

A special work session of Beaufort City Council was held on January 29, 2019 at 5:00 p.m. in the Beaufort Municipal Complex, 1901 Boundary Street. In attendance were Mayor Billy Keyserling, Councilwoman Nan Sutton, Councilmen Stephen Murray and Phil Cromer, and Bill Prokop, city manager. Councilman Mike McFee was an excused absence.

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

Mayor Keyserling called the work session to order at 5:05 p.m. [1:56P]

CONTINUED DISCUSSION ABOUT LADY'S ISLAND PLAN

Mayor Keyserling discussed the difference between the Lady's Island Plan and the transportation plan for Lady's Island, which he said is a "vision." The county is "driving" the transportation plan and will "lay out what was agreed to after many public hearings and will come up with a preliminary plan," he said, and then will have a public hearing about that, followed by another public hearing after the plan is revised.

Mayor Keyserling said tonight's discussion is at the request for the Northern Beaufort County Implementation Committee, the county, and the City of Beaufort to review the Lady's Island Plan.

Councilman Murray said overall he thinks the plan is "an excellent document." He presented his questions about it:

Page 4 – "The footprint of urban/suburban growth will be limited by modifying existing growth boundaries . . ." – Councilman Murray challenged the statement because he feels growth will continue outside of the growth boundaries, and the city pulling back its growth boundaries will not prevent this, so he suggested striking this language. **Rob Merchant**, Beaufort County Community Development, said north of Springfield Road and on the other side of Brickyard Point Road, there are PUDs/developments that have been approved for many years. Most of them are built out except for Coosaw Point, which is a PUD that was approved before the current ordinance was in place, he said.

Councilman Murray said it would be easy for the City of Beaufort to pull back its growth boundaries on the north part of Lady's Island, but he thinks they should be careful telling the public that reducing the growth boundaries will limit additional growth on the north part of the island. He described the tools that would have to be put in place to do that, and that would require public pressure.

Mr. Merchant said the Comprehensive Plan supports that area remaining rural and "puts some extra teeth into that." The pressure will be there in the future to develop

those areas, and there have already been “people looking at those properties” to develop them. Of the undeveloped parcels that would support 2 dwelling units per acre, Greenheath is about 100 acres, and there’s really only one other property that size on the east side of Sams Point Road, he said.

Councilman Murray said some of the maps indicate that those areas are rural, but some of the areas are *suburban* density, and he thinks the maps should reflect that. Mr. Merchant said, “Most of that potential for build-out in the northern area” would be coming from Coosaw Point, where there is still some capacity within the PUD; “the rest would be taking the raw land” at a density of 1 dwelling unit per 3 acres and “assuming that every single property owner maximizes that potential and develop[s] at that density.” This scenario is possible but unlikely, he said, because not all property owners would “exercis[e] their full property rights.”

Councilman Murray said he agrees, but he thinks the statement about reducing urban and suburban growth by reducing existing growth boundaries “is an untrue statement.” Councilwoman Sutton said the 5,000 units where “the real growth” is are in the south, but the focus is on the north. Councilman Murray said, “It’s not up to us to decide” where the growth is focused. He wants it to be clear that there need to be other tools used in addition to pulling back growth boundaries. **Bob Semmler**, chair of the Lady’s Island Plan steering committee, said they have “used some of those tools already” (e.g., at Greenheath). There are already PUDs there, but reducing the growth boundaries is “putting a sign out there,” he said. Councilman Murray said he’s in favor of that, but it’s a more complicated issue than just reducing the growth boundaries.

Page 9 – Councilman Murray said there has been a discussion about a “rising sea level overlay,” and he suggested that might be a way to reduce future growth, but he didn’t see that reflected in the plan. Mr. Merchant said it’s a possibility, but it would need to be a “countywide policy.” A large portion of the county is within a flood plain, he said, and that would have great impact on property owners, so he’s cautious about it. Mayor Keyserling said he feels anyone buying property should see that map and know that based on projections, “they’re taking a risk.” It would be similar to the disclosure for people buying properties in the AICUZ.

Councilman Murray suggested it would be better to not allow building in the flood plain because of “sea levels and their impact on our growth environment.”

Councilman Murray suggested that on the build-out map, it would make sense to put “green dots in the PUDs” to indicate the amount of density that is allowed there (e.g., Cat Island, Cane Island, Greenheath). Mr. Merchant said he thinks the map works, but that suggestion is “a different approach.”

Page 20 – Councilman Murray asked for clarity about text under the “City of Beaufort Comprehensive Plan and Civic Master Plan” heading. Mr. Merchant agreed that the

wording is awkward. Councilman Murray said the language confuses him. Mr. Semmler said they are focused on Lady's Island. Mr. Merchant said the "commercial corridor" reference is to the Sea Island Corridor.

