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A meeting of the Beaufort-Port Royal Metropolitan Planning Commission was held on **March 21, 2016 at 5:30 p.m.** in council chambers of the Beaufort Municipal Complex, 1911 Boundary Street. In attendance were Vice Chairman James Crower, Commissioners Bill Harris, Robert Semmler, George Johnston, and Tim Rentz, Rob Merchant, Beaufort County planner, and Libby Anderson, City of Beaufort planner. Chairman Joe DeVito 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

Vice Chairman James Crower called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

MINUTES

Commissioner Rentz made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Harris, to approve the minutes of the January 11, 2016. The motion to approve the minutes as submitted was approved unanimously.

REVIEW PROJECTS FOR BEAUFORT COUNTY

Beaufort County – Rezoning

Lady's Island rezoning request / master plan change for Greenheath PUD (planned unit development) at R200 010 000 0022 0000 (off Brickyard Point and Fiddler Drive)

Owner: Greenheath, LLC; agent: Christopher Inglese

Mr. Merchant said this is a 98.35 acre parcel that is "currently unfilled." This PUD was approved by county council in 1997, prior even to the county's previous ZDSO (zoning development standards ordinance), he said. When the ZDSO was adopted, there was a clause applying to existing PUDs: If a PUD had no activity, or fewer than 50% of the lots were subdivided ten years after the adoption of that ordinance, "that PUD would sunset," Mr. Merchant said. Greenheath applied for a 10-year extension that was approved in 2010; to date, he said, "there's been no development."

The Greenheath PUD was originally approved for 313 dwelling units and 25,000 square feet of commercial, Mr. Merchant said. These numbers are the same in the master plan amendment. He showed the existing and proposed master plans. The approved Greenheath master plan is designed to be "a pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use community." It's very near Coosaw Elementary and other Lady's Island neighborhoods.

In the original master plan, Mr. Merchant showed lots running parallel to Fiddler Drive that face a large open space ("The Heath"). He pointed out an alley and "a 30' buffer that separates that from Fiddler Drive." The applicant proposes to turn those lots

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around to “front Fiddler Drive,” Mr. Merchant said. The lots have been enlarged to 15,000–15,400 square feet, so another change proposed to the master plan is smaller open space. Also, he said, there are internal changes in the revised master plan that would convert townhouse lots to single-family dwelling lots.

Mr. Merchant said Fiddler Court is currently configured with houses on one side of the street. The size of existing lots on Fiddler Drive ranges from 26,000 square feet to an acre, and they are irregularly shaped. The proposed lots are one-third of an acre. The Greenheath PUD requires all properties to be hooked up to public sewer, Mr. Merchant said, but what is being proposed is that “when these lots are subdivided, they remain on septic.”

Mr. Merchant said county staff recommends denial of this request for several reasons: first, because of the impact on Fiddler Drive. Some residents have lived there 19 years facing a 30’ buffer and knowing that the lots across from them would remain undeveloped. With this change, there would be houses facing them, with smaller lots than what exists. Also, Mr. Merchant said, there is a reduction in the overall open space in the PUD with no gain (e.g., other parts of the development meeting the plan), so it’s a net loss of open space without benefit. And finally, having lots on septic runs counter to what was recommended in the original PUD, he said. The number of approved dwelling units remains the same, whether this PUD amendment is approved or not.

Commissioner Harris recused himself from this application.

Commissioner Johnson asked why the new configuration is not connected to public water and sewer. Mr. Merchant said probably because of the cost of developing the lots, and the return doesn’t justify the price to make the sewer and water connections. The lots that front Fiddler Drive will be on water and sewer.

Commissioner Semmler asked if approval of this amendment would extend the PUD another 10 years. Mr. Merchant said he didn’t think so, because the language is that if 50% or fewer are platted, the PUD sunsets. Commissioner Semmler clarified that if the developer builds 24 homes now, but nothing else, the PUD will still sunset in 2020. Mr. Merchant said yes, because 24 units is less than 10% of the development. The owner has asked for an extension from county council before, and he might again in 2020.

Commissioner Semmler asked the impact this might have on the school system, specifically Coosaw Elementary. Mr. Merchant said he knows Coosaw Elementary “is very close to capacity.” Since 1997, the county “knew this development was out there and undeveloped,” he said, and this proposed PUD master plan change “doesn’t change those overall numbers.” Any additional development on Lady’s Island is going to have an impact on the schools. Commissioner Semmler said in 2000, the Beaufort County population was 120,937, and in 2014, it was 175,852. These numbers include growth in

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Bluffton and Hilton Head, but the portion of the increased population that lives on Lady's Island is "significant." Coosaw Elementary is at 98% capacity and has five classrooms in a mobile unit. Effects might include more bussing and redistricting, he said, and some families who bought in the area so their children could attend Coosaw Elementary might have to see them bussed to a different school. Commissioner Semmler said he had spoken with a school board member who couldn't be here but who had provided him with that information.

