



City Council Worksession

Meeting Minutes – Planning Conference Room – 1st Floor

February 28, 2023

I. CALL TO ORDER

5:00 PM

Mayor Stephen D. Murray III

Members of Council in attendance - Neil Lipsitz, Mike McFee, Mitch Mitchell, Josh Scallate and Mayor Murray.

II. DISCUSSIONS

A. Interviews of applicants for Boards and Commissions - Cultural District Advisory Board.

Council held a question-and-answer session for all applicants.

Mitzi McClure and Heidi Smith interviewed for the at-large seat.

B. Whitehall Park update.

Linda Roper, Downtown Operations and Community Services Director, started off by saying that the construction is nearing the end. A soft opening of the park is being planned. They are going to take the plywood off the connector bridge to allow foot traffic to enter into the park, but signs will be posted that the facilities are not yet operational. The City will also start to take over the maintenance of the park. No reservations will be allowed until policies are set. She stated that this is only the first phase.

Scott Marshall, City Manager, stated that the City will be setting the rules and guidelines for reserving the park and posting the fee schedule in the Fiscal Year 24 Budget.

Ms. Roper said the policies will remain similar to those of the other parks and the fees collected will go to maintaining the park. She pointed out that Beaufort County owns the park, but the City is operating and maintaining it.

C. Contributing Structure Process for Historic Preservation.

Mayor Murray gave a little background by stating that the last time the list was updated was in 1997. A couple years ago, Council thought it was time to get the list reviewed.

Curt Freese, Community and Economic Development Director, began by stating that a list of 54 recommended properties to add was made by John Milner Architects Inc., in January 2022. These properties would be added to the list of the above ground historic sites. If added, all exterior modifications must go through the Historic District Review Board for approval. All demolitions must also be approved by the Board. Presently, these structures only require staff level approval for modifications or demolitions.

Councilman Mitchell is concerned about the costs that might be incurred by the homeowner.

Councilman Lipsitz, inquired about structures that might be on this contributing list, if they had already been given permission to be demolished, what will happen. Mr. Freese responded that they would be grandfathered in and would be able to proceed. Bill Harvey, City Attorney, acknowledged this fact.

Mr. Freese then went over the proposed process on approving these structures to be added. That will include notifying all property owners, having public hearings, and posting signs on the properties. He then went over allowing a property owner to opt out of being added to this contributing structure list. He stated that they contacted the State Historical Preservation Office. They recommended not to allow anyone to opt out.

Councilman Scallate stands with staff on allowing an opt out option. He would like to see if the staff is prepared to take on all these potential new additions. He wants to see the permitting process simplified first.

Mayor Pro Tem, McFee, does not wish to see a mass exodus from the area. He feels that the processes that are in place are exactly what is needed.

Mayor Murray believes that the opting out by the property owners should be at the discretion of the Council. He would like to have more background information on each of the properties before decisions are made.

Lise Sundrla, Beaufort Historic District Foundation, and Mike Sutton, Vice Chair of the Historic District Review Board, both spoke on this issue.

There will be some educational sessions between the Council, Staff, and the Historic District Review Board to obtain some clarity on what the decisions made will mean for property owners.

D. 2023 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) priority needs assessment.

Carrie Gorsuch, Infrastructure Project Support Coordinator, stated that this program is designed to aid units of local government in improving economic opportunities and meeting community revitalization needs, particularly those with low to moderate income. Barbara Johnson with Lowcountry Council of Governments addressed Council on January 24, 2023, and presented the program opportunities that are available. She proceeded to go over the categories and their funding limits.

Reece Bertholf, Deputy City Manager, indicated that the last time a resolution was made was in 2020. The needs have basically remained the same in the 2023 resolution that is being presented.

Ms. Gorsuch then went over three outstanding projects and their statuses.

Spanish Moss Trail - \$200,000.00
Calhoun Street - \$750,000.00
Washington Street Park - \$250,000.00

E. Development Code text amendment meetings.

Curt Freese, Community and Economic Development Director reported that another worksession would be added on the 3rd Tuesday of each month starting March 21, 2023, to start going over amendments to the Beaufort Code. This will take place chapter by chapter. All processes will be followed to move the changes forward. These will take place until they are no longer needed.

III. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Councilman Lipsitz made a motion to go into Executive Session and seconded by Mayor Pro Tem, McFee.

- A. Pursuant to Title 30, Chapter 4, Section (70) (a) (2) of the South Carolina Code of Law: Receipt of Legal Advice - regarding pending contracts.
- B. Pursuant to Title 30, Chapter 4, Section (70) (a) (2) of the South Carolina Code of Law: Receipt of Legal Advice - regarding litigation.
- C. Pursuant to Title 30, Chapter 4, Section (70) (a) (2) of the South Carolina Code of Law: Discussion regarding the proposed sale or purchase of property.

Councilman Lipsitz made a motion to come out of Executive Session and seconded by Mayor Pro Tem, McFee.

No actions from Executive Session

IV. ADJOURN

7:16 PM

Disclaimer: This document is a summary. All City Council Worksessions and Regular Meetings are recorded. Live stream can be found on the City's website at www.cityofbeaufort.org (Agenda section). Any questions, please contact the City Clerk, Traci Guldner at 843-525-7024 or by email at tguldner@cityofbeaufort.org.