

A meeting of the Beaufort Redevelopment Commission was held on November 15, 2016 at 7:00 p.m. in the Beaufort Municipal Complex, City Hall Planning Conference Room, 1911 Boundary Street. In attendance were Chairman Jon Verity and Commissioners Mike Sutton, Billy Keyserling, Mike McFee, Stephen Murray, and Steven Green, and Bill Prokop, city manager. Commissioners George O'Kelley, Phil Cromer, and Frank Lesesne were absent.

In accordance with South Carolina Code of Laws, 1976, Section 30-4-80(d), as amended, all media were duly notified of the time, date, place, and agenda of this meeting.

Chairman Verity called the Redevelopment Commission meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

MINUTES

Commissioner McFee made a motion, second by Commissioner Murray, to approve the minutes of the September 20, 2016 Redevelopment Commission (RDC) meeting. Deborah Johnson said on page 7, in the second full paragraph, “are being cleaned up by Water’s Edge Church” should be changed to “are to be cleaned up by Water’s Edge Church.”

Chairman Verity abstained from voting because he was not present at the September 20 meeting. **The motion to approve the minutes as amended passed 5-0.**

REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION STRUCTURE

Chairman Verity told Commissioner Green, who was the only commission member present who was not present at city council’s work session for the discussion about the RDC’s structure, what the RDC’s options are. He said the consensus in the work session discussion had been that Beaufort is too small to need an “independent” redevelopment commission, so it would be best for the RDC to officially operate as it does now, with city council approving all actions the RDC takes. Though there have been “some assumptions in the city’s ordinances” that the RDC has operated that way (i.e., “as a separate organization with our own budget,” ordinances, etc.), Chairman Verity said, “technically, that isn’t how we’ve operated at any point in time,” and, “for a small city like us,” it isn’t “in keeping with the city’s traditional management of its operations.”

Chairman Verity told Commissioner Green that at the council meeting, “it was left that **Bill (Prokop)** and Deborah (Johnson) and I would come back at a Redevelopment Commission meeting in December with some recommended changes to the ordinances the city currently operates, so that we wouldn’t be in conflict with ourselves at the moment.” At this December meeting, the RDC will also “talk about structure for the new year,” Chairman Verity said, and the projects they want to maintain or change. **Nan Sutton**, who had been elected the previous week to city council, could take over for Commissioner O’Kelley, whose place she is taking on council, and who heads up the “downtown” subcommittee, which is where Ms. Sutton’s interests already lie.

REDEVELOPMENT FUND BUDGET REPORT

Mr. Prokop said the full report on the city's budget would be given at the next council meeting. The report on the redevelopment fund he handed out does not include "the money coming in from grants." The RDC is "slightly ahead for the quarter, and its "expenses are all in line." As of today, he said, there is \$245,000 in grant money that will go to the Beaufort Digital Corridor, and that will eliminate the "ME&V costs." Council had agreed to transfer \$120,000 into the General Fund to support the Beaufort Digital Corridor, but that is not needed now because of the grants, Mr. Prokop said. The expenditures in the budget include Ms. Johnson's "cost as well as part of" **Linda Roper's** "cost and the other allocations" that are always in the budget for "benefits, etc." He said Ms. Johnson had put in a lot of time for the RDC, "particularly for grants," as had Commissioner Murray, who had also helped obtain grants.

The redevelopment fund "is a regular budget within the city's budget," Ms. Johnson clarified, not the Redevelopment Commission's budget." Commissioner McFee said this is for the "redevelopment fund," which is part of the city's budget, "and not the Redevelopment Commission."

DOWNTOWN MARINA: ROLE OF THE REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Mr. Prokop said 2 to 2½ years remain in the current marina contract before an RFP needs to be put together. There has been discussion about creating a committee to determine what the city wants and needs at the marina, he said, and he reviewed some of the work and repairs to be done at the marina soon. Commissioner McFee asked if the question was whether the RDC should be a part of the task force on the marina.