Commissioner Semmler asked if a traffic impact analysis was ever done. There was a different population with different roads in 1997. Mr. Merchant said that was a good question: a traffic impact analysis wasn't done for this change, and he doesn't think that there was any previous traffic impact analysis. This change will not have as much of an impact on traffic as it will have on Fiddler Drive, he said, if there are houses where there had been a buffer.

Commissioner Rentz said the developer's application says the access points will be limited to two or three. He asked if the lots facing Fiddler Drive will not have direct access to it. Mr. Merchant said an alley is shown in the master plan behind those lots. Commissioner Rentz asked what is allowed here under the county's new development code. Mr. Merchant said this parcel is "completely surrounded by the Lady's Island Community Preservation District" zoning, which "allows an overall gross density of 2 dwelling units per acre," which would be a maximum of 196 dwelling units. The minimum lot size is ¼-acre. It's a primarily residential district with no commercial component. 20% open space is required. Mr. Merchant said, "The percentage reduction of the overall site area goes from about 23.7% . . . down to about 16.2%."

Commissioner Rentz said according to **David Tedder's** office, the proposed amendment "has open space of 18.59%," and the "development standards for Coosaw Cottage will meet existing development standards." Mr. Merchant said no numbers had been provided "in any of the applications" for the PUD revision, so he explained how county staff had calculated the figures.

Vice Chairman Cromer asked if vehicular access for the lots on Fiddler Drive "comes off that alley" that is behind them. Mr. Merchant said, "There was nothing in the application about that," so the commissioners could ask the representatives if that is planned for this phase.

Christopher Inglese said he is an attorney in **David Tedder's** office and a nationally certified planner. He represents the secondary developer – the local builder, **Alan McNeal** – who's present, and **Greg Baisch**, the project's engineer, and **Cooter Ramsey**, the architect on the master plan, are also present. "The team is all local, and Mr. McNeal has a great reputation," Mr. Inglese said.

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Mr. Inglese said he feels the amendment is “a step in the right direction.” The ½-acre lots have a setback that is “basically unusable space,” so Mr. McNeal had proposed that the lots that front Fiddler Drive would be small and “knit in with the existing fabric.” His concern with the buffer in the existing PUD is “we’re cutting off a new neighborhood from an old neighborhood,” rather than fostering “connectivity . . . and a flow from the old to the new.” The proposed amendment puts neighbors across the street from those that are there now, CI said, and also “creates a nice transition from Royal Pines,” for example. “That transition is desirable.” From a public safety and crime prevention perspective, he said, buffers “prohibit good neighbor conversations and eyes on the street.” Neighbors can’t look out for one another if they can’t see into each others’ front yards.

CI said they had planned “for driveways to come off Fiddler.” The alley is there, and there are three access-ways on Fiddler Drive; he showed one that has moved, and said the 24 proposed lots would have driveways onto Fiddler Drive, and “across the street, there are a number of driveways . . . onto Fiddler Drive as well.”

Mr. Inglese said, “The vision is to be tied into the sewer,” but for a secondary developer with 24 lots, it is not economically feasible. They would like septic permits for the first four or five lots, “but would reserve for the remainder to be tied into the sewer.”

Mr. Inglese said he’s “really convinced that this plan is a better plan” that “promotes good-neighbor design.” Some people living there currently have given the developer “some positive feedback.” The Lady’s Island council had given them “favorable approval.” He added that the developer’s calculations are that “18.45% of green space would be retained,” but Mr. Ramsey and the surveyor had said the original 98 acres have been reduced, so “we believe we’re at about 19.5% right now,” and “can easily maintain 20%, if that’s a condition of (the Metropolitan Planning Commission’s) recommendation.” An “open neighborhood” with large, “suburban-style lots . . . doesn’t get into the calculation for the open space.” It looks more open because of caps (e.g., on impervious surfaces), “but it doesn’t count for the developer toward open space,” CI said.

Like Mr. Merchant had said, there’s to be no change in traffic impact or density, according to CI. This PUD amendment will create a consistent streetscape and “tie the old with the existing.” The PUD will sunset in 2020, he added, if there is not more development than these 24 proposed lots. Mr. Inglese said, “Without getting into the interior of Greenheath and feelings about what should happen inside,” they are “trying to get those 24 lots,” which is why they were before the planning commission.

Vice Chairman Crower asked if vehicular access for the lots on Fiddler Drive is off the alley. Mr. Inglese said they are looking at driveways for the 24 lots. Vice Chairman

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Crower asked the width of the lots across the street, and Mr. Inglese said 164' for "this particular one."

