

A meeting of the **Beaufort-Port Royal Metropolitan Planning Commission** was held on **September 17, 2012 at 5:30 p.m.** in council chambers of the Beaufort Municipal Complex, 1911 Boundary Street. In attendance were Chairman Joe DeVito and Commissioners Alice Howard, Bill Harris, Jim Hicks, and Robert Semmler, and City of Beaufort Planning Director Libby Anderson.

Commissioner James Crower was absent.

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 DeVito called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

MINUTES

Commissioner Hicks made a motion, second by Commissioner Harris, to accept the minutes of August 20, 2012 as submitted. The motion passed unanimously.

REVIEW OF PROJECTS FOR THE CITY OF BEAUFORT

City of Beaufort – Amendment to Civic Master Plan

The Sector One Civic Master Plan is proposed to be amended with the “Beaufort Marina Recreational Day Dock and Water Sports Center” plan.

Applicant: Beaufort Redevelopment Commission

Ms. Anderson explained the amendment to the master plan and said it requires a recommendation by the Planning Commission. **Alan Dechovitz** made a presentation about the plan and described the parties and people he had worked with on the Beaufort Marina Recreational Day Dock and Water Sports Center. Mr. Dechovitz described the initiation of the idea of the center and its intention. One intention is to bring in higher dollar tourists and to strengthen the capacity of downtown merchants. If the west end of the downtown area is strengthened, tourists with more spending power will tend to come, particularly those travelling by water.

Mr. Dechovitz showed the proposed layout of the day dock and the water sports center. The money would come from state and federal grants, which, he said, “the city has a reasonable expectation of receiving day.” It represents a small percentage of the waterfront, he said. He showed the recreational dock in downtown Savannah, which is similar to what is intended for Beaufort. The day dock impact should be small on the viewshed, Mr. Dechovitz added.

The second aspect would be the water sports center. It will be either 3000 square feet or 7000 square feet. He showed where it would be at the present-day marina. A 3000’ center would

accommodate the storage of various types of manual rowing craft. He showed an example of rowing shells in dry stack storage. The operator of the center would provide storage, retrieval, and launching, Mr. Dechovitz said. There might be a gathering area for selling refreshments. There would be 40-90' of low floats to aid in launching. All current activities would be accommodated as well as rowing storage.

Mr. Dechovitz said the 7000 square foot option might still have a 3500 square foot footprint but with a second story. There would be an enhanced convenience store, the marina offices, restrooms, and showers. This would be more of a center for recreational activity for people in the area as well as part of the city's plan.

The owner and tenants of the future building will need to be part of an active advertising campaign, Mr. Dechovitz said, to draw people with a higher income to come downtown and spend money there. Mr. Dechovitz showed some artist's renderings of the potential building and read the "appearance standard"; the style of the building would be subject to the HRB's approval and conformity with the form-based code.

Chairman DeVito invited members of the groups present to add anything to the conversation.

Roy Stevens, Commodore of the Beaufort Sail and Power Squadron, endorsed the project. He said Beaufort is a waterfront community, but it is not totally utilizing the waterfront at this time. The Power Squadron is part of a national organization and some of the other divisions are nearby in Tybee, Charleston, etc. Their members would patronize the restaurants and stores if they could come to a Beaufort day dock, he said, unlike some visitors to the city.

Charles Borrman, Beaufort Sail and Power Squadron, asked about one aspect of the plan. He said the day docks he knows of don't restrict the docking boats to 26'. He suggested that this might be rethought. Boats larger than that will have to go to the marina, which he feels people will balk at because they would have to pay to go eat lunch.

John Dickerson, DragonBoat Beaufort, said he supports the addendum. He explained what DragonBoat Beaufort does. They have 130 members and a boat in Beaufort. The growth of Beaufort depends on economic development, Mr. Dickerson said. There is a DragonBoat event planned, and the day dock would be very helpful. The low floats would help people get into the boats more easily. 2000-3000 people will be brought downtown for this festival, Mr. Dickerson said, and this will create an opportunity for the town.

David Cargile said the opposition to the day dock in the past has been "a tendency to love things to death." Beaufort isn't in a time capsule, he said, and change needs to be managed for this to be a viable, dynamic community. To not continue with this process would be a tragedy, he feels.