Councilman Murray said he knows that the county has a greenway trail plan and that Stantec has a plan, so he asked how they relate. Mr. Semmler said there are maps of proposed biking and pedestrian trails, but they "won't all happen." Stantec came up with overlays of old ideas about bike paths, but "every time it's been refined more and more." He sees this as a subset of the Northern Regional Plan.

Mr. Merchant said he, city staff, and a county engineer looked at the recommendations and put together a composite picture that they built on for the Lady's Island Plan. Councilman Murray asked if there needs to be a completely new plan. Mr. Semmler said the plans work together, but on Meridian, for example, they don't know what it will look like yet; the plans are "all reinforcing" one another, and they don't want to take away the input of the engineers and the public as they create it. Councilman Murray said he understands that, but plan duplication "costs money." Mr. Merchant said the Civic Master Plan only looks at the center of Lady's Island, "along with the corridor study." Past efforts have offered "a glimpse of the possibly of pathways," but now they are "looking at this as part of the wider network."

Page 23 – Councilman Murray said on #9, in regard to the Beaufort County airport master plan update, the recommendation at the last meeting was to strike the language from the Lady's Island Plan about "no runway extension" being considered. It's covered in 3 places, and it's "a bit out of the scope of the plan," he said, plus there's some "double-speak" about it in a section further on.

Mr. Semmler said he doesn't think there's any contradiction at all. The plan talks about the airport 3 times, specifically the extension of the runway. The FAA has been very involved in what happens to the airport, he said. The extension of the runway into the marsh would require an acre of marsh. Other aspects of the airport plan are an "outstanding, good plan," Mr. Semmler said, but county and city plans all "talk about keeping our natural resources," and Lady's Island citizens always give input to "save our marshes." The reason not to extend the runway is to save the marsh, he said. The county has made it clear that "the big airport in Beaufort County" is on Hilton Head because of tourism.

The Lady's Island airport is an integral part of the history of Lady's Island, Mr. Semmler said, and it should be. The wording could be changed, he said; the county and **Jon Rimbaud**, Beaufort County airports director, have initiated a conversation with the FAA about what the language should be. The airport is "always going to be there," Mr. Semmler said, and extending the runway for net jets to come in hasn't been shown to do anything more to offer "an economic advantage."

Councilwoman Sutton said last week they had discussed taking out the word “never” in regard to the runway extension. Councilman Murray said he agrees with Mr. Semmler about the runway extension, but he’d “like to see some professional analysis.” Mr. Semmler said there are 1,000 pages of analysis. Councilman Murray said he thinks the runway extension is outside the scope of the Lady’s Island plan, and there are contradictions, so he recommends modifying the language. Mr. Merchant said he is working on that with Mr. Rimbaud. There should be more about the airport master plan, so Mr. Rimbaud is creating a summary, he said. Also, the recommendation is to work with aviation experts and elected officials if a runway extension is ever considered in the future, Mr. Merchant said.

Mayor Keyserling said he thinks this language is irrelevant and only “window dressing” because “that runway is never going to be extended.” In the past, he refused to support the FAA plan because of the runway. He feels “the marsh is going to be saved” because there would not be public support for extending the runway into the marsh. The pressure on the environment, moving Highway 21, and filling the marsh “are things of the past,” Mayor Keyserling said; there are other “much more important, real things” to do to save the marsh, and those should be addressed.

Page 25 – Councilman Murray said in the public priorities, he was surprised to see that “decent jobs weren’t listed in there.” Mr. Semmler said he was surprised too, but the genesis of the plan is coming from Lady’s Island citizens. Mr. Merchant said what’s in the plan is “what rose to the top” from the public.

Page 29 – #1 “integrated network of streets . . .” Councilman Murray said he thinks “some people are left out,” and he suggested adding “the sea islands.” Mr. Semmler said they had discussed “how far do we reach?” Lady’s Island has “a lot of different facets to it” and is “a gateway,” he said. Mr. Merchant said “Lady’s Island” is “inclusive of other islands”; they’re not excluding those other places, but are instead using Lady’s Island as an “umbrella” that includes the Sea Islands.

Mayor Keyserling said, as an example, during the Boundary Street project, the city got the most complaints about it from people in Burton, who were using it as a gateway into the city and were being slowed down by construction, so he thinks it “wouldn’t hurt to include” the sea islands in this language. Councilman Murray said it “leaves a large group of folks out” if they do not include the Sea Islands, so he suggested making “this small modification” to the language.

Page 30 – Councilman Cromer asked if there had been any consideration for including “aquifer recharge areas.” Mr. Merchant said that wasn’t addressed in this plan, but it’s included in the county’s Comprehensive Plan.