Commissioner Johnson asked how many homes are on the other side of the street, facing the homes on Fiddler Drive. Mr. Inglese said he didn't know. Mr. Inglese said they are "excited about Mr. McNeal's work. . . . We don't want a national builder in there; Mr. Trask has already turned down two" of them. They feel what Mr. McNeal is proposing is right for Lady's Island.

Vice Chairman Crower asked if the slow development is because the dwellings won't all be on sewer. Mr. Baisch said the larger lot sizes and quality of the soils allow septic onsite. It's "purely cost-driven." The first five houses would be on sewer, and as the numbers grow, they "can offset the costs of running sewer down" to the new houses.

Commissioner Johnson asked if there were a timeframe for further development. Mr. Inglese said if they get through the rezoning amendment, they would "start with one or two in the fall." Commissioner Rentz asked about the rest of the property (i.e., other than these proposed 24). Mr. McNeal is a secondary developer, Mr. Inglese said, and "we are looking at all of our options on that." He said there are no plans for the interior at this time.

Commissioner Johnson asked if there were any "owners from across the street" present to speak. Commissioner Semmler said he wanted to hear from others on the development team first. Mr. Ramsey showed a 2002 master plan, which is "the one we settled on." The idea was to be a traditional neighborhood development near the school. This is an opportunity "to kickstart (it) and get it going," he said. Greenheath has been sitting there and might continue to sit there, Mr. Ramsey said. He said if he lived on Fiddler Drive, he would rather see 14 fronts of houses than the garages of more "that got built by who-knows-who." Mr. Ramsey said he had eliminated townhouses that had been planned in several areas in the development so he could get more single family lots in the neighborhood. There are still a few townhouses planned. He feels the amount and quality of the open space is right at this time, but they can adjust it. Mr. Ramsey added that this is a better approach to developing around Fiddler Drive than the buffer, which "we all know will be paper thin soon."

Commissioner Semmler indicated an example in the chambers of how big a 30' buffer would be. He said he "is disappointed" at the idea of losing the buffer, and the owners who bought homes in Greenheath had counted on having it. He said he doesn't think 30' is paper-thin.

Commissioner Semmler asked about burying the power lines. Mr. Baisch said they "haven't evolved to the design of utilities yet." The intent would be for the power company to see what it wanted there, he said, and they would probably want to run

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utilities “at the rear.” Commissioner Semmler said a PUD is to have utilities buried, and they having septic is a criteria of the PUD they have already changed.

Commissioner Semmler said the demographics have changed since 1998, when the PUD was mutually beneficial for everyone. Now, it appears this proposal is only beneficial to the developer and the owner. The MPC “has no clue” what changes will happen in Greenheath, and “what will end up on (its) 99 acres.” Not wanting a national builder is good, Commissioner Semmler said, but “I’ve heard that before.” He thinks the buffer, egress points, sewer system, and the future of the development are all important. They are changing the PUD 15 years after the original, and no one knows what will happen in five years. He asked how many of the homes would be affordable housing; there was no response from the team. The population has changed a lot “in that part of Beaufort County” in 15 years, Commissioner Semmler said, and he also feels “there’s going to be some impact on traffic.”

Larry Bank, 38 Fiddler Drive, said discussed traffic issues “on a school day” on Fiddler Drive. People constantly come in “the short way,” turn around in the driveways of homes on Fiddler Drive, and back up traffic. He sees no way to make these proposed changes without traffic being “brutal.”

Mr. Bank said that the developer hasn’t “looked at the electrical”; the water line is under Fiddler Drive, and it will have to be dug up. The developer might put in wells, since they aren’t putting in sewer lines. The 24 proposed houses, Mr. Bank believes, “will finance the rest of that interior.” He feels the “old” PUD and “the new way” are both “bad.” He would never have bought there if he’d known this was a possibility, he said, and if it happens, he will move further out on Lady’s Island. There are other ways they could develop this that would have less of an impact on the environment, Mr. Bank feels.

Kenny Zegner said this is “a beautiful piece of land” and should be preserved. He feels they should say, “No” and preserve the open space. He said “Fred” is interested in having Rural and Critical Lands look at it. There are not a lot of trails on Lady’s Island, and this area could be used for that. If it has “a reasonable market value,” Mr. Zegner feels the land should be green space. He feels this development can’t be supported, and he cited the traffic on Sams Point Road. He usually supports development, he said, but not here.

Liz Santigotti lives on Brickyard Point Road; her property is adjacent to this one, and she has lived there 30 years. She said she is “quite fearful of this entire development.” She said though it’s only a few homes now, when there’s further development, it will be the kind of community she didn’t want to live in when she moved to the area. Ms. Santigotti thinks there’s too much development in this area; she has concerns about more

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population bringing more crime and affecting traffic, and noted that getting onto or across Sams Point Road is “a deathtrap.”