In reply, Commissioner Keyserling said they should "bring in . . . outsiders on this" marina task force, such as the "Sail and Power Squadron folks" who'd sent him anecdotal "information from marinas up and down the coast." He said, "If we're going to do any juggling in January," and they want the marina to remain a redevelopment project, Commissioner Sutton could chair the task force and "bring in those outsiders" to it, because he "knows the marina" and that part of the Civic Master Plan "as well as anybody."

Commissioner Sutton asked what "your end goal from (the) RDC" is. Commissioner Keyserling said, for the city, the intention is to determine a vision for how to get the marina "alive and well and healthy." They may want to add a place for locals to store their kayaks and canoes. It was once an in-demand marina, he said, and had a long waiting list, while today it's "probably the least occupied of the marinas," and it's become "more of a liability for the city than an asset."

Commissioner Keyserling said the city will need to do an RFQ, anyway, so a task force could determine the city's vision now, and use that vision for the RFQ. When the contract was extended with Griffin Enterprises, he said, the marina didn't do as well as the city had hoped it would because of the economy. Commissioner Keyserling said he thinks the city needs to "put together a group to come up with a vision" of how to make the marina "an asset."

Commissioner Murray said he'd "extend that to the (marina) parking lot," because there has never been "consensus on what we want down there." Commissioner Sutton said they will see what happens with the penny sales tax requests in the 2- and 4-year political cycles, because "it goes through county council," and he believes there may be "less of a shotgun approach" with it next time than there has been in the past. He said he'd recommend that those requesting money narrow their requests to "several significant projects." Not having that may have been part of the reason for the voters' rejection of the sales tax.

Commissioner Sutton said he would be glad to chair a marina task force, but there is more to it than the marina alone (e.g., accommodating tour carriages and buses in the marina parking lot). He said what they are discussing would be development of "a master plan for" the marina and for "that end of the park." It took over six years to get "the mooring field going," Commissioner Sutton said, and there were perhaps 12 – and at the most, 18 – boats "anchored willy-nilly" in the river before Hurricane Matthew, and now more than 30 boats "are anchored out there regularly now," as people moved off "local docks" in favor of a safer place to moor their boats. This is "already bringing vibrancy to the marina," he said, but it has also increased the parking problems in the marina lot. Bringing vitality "changes the user demographic," Commissioner Sutton said, and brings competition for space.

Chairman Verity said having 2½ years before the marina RFP is needed affords them "a reasonable time to get people together" for the task force from a variety of places. There was a general discussion of the role of this task force in relation to council and the RDC. Commissioner McFee said it would be a subcommittee to the RDC, like its other subcommittees.

Mr. Prokop said the task force should have city staff among its members, and **Neil Pugliese** – the city's new senior project manager – and Ms. Roper have said they would want to be a part of the task force. Commissioner Murray said **Robb Wells** of the Chamber of Commerce is interested, too, and would offer a good perspective. Mr. Prokop said **Alan Dechovitz** has offered to serve, and he knows of another person who would also be good. Chairman Verity said commissioners should be thinking of people who they feel would be good on a marina task force.

INITIATIVE UPDATES

Economic Development

Commissioner Murray said Hargray has given the Beaufort Digital Corridor \$150,000, and MASC has given it \$25,000.

Commissioner Murray said the General Assembly, through the Department of Commerce, gave Beaufort County \$140,000 "in proviso money for economic development" that hasn't been given out and "has just been sitting there" for a few years. Last Monday, Commissioner Murray and others made a presentation to the county council's Intergovernmental Committee as part of a joint request with the Don Ryan Center for Innovation (DRCI) for \$70,000 each. The committee gave unanimous approval to the proposal, and then last night, county council "unanimously approved the consent agenda" that this request was part of, so both groups will

get the money they had requested, he said. The renovation budget for the Beaufort Digital Corridor offices at 500 Carteret Street would be “100% . . . paid for by (the) private sector and by the Department of Commerce.”

