

A meeting of the Beaufort Redevelopment Commission was held on November 7, 2013 at 5:00 p.m. in the Beaufort Municipal Complex, City Hall Planning Conference Room, 1911 Boundary Street. In attendance were Vice Chairman Mike McNally and Commissioners Stephen Murray, Alan Dechovitz, Wendy Zara, Henrietta Goode, Mike McFee, and Keith Waldrop.

Chairman Jon Verity and Commissioner Martin Goodman were absent.

In accordance with 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.

Vice Chairman McNally called the meeting to order at 5:02 p.m.

MINUTES

Commissioner Zara said that in paragraph 2 on the second page of the minutes, “has” was misspelled. On page 7, in the third paragraph, Commissioner Zara said the sentence in the minutes – “He asked if she had tried re-writing this aspect of the plan to show what would her in this regard so that the Redevelopment Commission could see her points side-by-side for comparison with the Civic Master Plan.” – should be “He asked if she had tried re-writing this aspect of the plan to show what would **please** her in this regard so that the Redevelopment Commission could see her points side-by-side for comparison with the Civic Master Plan.” On page 9, Commissioner Zara said the sentence “Commissioner Zara said she’s bothered that the latest version she got was at 11:30 a.m. that day, and then another one was sent to her at 4:00 p.m.” should be “Commissioner Zara said she’s bothered that ‘the first final plan was sent on Tuesday, and at noon on the day of the (Redevelopment Commission) meeting, (the Redevelopment Commission) got revisions.’” Commissioner Zara said that on page 11, the vote was made after the committee left Executive Session and resumed their regular session, not while they were in Executive Session. **Commissioner Zara made a motion, second by Commissioner Murray to approve the minutes of the October 3, 2013 RDC meeting as revised.** Commissioner McFee and Commissioner Waldrop abstained from voting because they were not present at the meeting. **The motion passed 4-0.**

LOWCOUNTRY HOUSING TRUST UPDATE

Commissioner Zara said that the Lowcountry Housing Trust is changing its name to South Carolina Community Loan Fund (CLF). She said a lot of banks are investing in them now, including \$1 million from Bank of America.

BOUNDARY STREET UPDATE

Libby Anderson said they hope to go out for bid soon and begin construction in the new year.

MARINA PROGRESS REPORT

Commissioner Dechovitz said they have received matching grant money for the marina day dock development portion and that will produce a 3 to 1 match so that have approximately \$445,000 for the day dock. They are pursuing other grants worth \$10,000 and \$300,000 for a total of \$800,000 for fire suppression equipment and “for deferred maintenance at the marina ... primarily to upgrade it to market demands and people’s needs,” Commissioner Dechovitz said. Conceptual design, Commissioner Dechovitz continued, will probably be seen in the first half of next year for the day dock to determine what it will be and what it will cost.

LAFAYETTE STREET UPDATE

Vice Chairman McNally said several weeks ago, Redevelopment Commission representatives, Ms. Anderson and **Lauren Kelly** from the Planning Department, and **Isaiah Smalls** and **Lamar Taylor** from Public Works met with **Eric Brown** and his builder “to see what was going on in regard to delays in beginning Mr. Brown’s housing project. SCDOT permitting is bogging down Mr. Brown’s work and Office of Coastal Resource Management (OCRM) bureaucracy in regard to a drainage issue had also become a problem. Mr. Brown is now going to meet with OCRM to resolve the drainage issue. OCRM is involved because there is a stream within 800’ of this project; they are going to show how this can be resolved, Vice Chairman McNally said, and hopefully OCRM “will let go of their grasp on the project.” There is an alley behind the proposed homes that turns into an “L” behind Lafayette Street for which they have been trying to get permits since May, but they “are caught in bureaucracy.” To shortcut this, and let Mr. Brown start, Mr. Brown’s going to resubmit a site plan showing a driveway at Von Harten Street with a turnaround that leads back the same way but no connection to Lafayette Street. In the meantime, Vice Chairman McNally said, after they get building permits, Public Works will work with SCDOT and Mr. Brown to get the issues resolved while the project’s being built.

BEAUFORT CODE

Ms. Anderson said the form-based code is on hold, waiting for the Civic Master Plan to be adopted for final direction on that code; they hope the adoption will happen at the first of the year, and then the committee will reconvene and work on the form-based code.