Page 32 – Councilman Murray referenced the italicized paragraph at the bottom of the page; he thinks it’s “a bit misleading” about the restriction of suburban growth by

reducing growth boundaries.

Page 33 – growth boundary map – Councilman Murray said he’s fine with growth boundary reductions on the north end of the island and believes the city might favor “further reduction” of those growth boundaries, but city council has been very clear about wanting to close donut holes caused by “wonky annexations” made by previous councils, so in 2007 or 2008, the city annexed 6/8ths or 7/8ths of Distant Island. From Walmart to out to Distant Island “creates a bit of a donut hole for us,” he said, and this plan “requests that we withdraw our growth boundaries from the Cowen Creek Bridge, just east of where the Walmart property is.” Most of that property is extremely low, Councilman Murray said, and if a rising sea level overlay were put on it, “or we reduce the fill,” as the plan recommends, “it would probably prohibit most of the growth . . . along that corridor anyway.” He asked, if the city agreed not to upzone – and kept or reduced the density – if it were to annex those parcels at the property owners’ request, if that be a reasonable compromise. Mr. Semmler said he personally thinks it would be, and if the city did that, he thinks “something like that could be worked out.” Someone on the steering committee “lives on that boundary,” he added.

Mr. Merchant said there are some property owners “just east of Wal-Mart,” but the city hadn’t taken action, he thought, pending the Lady’s Island Plan. He thinks this issue is very important to many members of the steering committee. Also, county councilman **York Glover** held a meeting for members of the Eustis community, and there was overwhelming support for retracting that growth boundary.

Councilwoman Sutton said the Eustis community was told they would be paying “much more” in taxes than they pay in the county if they came into the city. Mayor Keyserling said after the hurricanes, the city “made a huge investment in helping to clean up the island,” so if people expect city services, and there’s a donut hole, it’s only logical that it should be filled. There has not been any large residential annexation on Lady’s Island, Mayor Keyserling said, only the filling of donut holes. The idea is to have commercial businesses on Lady’s Island to keep residents from having to leave the island for that, which helps with traffic, he said.

Mr. Merchant said there has been a big expansion of the Lady’s Island business district, and there’s a concern among Lady’s Island residents about the city “pushing up to Cowen Creek.” He said retracting the growth boundary makes a clear policy statement “that we’re not going to urbanize the rest of that corridor.” He thinks retracting the boundary “sends a clear message” that they don’t want to “sprawl all the way to that bridge.”

Councilman Murray said he proposes that the city not withdraw its growth boundaries to the stoplight at Distant Island Drive, to allow Distant Island property owners to be annexed into the city if they choose to, with a commitment from the city that it “would try to match the existing county zoning and not upzone those parcels to allow any

greater density than what's currently allowed in the county." Mr. Merchant asked if this needs to be in the plan, or if the details should be worked out when they go to implementation. Mr. Semmler said they are still drafting the implementation plan for this, and city and county staffs could "get together and work on it" and implement that on their own, if they think this is the right approach. He feels Mr. Merchant's logic makes sense, as does Councilman Murray's statement in regard to donut holes.

Councilman Murray said the city doesn't force annexation, but if a property owner wants to be annexed, "and it closes a donut hole," he thinks it should be allowed.

Page 35 – Councilman Murray feels the map is inaccurate; the suburban neighborhoods "ought to be identified in the plan." He said, "Much of the northern part of Lady's Island is not rural. That ship has sailed." There are PUDs and existing neighborhoods there, which he pointed out. They are "suburban-level densities," he said, and they should be identified in that map. Mr. Merchant said this is not a Future Land Use map, and it doesn't have that effect. Councilman Murray said he understands that, but he thinks it "ought to have some respect for current land uses" and should show the areas that will continue to have suburban densities.

Mr. Merchant said this was something the steering committee worked on, and they "had to make compromises." Councilman Murray said this is "not a fatal flaw" in the plan, but if the public is reading the map, the suburban-level densities should be identified as such; Coosaw Point is not a rural area, for example.

Mr. Semmler said the idea of bringing down the growth boundaries was to "show that area." They know the developments such as Councilman Murray has pointed out are there, so he asked if they could "put a little line around" them. Councilman Murray said all of that area is not rural. He hopes the public will read the Lady's Island Plan, so there should be more clarity about this for the layperson.

Page 45 – Councilman Murray and Mr. Merchant discussed the densities in regard to sewer availability.

Page 49 – Mr. Merchant told Councilman Murray that this is an area where a wording change is proposed.

Page 49 – "packing sheds . . ." – Councilman Murray said he thinks this is a good concept, but he doesn't know how they protect them when they are public businesses. Mr. Merchant said the language is there to make sure that they are acknowledging "their use and importance."

