



Metropolitan Planning Commission Meeting Minutes – May 15, 2023

CALL TO ORDER

0:15

A meeting of the Metropolitan Planning Commission was called to order by Susan Cosner, Chair, and was held in-person on May 15, 2023 at 5:00 PM.

ATTENDEES

Members in attendance: Sue Cosner (Chair), Judy Alling, James White and Dennis Ross.

Members absent: Wendy Zara, and Josh Gibson, new MPC member.

Staff in attendance: Curt Freese, City of Beaufort Planning Director.

REVIEW OF MINUTES

1:14

Ms. Cosner said she has some minor grammatical errors that she will talk to Ms. Bachety about.

Motion: Ms. Alling made a motion to approve the March 20, 2023 minutes as corrected. Mr. White seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

All [Insert name of Review Board] meeting minutes are recorded and can be found on the City's website at <http://www.cityofbeaufort.org/AgendaCenter>. Audio recordings are available upon request by contacting the City Clerk, Traci Guldner at 843-525-7024 or by email at tgundler@cityofbeaufort.org.

QUESTIONS RELATING TO MILITARY OPERATIONS

2:24

None.

APPLICATIONS

2:30

- A. **City of Beaufort - Rezoning** – Rezoning request of property located at 1208 Pigeon Point Road, identified as R120 004 000 1007 0000. The current zoning is T5-Urban Corridor District (T5-UC). The proposed zoning is T4-Neighborhood (T4-N). Applicant: Beaufort Midway Development, LLC.

Curt Freese introduced himself as the new Planning Director for the City of Beaufort. He also mentioned that this feed is not working on Facebook Live but is working on Zoom and the information on the screen now is showing the link to this meeting as well as the phone number.

Mr. Freese stated the applicant is requesting a zoning map amendment for the property located at 1208 Pigeon Point Road to zone the property T4-N from its current T5-UC designation for the subdivision of three single-family homes. Currently, the entire block is zoned T-5 UC which does not allow single family homes as permitted uses. Five entire blocks North of Boundary up to Calhoun Street, are currently zoned T-5 UC. Should this amendment be accepted, it would be the first property rezoned out of the T-5 US zoning in these five blocks. The T-5 UC district is intended for dense urban uses from apartments to mixed use and commercial, while the T-4 N District is an urban neighborhood district intended for limited commercial uses. Mr. Freese showed the differences between the two zoning designations by presenting the Zoning District Differences Uses/Development Standards graph, an aerial view map, and surrounding zoning map and the City's Zoning Limit Map. Mr. Freese spoke about the surrounding uses. He referred to the Future Land Use Plan and Civic Master Plan. Notice of the Metropolitan Planning Commission hearing has been mailed to property owners within 200 feet of the subject property, a legal ad published, and the property was posted as required by the Development Code.

Ms. Alling asked Mr. Freese to confirm that the majority of the properties in that block are zoned T4-N. Referring to the zoning map, Mr. Freese said all of the blocks up to Calhoun Street on Boundary Street are zoned T5 and then all the properties that surround that are adjoining or are across the street, are on both Calhoun and Pigeon Point are T4-N.

Ms. Cosner referred to the use T5-UC in the Civic Master Plan, and thought the vision was to provide services for the neighborhood and to create a corridor of services. Also, Ms. Cosner recalled there being a streetscape plan for Calhoun Street that included the university housing and parking lot and wondered about the status east on Calhoun. Mr. Freese knows of a grant to fix the stormwater, but that's all.

The applicants, Duncan & Jacklyn Elliott were present. Mr. Duncan purchased the property a year and a half ago and it included the cottage, the townhouses, and the lot. We operate the two as Airbnb's. We currently live in Charleston. He said the concept is for us to move to Beaufort and make Beaufort our primary residence which will allow us to be the business operators effectively on site. We'd like to put up 3 one story cottages making one our primary residence. Mr. Duncan feels there is general support of the aesthetic pleasing cottages opposed to a high-rise apartment block. If we are granted permission to do this, Corey Post will be our builder. Mr. Post introduced himself and said there are a lot of vacant properties up and down Boundary Street at this time. The property directly east they just stage for the horse and buggy tours that is a lot that goes all the way through and next to that is two parcels that are vacant. There are very few 2-story buildings. From Bellamy Curve there are two new apartments and then Town Hall there is a storage unit on the other side. It's basically old development. He said he sees much more potential in the next 100-150 years and this area of Boundary Street being revamped.

Mr. Ross asked how long the applicant has had his rentals on Kiawah and Charleston. Mr. Elliott said he started in Massachusetts 7 years ago and 6 years ago we purchased a condominium in Kiawah and a year and half here in Beaufort.

