

A work session of the Beaufort City Council was held on December 23, 2014 at 5:00 p.m. in the Beaufort Municipal Complex, 1901 Boundary Street. In attendance were Mayor Billy Keyserling, Council members Mike McFee, George O'Kelley, Stephen Murray, and Phil Cromer, 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.

RENAMING HORSE HOLE PARK "CUTHBERT PARK"

Tate Horton said that his mother-in-law was **Alice Cuthbert Alston**, and he and his wife, Anne, want to give the name Cuthbert to the small park facing the Beaufort River known as "Horse Hole" Park. There have been 9 generations of Cuthberts in Beaufort, he said, and detailed who had made contributions to the city and in what fashion. The street that leads to the park is called Cuthbert Street, and they believe that the landing at the park was used after the river was crossed. The park itself has a connection to the family, Mr. Horton said, and they would be willing to pay for a sign for the park.

Mayor Keyserling asked about the history of the original Cuthbert House (as opposed to the "party house"). Councilman O'Kelley said he thinks renaming the park should be put on council's agenda. **Liza Hill** said work was done on the park, so grass grows there now. Councilman O'Kelley said it's "a pretty little park." Ms. Hill said the renaming is the purview of PTAC, and they had made approved a motion to recommend that council approve renaming this park.

Councilman Murray asked about the property owners in the surrounding area and if they should be notified of a name change. There was general agreement that Horse Hole is just a name that it's always been called. Councilman Cromer said he feels the name should be changed.

Mayor Keyserling said they still have to do a review of all of the parks in the city and "determine what does and does not make sense." Ms. Hill said this park is not on the deacquisition list. Mayor Keyserling said then he thinks it's a "grand idea, especially...with a plaque on it that tells the Cuthbert story." Councilman Murray congratulated staff for improving the looks of the park. Mayor Keyserling said it would be on the council agenda for the second week in January.

ORDINANCE REVISING SECTION 6.5.K OF THE UDO TO REQUIRE THE FINISHED FIRST FLOOR OF NEW RESIDENTIAL CONSTRUCTION TO BE ELEVATED A MINIMUM OF 18" ABOVE GRADE

Libby Anderson said this started several months ago. It pertains to elevating new residential construction in the city above grade, most importantly for flood prevention, but also aesthetics and termite control. In several other districts, elevating above grade is already the practice, and this is the case in the flood zone.

The Town of Port Royal requires residential construction to be elevated, as does the county's new code. The Planning Commission recommended approval. A few responses were gotten and are in council's packets. There was a public hearing and a first reading, where council had concerns. She thought there should be a discussion before second reading. They should do what they can to prevent flooding; it's cheaper to do slab on grade, but people with money concerns are those who can least afford to have flooding.

Ms. Anderson said staff proposed an ordinance change, which she read in its current and amended forms. In the amended language, elevation would be required when the structure is being built in a "bowl," so the risk of flooding is greater than on property built on a bluff or above street level. The developer would need to provide more information up front as to whether the house is in a sort of depression, Ms. Anderson said.

Councilman O'Kelley said that he'd noticed that of the 4 responses received, 2 were for and 2 were against the change. Those against it were concerned about handicapped access barriers and about residents having to step out onto a patio, but he thinks that's "rather lame," and he described his pergola at his house and the steps down he must take, though he's not in a flood zone. He said he has "no heartburn about it," and he could see that someone who didn't want to do it could prove that they were an exception. Ramps could be used when needed for handicapped residents.

Councilman Murray said, "I initially don't like it." He feels the developer and the property owner should have some responsibility in this matter. There are stormwater issues with that are caused by a lack of maintenance, not just because of building elevation. He asked, for example, if fill would be brought in on the lot that Ms. Anderson had used as an example. When the grade of a lot is built up, then the other lots get flooded. Councilman Murray said there are areas in the city with tall bluffs where flooding will never be an issue. He has an issue with requiring it everywhere in the city.

Ms. Anderson said the developer on Hamar Street didn't bring in fill, and knowing what they do now, there's still nothing that could be done to require them to do otherwise. Councilman O'Kelley asked if the retention pond Councilman Murray had mentioned in regard to maintenance wasn't maintained. Ms. Anderson said it's the street's the problem in that case, not the retention pond. Councilman Murray explained what **Mike Sutton** had determined. Mr. Dadson said, "It's an expensive fix to get the water out of there."