Page 51 – regional and commercial principals – Councilman Murray asked who keeps track of existing development agreements at the county. Mr. Merchant said planning/community development monitors that. Some development agreements

“continually get re-upped,” he said, while others sunset, and “we take a step back from that.” There has been a policy in place to sunset PUDs that haven’t been used, Mr. Merchant said; it’s “never a very clean process.”

Councilman Murray said he thinks it’s a great recommendation, and he thinks it’s important that they have the tools to monitor them. He’s concerned that the Lady’s Island Community Preservation Committee (CPC) is not the appropriate body to address this. Mr. Merchant said it is the role of staff and elected officials. There might be opportunities for the CPC to weigh in on this, but “we see this as the job of staff” to monitor these.

Page 51, #3 – Councilman Murray said he favors a regulation limiting fill, and he’s “still baffled that we allowed Walmart to put in 28,000 loads of dirt,” so he thinks this is “a great recommendation.” He asked if there is waterfront property that has been filled or if that is allowed currently under city or county zoning. There’s another section that talks about limiting fill, which is not related to waterfront property, he said, so he asked about the connection between limiting fill and preserving “existing waterfront.” Neither the Taco Bell nor Walmart sites are waterfront, Councilman Murray added. Mr. Merchant said he thinks this is about avoiding the need for seawalls in low-lying areas, for example. Mr. Semmler said they are trying to protect themselves in the future, which is why it is in the plan.

Page 52 – Councilman Murray said he feels suburban densities should be identified here.

Page 53, #7 – Development will continue to occur in these areas, even if the growth boundaries are withdrawn, Councilman Murray said.

On #4 on page 53, Councilman Cromer asked about “utilizing all the tools and initiatives available to mitigate or prevent additional development” in rural areas of Lady’s Island, such as the Rural and Critical Land Preservation Program and the purchase of development rights. He asked how far they have gone toward “looking at the policies,” for example. Mr. Merchant said they have looked at the greenprint and “identified the area . . . covered by the AICUZ.” A lot of land has been purchased in that area, he said, and they have been approached about other parcels. They’re saying that this would be used to limit growth in that area, he said. Councilman Cromer asked if they have looked at a policy on fill dirt. Mr. Merchant said they would be looking at the policy for the whole county.

Page 55 – Councilman Murray suggested modifications.

Page 68 – Councilman Murray said of civic engagement, “we’re very *reactive* when it comes to development projects” (e.g., Whitehall and Walmart). He suggested that they look now at the tools and the parcels that are available “before there’s a project in the

hopper.” Mr. Semmler said they hope this plan will allow that.

Page 69 – “A better system is needed . . . consensus should not result in more complexity . . . or a longer review process” – Councilman Murray said he thinks this recommendation is “spot-on.”

Page 70 – “Improve public notice” – #2 – Councilman Murray said when a development application is filed with the city, it’s added online. He asked if the county is doing that. Mr. Merchant replied, “We’re working on” a comprehensive online permitting process. The county is probably a year out from full implementation, he said.

Page 71 – expanding the role of the Lady’s Island CPC – Councilman Murray agrees with “focusing on developments that require discretionary approval,” but he’s concerned that adding “a layer of review” contradicts the goal stated on page 69 of the plan. He thinks those reviews are covered by the Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPC) and/or the Northern Regional Planning Implementation Committee.

Mr. Merchant said the county uses the CPC as a sounding board for map amendments and if there is a text change to a zoning district on Lady’s Island. They don’t want to encumber the process of permitting, so they are not talking about that, he said, but about rezoning applications. Mr. Semmler said there have been 2 or 3 cases where a developer came to the city or the county, and staff recommended they go to the CPC first.

Mr. Semmler explained how the CPC works and said he doesn’t feel this would “add another layer of bureaucracy.” Mr. Merchant said CPC review is “a courtesy,” and county staff uses it “to help guide our position.” It has meant a lighter workload for county staff, he added, and saved some developers headaches and application fees.

Councilman Murray said he thinks “a more formal process of appointing members” who “take the work seriously” and “participate on a regular basis” is important, but he’s troubled that staff would be “going to a review body and adding” a second or third “layer of review for the development community when it’s not required by ordinance,” so he’d “like to talk to some members of the development community to see how they feel about that process.” He has a lot of faith in the MPC and the Northern Regional Planning Implementation Committee to provide councils with guidance on many of these issues, so he asked if there’s a way to “give those bodies more . . . oversight of some of these issues without creating a whole separate regulatory layer” with the CPC.

Councilwoman Sutton said Councilman McFee was watching the proceeding from home via Facebook and had texted her to ask if the CPC is “just advisory.” Mr. Merchant said yes. An applicant can file a rezoning application and be heard by staff, the MPC, and elected officials, but the CPC is “a sounding board,” and it assists staff with citizen input on certain matters, he said.