Ms. Santigotti said in the Lowcountry, the water table is higher, so this kind of development affects everything around it, including her property. The quality of life on Lady’s Island and in Beaufort County is more important than making more money, Ms. Santigotti feels.

Gordon Fritz, Lady’s Island, is a biologist and a real estate broker and developer, thinks it’s absurd to consider putting 313 lots on 98 acres. This is not the same place it was in 1997, he said, “and a development like this has no place in Beaufort County or on Lady’s Island.” Stormwater is important, Mr. Fritz said, but he doesn’t see any provision for it on the proposed plan. They probably can’t change the level of density for this PUD, he said, but everyone involved with its development should consider their legacy.

Peggy Allard, 18 Audubon Road, said she is also opposed to this request, and feels it will have a huge negative affect on the community. The developers and the builders “have gotten ahead of the government side,” it appears, and though development won’t stop, they need to manage the kind of growth they have, she said.

Bob Kiessling, Royal Pines, asked what the county is prepared to spend on this development, citing costs for infrastructure, extension of a sewer system, which they “don’t even have in Royal Pines,” stormwater run-off, and building new schools. He feels the cost would be huge, and the “payback would never be there.”

Chuck Newton 414 Island Circle East, Dataw, said he had looked at this project at the behest of friends. He thinks the PUD was originally approved as “five pounds of sugar in a ten pound bag,” and there is “nothing positive” in the revision in terms of density, appearance, water and sewer, traffic, or schools. Mr. Newton recommended that the Metropolitan Planning Commission reject this proposal.

Commissioner Semmler said he would vote against it. The planning commission can’t stop the developer if they build these proposed 24 houses, then “flip it to a national developer.” He said the spirit of the Comprehensive Plan, the Lady’s Island Community Preservation District, and the new community development code all lead him to strongly recommend denial.

Commissioner Semmler made a motion, second by Commissioner Johnson, to recommend that the planning commission deny the request for rezoning and changes to its master plan.

Commissioner Rentz said, once a development’s planning is approved by the county, future traffic impact analysis has to take into account what happens there. The

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development team had gone from 49 lots on Fiddler Drive to 24, which he thinks is positive. He said he, too, would rather face houses than garages. Commissioner Rentz said he couldn't comprehend why the county believes the Fiddler Drive residents need a 30' buffer. Commissioner Semmler and Vice Chairman Crower said that was in the original PUD. Commissioner Rentz said Mr. Merchant had said "current zoning requires a 30' buffer along Fiddler Drive." Commissioner Semmler said this amendment to the PUD is only to build those 24 homes.

Commissioner Rentz said if the MPC approves this request, they also approve of all of the interior changes, such as the difference in the amount of open space. Commissioner Semmler added that if they approve it, they would also approve the use of septic. Commissioner Rentz said BJWSA can enforce putting in a septic tank now, and when sewer is available, require that the developer tap into it.

The motion to deny passed 3-0; Commissioner Rentz abstained from the vote. Ms. Anderson said an abstention is "a vote *against* whatever the motion was." Vice Chairman Crower said for the record that the vote to recommend denial of the request, then, was **3-1 in favor of denial, Commissioner Rentz opposed.**

REVIEW PROJECTS FOR THE CITY OF BEAUFORT

City of Beaufort – Rezoning

Rezoning two parcels of property located on Lady's Island from T4-Neighborhood Center, to General Commercial District. The properties are located at 19 Sam's Point Way and 169 Sea Island Parkway, and are identified as District 200, Tax Map 15, Parcels 592 and 606 respectively.

Applicant: Andrews Engineering

Ms. Anderson said this is a rezoning from two petitions for annexation, which the commissioners can cover with two motions. The parcels, at 19 Sams Point Way and 169 Sea Island Parkway, are owned by two separate owners. A small commercial building is at 169 Sea Island Parkway. The property on Sams Point Way is undeveloped. Both are proposed for use by Harris Teeter for its development of a grocery on the former Publix site.

Ms. Anderson said the property is contiguous to the city limits. All public services are available. The present county zoning is T4 Neighborhood Center, a mixed use district that allows a variety of residential, office, and commercial uses. All types of offices and retail uses are permitted in the city's General Commercial District. A gas station is permitted by special exception and with conditions. Staff feels that the rezoning is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, the Civic Master Plan, and the draft development code.

Ms. Anderson described the various land uses in the area. The property needs to be

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rezoned into a city designation to be annexed, because it's proposed to be part of the Harris Teeter development.

There will be tree removal, Ms. Anderson said. Water and sewer are available to the property. All required public notice was made. Staff recommends approval, she said.

Vice Chairman Crower asked if both properties are in the county and if both need to be annexed. Ms. Anderson said yes. Commissioner Harris asked if there were one owner for all three properties, and Ms. Anderson said no, there are three owners. Andrews Engineering is coordinating this application for all three properties.