Mayor Keyserling said he's struggled with this because the houses that are problematic sold for \$115,000 to people who otherwise couldn't have afforded them and who may not have thought of this issue, but he wonders how far the city should go in regard to regulations. He thinks, "Things should be made simpler." The bowl alternative is site-specific, and if a survey or extra elevation work needs to be done, it will cost the same amount as elevating the house. Mayor Keyserling said he hates "laying superficial layers on there." He asked Ms. Anderson what the costs would be to "go to the bowl."

Ms. Anderson said when people suffer disasters, they come to the mayor for remedy, which is where this issue arose, and people are looking to council and the mayor for answers. This would typically be a requirement in a form-based code, which is why Port Royal has it, so it will come back even if it's not done now. Mayor Keyserling asked again about the costs of the bowl /a site-specific plan. Ms. Anderson said they currently require grading plans, side property line swales, etc. with a bowl scenario.

Councilman Murray asked if an elevation certification would be required. Ms. Anderson said no. Councilman O'Kelley said they would have to see if they were in a flood zone, and Mayor Keyserling said there have been maps done. Councilman Murray said he had to get a \$400 elevation certificate for a shed behind his house in order to get a permit. Ms. Anderson said an elevation certification would not be required. They would look for the 18" in the plan and then the inspector would look at it to see if they had built to the required height.

Mayor Keyserling and Councilman McFee agreed that it's an "overregulation issue" and the costs that concern them. Councilman Murray said they "look at rain differently" than they ever did before, so while he thinks it's prudent for public officials to look at these things, "there's no way to regulate our way out of every problem we have."

Mayor Keyserling asked about special exceptions He was going to redo his house to be on grade because of the elevation of 25-30' at which his house is on the bluff. Ms. Anderson said with the bowl option, he wouldn't have to build up. Mayor Keyserling said he might have to build up to be on grade.

Councilman McFee asked if the Planning Commission had seen the concerns of the architecture/builder community. As a realtor, he hates adding regulations, but he could live with the exception. Hearing that there is a need for an elevation certification for a shed concerns him because of the additional expense. Ms. Anderson said planning would determine "bowl or no bowl" on the topographic survey in regard to the finished first floor. Ms. Anderson said now that they require drainage plans, they are doing it. Councilman McFee said then they wouldn't have additional expenses. Mayor Keyserling said he would prefer the bowl approach because it's more site-specific. Councilman Murray said it's for 18" above finished-grade first floor. If he has a bowl and has to raise the elevation to 18", can he bring in 18" of fill and do a slab construction? Ms. Anderson said yes, then he could do grade, though they would look at his swale construction. Ms. Anderson said the Riverpointe at Live Oaks subdivision is all in the flood zone, and they brought in fill there. Councilman McFee said he, too, prefers the bowl scenario.

Councilman O'Kelley asked what the definition would be, and if they "would go strictly by numbers." How would they make the argument to a builder? Mayor Keyserling said they are already doing that. If they are going to change the grade, they are trying to get a better handle on it, and they indicate that it has to be raised any number of ways.

Councilman Cromer said he also doesn't want to overregulate. He lives in a flood zone. If he has to go with one, he would go with the bowl alternative. Ms. Anderson said for second reading, they could put on the bowl option, and if they decide they don't want anything, they can vote against it. Councilman Murray said that if it's staff approved and requires no more documentation, etc., he could "vote for the bowl." Ms. Anderson said she would check the regulations.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Pursuant to Title 30, Chapter 4, and Section 70 (a) (2) of the South Carolina Code of Law, **Councilman O'Kelley made a motion, second by Councilman Murray to enter into Executive Session for a discussion about personnel. The motion passed unanimously.**

Councilman O'Kelley made a motion, second by Councilman McFee, to adjourn the Executive Session and resume the work session.

The work session was adjourned at 6:44 p.m.

A regular meeting of the Beaufort City Council was held on December 23, 2014 at 7:00 p.m. in the Beaufort Municipal Complex, 1901 Boundary Street. In attendance were Mayor Billy Keyserling, council members Mike McFee, George O’Kelley, Stephen Murray and Phil Cromer, 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 meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Councilman McFee led the invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance.

