

A meeting of the Beaufort Redevelopment Commission was held on April 19, 2016 at 7:00 p.m. in the Beaufort Municipal Complex, City Hall Planning Conference Room, 1911 Boundary Street. In attendance were Vice Chairman Mike Sutton, Commissioners Billy Keyserling, Mike McFee, Phil Cromer, Stephen Murray, Steven Green, George O'Kelley, and Frank Lesesne, and Bill Prokop, city manager. Chairman Jon Verity was 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.

MINUTES

Chairman Verity called the Redevelopment Commission meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

Vice Chairman Sutton made a motion, second by Commissioner Cromer, to approve the minutes of the March 15, 2016 Redevelopment Commission meeting. Commissioner Cromer said on page 9, in the second paragraph, “of” existing businesses should be “for” existing businesses. Commissioner McFee said on page 6, the first sentence is missing the verb “said” or “stated” after Commissioner Murray. **The motion to approve the minutes as amended passed unanimously.**

BOUNDARY STREET

David Coleman said the Boundary Street project is 20% complete, and “the project is healthy at this point.” On the right side of the project (if one is coming into the city), they are working on the duct bank. This is “the smaller one,” he said; it’s both high- and low-voltage. They need multiple conduits, Mr. Coleman said, so they have to add additional cables. Part of the horizontal bore on the right side is through the marsh. They expect it will be complete to Greenlawn Drive within the next 30 days.

Next, they will jump to First Street or Polk Street for the duct bank, Mr. Coleman said, and then they will be moving from one side of Boundary Street to the other with it. BJWSA, a project partner, has “to expend effort on the project in order for the city to progress” with the main contractor. Other partners all have staff on the job, “and everybody is playing together nicely,” Mr. Coleman said. The duct bank “has been challenging to build,” including finding lines, pipes, and cables they didn’t know were there.

“Inconvenience” is the main problem on the project, Mr. Coleman said, so they are trying to do what they can to maintain access on Boundary Street and help the businesses there. Traffic is “actually running very well.” They will add two green left-turn arrows: at the K-Mart Plaza and at Hogarth Street. On the left turn lanes from Boundary Street onto Highway 170, there *were* two lanes that were 100’, and now there’s one lane that’s 350’ long. The green arrow has been changed from 25 seconds to 50 seconds.

Vice Chairman Sutton said he’d like to hear about the project’s effect on Boundary Street businesses. He asked about PR about the project. Mr. Coleman said, “We’ve put these folks (businesses) through some hard times,” and he gets a lot of emails about their concerns. He

tells them he understands and explains to them “why things are the way they are,” which he said usually “makes them happier.” He tries to ride Boundary Street at different times, 8–10 times a day, to experience what others are experiencing. “We are constantly adjusting,” he said.

Mr. Coleman described some of the other work being done on Boundary Street and said there can be “a reasonable traffic flow” and “some relief for our citizens in the first year,” though the project, he feels, will still take two years.

Commissioner McFee asked if they are being proactive with the Boundary Street businesses that are being affected by the construction. Mr. Coleman replied, “I tightened our team up” in the past week. They are very conscious of the issues, he said, and he could promise, “we won’t leave a business hanging” that is having a problem. Those businesses are paying the taxes to support this project, he said.

Commissioner Murray said the Chamber of Commerce had suggested adding to “the big, flashing ‘median closed’ billboards” a message that the businesses along the Boundary Street corridor are still open. Mr. Coleman said he had done research on signs, and unfortunately, their use is restricted to “what is associated with the road.” The county has an inventory of message boards, however, and they “may be able to launch some PR campaigns” about the Boundary Street businesses being open. Mr. Coleman said he has done a commercial on a show on WHHI to say that they are trying to minimize impact. Commissioner Murray said he has heard from the sandwich shop and the liquor store that they “are suffering” from the construction. If customers can’t access those types of businesses, or believe they’re closed, they’ll go to other places in town to buy what they’d normally get from the Boundary Street businesses.