Commissioner Harris said the zoning would seem to allow mixed use. Ms. Anderson said yes, with the exception of new single-family development. There was no one present to represent the property owners.

Mr. Fritz said he supports "good development," but this project is not good development because of the tree cutting that will be done. There is "a dense live oak forest (running) across this property." He believes there will be no effort to save the trees. If a developer is prepared to pay a fine, "he can cut anything he wants to," Mr. Fritz said. He's written to Harris Teeter and asked them to preserve the tree cover. To not do so, he feels, "is really criminal."

Ms. Anderson said the place for those comments would be to the Design Review Board, which is having a special meeting on Wednesday this week to review Harris Teeter's plans. The DRB will cover the arborist's report, necessary mitigation measures, etc. Ms. Anderson said plans for the project should be on the city's website by tomorrow.

Vice Chairman Crower asked Ms. Anderson if annexing the property into the city first would change the rules about tree preservation. Ms. Anderson said the city doesn't have an official mitigation fund like the county does; it's proposed in the new code. The administrator can mitigate up to one-third of the trees onsite. City's mitigation is onsite, Ms. Anderson said. They don't typically pay into a fund, like they can with the county.

Commissioner Semmler asked about "the triangle piece" at the top of the plan Ms. Anderson had presented. She said it's owned by people who live in Spartanburg. Ms. Anderson said a lot of this area, which is low, will be used for detention and retention, so some trees can be saved there. Commissioner Semmler said if the property isn't annexed, "those trees live." He said he doesn't know "why it's so important" for this property to go to Harris Teeter, and he noted that the applicant wasn't present.

Commissioner Harris said **Steve Andrews** is acting on behalf of the two owners of these two parcels. Ms. Anderson said one property is going to be used for stormwater and parking. Typically, you want all the properties that would be in a development to be in

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one jurisdiction for “planning and management” purposes. Commissioner Semmler asked if it was a retention pond currently. Commissioner Rentz said if the whole triangle is under one ownership, it should be under one jurisdiction; it’s easier on everybody: city, county, tax assessor, etc.

Commissioner Rentz said you can do parking lots and retention ponds in T4 zoning, so not recommending annexation “doesn’t slow anything down.” Commissioner Semmler said slowing things down is not what he wants to do. Ms. Anderson said the current Publix building had a little piece of its parking lot in the county, so Publix brought an annexation petition so there would only be development under one jurisdiction.

Commissioner Rentz said both the city and the county require developments to be close to the road, and there was some discussion about being able to save the trees in the front. Ms. Anderson said yes, they might need a variance. Harris Teeter’s latest plan that they have submitted to the Design Review Board has fewer variance requests than their last plan.

Ms. Anderson said the grocery stores need a lot of parking. Commissioner Semmler recommended that shoppers could use the Wal-Mart lot. Commissioner Harris said this is someone’s property, and though it would be nice to keep it green, the MPC is “being asked to make it whole.” Ms. Anderson said the building has been vacant for quite awhile, and to redevelop the parcel, they have certain requirements. Commissioner Semmler said Harris Teeter is saying they need the parcels, but he is challenging that. The applicants, if they were present, could speak for themselves, he said.

Commissioner Johnson said the process bothers him. He feels that this application to the MPC should have come to it after the meeting that is happening Wednesday: “We don’t know what we’re facilitating,” he said. Ms. Anderson said the MPC is not approving the Harris Teeter – or any specific use. In General Commercial zoning, someone could build a restaurant or a multi-family dwelling; in this case, they know what this applicant wants to do. She reminded the commission that it is to recommend or deny *a particular type of zoning*, and they shouldn’t concern themselves with what business goes in that zoning. Ms. Anderson said the commissioners should determine if General Commercial is appropriate zoning, or if there is better zoning for this parcel among those that surround it.

Vice Chairman Crower asked about the contiguity to the city. Ms. Anderson said staff is recommending General Commercial zoning because these parcels would join the other General Commercial on the block. Vice Chairman Crower asked if the properties on the east side of Sams Point Way are in the county. Ms. Anderson said yes. There was a general discussion about which properties in the area are in the city and which are in the county. Commissioner Harris said the MPC is considering this request because the property owners have asked them to do so; these owners want to join the city.

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Maxine Lutz suggested that the commissioners ask whether this beautiful parcel – which ideally wouldn't be developed – might have more protection by being in the city, rather than in the county. She feels that the city does a better job of tree protection and environmental management.

Commissioner Harris said, in regard to any fear about development on this end of the property: many developers “have looked at doing things on this property,” but it’s “exceptionally low,” perhaps “15’–18’ below Sams Point Road.” He said he thinks it’s safe.