Councilman Murray made a motion, second by Councilman McFee, to amend the agenda to add Item G: Appointments. The motion passed unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARING: UDO AMENDMENT REVISING SECTION 5.3.D.11 TO UPDATE THE STANDARDS FOR SHORT TERM RENTALS

Mayor Keyserling opened this public hearing. Ms. Anderson said this pertains to the short-term rentals ordinance that was adopted in 2011. The ordinance would

1. Ensure that a professional property management company managed short-term rentals in residential districts if the owner lives outside the area. Having a service person or neighbor manage the property is not acceptable. Someone should be available 24-7. Staff recommends that in general a professional management company do this, Ms. Anderson said, though the Zoning Board of Appeals can approve something else if they find it to be justified.
2. Eliminate the requirement for an inspection of the short-term rental before a business license is issued. The short-term rentals are some of the best-maintained units in the city’s neighborhoods, and there’s no need for an inspection for basic standards.
3. Add a statement in the ordinance that a monitored fire alarm is required in all short-term rentals, and all service providers for short-term rentals are required to have business licenses. When people query, they will see this, which provides a more comprehensive look at what is required to operate a short-term rental.

The Planning Commission considered this at their meeting earlier this month, Ms. Anderson said. Short-term rental owners spoke – most from commercial zones – and the Planning Commission recommended denial. Staff would like to have a work session with the Zoning Board of Appeals in early February to determine what a professional management company would be required to do.

Ms. Anderson indicated where the short-term rentals are in the city and said only one had been denied this far – in the West End – and there will be a rehearing on it in February. That case was also a matter of needing a professional management company.

Councilman Cromer indicated a section he found redundant. Mayor Keyserling said this was an opportunity for the public to speak prior to a work session, when council will get their shot at it.

Charles Aimar asked where the West End is. He asked if there's a long-term plan for short-term rentals (e.g., how many can go on a street). Ms. Anderson said the Zoning Board of Appeals has brought this up as well. Council considered a number per neighborhood, per street or per spacing requirements, similar to what the city has for B&Bs, but it's being tracked in case they decide at some point that they want to limit numbers.

Brenda Hood said she owns a vacation rental in Pigeon Point and has operated it for 9 years. She agrees with Ms. Anderson about the need for regulations to limit the quantity of vacation rentals in neighborhoods and also the quality. She doesn't want "riff raff in the neighborhood" because "it reflects badly on all of us." She said she interviews potential guests to ensure that they will take care of her property. She doesn't want nightly customers. It's not an easy business, Ms. Hood said, and it's very competitive. She would like to be involved in the regulation-making. Several years ago there were questions about short-term rentals, and she never knew that there was an ordinance passed about them, though she has been operating one. She thinks the city should make a point of notifying the businesses after the fact about the rules as they are passed. The rules being proposed largely won't affect her because her business is in a commercial zone. She also lives outside the city. Ms. Hood feels that some people won't monitor their property even if they live in the City of Beaufort. She thinks the rules need to be enforceable.

Don Starkey said he sits on the Zoning Board of Appeals, and citizens in a neighborhood come in, and they are concerned about things like traffic in relation to short-term rentals. He recalls sitting at a council meeting when the short-term rental issue came up, and it was initially supposed to be people who were local and who had a space on their property that they rented like a cottage or a unit above the garage. They need people running short-term rentals who can solve a problem at midnight for a renter or a neighbor. Mr. Starkey said he had also asked for the list of short-term rentals to determine if they should consider density requirements.

Mayor Keyserling asked if there was an association of short-term rental people. Ms. Hood said there's not. Mayor Keyserling said a group could be created that would work with staff. Ms. Hood said she had approached the Chamber of Commerce about setting up something like that several years ago. There was a hospitality group, but it's disbanded, and now there's a tourism committee. She said she would very much like what Mayor Keyserling is recommending. Ms. Hood said she had also asked for a list of the short-term rentals to try to get the group together. Councilman Murray asked her if she had a City of Beaufort business license. She said she did, and he agreed with her that they should notify people whose businesses are affected by council decisions. Ms. Hood said that she would bet that people are still operating vacation rentals without business licenses/paying taxes.

