A special meeting of the Design Review Board was held on **January 26, 2015 at 2:00 p.m.** in the City Hall Planning Conference Room, 1911 Boundary Street. In attendance were Chairman John Dickerson, Dan Ahern, Brian Franklin, Chuck Rushing, Jane Frederick, and city staff Lauren Kelly.

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
Chairman Dickerson called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

MINUTES
Mr. Ahern made a motion, second by Mr. Franklin, to approve the minutes of the December 11, 2014 meeting as submitted. The motion passed unanimously.

Parker's Convenience Store and Gas Station
3462 Trask Parkway, Identified as R120, Tax Map 25, Parcel 0012 and R100 025 000 012C. (15-01 DRB.1)
Applicant: Gregory M. Parker, Inc. and Nathan B. Long, Thomas & Hutton
The applicant is requesting approval for a convenience store with a 16-pump gas station and a food service component.

Ms. Kelly said the applicant will go to Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBOA) for variance in regard to Conditions of fuel sales: they want the fuel pumps in the front with the building to the rear of the site. This will start the Design Review Board (DRB) process, and they would like a conceptual recommendation from the DRB to take to the ZBOA.

This is a redevelopment site, so it has slightly higher impervious surface, Ms. Kelly said, at 75%.

Ms. Kelly reviewed the applicable guidelines. The property is on the periphery of the city limits. In the 2009 Comprehensive Plan, it's depicted as O-2 Rural Conservation land; it contains land that should not be developed except occasionally for "urban service factors" because of its proximity to MCAS.

Staff comments and suggestions:
The site plan doesn't meet the intent of the ordinance, Ms. Kelly said, but given the rural location, surrounded by unincorporated, low-density Beaufort County property, it's worth considering the alternative site design. There's a positive benefit to the trail users, including seating, which could be strengthened if more were added, perhaps under the 38" live oak.

In regard to trees, staff is in favor of saving as many healthy trees as possible. An arborist's report will be required. The underground storage tanks are too close to some of the large trees that are to be preserved, and Ms. Kelly asked the applicant if the tanks

could be relocated beneath the drive area pavement.

Given the lack of effective screening by the trees, a fair amount will need to be done. Staff recommends that the DRB ask the applicant to consider installing a low fence or wall to screen along Highway 21.

Other site comments:

- Shared access points are appreciated and comply with the ordinance recommendation.
- The configuration of the "future building" should be rethought to minimize the amount of parking in the front.
- The stormwater pond should be treated as an amenity.
- The applicant likes the corner location for the pump station. In the ordinance, there are provisions to move pump stations internally, so they are not in prominent places like corners.
- Vending machines and all mechanical equipment and trash/recycling should be screened.
- A bike rack, lighting and landscape plan will be required.

Architecture

Staff appreciates the Lowcountry vernacular as applied to this project and the pitched canopy for the pump station. Staff recommends that the DRB give conceptual approval and that the ZBOA grant a variance contingent on a discussion about relocating the pump station, integrating better into the trail, installing a low perimeter wall or fence, location of the underground storage tanks, and obtaining an arborist's report.

Bill Bishop, VP of real estate for Parker's, said they are trying to put up an attractive building. This is their third design, and they have worked closely with staff to determine what would work for everyone. It's functional, with internal traffic flow, efforts to save trees, etc. They are more than willing to relocate the tanks. They want to do some things up front with nutrients for the trees, Mr. Bishop said, in case the roots are disturbed during construction. Indicating the site plan, he said the peripheral property is what might be there in the future. They're unlikely to find tenants in the next few years for "a strip mall situation," so they will likely have single tenants, and "it will be pulled forward."

Nathan Long, of Thomas and Hutton, the civil engineers for Parkers, said that on Roseida Road, there are large live oaks, and to save them, they moved the entrance to be spaced between the trees. There's also a large laurel oak that's labeled a live oak. **Liza Hill** had some concerns with that one, Mr. Long said, so they will have an arborist look at them all. He indicated another live oak, and said the trail wraps around it. Parker's has a full deli store in Bluffton on Buckwalter and a mini-deli on 46 in Bluffton, and they mirrored those plans for this one. He indicated a cinder block wall and a portion that will be removed. He indicated the seating and the trailhead, and said people "will be invited in to have a drink." Of the trees, Mr. Long said, the main traffic corridor is Highway 21, and the trees provide a sort of buffer/separation/place to sit without staring at cars.