Page 76 – “endorsement of this plan . . .” – Councilman Murray asked if the Lady’s Island Business and Professionals Association (LIBPA), Sea Island Corridor Coalition, and Coastal Conservation League “have formally adopted the plan.” Mr. Merchant said the groups would “endorse” the plan, not formally “adopt” it. “We did go to LIPBA,” he said, and **Kate Schaefer** of Coastal Conservation League is on the plan’s steering committee.

Chuck Newton said Sea Island Corridor Coalition has voted unanimously to endorse the plan. Ms. Schaefer said Coastal Conservation League doesn’t have “a formal endorsement process,” but it “will support and encourage the adoption of the plan.”

Page 77 – “establish implementation leadership . . .” – Councilman Murray said he thought this “could be a bit simplified.” He read the section and asked why it is necessary to establish an interim subcommittee for implementation, but then “as soon as the Community Preservation Committee is formalized,” the responsibility for implementation would be “transitioned to that group.” He asked if they couldn’t “just stand up the Community Preservation Committee and make them responsible for implementation,” or if “the Community Preservation Committee [is] the appropriate body for implementation.” Councilman Murray suggested “staff technical groups with other representatives from the local governments” would be “more appropriate, since most of the implementation will have to occur inside the political jurisdictions.”

Mr. Merchant agreed that this is “probably” an unnecessary “extra step.” Even after this is adopted, he said, “some group . . . would lay down the ground rules” for the CPC, and “once they’re in place,” the CPC would oversee implementation. “This is a lot of words,” he said, but it would be “a simple process.” The CPC would be staffed by county and city planning staff and would come up with a prioritization schedule for implementation, but the action of going to city council or county council would be the responsibility of the planning staffs.

Councilman Murray asked if, given that, it wouldn't be better to use the Northern Regional Planning Implementation Committee. Mr. Merchant said the idea is to have something that’s more unique to Lady’s Island; the Northern Regional Plan covers more of the county. Councilman Murray said he’s suggesting a subcommittee of the Northern Regional Planning Implementation Committee. Once the CPC is formed, he said, it would be responsible for implementation actions, but he thinks an Implementation Committee subcommittee would have “more teeth.” Mr. Merchant said the goal is to have “cheerleaders” for the Lady’s Island Plan, and the Northern Regional Planning Implementation Committee has a lot of other responsibilities.

Page 79 – “. . . implementation strategies for Phase 2 transportation projects,” including Lady’s Island Drive/Island Causeway and Lady’s Island Drive/Ribaut Road – Councilman Murray said there is “obviously . . . broad public concern about the road improvements” and how they are structured. He personally feels that the Lady’s Island Drive/Ribaut

Road intersection and “potentially even Lady’s Island Drive/Island Causeway are . . . higher priorities than some of the things identified in Phase 1,” so he thinks as part of ongoing processes with the county to identify how the road improvements “are going to roll out,” they should not put Lady’s Island Drive/Ribaut Road in Port Royal at “the bottom of the list” because it’s “a trouble spot.”

Page 79 – Councilman Murray asked if “require connections and new streets for major development and redevelopment projects” refers to making that a requirement for developers. Mr. Merchant said, in looking at the redevelopment of any land on Lady’s Island, they would look “for opportunities to connect to neighboring developments or providing through-streets, depending on the scale of development.”

Page 80 – “. . . funding sources, a local options gas tax” – Mr. Merchant said they have looked at things that could be enacted locally to provide funding sources for the plan, and some would have to be worked out with state officials. The gas tax is a “long shot,” he said, but others are “more attainable.”

Page 83 – modified growth boundaries – Councilman Murray said this is another place where he has issues with the language about growth boundaries.

Page 83 – policies and regulations to limit dirt fill – Councilman Murray suggested that this language should be used in the “preserving waterfront” sections discussed on previous pages of the plan.

Page 85 – Councilman Murray read under “Streetscape” that they should “ensure that the roadway improvements recommended in the Lady’s Island corridor study are designed . . . to not preclude additional improvements to the streetscape, including ensuring that adequate right-of-way is reserved.” The Beaufort Code requires that “everything [is] built right up on the street.” He said on page 43 of “your Village Center Principles,” there’s a suggestion that liner buildings be on the front of the lot, so there’s a conflict in the recommendations. Councilman Murray said there should be clarity about whether “you want build-to on the line” or to “ensure there’s adequate right-of-way being reserved.”

Page 85 – “Economic reuse” – In regard to creating economic incentives to attract developers to underutilized properties, Councilman Murray explained the differences in primary and secondary economic development; the focus of incentives needs to be on primary economic development. He said Lady’s Island residents want them to “tamp down on the development a little bit,” not create incentives to attract developers to develop more along the corridor.

Page 86 – Councilman Murray asked if they are really committed to updating the plan every 5 years, and if so, who would pay for that.