John Dickerson read a letter from **Sarah Tetley** about their travelling to Beaufort to speak at

the Metropolitan Planning Commission meeting and what had happened. She provided her thoughts and a property management plan in the letter.

Mr. Dickerson asked council why they need to change now, when the ordinance has been working for 3 years. Each of the items that staff wants to add “comes at a cost.” He said, “If there’s this kind of language in Item J” for short-term rentals, then they need to have that for *all* rentals and all businesses in the city. He said they should consider what they are saying to the business owners with these changes. **Erica Dickerson** said, as an operator and in regard to problem-solving, Ms. Tetley is more effective than a professional would be and more than many locals would be.

Ms. Anderson said the Zoning Board of Appeals is driving this change. The people in the public who have spoken have short-term rentals in commercial zones, while staff’s encouragement of professional management is for short-term rentals in residential neighborhoods. The elimination of the inspection will apply but will save business owners \$50. The fire alarm and business licenses are just trying to give a “one stop shop” to potential renters. It doesn't have to be in there, she said, since it already is. Mayor Keyserling said it would be workshopped by the Zoning Board of Appeals before it comes to council, if it comes to council at all. Ms. Anderson said they can’t delete anything without council approval, so they will need that. Mayor Keyserling said council would see it again.

MINUTES

Councilman McFee made a motion, second by Councilman Cromer, to approve the minutes of council’s work session and regular meeting December 9, 2014. Mayor Keyserling said on page 7, in the second paragraph from the bottom, the Chamber of Commerce had requested \$2500 from the city that the Beaufort 300 would pay as a co-sponsor; he asked that it be stressed that it’s a one-time appropriation for this year, though it’s an annual event. **The motion to accept the minutes as amended passed unanimously.**

ORDINANCE REPEALING SECTION 8-1008 OF THE CITY CODE OF ORDINANCES PERTAINING TO USE OF HANDHELD ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION DEVICES WHILE OPERATING A MOTOR VEHICLE

Councilman O’Kelley made a motion, second by Councilman McFee, to approve the ordinance on second reading. Mayor Keyserling said that Councilman O’Kelley had crafted an ordinance about no texting and no use of cell phones by people 17 and younger while driving, and then the state passed a similar law. However, the state law didn't have the 18-year-old requirement for use of a phone while driving. Councilman O’Kelley said this just repeals the part of the ordinance that is covered by the state law, which is the texting. The prohibition against 18-year-olds and under using a phone while driving would stay. **The motion passed unanimously.**

MOTION AUTHORIZING CITY MANAGER TO ENTER INTO CONTRACTUAL AGREEMENT REGARDING NEW FIRE STATION

Councilman Murray made a motion to table the matter because he didn't receive the information about it until 3:30 this afternoon. After some discussion about procedure,

Councilman Murray withdrew his motion.

Councilman Murray made a motion, second by Councilman McFee, to approve the motion for discussion. Councilman Murray said that “all the numbers weren’t in,” and he’s only had 2.5 hours to approve \$500,000 in overruns. He felt he needed “more time to do homework.” Councilman Cromer agreed. Councilman O’Kelley said he has trouble with it, too. Councilman McFee said some of the cost overruns had been discussed among council before Councilman Murray and Councilman Cromer were elected to it; not all of the overruns are “in excess of things that hadn’t been discussed before.” Mayor Keyserling said he had taken the 2.5 hours to understand this today: “What was the fire station has morphed into a very smart neighborhood development program.” The stormwater opens up residential development around it, though he agreed that it’s still \$500,000 more than they had planned to spend. Mayor Keyserling said that staff had told council: about unsuitable soil that needed to be removed, not dumping stormwater on adjacent property (which already had stormwater), tying into a collection of stormwater that belonged to someone else, and opening another street so people could develop it.

The motion failed on a vote of 0-5. Mayor Keyserling asked Mr. Dadson if staff had been given guidance. There was insufficient time given to consider it, and those who weren’t on council at the time need to be given some information. Mr. Dadson said they had value-engineered it with the architect; Mayor Keyserling said it’s still \$500,000 that they need to figure out. **Kathy Todd** had provided different revenue pots from which the money could come, Mr. Dadson said. They need a short work session to discuss where the money could come from, Mayor Keyserling said. Councilman O’Kelley agreed.