Commissioner Johnson said “the only credible reason” he has heard for why the MPC is looking at this request is Commissioner Harris’s: because the owners have asked. There’s nothing out of the ordinary or inconsistent about the application, “so it’s a done deal,” he said. Ms. Anderson said that a developer may come in with plans for a parcel that the commission approves for a certain zoning, but then a different type of development could happen, so they “don’t want to get too involved in the use,” though they happen to know this one because the project is further along in the planning process.

Commissioner Rentz made a motion to recommend annexation of both parcels. Commissioner Harris seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Rentz made a motion to zone both parcels General Commercial. Commissioner Johnson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

City of Beaufort – Rezoning

Rezoning a parcel of property located at 1402 Washington Street, identified as District 120, Tax Map 4, Parcel 342. The existing zoning is General Commercial District. The proposed zoning is General Residential District.

Applicant: City of Beaufort

Ms. Anderson said this property is in the city limits. The applicant is the city. She showed the parcel, which is on the corner of Washington and Wilmington Streets in the Northwest Quadrant of the Historic District. It’s about 4800 square feet and is currently vacant. Ms. Anderson showed a photo of the property. It’s currently zoned General Commercial, so new single-family development is not permitted there. The new owner would like to build a single-family dwelling on the property, as would staff and the Design Review Board. General Commercial zoning “is too much for that area,” Ms. Anderson said, though it’s been that way for many years, because it allows intense commercial uses, multi-family dwellings, etc. Staff is proposing to change this in the new code.

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For this application, Ms. Anderson said, staff recommends rezoning the parcel to General Residential District, which is contiguous, and which would permit the desired use. A duplex is next door. The lot size is too small for commercial uses because they need onsite parking. She said staff feels this zoning is consistent with the Comp Plan. Water and sewer are available. All usual public notice was made, Ms. Anderson said, and Historic Beaufort Foundation (HBF) and a neighborhood association were also notified.

Ms. Anderson said the city is the applicant for this; it can bring forth an application because staff feels “it’s the right thing to do. The owner’s plans have been approved by the Historic District Review Board.

Ms. Anderson said this project “got pretty far through the process” before anyone noticed that the parcel was zoned General Commercial. There were no public comments. **Commissioner Johnson made a motion to recommend rezoning the lot to General Residential District. Commissioner Semmler seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

City of Beaufort – Rezoning

Rezoning three parcels of property located at 1009 Congress Street, identified as R120 Tax Map 4, Parcels 77, 78, and 79. The existing zoning is General Residential District. The proposed zoning is General Commercial District.

Applicant: Marty Miley, Bridges Preparatory School

These three parcels are also already in the city limits, Ms. Anderson said. They are at the corner of Congress and Newcastle Streets in the Northwest Quadrant neighborhood of the Historic District. They total a little over one-third of an acre. The properties are currently vacant and across the street from Bridges Preparatory School, she said. The school wants to develop them into a surface parking lot.

These parcels are zoned General Residential district, Ms. Anderson said, and parking is not permitted as the primary use in this zone. The proposed rezoning is General Commercial district, which allows parking as a primary use. There is “a patchwork” of zoning in the area, she said; staff feels the proposed zoning is compatible with this. A surface parking lot would be an acceptable use. It would have to be landscaped per the Historic District requirements. There is no formalized on-street parking.

The usual public notice was made, she said, and no public comments were received.

Neighborhood Commercial zoning would also work, Ms. Anderson said. It allows surface parking lots as well as single-family development. Commissioner Rentz asked Ms. Anderson which zoning was most appropriate for the neighborhood. Ms. Anderson replied, “Neighborhood Commercial,” which has a “somewhat limited scale.”

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Commissioner Semmler said the area has been a grass parking lot for years. When Bridges had made presentations, they had said they would be in the city and wanted to have their teachers live within walking distance. While that would be nice to have, Commissioner Semmler said, parking is an issue in the City of Beaufort. The school is there, and “people have to park.” Ms. Anderson said that’s why Neighborhood Commercial zoning would be nice. If something happens, Bridges could use the property for cottages. She added that the parcels all have the same owner.

Maxine Lutz agreed that Neighborhood Commercial zoning is “more flexible,” so it’s the better option. HBF has tried to remove General Commercial zoning from the Historic District “for years” because of concern about “commercial creep” there, and this “backs up to General Commercial.” Bridges Preparatory School “is a welcome addition to the city,” and HBF doesn’t oppose the parking. The school is a use that HBF wants to encourage, Ms. Lutz said, and it needs parking. **Commissioner Johnson made a motion to zone the property Neighborhood Commercial. Commissioner Semmler seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

City of Beaufort – Rezoning

Rezoning three parcels of property located on Port Royal Island, from C5 Regional Center Mixed-Use, to Highway Commercial District. The properties are located at 2811 Boundary Street, and are identified as District 100, Tax Map 26, Parcel 146A, and District 100, Tax Map 26A, Parcels 257 and 292.