Mr. White asked the applicant if he considered the current zoning with thinking about developing the property with two story type of buildings or what it currently is zoned for. The applicant said,

we have considered many options. We're looking to compliment the whole block so when people are walking up and down towards Pigeon Point Park, it looks like a completed block of beautiful properties. Mr. White noted there is a two-story townhouse next to it.

Ms. Alling said the MPC's greatest concern is with zoning changes, not specifically with this project, but what generally is allowed because no one never knows what's going to happen between now and later, and then it could be opened up to development that no one would be happy with.

Public Comment: **24:28**

Bill Loflin, resides at 1200 Barnwell Bluff which is directly across from the property. He is speaking on his behalf and his wife's behalf who could not come tonight. He took an informal poll of the Barnwell Bluff residents and feels confident speaking on their behalf as well. When this goes to Council for a final decision, we will have a sizeable petition in favor of Mr. Elliott's proposal. Barnwell Bluff was begun in about 1998 (25 years old) and well before the city urban plan was developed. Pigeon Point is a residential neighborhood and Pigeon Point Road is the primary ingress and egress for that neighborhood. He said he has the prettiest patio in Beaufort and he's out there about 4 - 5 hours a day watching his bird's nest and feed and enjoys his garden and flowers and so he knows what traffic is like on Pigeon Point Road. He's worried about all the new traffic it will create. He was in the construction and development business for many years before retiring and feels this fits that blueprint perfectly. When the Elliott's bought the property there was a local developer who had an offer to buy it to build college dormitories that would be 3-4 stories with a big parking lot. Pigeon Point has a bird sanctuary and an addition of big commercial building across the street is not in anybody's interest. We need to preserve that residential feeling once you leave Boundary Street and turn onto Pigeon Point Road.

Andy Kinghorn, a Beaufort native that grew up in Pigeon Point 67 years ago and overall, very familiar with the neighborhood. He is in favor of the Elliott's request for rezoning. The Pigeon Point neighborhood has always been residential from the boat landing down Wilson Drive to the boat landing down Pigeon Point Road to Boundary Street. On the east side of Pigeon Point Road is Barnwell Bluff which is residential as well; the northside of Calhoun Street is all single-family residential as well. So, this piece of property is surrounded by residential which is the character of Pigeon Point. Since the Elliott's bought the property, there has been a dramatic change in curb appeal for that property; it's gorgeous. They want to make Beaufort their home from Charleston, and he can't argue with that. We will welcome them as neighbors. The plan they have satisfies most of the requirements for the change in zoning that is being asked for. The only thing it doesn't meet is the future vision of the Civic Master Plan. He said he understands the need for the urban infill card, but who knows when that will ever happen or if it will ever take place. It could be way beyond the lifetimes of the people that are in this room today. All the buildings on that block would have been torn down in order to make it look like what the Civic Master Plan actually calls for. In the meantime, the city misses out on additional property taxes, business taxes, and accommodation taxes that could be brought to bear with the execution of what they are intending to do with the additional houses. This will be a credit to Pigeon Point and a credit to Beaufort by being done. He urged the MPC to approve this change and let this project go ahead as the applicant intended.

Kay Merrill, lives in Pigeon Point and is Chairman of the Pigeon Point Neighborhood and said she don't think she's speaking on behalf of the entire neighborhood, but like **Bill Loflin** said, we have to take an independent poll too in support of what the Elliott's would like to do. They have become really wonderful neighbors. She would love for the MPC to take a field trip and take a look at the property because these pictures presented by the city don't really do the project justice. It's a

beautiful little piece of property. It is directly across the street and surrounded by other residential properties and would fit in so nicely. We are very much in support. It is the gateway to Pigeon Point, and we would like it to be “cute”!

Frances Ackerman and her husband, James Ackerman, live at 2215 Wilson Drive. She echoes the sentiments and remarks everybody has made. The difference in this property is just outstanding. When you enter Pigeon Point Road, it is the welcoming gate to what has become, a lovely comfortable place to live, not only for the residents but also for the entire city. She said, she speaks for myself and most of my friends, and people I have spoken to, Pigeon Point is an unusual place. It's been a neighborhood intact in the city for years back to the houses that are 635 square feet that have been there for 50 – 70 years. We all live in this neighborhood in harmony, we take care of each other. When one person is down, we rise up and take care of people. We have a Neighborhood Beautification Committee and it's not one when “you are yard of the month”, its one where we know of a neighbor is ill or one without resources and offer to help. We are people who have worked in our own communities in our lifetime. We do have a number of families who are retired. We saw a vision in Pigeon Point that we could help to embellish it but keep the history and the families that were already there that we do not care to displace, including our two sections of public housing that we all have friendships with and them as part of our neighborhood when we have our celebrations in the park and try and reach out. Ms. Ackerman referred to the gentleman working on her house who said, “I work rehab houses all over the county/city and you don't have it; everybody walks out and greets everybody and knows everybody name in Pigeon Point and encourages people to be here”. The special nature of Pigeon Point is just not for us and our neighbors, it's the largest living park for the City of Beaufort. People come there to walk their dogs, ride their bikes, push their babies in buggies, take their daily walks and daily runs; they stop and talk to us, and we'll offer them water or lemonade. This property fits in and there is plenty of room on Boundary Street for restaurants and whatever should go there. Right now, we have a Vape shop there and not sure it was the City's vision or the Pigeon Point's vision. And, we have a derelict building across from it that someone was trying to make into a restaurant ever since I've owned my property which is close to 9 years. We cannot get rid of this gem of a neighborhood by doing anything to its interior façade or its entry point, but to encourage the absolute splendor that's there now.