MOTION ACCEPTING AGREEMENT WITH BJWSA REGARDING SOUTHSIDE PARK AND ACCEPTING TENURE TO PROPERTY

Mr. Dadson explained the work on Southside Park thus far; there was “a holdout piece” of property where there are some older facilities. The city owned it at one point, then gave it to BJWSA, and then BJWSA decommissioned the system and gave the park back to the city, but held out this piece of property. They have done up to \$50,000 worth of work now and will do more after the first of the year. They want to properly put in maintenance facilities there and put in some park facilities and an arboretum, Mr. Dadson said. They are willing to exchange this for some of the in-kind services they were going to do. This will allow the dog park to move forward. Staff and the committee have wanted to do this exchange, and it allows the park to move forward. The city attorney has prepared the agreement for this exchange of property, and council needs to approve it.

Mayor Keyserling said the estimated in-kind total is \$160,000. They have about \$50,000 more work to do. Ms. Hill said the 5-acre parcel was the old operations center. BJWSA has carved out an extra piece and it’s been surveyed – it’s 1.16 acres, which is equivalent to the 3 parcels they bought originally, so it’s an even exchange. Mr. Dadson indicated what BJWSA would get in this exchange. They are keeping a piece of which as council had approved of them doing.

Councilman O’Kelley said the land transfer agreement states that they will convey certain parcels to the city. Councilman O’Kelley explained a confusing point. Ms. Hill explained what Parcels A, B, and C are. She said BJWSA is calling the carved out section “Parcel B,” which is confusing because the entire parcel was Parcel B, too. Mr. Dadson said **James Grimsley** has worked with **Bill Harvey**, and it’s all straightened out.

Ms. Hill said the Civic Master Plan for the park shows a connection to Waddell Road.
Councilman McFee made a motion, second by Councilman O’Kelley, to accept the agreement.

Councilman Murray said there were ingress/egress agreements in Exhibit C, and Ms. Hill said that’s null and void because it’s been moved down now to give access to Waddell per the Civic Master Plan. Mayor Keyserling asked why it is taking so long; what complicated this? Mr. Dadson said he thinks it “just got pushed aside.”

Conway Ivy said this is the first he’s heard about BJWSA giving \$170,000 of in-kind services, and he wanted to know what those services are and if the city “will have to spend money to replace those” in-kind services. Mayor Keyserling said part of their agreement was for BJWSA to move ground and clear underbrush. He went on to enumerate some of the particulars and the amount of in-kind: the Waddell Road access was \$75,000, \$10,000 on the Southside side; survey the left Southside site: \$10,000; potable water connection, \$2000; tap installation, water and sewer connections, reclaimed water center, 3” pipe, construction of a dirt walking trail, installation of culvert pipe, spreading stone and other material, etc. Mayor Keyserling said there is no expectation of the city. They are finishing what started in 2007. Mr. Ivy said the city wouldn't absorb any incremental expenses, and Mayor Keyserling said that’s correct.

Councilman Murray said the in-kind part was for the trail, and Mayor Keyserling said they had millings they had purchased. Ms. Hill said the city had purchased them and they’ve been there a long time. BJWSA broke it up and has removed and broken up *other* asphalt, too.

Mr. Starkey said he has been on the committee since Year 2. BJWSA has done clearing and other work on it; when he city had no money to put into it, and Beaufort-Jasper had “made it into a park.” He feels the City of Beaufort owes them a “Thank you.” They have to be prepared to put the money into the park. Mr. Starkey added that in next year’s budget, Southside Park needs some money. **The motion passed unanimously.**

RESOLUTION TO SOLICIT FUNDING FOR US 17

Councilman Murray made a motion, second by Councilman McFee, to approve the resolution. Mayor Keyserling said the City of Beaufort along with the Town of Port Royal, Hardeeville, the Town of Bluffton, and the Town of Hilton Head formed a metro planning organization; they’re entitled to a pot of money that larger areas get. Bluffton and Hilton Head Island invited the city, the Town of Port Royal, and Hardeeville to be a part of this. The metro planning organization is “given a relative pittance,” and it was determined the principle funding would go to Highway 17 in Jasper County, where the road goes from 2 to 4 lanes and is used by 40% of commuters. They organization has asked the city to pass a resolution in support of what they are doing.