Applicant: Milt Rhodes, The Arden Group

Ms. Anderson said these parcels are on Trask Parkway, near the intersection of Highway 21 (Boundary Street) and Parris Island Gateway. The three properties were formerly a car dealership. All public services will be available. It’s currently C5 RCMU (Regional Center Mixed Use) zoning, which is the county’s most intense zoning, and allowed uses include drive-thrus and auto sales and service. Proposed zoning is Highway Commercial District, Ms. Anderson said, which is the city’s most intense zoning district. It permits restaurants with drive-thrus under certain conditions. Most of the lots around it are zoned Highway Commercial.

Ms. Anderson said Boundary Street has a mix of commercial uses in this area. Some of the property fronts the marsh. The site is “just about completely paved,” and any development should reduce the amount of impervious surface. Water and sewer will need to be made available, she said. Public notice was made, and no comments were received. Staff recommends approval of this rezoning, she said.

Ms. Anderson indicated other surrounding uses, which are in Highway Commercial and General Commercial zoning, with “a little peninsula” that is zoned residential. “We’ve got a little bit of everything” there, she said.

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Edward Robinson, a representative for the owners of the site, said they were excited to sell it to developers, who will “develop it to its highest and best use.” They are already working on the property, and by bringing it into the city, he said, they will be able to make it attractive to the right sort of developer.

Fred Bley lives at 1800 Debby Lane, which he indicated is near these parcels, and he owns various properties in the area. Whatever is put in there will affect him, he said. Mr. Bley discussed what can and cannot be put in Highway Commercial zoning. He asked what city staff or the MPC is “facilitating” if the property is annexed and rezoned. Vice Chairman Crower asked Mr. Bley what he would rather see on this property than the current “huge parking lot,” and Mr. Bley replied that he’d rather see the lot than the development of a 35’ apartment building.

Ms. Anderson compared the county’s current and the city’s proposed zoning for this area: a multi-family dwelling unit, restaurants and cafes, etc. are permitted in both, she said. The differences in the two zonings are “subtle,” and both allow “intense commercial” uses.

Vice Chairman Crower asked if moving the part of the parcel that borders the marsh into the city would mean setback changes. Ms. Anderson said it might.

Commissioner Johnson asked why the owners want to do this if the zoning is comparable in both the city and the county. Commissioner Semmler said MCAS has been annexed into the city, and someday, all of that side of Boundary Street will be, too. As with the Harris Teeter site, the commission can’t argue about its use or the reason for the rezoning. Ms. Anderson said, because both zonings are similar, there’s probably something about this zoning that is more attractive to a developer.

Commissioner Johnson asked if Mr. Bley will have a venue in which to express his concerns further. Ms. Anderson said, in the code, if you adjoin residential property, there are screening requirements, for example. Mr. Bley could be involved in the design review process if what’s developed there is a larger project; smaller ones go to staff for approval, but that information is still available on the city’s website.

Commissioner Harris made a motion to recommend approval of the annexation of the three parcels. Commissioner Johnson seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Harris made a motion to recommend approval of the zoning of the three parcels to Highway Commercial. Commissioner Rentz seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

City of Beaufort – UDO Amendment

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Revising Section 5.3.D.7 of the Unified Development Ordinance, “Specific Use Standards; Commercial Uses; Car Washes,” to revise the conditions for car washes in the General Commercial District.

Applicant: Martie Murphy, Tidal Wave

Ms. Anderson said the applicant is not present, and there may have been a mix-up about meeting dates. **Martie Murphy** is a commercial developer who is applying for an ordinance revision as it applies to car washes. He would like to open a car wash on Sams Point Road, near the Walgreens and the coming Waffle House. Tidal Wave is very interested in this location, and they have met with staff to discuss rezoning to Highway Commercial, but staff felt they couldn't support that because of what other businesses would be able to go in there with that zoning. Development standards would also be different: with Highway Commercial zoning, there's a 25' setback as opposed to a 7'-12' build-to line. So rather than rezoning, staff recommended that Mr. Murphy should apply to amend the ordinance. The applicant went before the Design Review Board earlier this month. In regard to the text amendment, the DRB supports it, as long as a liner building is developed in front of the car wash to screen it from the street.

Ms. Anderson reviewed the conditions that apply to car washes. Staff had suggested that a stand-alone, automatic car wash could be permitted if the bay were screened from view on the street with a liner building. If this won't work for Tidal Wave, she said, the applicant needs to tell staff; there's “the possibility of a variance, moving forward.”

Commissioner Semmler asked if this car wash takes one car at a time, or if there would be a “string of cars” in the tunnel. He noted two car washes on Boundary Street, and a closed one that was next to Zaxby's; it had bay doors that faced the street. Ms. Anderson said the liner building is meant to screen the doors.