Page 89 – “Community Form” – Councilman Murray said, “Changing land use regulations and putting together a comprehensive plan on land use between 2 political jurisdictions is going to be more than ‘easy’ and more than ‘cheap,’” which he thinks should be reflected here on the costs, timeline, and degree of difficulty. Mr. Merchant said he thinks most of that work has been done with the city’s Beaufort Code and the county’s Community Development Code. Councilman Murray said he’d like to talk more about this later.

Appendix, page 1, bottom line – population projections – Councilman Murray asked if the study looked at the potential growth in population “in the rest of the Sea Islands.” Mr. Merchant said that was included in the traffic calculations. Councilman Murray said the majority of the projections focus on population and building potential, rather than on transportation impacts.

Mr. Semmler said, “Walmart has taken a tremendous amount of traffic off the roads, because people don’t have to cross the bridges,” which is an “unintentional benefit” of having Walmart there. Councilman Murray said his biggest concern “is getting everybody on and off of those bridges on a daily basis.” He agrees with the recommendation to “hold off on a third bridge right now,” and he would have liked that to have been addressed in greater depth in the plan.

Councilwoman Sutton said Councilman McFee had expressed concern that the CPC would be given “too much authority.” Also, she said, in regard to the growth boundaries, Councilman McFee feels it’s important that the areas “that aren’t really rural” are not designated that way.

Mayor Keyserling said he’d hold his comments until “council takes up the plan.”

Mr. Merchant said the goal for the plan is for the city and county to “both adopt the same document.” He asked if there is a general consensus on council about the changes that need to be made.

Mayor Keyserling said since the review process started, he’s been “thinking about all the plans we’ve done” in the city and county, as well as the Northern Regional Plan, which took 5 years to complete. Now that the Northern Regional Plan has been in place for more than 10 years, and as a member of the implementation committee, he feels he’s been “derelict” about “paying attention to moving it forward.” Expectations are created when plans are passed, he said, but “they’re not plans, they’re visions.” Mayor Keyserling said he needs to think about whether city council should approve “a resolution to support this vision,” because the Lady’s Island Plan is a vision “until implementation occurs,” when “it becomes a plan.” He said he’s “having a little bit of trouble calling this a plan,” which “creates an expectation” that “something’s going to happen.” Mayor Keyserling thinks the Lady’s Island Plan is a “necessary step,” and the work done on it is “fabulous,” but he owes the public “realistic expectations.”

Mr. Merchant said the steering committee has an expectation that this plan is going to the city and county for adoption, so if it's not a plan, he asked, "How do we get there?" Mayor Keyserling said city and county councils could "endorse the vision" and then "plug in the pieces."

Mr. Merchant said when the Northern Regional Plan was adopted after a year of work, the next two years were spent on the details of the plan. Councilman Murray said he wouldn't hold up the Lady's Island Plan for his "minor concerns." Historically, plans have been made and then shelved, he said, and he thinks Mayor Keyserling is saying that passing the Lady's Island Plan is "just the first step."

Councilman Murray said Mr. Merchant needs feedback on issues discussed tonight. Mr. Semmler said the Northern Regional Plan was written 10 years ago and requires review every 5 years, which hasn't been done. This plan is a subset of the Northern Regional Plan, he said, and all other plans were also reviewed as part of the process of coming up with the Lady's Island Plan. Mayor Keyserling said the city is prepared to participate in the process, but he "personally want[s] to see more accountability" and "a plan, rather than a vision."

A member of the public said citizens want to be more involved in this plan. Mayor Keyserling described what he has perceived as the public's involvement in the Lady's Island Plan.

Veda Yohe asked if there are two separate plans, with transportation being "something totally separate." Mayor Keyserling said, "The two plans are presumed to work together." This plan incorporates the transportation plan, he said, but the Stantec plan "could be changed if the public wants to be heard" on it.

Mr. Semmler said there are 11 priorities in the Stantec study, and there will be public hearings on each of those. The transportation study took a year or 18 months, he said, and then the work on the Lady's Island Plan began. There were numerous public meetings for that, Mr. Semmler said, and they were publicized.

Robert DeTreville said he had gone to those public meetings and had provided input, and he feels this planning is very important to residents and business owners on Lady's Island. He feels Boundary Street is "very difficult" now for people using it to get to businesses on Boundary Street. When Sea Island Parkway was widened, Mr. DeTreville's father gave the county 10 feet of his property, and Mr. DeTreville would like it back because now it "encumbers my business." Other businesses use the middle lane of Sea Island Parkway to get supplies to their businesses, he said, and they won't be able to do so if the middle lane is taken away.

Sunset Boulevard traffic has increased because of Oyster Bluff development, Mr.