The residual parcel has a conceptual plan, but they have made an effort to design it to be low-access and to be used by both businesses. The stormwater facilities will be sized and designed so a tenant can tap into it.

On the stormwater side, Mr. Ahern asked if they would irrigate. Mr. Long said they would use potable water. If the pond were larger, deeper and had more volume, they could use it. Parker's does a lot of landscaping and the intake is a concern. They will prove that all the stormwater meets and exceeds the ordinance. Mr. Ahern said they seem to have raised beds, and he asked if they had considered lowering the beds to use the rainwater. Mr. Long said they want to route stormwater to the depressed basin and will plant vegetation in it to take the stormwater before it's released into the pond. There isn't much opportunity for depressed islands. The inlets routed to the pond will have to go through the vegetation pond. Mr. Ahern asked if they could have 2 systems and use them intermittently. Mr. Bishop said they could look at that. Mr. Ahern said reducing volume by pumping the pond water out onto the land would be desired. Mr. Long said they have done that elsewhere.

Mr. Franklin said he agreed with staff comments on the fence. He would encourage them to make the parking lot more uniform, given the shared access. He feels it looks disconnected. Mr. Franklin recommended cohesion for the "future building" site as well as parking layout, so it will be cohesive. With the proximity of the pond to the sidewalk along the back, Mr. Franklin asked what the grade would be like. He also encouraged the applicants to look at the architecture on the back of the building and show one that meets design guidelines. The back addresses the trail, and there's "a big blank wall" there. He encouraged the applicants, too, to have something other than a concrete patio for patrons to sit under, like a trellis or arbor that is more substantial. And one elevation seems to have concrete balls in front of it, Mr. Franklin added. Mr. Long said, "That's the plan. They like balls better than bollards." They need to have something to keep people from slamming through convenience store windows, which is surprisingly common, he said. Mr. Franklin suggested plantings like in other Parker's locations. It's "more rural" and "a better look."

In regard to the shared entrance, Mr. Long indicated what they would do on the plan on the overhead. They will look at putting something more in line with the ordinance there. They will look at the back of the building. They are trying to do the same "Lowcountry scheme" they used in Bluffton. Mr. Bishop said they have done vines and trellises "to soften it up with vegetation." He asked they Board if they would be interested in that. Mr. Franklin said it looked like they have put thought into 3 sides, and he'd like to see more articulation on the back.

Ms. Frederick asked why they weren't putting the pumps in the back, and if 15 pumps would work better. Mr. Bishop said the pumps behind have only been done a few times, and "those properties are not successful." The applicants are trying to tie into the trail, and this works better for them. "Otherwise," he concluded, "We really can't do this." The canopy behind the building, from a business standpoint, "just doesn't work." This is a property that was annexed into the city, and there are no other adjoining properties.

Mr. Long said they had tried to touch on some bullet points in the narrative. They were able to save some live oaks by pushing things back a little. The property is not in the

urban center of the community, and they felt like “by doing something nice there,” it will “help promote future businesses” there. He reiterated the need for the pumps to be visible as among the multiple reasons they wanted to do it this way.

Mr. Rushing reiterated fencing on the corner of Roseida and Highway 21 with low-height vegetation. He said he appreciates the attention to the Spanish Moss Trail aspect of the project. Mr. Long said they have discussed the fencing with Ms. Kelly as well. They thought instead of a “hard, continual opaque-type fence,” they could incorporate it to frame the entrances to the corridors. They could have landscaping in between the fences and create the separation. There would be a wooden fence with “X” bracing and vegetation between them.