Ms. Anderson explained where the proposed car wash would be: between the defunct Mexican restaurant and the professional building. She said another applicant might not have the same considerations about bay doors, if theirs don't face the street, and they could seek a variance to the liner building.

Commissioner Harris asked, for the sake of flexibility and in order to pertain to other projects, if the ordinance could “just say they don't have to be attached to a gas station?” A commissioner asked if there could be a wall instead of a liner building. Ms. Anderson said she'd “have a hard time supporting that.” Commissioner Rentz said city planners are trying to achieve a “downtown effect” in this area, with buildings close to the street, and putting up walls would ruin that effect.

Commissioner Johnston said there's a section in the new development code about “sexually oriented car washes.” Ms. Anderson said that's not the case here, and it would not be permitted: “That's a whole different kind of car wash.”

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Commissioner Rentz made a motion to approve the revision to the UDO as it pertains to car washes as requested by the Design Review Board. Commissioner Semmler seconded the motion. The motion passed 4-1, Commissioner Harris opposed.

City of Beaufort – UDO Amendment

Revising Sections 5.3.D and 11.2 of the Unified Development Ordinance, to revise the definition of short term rental, and to stipulate that short term rental of a bedroom within a dwelling unit is permitted as a conditional use.

Applicant: City of Beaufort

Ms. Anderson said the ordinance currently defines a short-term rental as rental of a dwelling unit for less than 30 days. In the “sharing economy,” a bedroom in someone’s dwelling may be rented out on a short-term basis (e.g., Airbnb). The city would like to update its ordinance to encompass this type of activity, which was not known of when the ordinance was adopted. City council is establishing a short-term rental task force to look at short-term rental issues such as saturation of neighborhoods. In the meantime, staff would like to fill this gap in the ordinance, she said.

Ms. Anderson showed the language that staff proposes to add to the definition of a short-term rental, which encompasses the dwelling “or any portion thereof.” Also, if a room or rooms are rented to one “guest unit” (e.g., a couple or family, no matter the size or number of bedrooms rented), the use is considered a short-term rental. Renting multiple bedrooms to multiple guest units simultaneously makes the use a B&B, she said.

Ms. Anderson explained how these will be permitted: when a whole dwelling unit is rented short-term, the owner must obtain a special exception. In an Airbnb situation, it is permitted as a conditional use.

Commissioner Semmler asked if there is a section that addresses students at USCB who rent a room for the period of their enrollment. Ms. Anderson said that’s “like having a roommate.” Up to five people can live in a dwelling unit in that situation. This is for short-term (less than 30 days) rentals, Vice Chairman Crower added.

Vice Chairman Crower pointed out a typographical error to Ms. Anderson.

Robert Brown said he rents out rooms in a property he owns that is “in this category,” like Airbnb. He and his wife, **Deborah Wessel**, had worked with Ms. Anderson to try to fit it into the existing ordinance, but it did not. Mr. Brown described how his house is configured and said parking is on a side street. There are houses on three sides of his; his is well-screened on one side. They are close to their neighbors to the south, who are not bothered by their renting rooms. On the other side, the house is a rental property

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that is unaffected. Their guests have not been “partiers,” Mr. Brown added.

Vice Chairman Crower asked if access to the whole house is typical. Mr. Brown said the guests’ room is closest to the front door; there is not access to the outside from the room. Guests can use the living room if they want to, but most don’t. Commissioner Johnson asked if there’s a way for Mr. Brown to vet people who come to his home. Mr. Brown said he and Ms. Wessel have travelled a lot and never have had problems when they are staying at other people’s homes. The Airbnb system has a vetting process by way of “an online presence.” No money changes hands with the guests, Mr. Brown said; everything is prepaid. Ms. Wessel said both guests and owners have a profile on the site and both have reviews, so you can see what other owners said about how people were as guests. She said they also don’t do “instant booking,” so they can look potential guests over to determine if they want them to stay in their home. Mr. Brown said the average stay is two nights.

Commissioner Johnson asked why someone would rather stay in someone’s home than in a hotel. Mr. Brown said “It’s not for everyone,” but Airbnb offers a more personal introduction to the area, with advice about where to eat and what to see, for example. Ms. Wessel said they have met a lot of people who want to retire here and want to discuss Beaufort with residents, as well as a lot of single women who feel more comfortable in this environment than in a hotel. Commissioner Semmler said he’s had many good Airbnb experiences.

Commissioner Semmler made a motion to revise the definition of a short-term rental in the UDO to include renting any portion of a dwelling for less than 30 days to a single guest unit. Commissioner Johnson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

There being no further business to come before the commission, the meeting was adjourned at 8:38 p.m.

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