Councilman Murray said this commits the city to no funds and doesn't take any funds from the COG or NPO. **The motion passed unanimously.**

RESOLUTION TO TEMPORARILY EXTEND TWO-HOUR FREE PARKING DOWNTOWN

Councilman McFee made a motion, second by Councilman Murray, to approve the resolution.

Councilman Cromer said he wanted to amend this. There's a time limit of March 2015; he feels it should be extended for all of 2015 so as not to have it be during the holidays and then for the 2 slowest months of the year. **Councilman Cromer made a motion to extend two-hour free parking downtown for all of 2015; Councilman O'Kelley seconded the amendment.**

Mayor Keyserling said he knows he has "offended some people" with something he wrote in his newsletter, and he apologized. Council has "crammed an 80-year-old problem into a month." He doesn't feel he has enough data to make a decision about this. He has had many emails to which he's responded, taken meetings, etc. He has heard a lot, and he's confused, even turning to Santa for help. He's had some merchants say parking downtown is not a problem, and another merchant who wants to graduate fines; another wants Bay Street to be one-way and have angled parking, one wants to take out the pork chops. One merchant on Port Republic said all the city cares about is Bay Street, while one church says that says another church has free parking, but they have meters in front of theirs.

Mayor Keyserling said he's prepared to support "some sort of extension," and he proposed a way to attain data that would be valid. He said if they learn that the aggregate of the 80 downtown businesses' sales was \$100,000 in January 2014, and it's \$125,000 in January 2015, that will be actual, helpful data. If it's gone down to \$70,000 in 2015, maybe people are picnicking for 2 hours in Waterfront Park, and what the merchants want free parking for isn't being accomplished. They have hired a parking management firm that can help, Mayor Keyserling said. He thinks that they can get something useful in 3 months, and they can revisit the idea of an extension if they need to at that time. He will not support a year, but he supports 3 months.

Councilman Cromer said the task force would only have 3 months to do anything. Mayor Keyserling said the parking management firm would send someone in January. The task force is to look at bigger issues, not just 2 hours of free parking. Mayor Keyserling said they could talk more about the task force at the next meeting.

Councilman O'Kelley said when they say there's no urgency, and it's limited to March, and the new company comes in, the data will include 2 traditionally slow months downtown. He doesn't believe they can get enough of a picture to be useful between now and March. Mayor Keyserling said all they need is someone to collect data and get the aggregate information that will help them.

Councilman McFee said he has reservations about a year, but agreed that data collection will take some time. He doesn't want to have a sense of having a great amount of time. He wants the task force to be able to look at all of this information. A budget adjustment is being done to

go through the end of the fiscal year, which is the end of June. They could consider that as the end-date rather than a year. Councilman O'Kelley said he could live with that.

Councilman Murray said he has those reservations about a year, too. He has 2 small businesses and is in favor of anything to increase revenues, but he will have a difficult time making a decision. He has heard a variety of things from merchants about what might be larger issues behind their struggles as to why businesses are failing or succeeding. These parking studies are being done around the country. He's afraid that 2 free hours of parking may have the opposite effect of what's desired: there may not be spaces available, and the adjustment could make things worse. Councilman Murray said he doesn't yet have the data to allow him to make a sound decision. January – March are the slowest months, so an extension of free parking would encourage locals to come down in the first part of the year. SP+ feels confident in their ability to do studies of the parking issues to help the city adjust the program through these 3 months. Budgeted items are dependent on the parking revenue. Councilman Murray is in favor of the resolution as presented through March.

Councilman O'Kelley said there are not budgeted items dependent on parking revenues. It goes to Main Street Beaufort and the Redevelopment Commission. He and Councilman Cromer agreed that they could go until June to get real data. **Councilman Cromer withdrew his amendment, and Councilman O'Kelley his second. Councilman Cromer made an amendment to the original motion to extend 2-hour free parking through June 30, 2015. Councilman O'Kelley seconded.**

Councilman Murray said he's not in favor of that. April – June is one of the busiest times of the year, and his biggest concern is that "the vacancy rate will be lowered, and free spaces means no spaces." Councilman McFee said he understands the reservations, but the task force and SP+ will be working on it, and he thinks they will be getting data well before June 30 as they receive it, so that's how he can support it.