Mr. Ahern said, because of proximity to the Spanish Moss Trail, people might come to Parker’s to start the trail, and there could be a parking issue. He asked if there was any planned terminal area there. Ms. Kelly said there’s one right across the street.

Ms. Kelly said in the ordinance requirement, they had a little flexibility, because there was table seating, which is why the 25’ front setback meets the ordinance. Ms. Kelly added that the ordinance requires sidewalks to be constructed on major street frontages, but because this is rural, the DRB has the authority to waive this requirement. She suggested they also discuss as a Board the waiving of anything less than a full-size sidewalk. Mr. Bishop said they would enter a developer’s agreement, and they will put it in at their own cost. Mr. Long said keeping it internal and not along a public road is “more inviting,” and they like “that calming feel,” as opposed to walking along the road.

Ms. Frederick asked if they would “stick to Spanish Moss Trail signs.” Mr. Long said they would comply with what the trail people wanted to do, if they could have a “Parker’s this way” sign. She also asked for a not-bright-white color. Mr. Franklin commented on the width of the sidewalk, and Mr. Bishop said they tried to make it the width of 2 bikes riding toward each other and passing. Mr. Long said they show it as 5’, and a 2-way trail is usually 8’. They want it to look low-key, and it’s just a small part of the trail, but they will look at it.

Chairman Dickerson said he appreciated the architecture and the efforts to make it look like its part of the Lowcountry. He likes the idea of the signs on the Spanish Moss Trail that say “Parker’s,” and he appreciates their support of the trail.

Mr. Long said on the staff recommendation, there were conditions. He would not like the pump station moving to be a condition of the approval. The pump station is completely underground; they’re known as “a pump in a can.” He showed a photo and described it. The property has to be fenced in and dedicated to BJWSA. They want the fencing to mirror the building. From Roseida, all that will be seen is the fenced-in area. Mr. Bishop said it would also have landscaping all around it. In regard to the shared stormwater, it provides a barrier for people from the trail. They don't want people coming in and out through the corridor to be “limited in their movements.”

Mr. Bishop said Parker’s wants to let BJWSA maintain without disrupting business, so that’s another reason they want to keep the pump station where it is. Chairman Dickerson asked if there would be public access, and Mr. Bishop said “None.” He asked

them to change the recommendation to providing screening with fencing and landscaping, if everyone is amenable to that.

Mr. Long said there are no external vending machines. There are usually propane tanks, and Ms. Kelly had said they needed to be screened. Mr. Long showed where they could be kept with screening. There was a discussion as to where the dumpster could go. Ms. Frederick asked if they had looked at moving the underground storage tanks. Mr. Long said definitely that could be done. Ms. Frederick asked if they can go under the paving, and Mr. Bishop said they "absolutely" could.

Mr. Franklin made a motion for conceptual approval pending staff's and the Board's comments in regard to the fence, access, architecture, pond retention/irrigation, stormwater, and the possibility that the pump station may stay where it is, as long as screening is shown. Mr. Ahern seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Kelly said the initial discussion was putting up a limit on where this ordinance applies and figuring out the limits everywhere.

Taco Bell, 209 Robert Smalls Parkway

. Ms. Kelly said that the Board had given the applicant suggestions in December. The property was rezoned Highway Commercial, so drive-thrus are allowed. Ms. Kelly reviewed the applicable guidelines. Drive-thrus should be on the side or rear of the structure. In regard to elevations, all those visible from a primary street or vehicle access point should be harmonious in scale, proportion, detail, material, etc. Side and rear elevations should be as attractive as the front elevation when they're visible from the street. In this case, all of them are except the western elevation. In the Civic Master Plan, there's a long-term vision for this area to be walkable and mixed-use.

In regard to the site, since the last time the Board saw it, there have been modifications, which Ms. Kelly reviewed. The building has been shifted north and is more consistent with the recently constructed Dollar Tree. Some of the larger live oak trees can't be saved. Staff feels the benefits outweigh the cons of this. Mitigation will be provided as permitted by the ordinance. In regard to circulation, sidewalks should be connected and have ramps. They should be installed along the rear of the parcel.