BAPTIST CHURCH OF BEAUFORT PROPERTY TRANSFER AND BUILDING OF HOMES

The memorandum of understanding between the church and the city was sent, and the city approved it, Vice Chairman McNally said. The first item in the memo was to hire a developer and to subdivide the property. They have a fully signed contract of sale between the church and **Steve Tully**, the chosen developer. He will survey the properties there, do the subdivisions, and take them through the city process. When that’s done, he’ll report to the Redevelopment Commission, and it will be up to the Redevelopment Commission to take the next step, which is to ask the city to make the swap between the properties, which will give the city two houses on those lots, including the historic home and the new home next to it. Mr. Tully has said he will work closely with Historic Beaufort Foundation on the architecture of the house.

MAIN STREET BEAUFORT WORKPLAN FOR 2013-2014

LaNelle Fabian said the National Main Street Center has gone through changes. It was started as a pilot program in the early 1980s in three Midwest cities; now there are more than 2000 Main Street communities, and they're a subsidiary of the National Preservation Trust. Ms. Fabian described the 4 point approach the organization follows. She showed what the boundaries are for downtown Beaufort, which is about 148 blocks.

Ms. Fabian talked about the possible detriments to downtown in 1989 that it managed to push through:

- Hurricane Hugo
- Desert Shield
- The first Wal-Mart opened in Beaufort
- Snowfall on Christmas Eve for first time in 20 years
- Parking fees and fines were raised
- Street preachers – “dozens of them fighting to preach on Bay Street”

But 12 new businesses opened downtown, Ms. Fabian said, in spite of these challenges.

Main Street Beaufort was chartered in 1985 and is a not-for-profit partner of the city. She showed the organization's mission statement and described the staff, board, other volunteers, and members of the organization.

Commissioner Waldrop asked what the volunteers do, and Ms. Fabian said they serve on the board, committees, and volunteer at events. She went on to describe the organization's funding sources. 48% is earned income, and \$375,866 is Main Street Beaufort's total 2012/2013 income.

Ms. Fabian reviewed the designated funds and how they were distributed. She broke down the events' income and expenses. The festivals bring in money, she said: \$206,001 was earned through festivals last year, and about 23% of that came back to Main Street Beaufort; the rest went back to the community.

She showed last fiscal year's top priorities. They applied for a Great American Main Street title and came in 4th of 3; they will reapply. They have been asked to teach courses on revitalization at OLLI and “have tackled downtown Beaufort's branding identity.” The promotion committee covers all of the usual events and new ones, and they did some advertising as well, which Ms. Fabian showed.

Commissioner Dechovitz asked the target audience of *Preservation Magazine* and Ms. Fabian said she didn't have the demographics on her, but they were “the demographics that they would look for in a tourist to come to Beaufort,” i.e., disposable income, empty nesters, etc. The Chamber of Commerce had told them that their leads from there were good ones, Ms.

Fabian said. Commissioner Dechovitz complimented the pages on the screen that focused on downtown, which he had seen.

The design committee brought in a designer to talk about window dressing and make suggestions, Ms. Fabian said. The downtown dolphin program was successful in that people took the dolphins home with them. The awning project was one they were proud of, she said. Main Street Beaufort got a list of property owners who were interested in new awnings and talked to awning companies about discounts for a group buy. 15 properties got new awnings, which saved the businesses \$10,000, and the city waived application fees. The design consultant for Main Street South Carolina is using this project as an example in his national talks.

Ms. Fabian said Main Street Beaufort is working on a way-finding sign project. They are working with city staff and are now in the design phase and hope to be going out to bid after Thanksgiving. They will be using lamp posts so as not to add too many new poles. There will be some gateway signs. Commissioner Murray suggested Beaufort historic district signs on Highway 278 and Highway 17 for people going to Hilton Head Island and Charleston. Ms. Fabian said they have done billboards in the past, and can look into what Commissioner Murray suggested, though there may be SCDOT concerns.

Ms. Fabian said in regard to business development, they are working on the concept approval for the day dock and will work more to get it in place if there's interest in that. They are also working on Wi-Fi in the Waterfront Park.

Main Street Beaufort has formed task squads in lieu of committees, which can get more work done, and allow volunteers to participate in the projects that interest them.