Mr. Ivy said in regard to the 3 months or 6 months debate, he has heard that the meters and tickets have created the perception that Beaufort is a difficult place to park; he feels there needs to be a marketing program to let people know that there is 2 hours of free parking to give it a proper test. Mr. Ivy said good data is hard to get, and comparable data would be available for doing it for a year. Fernandina Beach has free parking, he said, so other historical communities have had free parking and a subcommittee of the task force could reach out to other such communities with free parking. Elsewhere there's a button on the parking meters that allows free parking, and the task force should consider that.

Councilman Murray said 25% of the monthly parking capacity is given to monthly passes. **Will Achurch**, chair of the Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce said that Beaufort had been named among the top 10 warm weather winter destinations. Mr. Achurch said the Chamber of Commerce's position is in favor of 2-hours of free parking for a period of up to 12 months. They are open to collecting data as long as the business owners are willing to provide it. Mayor Keyserling said if they got data from 50%, and "it went somewhere undisclosed...all you need

is the aggregate” and “it would be very telling.” Mr. Achurch said they would also like to be at the table on a task force.

Mr. Aimar said in regard to store hours downtown, they had tried to stay open later, “and it’s a deficit.” Councilman Murray said he wasn’t singling any downtown merchants out, but he thinks there are issues other than just parking downtown that affect store revenues. Mr. Aimar said many stores downtown would currently stay open if a customer calls and asks them to, but “Bay Street typically has no strollers after dark.” Mr. Aimar believes that the businesses that said there’s not a parking issue are not the ones that he had approached, the majority of whom “want free parking all the time.” “As far as stakeholders,” Mr. Aimar added, “they’re behind it.” He said, “No merchants are opposed to it...The citizens’ input is in, and they want the free parking.” He thinks “the merchants need to clarify what the Historic District downtown is,” and he suggested what its parameters should be. Mr. Aimar believes only those areas with the 100-200 parking meters should be on the blue ribbon committee because they are the ones “feeling the pain.”

Mr. Aimar said even with a 6-months to 1-year study, “there is a very negative environment,” and council needs “to get people to know that downtown is there, and they should come down.” He “constantly hears how unfriendly downtown is,” he said. They “have to do more than extend the parking and get a blue ribbon commission.” They have to work while they do the study. \$55,000 of the parking revenues is used to do just that, Mayor Keyserling told Mr. Aimar, through the money given for marketing to Main Street Beaufort.

Mayor Keyserling said many years ago they bagged meters, and then merchants begged them to take them off because there was no turnover, and “that’s the key thing about parking.” Mr. Aimar said they want the employees who park in those spots, preventing turnover, “to be penalized.” Councilman Murray said that’s the reason they need parking management. That’s why he has this concern: people parking in front of the businesses they manage and/or at which they work.

Councilman McFee said he disagrees with the task force suggestion by Mr. Aimar. Councilman McFee said the downtown is much larger than the four blocks Mr. Aimar had said members should be drawn from. The task force is to look at *all* the parking issues downtown. He thinks the task force needs to be more comprehensive than Mr. Aimar had suggested.

Mayor Keyserling said in the 20 years that he’s thought about parking, the principle problem for turnover is employee and business owner discipline. The business owners could solve this problem by agreeing – and getting their employees to agree – not to park in the principle parking areas. Mr. Aimar offered to read the 2000 names on his petition. He said a restaurant owner had told him that if he insisted that his employees parked somewhere other than on Bay Street, and something happened to them, he would be liable. Mr. Aimar added that he doesn’t know if that’s true.

Ginger Aimar said her family owns the building their business is in. “This is about psychology,”

she feels, and people have a negative view of the downtown area because parking “requires so many quarters,” or they fear they will get a \$10 fine. She and Mr. Aimar “want people to come downtown again.” The parking issue shouldn't be about money, she believes, “because people are mad about a \$10 fine if they were 2 minutes late.” She said in Anderson, SC, people are happy to talk about their successful free parking. She said people would ride their bikes downtown if there were racks for them available. **Lundy Baker** and **LaNelle Fabian** described where the bike racks currently are. Ms. Aimar said that police could give golf cart rides to employees at night to the parking lots.