A sidewalk should be installed along the rear of the Lowes access road, and connect back to the sidewalks that provide building access as close to the eastern property line as possible. A sidewalk should also be constructed on the eastern part of the property by the Lowe's entranceway. All disability plans have been addressed.

Parking: There are a few excess parking spaces – about 5 more than would be permitted. All stormwater requirements have been met. They will require a bike rack, screening of mechanical materials, trash and recycling receptacles, and a building and site lighting plan.

In regard to the building, the plans are on sheets 4 and 5, Ms. Kelly said, and she

described what staff appreciates:

- The large amount of glazing on the front and side entries
- The articulation of different masses to break up the long portion of the building
- The size, mass and scale are appropriate and conform to the zoning requirements

Since December, the awnings are modified, are more contiguous, and cover the entrances. Staff appreciates this and the inclusion of oyster shell stucco. The main body of the building is to be metal slats, which is atypical in this area as a building material, so staff recommends a smooth hardie panel, perhaps to look like typical Lowcountry material, and a simple cornice and corner board. On the Robert Smalls Parkway elevation, staff recommends adding a base that will tie the building together and break up the mass a little. On the Lowes/drive-through elevation, which she showed, a trellis could break up the mass. Signs are shown, and they need to be approved, Ms. Kelly said.

Staff recommends conceptual approval of the site plan contingent on clarification of the matter of the parking spaces, and conceptual approval of the architecture contingent on the removal of the metal slats, the addition of a cornice and corner boards, and board consideration of an oyster shell base on the right portion of the Robert Smalls Parkway elevation.

Cooter Ramsey shared photos with the Board. He said "Julie" was present from Taco Bell. He said they would like to keep the parking, but they could get rid of 5 spaces without much impact. If they dropped 5 in the main parking area in the back section of parking, they won't get any benefit, which he said Julie could speak to. He still has to get this plan approved by corporate Taco Bell.

They rotated the building, and consequently, they lost the trees, but they "can't have it all," Mr. Ramsey said. Architecturally, he feels the aluminum slats on the building are "gorgeous" and "not at all inappropriate." It's clean, dark-colored, and anchored with an oyster shell stucco wall. It will "pop" and "feel right on that site." Taco Bell is designing a more upscale, different feel than they have had with buildings in the past.

Mr. Rushing said an oyster shell base would be good, and he has no problem with the trellis. He said he's not opposed to the aluminum slats. Ms. Frederick said if they do the stucco, they should be careful of the height and ensure it relates the window height. Mr. Ramsey said they would pick up the storefront line and wrap it around. Ms. Frederick said it looks like they could eliminate some spaces and save an oak. Mr. Franklin reiterated staff comments about sidewalks. There is nothing there to tie it in and make it more walkable. On the elevation on sheet 4, he suggested it could be on the back of the building: "There's a lot of real estate to screen there – for utilities." Mr. Ramsey said he could move those. Mr. Franklin said there's not a lot of room there. He doesn't mind the architecture, but feels "it falls apart as you come around the building." Mr. Ramsey agreed.

Mr. Ahern asked Mr. Ramsey if they had considered low-impact infiltration to reduce water going into the main system, and Mr. Ramsey said that could be possible.

Chairman Dickerson suggested replacing the excess parking spaces with pervious material. Ms. Kelly said they couldn't exceed the maximum number of spaces, which is 140% of the minimum, or it would require a variance. Chairman Dickerson asked how the Board felt about the aluminum slats. Ms. Frederick asked about colors; Mr. Ramsey said there would be dark brown slats, silver awning, grey white tabby, and a rear stucco color of which he's not sure.

Mr. Ramsey assured the Board that this building would not look like the building behind Moe's.

Mr. Franklin made a motion for conceptual approval per staff comments with additional comments that the Board would not be strict about the metal but parking, stormwater, and sidewalks should all be considered as well as landscaping, as part of the approval. Mr. Rushing seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

There being no further business to come before the Board, **Mr. Franklin made a motion to adjourn, and the meeting was adjourned at 3:09 p.m.**