DeTreville said, and if there is a roundabout there, with a light at Highway 802 and “undulating medians down Miller Avenue” to slow traffic, “people will take the cut-through on Sunset,” not stay on the roundabout. He said he is concerned about “shunting traffic through a purely residential area.”

Councilman Murray read a memo from the county about its “process for the roadway and the pathway development.” He said it would be critical for the public to provide feedback at those two community meetings. There is a conceptual plan now, he said, but there is also “reality.” The first iteration of the Boundary Street project was “vastly different” from “where we ended up,” so Councilman Murray encouraged the public to stay engaged with county engineering.

Carol Ruff said there's been a lot of talk about stakeholders having a voice in the process and how there have been “multiple meetings.” Many residents were present at those meetings, but “no one thought that taking a highway and diverting it into residential neighborhoods was a good idea.” Citizens gave their opinions about that, she said, “but it’s still happening.” Ms. Ruff said they’ve “all voiced our concerns,” especially if they will be directly affected. She feels the county might have to “buy up a lot of those residences” to use the residential neighborhoods for traffic. She believes “the problem is” the idea of a “walking village,” and “to fix that mistake,” they are doing it “on the backs of residences.”

Ms. Ruff feels the plans have been “terribly thought out.” Lady’s Island residents did not “miss the boat,” she said; they have been “coming to meetings for years.” She owns a business and a residence in this area, “so I’m getting hit twice.” What has been planned “is going to disrupt a lot of homes and businesses,” Ms. Ruff said.

Mayor Keyserling asked Ms. Ruff what she feels should be done. He said the city jumped into the transportation plan because it “lost the fight on Walmart,” for example, and it has invested its impact fees and “participated with the county.” The city is a small stakeholder, he said, but it participates because the city is “a part of Lady’s Island.” He asked how they can “stop a moving train.”

Ms. Ruff said the problem is that there are “a number of jurisdictions” involved on Lady’s Island. If the plan is to buy out residents to make a roundabout, that’s “fine,” she said, if “that’s what you need to do.”

Mayor Keyserling said the stakeholders opposing the transportation plan need to “go to every county council meeting” because the City of Beaufort is “not driving this.”

Councilman Murray said the commercial density in the corridor is a result of the number of rooftops on Lady’s Island, and the county has approved the densities.

Ms. Ruff said the village concept was **Libby Anderson’s**, so the city has participated “in

some of the stuff,” but “the consumers” on Lady’s Island aren’t “interested in finger-pointing.”

Diana Rundquist asked if there are opportunities to use “what we have,” such as “metering lights,” instead of “taking away the charm of our island.” She feels they haven’t looked at alternatives. Mayor Keyserling said SCDOT (South Carolina Department of Transportation) “owns those roads . . . and control[s] them,” so that department will have to review the plan and sign off on it. Ms. Rundquist suggested getting SCDOT to sign off on “something better,” using “what we have.”

Mayor Keyserling asked how Mr. Semmler would advise the Lady’s Island residents. Mr. Semmler told those present to keep going to all of the meetings and to keep telling those running them that “this isn’t what we want.” The engineers consider everything, including what they have talked about tonight, he said, so if the residents don’t want what is being discussed, they need to keep speaking out about that, including by writing letters.

Ms. Rundquist said it feels like no one except Lady’s Island residents wants to change anything in the plan.

Ms. Ruff asked if there’s a plan to have an urban planner and a landscape architect “involved in this design,” so **Rob McFee**’s office does not have “the final decision” on “what this is going to be.” She hopes that there will be involvement by “more than just the engineers.”

Eric Greenway, Beaufort County’s community development director, said, “We certainly hope so.” Engineers have a certain set of principles that they feel they need to go by, he said, while urban planners feel differently about the streetscapes than engineers do. “This is the first step of the process. The transportation elements” in the Lady’s Island Plan are not the “final say on what happens on Lady’s Island,” Mr. Greenway said.

Ms. Ruff said she had been told the roads were “a done deal.” Mr. Greenway said, “You’re dealing with plans,” and they can be changed. No one wants to do anything with transportation or planning on Lady’s Island that would be “detrimental to anyone’s quality of life,” he said. Before the detailed plans are developed, there needs to be public input on the transportation design elements, Mr. Greenway said. Ms. Ruff said residents are “a little weary of public input,” but they will “continue to show up” for meetings.

Mr. Greenway said he’s “done this for 25 years,” and “at no point” have planners “done anything that is detrimental to a neighborhood or a community.” There will be public input on the design of those corridors, he said. Mr. Greenway said he understands “early involvement,” but they are dealing with “concepts” now, and they’re “not at the design component,” which will be the time that residents and business owners need to

give their input.