Commissioner Murray said the Beaufort Digital Corridor has hired a program manager, **Karen Warner**, and she will officially start soon.

Renovations are underway at the Beaufort Digital Corridor, Commissioner Murray said, and they expect to have a ribbon-cutting in December. They have some prospect interest, too, he said.

The food truck ordinance was approved, Commissioner Murray said, which he’s excited about. The DRCI partnership has been approved, and by January 12, its office will be opened in City Hall. In the new year, the subcommittee will turn its attention to the Beaufort Commerce Park and a more aggressive recruitment strategy to bring in businesses, he said.

Mr. Prokop said a firearms assembly operation had made an inquiry and would be looking at space for their business in **Merritt Patterson’s** industrial park. Commissioner Murray said there has also been progress made with Harris Pillow, which is in Beaufort County, not the City of Beaufort, and is doing a big expansion.

Commissioner Keyserling asked Mr. Prokop about emails he and others had received asking where the food trucks will be at 500 Carteret Street. Mr. Prokop said they would be in the parking spaces, but there is not one designated for them. Commissioner Keyserling said the neighbors had asked if the food trucks could be “closer to the road” and “further away from” their houses in the Old Commons neighborhood. Mr. Prokop said the food trucks want to be close to Carteret Street so people can see the trucks are there. Commissioner Murray said he thinks the food trucks should be invited to be part of planned events, such as the Beaufort Digital Corridor’s ribbon-cutting.

Mr. Prokop said the food trucks’ proprietors are “holding off” until January to get their business licenses “because they get a full-year business license discount.” Commissioner Murray said it’s not prorated, so food truck operators would have to pay \$200 “plus the business license fee for a month and a half.” Commissioner McFee suggested that the city should “waive that,” and Mr. Prokop said, “We can waive that.”

Infill

Commissioner McFee said “guests” had visited the “war room” at 500 Carteret Street. He suggested that commissioners and others should go see the changes taking place at Church and Duke Streets. The letters to residents that the subcommittee sent are getting responses and questions, Commissioner McFee said, and there’s a lot of “activity on the street.” There was “a meeting in the neighborhood,” and “we are likely to be standing up an new neighborhood association in response to that” and “potentially a private Facebook account . . . in cooperation with the police department.”

Ms. Johnson said the park was to be scheduled to be planted this past weekend, but because of Hurricane Matthew, painting was delayed, so they can't plant until that is done. Painting should take place soon, though, she said, and then if the weather is good, volunteers can plant. If the weather is too cold, they will plant in March. Trees have been planted, and benches will go in soon, Ms. Johnson said. People came out to work on the project on Sunday, and she thinks that's because of "the Thursday night meeting."

Ms. Johnson said interest has been shown in two of the vacant and abandoned buildings that are historically significant on Duke Street, and two houses that have been on the market for some time have just sold.

Chairman Verity said, "This strategy has really made a difference." People with whom he spoke who were visiting the war room have "really responded" to this "new energy." Mr. Prokop said at the Thursday meeting, one person was concerned about the Duke Street cleanup efforts, but otherwise people were enthusiastic.

Downtown

Mr. Prokop said he'd met with **Dick "Stewart"** and the Nords, who are very concerned over the noise ordinance and the noise that still exists, in their opinion, downtown . . . If we're ever going to have development of high-end condos, (the) Redevelopment Commission and council have to address that." Mr. Prokop said he'd explained that there was only one noise complaint in the last four months, "but they still feel they can't . . . get the commercial lease for the Regions Bank that they're in" except by having "very high-end condos," and they told Mr. Prokop "unless we're willing to have a (quieter) downtown, they won't be able to convert the upper floors." Mr. Prokop said they are "concerned about what . . . the city wanted the downtown to be."

Commissioner McFee said, "Mr. Stewart spoke in favor of the restaurants . . . with reference to the Hospitality Association stepping in and indicating that . . . the mix in the downtown area was appropriate." Mr. Prokop confirmed that this was correct.