Commissioner Cromer asked what the raised median would be planted with. Mr. Coleman said oaks and grass, and there would be oaks on the side of Boundary Street, as well. Commissioner Cromer asked if the median would be irrigated, and Mr. Coleman said he wasn’t sure.

Mr. Coleman said “the traffic . . . is a whole lot better than it was 30 days ago.” There have been “a number of wrecks” but none that can be attributed to construction.” Commissioner Keyserling said he’d be curious to see the accidents before and after the Boundary Street changes. Mr. Coleman said the traffic officer who is assigned to Boundary Street is good. There was a general discussion of the cost of traffic fines. Mr. Prokop said at next week’s council meeting, he plans to show what a speeding ticket costs and where the money goes.

Commissioner Green told Mr. Coleman that if FM 94.5 could help by running PSAs about Boundary Street, to let him know. Mr. Coleman said they have been utilizing all of the media access they can get, so he appreciates the offer.

SEA EAGLE MARKET PROPERTY

Commissioner Keyserling said, "We were expecting to hear from their attorney on Friday, but we have not." The business owner has commissioned an appraisal that will be measured against the city's appraisal. Mr. Prokop said the end of April is the city's and county's "cut-off date" to finalize this sale or they might have to move on to a different property.

BEAUFORT CODE

Libby Anderson said the initial public draft of the new development code was released at the beginning of March; everything pertaining to it is on the city's website. They have had 15 public meetings and have met with all the planned communities that have PUDs because they hope to bring the older PUDs under the new code. Ms. Anderson said the technical review committee for the code had made more than 200 comments on an initial draft, and the public also made that many. All of these comments are available online, as are staff's notes in response to the comments.

This month there will be six meetings "to share the major changes" to the draft of the code, Ms. Anderson said. The comments from these meetings will be released at the end of April, and the official public review process will start. The Metropolitan Planning Commission will hold workshops about the code on May 16 and 18. There will be a workshop with the Redevelopment Commission to present an overview of the code on May 3 at 5:00, then a more detailed review in June.

Commissioner Keyserling said, in reading through the public comments online, he noticed that some people seemed focused on the Civic Master Plan, and "decisions that were made there or fights" that were had and resolved and/or abandoned. He asked Ms. Anderson whether she felt there was "much disconnect," other than in "the one neighborhood where I think we ended up backing off the Civic Master Plan . . . Are we finding that elsewhere?" Ms. Anderson agreed that the unnamed neighborhood that Mayor Keyserling had alluded to is "where most of the concerns are lying."

A code is developed to implement a vision, Ms. Anderson said, in this case, the vision of the Civic Master Plan. The code "doesn't obligate anybody to do what's in the Civic Master Plan," she said, "but it might enable them to do . . . many of those redevelopment scenarios or opportunities in the plan" that can't be done today under the current ordinance. The new code "allow(s) that vision to come to fruition," she said, for those owners, developers, and neighborhoods that would like to "take advantage of those opportunities." It does not "obligate or mandate" anyone to anything, but it might enable those who want to to implement the plan's vision.

WHITEHALL UPDATE

Commissioner Murray said a new development group has the Whitehall property under contract. They're based in Atlanta, and one partner has a second home in Habersham. The bank is working through the foreclosure process, he said. Some of the Redevelopment Commission met with the development group a month ago and then coordinated meetings with area

stakeholders and the development group. The group will formalize plans for the property and come back in the next month or so. The plans for the property are more for mixed use, Commissioner Murray said, as the Civic Master Plan proposes, than the prior developers had proposed. They include townhomes similar to those in Habersham and single-family homes. Their plans are not concrete at all yet, though, Commissioner Murray said.

Tommy Logan asked about the park that was proposed and the use of the Open Land Trust. Commissioner Murray said this development group would like to keep the park, like the previous developers, “and keep the connectivity,” so they have spoken to the Open Land Trust to see how they might pick up where the other developers had left off. They are also trying to work out issues with residents on Harborview Drive/Circle, Commissioner Murray said.