Kevin Cuppia said, “People coming up the waterway need an off-ramp.” Beaufort is hard to get to at this point. There are tens of thousands of boats within a 50-mile radius. They want to make the park more accessible to others, as well as helping out the merchants and businesses. He said he’s ready for the day dock, which he thinks is long overdue.

Ken Maliken, president of the Beaufort Rowing Club, said they have been fighting for a viable location for several years. They feel hosting colleges from the north for rowing training would potentially be very lucrative to the community. They are also in favor of the new day dock so that it frees up the old day dock for other crafts.

Jeff Thomas, a small business owner, is a supporter of this proposal. It will attract traffic and revenue. It has “a self-sustaining income stream,” he added.

Martha Weeks, Savannah Country Day School, has competed as a rower for 29 years. She recalled a time in Amsterdam on a river shell and going through the canals there. She would love people who come to Beaufort to go out on a boat or kayak and experience the creeks, etc. She thinks it would be a tremendous asset for downtown Beaufort.

Conway Ivy said he likes the idea of a day dock and bringing boaters to increase traffic and business downtown. However, he has questions:

- He called the presentation Mr. Dechovitz made “interesting” because it’s in conflict with the Army Corps of Engineers’ vision of the effect on the waterway. He showed the boat ramp and the existing day dock; the new floating dock extends off of the existing day dock. He also showed existing timber floats and additional mooring areas. He asked why the Army Corps of Engineers, as of September 5, had a very different plan than what is proposed here.
- Mr. Ivy asked the actual cost of making the day dock extension. He said in many projects, there is not a cost-benefit analysis done that is more than just conceptual.
- In regard to matching funds, how much can be allocated to the day dock? Are there limitations?
- In order to obtain the federal and state funds, he asked how much the City of Beaufort has to provide. He has been unable to find this information.
- Have there been any marketing studies to quantify the increased money to be made from the day dock?
- He asked what the occupancy and usage of the current day dock is.
- What is the income of the users of the existing day dock?

In regard to the Beaufort water sports center, Mr. Ivy thinks it’s a good idea but had more questions:

- Has there been a marketing study to quantify the benefits of such a place?
- What will be the costs of the temporary and permanent structures?
- Do they have a financial pro forma based on the potential return on investment?
- He asked what the city would gain from leasing these footprints to a developer.
- The conceptual site plan only shows a temporary structure.
- He asked the specific language in the amendment to the Sector One master plan. He asked if it indicates a proposed mass and scale for the building.

Mr. Ivy said they “need to change (a) part of the culture in Beaufort” by having “a tight economic analysis whenever money is spent.” He agrees that there is a lot of boat traffic going by now, but he feels these questions should be answered.

Maxine Lutz said the proposal is an amendment dealing with the recreational day dock and the water sports center. She asked if the mooring field is part of what’s being proposed. She asked for the spokesperson for the plan to speak more to this matter.

The mooring field is a separate matter, Mr. Dechovitz said. Griffin Enterprises has applied for a permit. It originally allowed for 19 moorings, and after an additional study, it will be extended to as many as 40 moorings. The day dock configuration Mr. Ivy presented was presented four years ago, Mr. Dechovitz said, and it’s not their intention to build it at this time. Mr. Dechovitz said the city is not the developer of what they are presenting; “it’s an addendum to allow someone to come in and develop this.” The developer would have to develop their own documents in regard to the finances. In regard to the day dock, they do not yet have all the finances for it, Mr. Dechovitz said, but there is an analysis of the downtown marketplace. It goes into a variety of groups that would be desirable to attract the city.

Chairman DeVito asked about the 26’ boat size limit. He asked if there had been discussion with the marina to see if larger boats could come in for more than 1 hour. Mr. Dechovitz said 26’ is “a talking point,” but there needs to be a balance between the needs of larger transient boats and the volume of traffic they want to bring in.

Eddie Rodgers registered a complaint about the sound quality of the chamber’s microphone. She then said that a “special interest group wants the facility.” The two projects should have been presented separately, she feels. In regard to the day dock in front of the sea wall, then representative **Billy Keyserling** tried to get a grant, she said. Later, the present day dock was built. Years after that, there was a new effort to put a day dock in front of the sea wall so that people could be closer to the restaurants. She said this is the fourth time this has been brought up, and she doesn’t feel that, given the millions that have been spent on Waterfront Park, the view should be marred with boats.

