at Marketplace News, and "they could bring the park live," and that could be on the vendors to provide that, and if not, someone else will do that. Hargray doesn't need to be the only person to help bring Wi-Fi to downtown Beaufort, Councilman Sutton concluded.

DISCUSSION ON SANDWICH BOARD SIGN AMENDMENT

Libby Anderson said a number of suggestions came up at the public hearing about sandwich boards, and they would like input from council. They were limited to 5 square feet, and it was suggested that the signs be allowed to be 6 square feet. Councilman O'Kelley said that is hard to envision, but he thinks 6 square feet is sort of the standard area for most sandwich boards seen downtown now. Ms. Anderson said that the larger they are, the more space they take up on the sidewalk, but she thinks 6 square feet will work. Councilman Sutton said they are commonly made by a piece of wood that can easily be made into a sign of that size.

The third-party vendors' prohibition has been deleted, Ms. Anderson said. In regard to off-premise signs, staff feels they should be carefully controlled to avoid sign clutter, etc. . A non-profit partner would ideally sponsor them. Ms. Fabian said they discussed this morning doing something in the interim. She said that businesses can purchase a slat with the business name on it in to be slid in to the "More to Explore" sign.

Ms. Anderson said the fee for the application is up to the city manager and council. There are applications that don't require fees, e.g., the awning applications that Main Street Beaufort sponsored, but she still thinks that they should have an application, even if there's no fee to apply. They can submit it through fax or email, but the applications need to be submitted. The revised proposal has been given to Main Street Beaufort for their input as to how they think the ordinance should be put forward.

Councilman O'Kelley said this is for sandwich board or easel signs. Some businesses have free standing or pedestal signs, like Mr. Aimar's and Pinckney Simmons Gallery. They're smaller than an easel or sandwich board, and he thinks "they could be in the realm of the easel." Mr. Aimar showed his signs that aren't easels; Councilman O'Kelley said if a business has a sign there, and they're smaller than the sandwich boards, they should be included. Ms. Anderson said they "can make that happen."

Councilman Sutton said the easel signs' biggest problem is that "they continuously blow over." He only knows of one that is downtown. Mayor Keyserling said there has not been the proliferation he'd feared of sandwich boards outside of the Historic District. He suggested that an annual award for the best and worst sandwich boards be given.

Maxine Lutz said the signs must be made of a permanent durable material; Ms. Anderson said plastic's not acceptable in the Historic District, only wood and metal. Councilman Sutton said he's "not sure that plastic should be ruled out." Ms. Anderson said if it were so far away that they couldn't touch it, that would be different, but for the Historic District, it's not authentic. Councilman Sutton said if they wanted to be authentic, they would paint signs on the walls of the buildings, and he feels they should open up regulation. Ms. Fabian said the plastic sandwich boards are bigger than the 6 square feet size. Ms. Fabian said Main Street Beaufort has plastic because they went to Murr's and ordered sandwich boards, and that's how Murr's makes them. Ms. Sutton said they can talk to Murr's and ask them not to sell the white plastic, and perhaps they could sell another type.

Mayor Keyserling asked how Councilman McFee felt about plastic signs; he said he liked black plastic, but not white. Councilman O'Kelley said he "doesn't care," Councilwoman Beer agreed with Councilman McFee, and Councilman Sutton said he doesn't want to rule plastic out. It was agreed that they don't want to cheapen the streetscape with plastic, as Ms. Lutz said. Mr. Aimar said the woman from St. Peters Church had said at the hearing that she can't lift a wooden sign, so that's why they use plastic. Councilman Sutton said St. Helena has plastic, too, for the organ concerts.

BOUNDARY STREET ROADWAY PROJECT UPDATE

Rob McFee made a presentation on the Boundary Street master plan. The parallel street was shown. He showed which piece was covered by federal money. He showed a cross-sectional view of Boundary Street boulevard, including the pedestrian walkway and the trees. The pedestrian component is very important to the feds, he said. He showed an aerial view of the multi-use path. He showed the components of Neil Road to Hogarth Street and the parallel street and a cross-section of it. He showed the parallel parking on the parallel street. Mr. Dadson said it was taken by the city from the state two years ago. He showed the second section of the parallel street from Westview to Hogarth. He showed Boundary Street from Hogarth to Ribaut Road.

Mr. McFee shared the keys during construction, e.g., providing clear signs from the roadway to business entrances, temporary and or secondary business access where feasible, construction after business hours, and staggering construction so as to not have all of the impact at one time.

The primary components, Mr. McFee said are:

- Parallel road network
- Street trees and underground utilities
- Pedestrian and bicycle trails
- Boulevard-style with median and landscaping
- Special intersections in 2 key areas

Mr. McFee went on to describe the next steps; construction is anticipated to take 18 months. Construction is expected to start in January 2014. Councilman Sutton said at the crossover at

Carolina Cove, a 10' intermodal crosses over and continues to be 10'. Mayor Keyserling said nothing goes on the marsh anymore. Mr. McFee said there is "a small piece of boardwalk."

Mayor Keyserling asked how they were coming along on the right-of-way; Mr. McFee said they have purchased about 40%. Mayor Keyserling asked if it would hold the project up, and Mr. McFee said no.

Councilman Sutton noted that there are no roundabouts. Slip lanes will be the business owners' prerogative at a later time, Mr. Dadson said. Ms. Lutz asked if the parallel road is residential, and she was told that it is, on one side. Mr. Dadson said anything within the city is mixed use. The master plan for Boundary Street set the road network, and the type of road determines different design speeds; the road design is designed to be more walkable.

Councilman Sutton said the land is currently available to make a slip road, which can be one or two lanes that parallel Boundary Street, a la the Olive Garden / Red Lobster, but Belt Buckle Park / Kmart blocks it. It has a slip road built in, Councilman Sutton said, so you can get behind it but not past the former Mexican restaurant. Mr. Dadson said 5-7 people come in a year to talk about different projects in a strip of Boundary Street, and once the construction goes to bid, and they start to see the \$21 million worth of work, it can then be leveraged and marketed as people begin to really see it. The city will be doing small projects that will add up to connecting to the Boundary Street project.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Pursuant to Title 30, Chapter 4, and Section 70 (a) (2) of the South Carolina Code of Law, **Councilwoman Beer made a motion, second by Councilman Sutton, to enter into Executive Session for the purpose of discussion of land acquisition and receipt of legal advice. The motion passed unanimously.**

Councilman O'Kelley made a motion, second by Councilman Sutton, to come out of Executive Session and resume the work session. The motion passed unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the work session adjourned at p.m.

ATTEST: _____
IVETTE BURGESS, CITY CLERK