PARKING AT 500 CARTERET STREET

There are now two kiosks in the lot at which to pay for parking, Mr. Prokop said, and as of last week, 18 places have been reserved for employees. It will increase by 7–9 employee spaces shortly, and the city will be doing some landscaping. He said 3–5 employees who were parking free on the street have moved into the parking area and are paying \$20 a month for a space.

Vice Chairman Sutton said he’d noticed that on Sunday, churchgoers hadn’t used “the gravel parking.” Commissioner McFee said, “Everybody’s afraid to,” but the congregation had been told “from the pulpit that you could park in the employee parking if you want to.”

Maxine Lutz asked how employees are learning about the employee parking. Mr. Prokop said **Alice Wallace**, Park Beaufort, is going to all the Bay Street businesses to inform them, and the parking committee has also put the word out. Ms. Lutz said she has noticed no relief yet in her neighborhood. She asked if they could put cards about the employee parking lot on the windows of cars parking on the streets in the Old Commons.

PARKING GARAGE

After an RFQ was issued, Mr. Prokop said, the parking committee had recommended a company out of Savannah – Dunn Construction – to consult on the parking garage. As the city manager, he will discuss negotiating a contract with them. Dunn’s understanding is that the parking garage is dependent on whether Beaufort gets funding through the allocation of the penny sales tax. Dunn Construction will make a recommendation as to size of the garage and its location, etc. to council when their work is done, he said.

Vice Chairman Sutton said the Capital Projects Sales Tax Commission had put out its preliminary list of projects that could be funded by a proposed 1% sales tax increase, though it didn’t include the dollar amounts to be given to the various projects, and the parking garage “is on the list.” The parking garage is “one small part” of the many projects on the county’s list, he said. If Beaufort falters in its ability to execute the project, it will be difficult for the city to obtain such funding in the future, Vice Chairman Sutton said. Waterfront Park and improvements at Southside Park also made the list, he added. The Town of Port Royal is on the list for “the spine road along the waterfront,” their sidewalks, and road paving.

INITIATIVE UPDATES

Economic Development

Commissioner Murray said his group didn't meet last month. There has been a lot of economic development activity. Several prospects are interested in the commerce park, he said. The Chamber of Commerce and city staff have submitted the application to Commerce for Palmetto Site Certification for the commerce park, and there was a meeting with a developer about a public-private effort on a spec building there. The developer is going to put proposals together, Commissioner Murray said.

There have been "conversations with the Digital Corridor" about "extending their brand to Beaufort," Commissioner Murray said, and a meeting with Hargray to discuss various issues, including putting fiber in the commerce park.

Commissioner Keyserling said **Cooter Ramsey** had shown him how the commerce park could be connected to I-95.

Infill

Commissioner McFee said the committee is creating an infill development plan with analysis from staff, codes enforcement, and the police and fire departments, specifically for Duke Street and the areas east and west of Duke in the Northwest Quadrant. He described the redevelopment target area.

They have submitted their "final discussion about the development plan," Commissioner McFee said, and he believes that they have the "verbiage set down for the development plan to go forward – for the infill development." **Deborah Johnson** said they had worked with **Camille Miller** to choose an area to focus on. They are planning the redevelopment to be "street by street," instead of "trying to look at the whole district" at once. They are looking at projects including "soft things on that street, like working with Beaufort Housing Authority to paint their buildings," and enlisting the help of master gardeners to help with landscaping. They could use Duke Street as a model for the whole neighborhood, she said.

There will be a space in the 500 Carteret Building that is similar to the "war room" in City Hall, with maps and other materials pertaining to this infill project for anyone who wants to see what projects are being targeted in that neighborhood, Ms. Johnson said.

Downtown

Commissioner O'Kelley said the downtown committee didn't meet, either. Work on the day dock should be starting soon, and Merrill Lynch is moving into the "old People's Bank building," he said.

Mr. Prokop said the contract is out for the divers and engineers for the day dock, and they will do an inspection on May 9. 32 additional moorings should be put in, and the current day dock will be improved for the Dragon Boat races in September, and then they will look at working on the *new* day dock.