Ms. Fabian said Main Street Beaufort is all for anything to bring more people downtown and to enable businesses to make more money. Main Street Dollars will be done again in February. She thanked Mr. Achurch for offering to do data collection. She said she has talked to people in Columbia in regard to numbers. They are planning a community marketing campaign, and 2 hours of free parking could be part of that. Ms. Fabian said Mr. Aimar had said employees should be penalized, and she thinks there's no means to do so because there's no ordinance against it. Mr. Aimar said he's talking about “abusers,” not all employees. Ms. Fabian said signs are important for this effort, and she asked whose responsibility that would be. She noted that downtown businesses could do more for themselves, as well: the ads in the *Beaufort Gazette* on the Sunday before Christmas were either placed by her or were for businesses not in the downtown area. She said there was notice about the free parking.

Councilman Murray commended Ms. Fabian on the extended hours advertising in the *Gazette*. Councilman Cromer said the Chamber of Commerce has been advertising the 2-hour free parking in their emails.

Mr. Starkey said he had asked someone if they'd gone downtown, and they said they could go to Bluffton where parking's free. He feels offering two hours is enough to convince people that they can come to Beaufort and park for free. **Councilman O'Kelley called the question on the amended motion for 6 months. The motion passed unanimously. On the original motion, the motion passed unanimously.**

BUDGET AMENDMENT FISCAL YEAR 2015

Councilman O'Kelley made a motion, second by Councilman McFee, to approve the budget on first reading and have a workshop on it. Mr. Dadson said they had recommended \$73,863 based on the estimates by finance – they need to double that to \$150,000, less revenues and less expenditure – which means they will have to come up with cash to pay for the parking management system. They have Main Street Beaufort, “who are real receivers of this,” and “that's the reality of the budget amendment.” Councilman Murray asked about the funds. Mr. Dadson said they are in the General Fund and are separately accounted for and put aside. Mayor Keyserling said with Main Street Beaufort and the Redevelopment Commission, the contract was tied to the parking contract. Mr. Dadson said this is until June.

Councilman Murray said the free parking scenario is equivalent to \$55,000 worth of lost marketing. Mayor Keyserling asked, for second reading, if they could have it for just 6 months.

Mr. Dadson recommended that council “put this in motion.” Councilman O’Kelley said he would like to know more. Mr. Dadson said budgets are planning tools and estimates; they like to have an aggregate year and disburse based on an aggregate. Councilman O’Kelley said he’s understood that parking revenues from meters and fines go to Main Street Beaufort, Redevelopment Commission, and \$25,000 goes into a fund. Mr. Dadson said those are dollars above and beyond funding parking management.

Mayor Keyserling said if they go for 6 months (of 2-hour free parking), they have to amend the budget. Ms. Fabian said she’s surprised that this has come up tonight “with no warning or anything.” Main Street Beaufort hasn’t always been paid out of parking money. She would like notice about when the work session will be. Mayor Keyserling said Ms. Fabian shouldn't be surprised. The recent history of Main Street Beaufort’s revenues should indicate that they might have less if 2 hours of free parking is instituted for 6 months. They have to balance the revenue stream now that they have supported the free parking extension for 6 months. Mayor Keyserling said this isn’t cutting Main Street Beaufort’s budget; it’s about having less revenue. **The motion passed unanimously.**

REQUEST FROM BEAUFORT COUNTY MINISTERIAL ALLIANCE TO HOST ANNUAL MLK PARADE

Councilman McFee made a motion, second by Councilman Murray, to approve the request for the January 19, 2015 event. The motion passed unanimously.

APPOINTMENTS

Councilman Murray made a motion to reappoint city attorney Mr. Harvey to a 2-year term. The motion passed unanimously.

MAYOR’S REPORT

He thanked the other council members for their work on the parking issue.

REPORTS BY COUNCIL

Councilman Murray said he’s happy that “we’re a small town with a parking problem.” He asked if staff would work with Lanier and SP+ to get signs up about the 6-month extension of free parking. Mr. Dadson said staff would work with parking management and Main Street Beaufort to get signs.

Councilman McFee said December 31 there would be a Founders’ Night celebration in Waterfront Park.

There being no further business to come before council, **Councilman O’Kelley made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Councilman Murray seconded. The motion passed unanimously,** and the meeting was adjourned at 9:07 p.m.