Boundary Street

Commissioner Keyserling said **Craig Reeves** had opened the new Sea Eagle Market location, which has a restaurant in it now.

Commissioner Keyserling said in regard to the partnership with the City of Beaufort, the Open Land Trust, and the county, **Dean Moss** reported that the county "has the contract now on the fire house" and is "working on one on the gas station." Commissioner Keyserling said, "We need to reconcile numbers," because he's unsure there is "money . . . in our land fund" for what is needed for matching funds.

Mr. Prokop said staff had "met with (Mr. Moss) and the Open Land Trust people" and had "told them we didn't have any money, and it was the Open Land Trust or [Rural and Critical Lands]

that was going to have to fund that.” He added that “somebody had said that they had several million dollars in the [Rural and Critical Lands] fund, so they couldn't see why they weren't going to do it.” When Mr. Moss asked Mr. Prokop if the City of Beaufort had money, Mr. Prokop had told him it did not.

Commissioner Keyserling said, “It will be time to do some demolition” soon, and it's his understanding that the county will be “occupying the United Way building” temporarily. Mr. Prokop said originally, the county was “going to take down all the buildings,” but now they are saying they will take down only the United Way building when they're finished using it. He said there will be discussions about costs for Boundary Street demolitions.

There might need to be an asbestos inspection of the fire house or Huddle House, Mr. Prokop said. No demolition dates have been set yet.

Commissioner Keyserling said the south side of Boundary Street has been paved, but that work is not final. He asked Mr. Prokop if there would be “the radius for U-turns at those lights.” Commissioner Murray said “a couple” of the intersections will have “expanded hips” to “give that radius,” or they will have a green arrow at the traffic light plus the area to make a legal U-turn.

Codes and Regulations

Mr. Prokop said there were 200 changes to be made to the draft Beaufort Code; the goal is to have another review this month after those changes are made. The goal for completion is in January.

Mr. Prokop said he and **Libby Anderson** would be meeting with **Delene Miller** and **Greg Rawls** of the Beaufort Arts Council (BAC) because its leadership feels that the creation of the arts district is being delayed until the Beaufort Code is completed, which they felt was unfair. There will be some sections of the code related to the arts district (e.g., the size of sign allowed, art displayed in front of the house, etc.) that will be advanced, Mr. Prokop said, through the Metropolitan Planning Commission. He added that the BAC has a much larger arts district planned than what was approved by the city council in the ordinance that created the district.

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE PROJECTS IN PROGRESS

Chairman Verity noted there are nine houses under construction in City Walk and “quite a few” elsewhere. Ms. Johnson said because the RDC had not had meetings every month, nothing has been taken off this list from July – September, so even those projects that have been completed are “still in the mix.” Because it is such a long list, she said, she has been unable to drive around to check on each project, so some of the houses on the list that are said to be under construction might be completed and occupied.

In the downtown area, Ms. Johnson said, the Regions Bank branch closed, and on Carteret, “the two Environments buildings” are posted as being for rent. Commissioner Murray said, “Environments is closed.” Ms. Johnson said they should note the Charles Street and Carteret

Street corridors when they discuss what the RDC wants to do in the new year at its December meeting.

Joe Loves Lobster Rolls has closed, Ms. Johnson said. The Navy Federal Credit Union is moving forward in front of Lowes on Robert Smalls Parkway, and a car dealership will be going into a parcel there. The Tru Hotel – the second Hilton hotel on County Shed Road – has been brought to the Design Review Board for its comments.

Ms. Johnson said because there is interest in moving the building on Mr. Stewart's property that was slated for demolition so Mr. Stewart can build a parking garage, the Historic District Review Board (HDRB) has tabled the demolition for 60 days; the HDRB approved the demolition of the former Nippy's building on that same property.

Commissioner Murray made a motion, second by Commissioner Sutton, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting ended at 7:55 p.m.