Boundary Street

There was a discussion about signs. Ms. Anderson said the ordinance allows additional banners and signs during the construction. There's no charge for them, and they can remain in place until the construction is complete. Commissioner Keyserling wondered whether the city could do anything for these businesses, such as printing "Open for Business" signs similar to political campaign signs. They could print 50 \$2 signs as a gesture and put them in front of Boundary Street businesses. There was general agreement that this would be good PR and might help.

Incentives, Codes and Regulations

Commissioner Cromer asked Ms. Anderson if staff has "met with TCL again" about the city's building permitting process. Ms. Anderson said staff has not heard back from anyone there. "There are several important things in the current draft code that deal with streamlining the process," she said, and they may need the Redevelopment Commission's endorsement at a later point. Mr. Prokop said there has been turnover in TCL's support staff, and they will get back to the city soon about the process for building permits.

Commissioner Cromer said State Representative **Shannon Erickson** had been co-sponsoring a business license bill "that was detrimental to us," but as of April 14, she is "sponsoring H-5109," instead, which is "a bill that we're favoring." Commissioner Cromer explained aspects of H-5109, including a "central portal," and it's revenue-neutral. He said it wouldn't be passed this year.

INITIATIVES IN PROGRESS – UPDATED REPORT SINCE 3/15/16

- Ms. Johnson said there are "quite a few new houses under construction." There are some rezoning issues.
- On Boundary Street, the furniture store that closed will now be Mama's Furniture.
- A property at Parris Island Gateway that was a car dealership passed first reading for annexation into the city.
- Two properties on Washington Street were sold for construction of new residences. Every neighborhood has new construction, Ms. Johnson said.
- The Arts Council will move downtown into the building that Merrill Lynch has vacated. Vice Chairman Sutton wondered about the difference in the number of employees of the Arts Council and Merrill Lynch. Ms. Johnson said they have 3 full-time employees and two part-time employees at the Arts Council, in addition to those who come in to teach classes. Commissioner McFee said Merrill Lynch has 11 parking spaces for its new building. There will be no studio rentals and no black box theater in the Arts Council's new building, Ms. Johnson added; she described what would comprise the organization's space.
- Parker's has cleared all its brownfield issues at Roseida Road, Ms. Johnson said, and Ms. Anderson said the project is ready for permitting.
- There are now serious discussions going on with the city, the county, and SCE&G about building a commercial solar field in the commerce park that would be utilized by MCAS or

Laurel Bay, as well as panels on the municipal buildings and some county buildings, Mr. Prokop said.

FAIR HOUSING

Ms. Johnson said April is “Fair Housing Month.” In addition to discrimination and “poverty pockets,” the most common fair housing complaints pertain to conflict of interest. The commissioners had received some training in September about conflict of interest, she said, and she wanted to give them all a copy of a recusal statement that **Ivette Burgess** had created.

NEW BUSINESS

Commissioner Keyserling said two new groups have formed on Lady’s Island with the recent annexations, and there are “lots of ideas flowing around.” He said sent council, but not the Redevelopment Commission, copies of an email he had written to **Paul Butere** that said the “village center” concept on Lady’s Island will need to be revisited because of the rapid growth there; “it’s not ever going to be a village center.” Mayor Keyserling said “one of the best ways to not have to do a Boundary Street”-style project on Lady’s Island is “to think about what Airport Junction to the Woods bridge would be like one day.” He feels “at some point, that’s going to be a redevelopment district.” This new development “is good news for us,” but “we’re going to have a certain responsibility to be responsive and to manage it in a way.” The four annexations the city has recently done were because “people . . . came to us because they wanted better services.”

Mayor Keyserling said, “Upper Cane Island has just gone back on the market,” the possible development of which he discussed.

There being no further business to come before the commission, **Commissioner Cromer made a motion, seconded by Commissioner McFee, to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously,** and the meeting adjourned at 8:21 p.m.