- **Organization committee task squad:** partnerships, policies and procedures.
- **Promotion committee task squad:** advertising; website (they want to turn it into a business directory); festivals; events to get people walking through downtown and be more retail- oriented; farmer's market.
- **Design committee task squad:** way-finding signs; discounted sign project for downtown businesses, similar to the awning project; downtown dolphins (looking for new, out of reach locations). Commissioner Goode asked if they can secure the dolphins with bolts. Ms. Fabian said she's not sure how they were done. The one on the seawall "made it through three festivals, but then it went missing." She doesn't know how they were secured, but anyone with any strength could get them up, she said. Commissioner Dechovitz asked how the dolphin project supports the brand, and Ms. Fabian explained that that's not necessarily its purpose. It's meant to be an activity for families to go and look for the dolphins using clues, getting people walking and seeing everything that's downtown.
- **Business development committee:** USDA Grant; Wi-Fi; parking tokens. Ms. Fabian said that Main Street Beaufort is applying for 2 USDA grants, one for business owner

workshops and one to help with upper story office-oriented businesses to try to entice people to move downtown. Commissioner Murray asked if that is space where people have moved out or is newly developed, and Ms. Fabian said "Both." She said in Spartanburg, the city spent their own money to fund such a project, and someone from the USDA said they could have funded it for Spartanburg.

Vice Chairman McNally asked Ms. Fabian to say which events Main Street Beaufort is involved in as opposed to festivals. She said they want to get merchants to say what kind of events the merchants want to be involved in. Vice Chairman McNally said there are a lot of events held downtown, and he would think Main Street Beaufort might want to be a part of, e.g., the historic homes tours, as well as Flag Day and the 9/11 services in Waterfront Park, which could potentially have a lot more people coming downtown, and Main Street Beaufort could help bring people to the event and to stay for a meal and shopping. The idea, Ms. Fabian said, is to get people to go throughout downtown, not just Bay Street, and they would like to do more than just the two festivals, e.g., other art walks and wine strolls.

Ms. Fabian said in regard to Wi-Fi that Mr. Smalls has a picture of the hardware if it were attached. They have spoken to **Rick Griffin**, who has marina Wi-Fi. It would be about \$9000 a year to provide Wi-Fi from the pavilion to the playground. They need to create a landing page with terms to be agreed to, and then that page would advertise downtown. They will start trying to fund this when they get the go ahead.

Ms. Fabian said selling parking tokens to employees downtown has expanded into a request from council to get tokens for merchants to give to their customers. They are purchasing 10,000 tokens to give to Park Beaufort, who will sell them for 50 cents apiece to anyone with a City of Beaufort business license, to be given to customers. Locals who frequent downtown could be given tokens as a gift, too. They are not themed, but they hope to have them by Night On the Town. It cost \$2200 to purchase the tokens themselves, and Main Street Beaufort paid for those. Commissioner McFee said when the tokens are collected, they can be redistributed, and Ms. Fabian said yes, though some people will keep them as a souvenir or forget about them, but when Park Beaufort collects them, they can be given back out.

Commissioner Murray asked if they know what the loss of revenue would be. Ms. Fabian said it depends on the businesses that buy them; if the hospital bought a bunch and gave them to their employees, that would be great. Merchants don't currently pay for their customers' parking, Ms. Fabian said. Commissioner Murray asked if they have concerns with businesses giving them to employees. They have to write a business check, Ms. Fabian said, to purchase them, and agree not sell them for profit and for use themselves or their employees during regular working hours, and they're not for construction if their building is being worked on.

Commissioner Dechovitz said there are a lot of good ideas, but tourism is up by 2 times, and they're not really increasing the prosperity of the businesses downtown. He thinks they need to

think of something other than events and activities and work more toward something that will help the downtown businesses increase their revenues, especially among the established businesses. He encouraged her to think about what the Redevelopment Commission can help to do for businesses in downtown and in the historic core “to move the needle.”

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Commissioner Zara made a motion, seconded by Commissioner McFee to move into Executive Session, Pursuant to Title 30, Chapter 4, Section 70(a) (2) of the South Carolina Code of Laws, for a discussion of contractual matters. The motion was approved unanimously.

Commissioner McFee made a motion, second by Commissioner Murray, to come out of Executive Session and resume the regular Redevelopment Commission meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

There being no further business to come before the Commission, **Commissioner Dechovitz made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Goode to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously,** and the meeting adjourned at 6:56 p.m.