Councilman Murray provided the example of the initial Boundary Street project; plans called for a roundabout and a parallel road. As the plan rolled out, they looked at many things, and the parallel road was taken off the plans until a later date, he said. There is an opportunity on Lady's Island for the public to be involved by talking about their concerns "from the time [plans] are conceptual to the time they are reality." Mr. Greenway said, "Minor tweaks are always an option" in the process.

Mr. Greenway encouraged the public to call or email the county's community development department with questions.

Cindy O'Neal asked if the recommendations in the traffic plan are what the engineers will go by. Mayor Keyserling said, "That's where they start," but that's not necessarily "exactly where they go." Ms. O'Neal said they are going to try to continue to funnel the traffic through the neighborhoods. She asked if they "will never be able to change that." Mayor Keyserling said, "Never say 'never'."

Mr. Greenway said plans were made based on public input at the time, but that can change. SCDOT listens to public input and "will modify things when it makes sense to do so," he said. The idea is to improve the quality of life on Lady's Island and manage the growth that's coming to "prevent drastic and very bleak decisions in the future." The steering committee for the Lady's Island Plan has created the best-case scenario for Lady's Island that could be done "based on the information that we have at this time," Mr. Greenway said. The planners for the city and the county are not the citizens' adversaries, and while the plan isn't perfect, he said, "it's probably the best we have at this point in time."

Billy O'Neal said they see the plans, and because of the referendum, there is \$30 million to implement the transportation plan, but property hasn't been acquired, etc. He asked how "we vote[d] on that [plan] when none of it's settled." Councilman Murray said the same way they did for the Boundary Street project, which got funding from various sources well before the plan was finalized. The \$30 million they have now for transportation improvements isn't all they will have, he said, but it's "a good start."

Mr. O'Neal asked if some of that money could be reallocated to some of the Phase 2 projects, which he feels "have more merit." Mr. Greenway said they're limited by state law concerning the referendum, so that might not be possible. Mr. O'Neal said the corridor plan is referenced, so it's been identified. Mr. Greenway said the referendum money is "just a start." Those funds could be leveraged for additional state and federal money to help to get to the Phase 2 projects, he said, and *that* money could be "adjusted and moved around."

Mr. O'Neal said the plan is to "rip up" existing trails and put down "new ones . . . just to

get a little strip of grass there,” which he thinks is a waste of money. Mr. Greenway said they might find out in the design phase that they could do this a different way. Mr. O’Neal said that would be changing the plan on which the referendum was based. Mayor Keyserling said “none of us voted on a specific plan.” An unidentified member of the public said the referendum that she voted on was not specific. Mr. Greenway said if it is a general referendum, “then it can be adjusted,” but not if it’s specific. Mayor Keyserling said it was “something like . . . ‘for road improvements to mitigate traffic.’”

The same unidentified member of the public said that at the public meetings, “the majority” of those present “were not for” the ideas that were being “put up on the board.”

Councilman Murray read the language of the referendum.

Ms. Rundquist asked who would be looking at alternatives to “direct traffic away from our neighborhoods.” Various people told her who would do that. Councilman Murray said they heard 2 years ago that the traffic was becoming a problem on Lady’s Island, so they’re trying to respond to the needs of Lady’s Island residents. The issue is a capacity problem and a finite amount of land, he said.

Councilman Murray recommended that those present closely read the Stantec report. He feels Lady’s Island residents need to look at capacity issues and at how much growth is predicted to occur. Everyone is open to input from the residents, he said; for example, staggered school start times are “an awesome idea.”

A member of the public asked if the engineers consider the effects of medians on businesses. Mr. Greenway said yes, they do, but they don’t look at “the impact on every single parcel” along the parkway. The transportation engineers’ job is to keep traffic moving along that corridor, he said. The more curb or median cuts there are, the more capacity is “eaten up,” but they do consider the effects on businesses, he said. When the plans are made is when the individual business owners can state how the design would affect their individual businesses, Mr. Greenway said, and there can be changes, as there were on the Boundary Street plans.

Mr. Greenway said people can come to public meetings to speak about their needs and their issues with the design. Consultants don’t know every individual property, which is why they hold public input meetings. The public will have that opportunity, he said, “when we know our design.”

Mayor Keyserling said as part of the Boundary Street project, one person met with every individual property owner, and they “did the best they could,” including moving a business to a better location. Some small businesses “were lost,” he said, but there’s already been more than \$20 million in investment on Boundary Street. Councilman Murray said it’s a much safer corridor now, and the raised medians are thought to have

“dramatically” lowered “the accident rate.”

Chris Butler said he would like the airport not to be noted in the Lady’s Island Plan. The “port project” has “lost some options” because of the length of the airport’s runway, he said. Since “the research wasn’t done for it,” he feels it shouldn't be in the plan.

There being no further business to come before council, the work session adjourned at 8:24 p.m.

DRAFT