

MINUTES
GREATER LOWNDES PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
LOWNDES COUNTY SOUTH HEALTH DISTRICT ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE
325 WEST SAVANNAH AVENUE
March 28, 2016
5:30 P.M.

Members Present:

Chip Wildes
Ted Raker
Brad Folsom
Celine Gladwin
Franklin Bailey, Chairman
Johnny Ball, III
Tommy Willis

Members Absent:

Gerald McClendon
W. Keith Sandlin
~Dasher representative~

Staff:

Jason Davenport, County Planner
Matt Martin, City's Planning & Zoning
Carmella Braswell, Recording Secre.

VISITORS PRESENT:

(See Attached Sign-In Sheet)

AGENDA ITEM #1:

CALL TO ORDER, INVOCATION, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chairman Bailey called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m. Chairman Bailey welcomed everyone to the GLPC meeting, and thanked staff for their efforts for arranging the special called meeting. Chairman Bailey explained that the Planning Commission serves as an advisory body to the local member governments regarding land use requests. Chairman Bailey explained that the Planning Commission is a recommending body only, and the final determination of the requests presented will be made by the applicable local governments. Chairman Bailey explained the meeting procedures and stated that handouts were available for review by the public for the conducting of the public hearing, to include the Standards for the Exercise of Zoning Powers that will be used as part of their determination for the cases on the agenda. Chairman Bailey announced the date of the public hearing for the member governments as listed on the agenda.

Chairman Bailey asked Commissioner Raker to lead the Pledge of Allegiance followed by an Invocation.

AGENDA ITEM #2:

Approval of the Meeting Minutes: February 29, 2016

Chairman Bailey called for questions, corrections, and approval of the February 29, 2016, GLPC meeting minutes.

There being none, Commissioner Wildes made a motion that the minutes be approved. Commissioner Willis seconded the motion.

Chairman Bailey asked if there was any discussion concerning the motion. There being none, Chairman Bailey called the motion and it was carried. (Vote 6-0, Unanimous)

CITY OF VALDOSTA CASES:

AGENDA ITEM #3

VA-2016-06 – DINKINS

Nature of Request: Mr. Martin stated this is a request to rezone 0.29 acres from Single-Family Residential (R-6) to Highway Commercial (C-H). The subject property is located at 2901 Bemiss Road. This is a split-zoned property of C-H and R-6 zoning. Most of the subject property is zoned C-H. The requested zoning is for the rear yard area that is zoned R-6. The subject property is located within a Community Activity Center (CAC) Character Area on the Future Development Map of the Comprehensive Plan which allows the possibility of CH zoning. Staff finds the request consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Standards for the Exercise of Zoning Power (SFEZP) and is recommending approval.

Chairman Bailey asked if there were questions to staff from the Planning Commission.

There being none, Chairman Bailey asked if anyone was present wishing to speak in favor of the request.

There being none, Chairman Bailey asked if anyone was present wishing to speak in opposition.

There being none, Chairman Bailey closed the public participation portion of the request and entertained further discussion from the Planning Commission.

There being none, Chairman Bailey called for a motion.

Commissioner Wildes made a motion to recommend approval of the request as presented by staff – as the request is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. Commissioner Folsom seconded the motion.

Chairman Bailey called for questions concerning the motion.

There being none, Chairman Bailey called the motion and it was carried. (Vote 6-0, Unanimous)

AGENDA ITEM #4

VA-2016-07 – City of Valdosta

Nature of Request: Mr. Martin stated the City of Valdosta is proposing to amend LDR Chapter 328, Landscape, Buffers and Screening. The proposed amendments are presented in 2 different options (revised copies were passed out). There is very little change in the revision. Option #1 is shaded in green at the top; Option #2 is shaded in pink at the top. For Option #1 under “Amendment #5”, staff changed wording from “punished” to “fined” in 2 different places. All changes are shown in red and as a strikeout. Staff is recommending for Option #1 – that is, regarding crepe myrtles and to implement warning system. The proposed amendments have been reviewed by Chamber’s SORT Committee. Staff believes there are some members of the SORT Committee present to speak on the topic.

Chairman Bailey asked staff to explain Option #2.

Mr. Martin stated both options are very similar – Option #2 exempts Crepe Myrtles from the topping requirement and they are removed from the City’s tree list for landscaping requirement purposes.