There was a plan at one time, Ms. Rodgers said, to extend the day dock elsewhere, where it would not mar the view. If it were to stay at the west end of the marina, she feels, it would be better. She has a concern that there will be more demand and for bigger boats, and eventually the entire seawall will be covered with boats. The thing that put Beaufort on the map was the Waterfront Park, Ms. Rodgers said, and she can't imagine having to look at boats right in front of her. She asked how much time was spent determining that this was the best location. She feels there are "other possibilities for more appropriate places to put this kind of activity."

Bonnie Wright said she loves Waterfront Park and understands about tourism. Beaufort needs the revenue, but it's "letting all those boats go by and losing revenue." The cruise ships take up more room and block the view, she said. Eco-tourism is important, and Beaufort is not taking advantage of that now.

Nan Sutton highly endorsed the plan and feels it is "long overdue." On recent boating trips, she has seen how many people would like to take advantage of the water and the day dock opportunities. As the Waterfront Park is now, it is designed to take boats, so "whether they will block the view seems highly unfounded." She hopes the Planning Commission and council will vote for this highly overdue expansion.

Stephen Murray said one of the ideas of the Waterfront Park was to give better access to Beaufort for tourists and locals. He's also a boater, and said the current day dock is not adequate. The pros of the plan, he said, are increased revenue, more healthy activity, and more economic development from transient boaters; blocking the view of less than 16% of the wall is the only con. He feels access to the water and the landside should be made as easy as possible.

Ken Bruning said the Waterfront Park is important to the town. Since 1994, they came to Beaufort by water 12-14 times, and then 7 years ago relocated here. They have cruised extensively and found that the cities they wanted to stop in provided that space for boaters to stop, even just for an hour or two.

Mr. Keyserling, 771 Ribaut Road, said this is a package because "for too many years, Beaufort has done ad hoc planning." There was a big hole after the Sector One master plan was finished. This is part of a larger vision, not three separate plans. The city "asked the Redevelopment Commission to think outside the box for a bigger picture." The concept of maximizing the asset is what's being discussed, not the individual elements. The question is, Mr. Keyserling said, should downtown Beaufort be more accessible to locals and to those who are passing through?

Commissioner Hicks said he's not comfortable with "putting through something with this much detail." They're down to minimum footage for the day dock, a water sports center of unknown size, and a master plan. If the Planning Commission wants to recommend a new recreational day dock to council, the amendment to the master plan could include a new recreational day

dock, Commissioner Hicks said. If this day dock may be supported by a new water sports center, there are a lot of unanswered questions, he feels. This is a plan, and he has nothing against the Planning Commission recommending support of it generally. He has concerns with the “‘will be’s,’ not the ‘may be’s.’” The Planning Commission doesn't know the cost of what they're recommending, but they could recommend the concept, Commissioner Hicks concluded.

Chairman DeVito said this is just the proposed amendment, not the specific directions, which may be inappropriate to include there. The recommendation would be for the *concept* of the proposed amendment. “The details will be vetted a million times,” Chairman DeVito said. Commissioner Hicks agreed that they could recommend it conceptually, but he feels they “should stop with the background.”

Commissioner Harris agreed that no one seems to be against the concept, and it “would be a huge plus for Beaufort.” The questions come in with the specifics, he said. When Mr. Keyserling said it was the concept they would be approving, Commissioner Harris felt relieved. Commissioner Howard agreed and said they were being given background information on the project.

Commissioner Howard made a motion to recommend the amendment to council with the following changes to the language of the proposal: in the second paragraph, change “will be supported by a new water sports center...” to “may be,” and remove the minimum length of the day dock requirement. Commissioner Semmler seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

CITY OF BEAUFORT UPDATE ON COUNCIL ACTIONS

Ms. Anderson said first readings had taken place in regard to the UDO amendment establishing a minimum front setback for garages, adopting new stormwater standards, and rezoning six lots in the Whitehall development. A public hearing took place on the annexation and rezoning of the lot at the corner of Highway 21 and Parris Island Gateway.

There was some discussion about the Whitehall first reading and some changes that took place between the Planning Commission’s meeting and council’s. Commissioner Howard asked if there had been any new maps presented by Mr. Tedder, and Ms. Anderson said no.

UPDATE ON FORM-BASED CODE PROCESS

The first meeting will be this week.

There being no further business to come before the commission, Commissioner Hicks made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 6:50 p.m.