Bill Loflin reiterated what other people said and referred to the vacant real state on Boundary Street east of the cemetery and people are in there unloading tractors and breaking ground. There's been a lot of vacant property in that area for a long time, so there's no telling when this might ever be developed. He is glad the dormitories didn't go there because that would have been a mistake. He said when he looks at Pigeon Point and realized what was on where Barnwell Bluff is now, which was single-family residential property at one time all the way out to Boundary Street until the Open Land Trust bought a portion of it and when the developer took it in the 1990's, that was all residential. He referred to the Magnolia Cottage and the building next to it.

Public comment was closed.

Motion: I move that we recommend to Council to accept the rezoning of property at 1208 Pigeon Point Road from T5-UC to T4-N.

Second by: James White

Further Discussion

Mr. Freese suggested there be some findings added of why you are making the motion for the record. Ms. Alling said the neighborhood support is the main reason she supports this application. She felt it's wonderful how everyone came forward with their spirit; it's great. Ms. Alling said she drove through the park today and it was filled with children. It is a delightful place, and she understands why they want to keep it that way. But she does have a concern that she mentioned before about understanding the allowable uses that could happen such as: vehicle services station is *conditional*, but it could be allowed; drive-thru restaurant is *conditional*; but it could be allowed; gas station is *allowed*; or light industrial services are *allowed* for that property if its changed and if that ever came to be, you wouldn't be happy. These uses probably will never happen, but you need to be knowledgeable, and I have to when casting my vote.

Mr. White said he appreciates all the support and wanted to state for the record, the reason we have the zoning from a T5 to a T4 to a T3 is to have that transition for the neighborhood so you not having a 5-story next to a single-family home next to another 5-story (the Master Plan indicates this) and that's what we have on Boundary Street, T5 to T4 to T3. And what we are doing is taking a piece of that and changing that to T4 to make that transition a little bit different than what it was originally zoned for. I think that's okay in this case because of the fact that it is on Pigeon Point Road, it's on the edge of T5 and this makes sense. The reason why its zoned what it is, is because that is what we all agreed to in terms of the zoning for Boundary Street Corridor. There are going to be college dormitories and other large along Boundary Street.

Mr. Ross reiterated Ms. Alling's concerns about how things change; life happens. He feels there might be a downturn in the real estate, and this could affect ongoing construction for those two other cottages. I also wanted to make sure the individuals in here today were supportive. He applauded the applicant's enthusiasm. He said he and his wife go to Pigeon Point Park and it's an enjoyable area to go and we'd hate to see it ruined. But there is that possibility that life happens, and you can't sell that property, or someone wants to come in there and build that gas station or restaurant with a drive-thru. It is part of the Master Plan, like Mr. White said.

Ms. Cosner is concerned about giving up opportunities for the university. We are trying very hard to entice the university to continue to expand here. Ms. Cosner referred to the point in Mr. Freese staff report that said, "we do this, and it's gone permanently". She echoed all the Commissioner's comments about the enthusiasm the neighborhood has for the project, but she thinks the Commission needs to support the Civic Master Plan. Ms. Cosner thinks the master plan needs to be changed, because she has found lots of "consultants dreams", but this is not one of them. The T5-UC designation makes a lot of sense; urban corridor is an opportunity for missing middle housing, opportunities for the university, opportunities for other friendly uses that wouldn't be five stories or gas stations. Ms. Cosner said she is in Pigeon Point all the time and applauds what the Elliott's have done. She said to the applicants, "please understand my vote is not reflective of what you plan to do, but my vote to not recommend approval is in support of the Civic Master Plan". With the upcoming codes changes, we need to take a hard strong look at the Civic Master Plan.

Motion: I moved to not recommend approval for the rezoning from T5-Urban Corridor District (T5-UC) to T4-Neighborhood (T4-N).

Motion by: Judy Alling
Opposed: Sue Cosner
All in favor: Mr. White, Mr. Ross, and Ms. Alling
Vote: 3:1

ADJOURNMENT

50:20

Motion: Ms. Cosner made a motion for adjournment at 5:53pm. seconded by Mr. Ross. The motion passed unanimously.