Commissioner Raker stated several months ago, a text amendment reflected that commercial property owners were responsible for any easements and R-O-Ws in front of their property.

Mr. Martin stated they have always been responsible; the trees in those areas are within the City's R-O-W and are in the protection of the City.

Commissioner Raker asked who is responsible for pruning those trees.

Mr. Martin stated it is the responsibility of the city. (Mrs. Emily Davenport confirmed Mr. Martin's statement)

There being no further questions, Chairman Bailed asked if anyone was present wishing to speak in favor of the request.

Mr. Michael Lee, 4289 Spring Branch Circle, thanked the GLPC for allowing him to speak, and stated the Chamber agrees with the proposed text amendment. The SORT Committee has also reviewed both amendments. The SORT Committee is present to promote the business environment and believes that Option #1 is most appropriate. The SORT Committee did not think it is proper to remove Crepe Myrtles from the tree list as it is an economical alternative. Mr. Lee furnished the GLPC a summary of the SORT Committee's position.

Chairman Bailey stated the main difference between the 2 options is Option #2 removes Crepe Myrtles as a tree option in the Landscape Ordinance; however, it can be utilized but doesn't count towards the calculation requirement.

Mr. Martin stated that is correct.

Chairman Bailey asked if anyone else was present wishing to speak in favor of the request.

There being none, Chairman Bailey asked if anyone was present wishing to speak in opposition to the request.

There being none, Chairman Bailey closed the public participation portion of the request and entertained further discussion from the Planning Commission.

Commissioner Wildes asked staff if there were mechanisms in place for landscapers to be certified and/or trained by the City of the ANSI specifications.

Mr. Martin stated the LDR will make reference to technical manuals. The national standards are maintained in the Zoning office for educational efforts.

Mrs. Davenport stated the references are posted on the City's website that are downloadable – they are \$20 per booklet. As of now, due to copyright laws, staff is awaiting permission from ANSI to run copies for distribution. The proposed amendment will affect only the commercial properties.

Chairman Bailey asked staff if there had ever been an incident where both the property owner and landscaper were both fined; and, what will be a direct educational tool for the public, the business owner, and the landscape companies.

Mrs. Davenport stated it is usually the property owner that is fined. At the time that the occupation tax registration is re-issued, an attempt is made to furnish a copy of the ordinance for pruning and trimming practices; additionally, staff plans to host some in house training so as to have some hands-on experience in lieu of mail outs. The City's first training was held in February. It is staff's desire to provide the resources in order to make the public aware.

Commissioner Willis asked what point fines will be made.

Mrs. Davenport stated the first contact will be that of a warning issued. Staff hopes to offer quarterly training.

Commissioner Raker asked if there were warnings for other tree types.

Mrs. Davenport stated that is correct – the warnings are specifically for Crepe Myrtles because they are so resilient.

Commissioner Folsom asked when do replacements come into play, and how does the offence work.

Mrs. Davenport stated there is no replacement with Crepe Myrtles - only with other tree types. There is an offence per tree. While there has been some citations issued, most commercial properties top and prune their Crepe Myrtles properly.

There being no further questions or discussion, Chairman Bailey asked for a motion.

Commissioner Folsom make a motion to recommend approval of Option #1 as presented by staff. Commissioner Gladwin seconded the motion.

Chairman Bailey called for questions and discussion concerning the motion.

There being none, the motion was called. (Vote 4-2)

LOWNDES COUNTY CASES:

AGENDA ITEM #5

REZ-2016-07 – THE MEADOWS

Nature of Request: Mr. Davenport stated the subject property is located on Bemiss Road, and the request is for P-D (Planned Development) zoning and site plan approval for a multi-family development. The development will be for a tax credit low income housing development that is a competitive grant. The developers constructed similar projects in the Hahira and Lake Park area. The main change is the addition of an easement to the front of the property. Initially, the developers started with 2-story buildings, and after discussion and reconsideration of adjoining property owners, there are now 1-story buildings that will abut to the single-family residential development to the east. The movement of traffic and egress/ingress has gotten the most attention. According to the County Engineer, GDOT may require a deceleration lane due to this being state route. The recommendation from staff is for approval.

Chairman Bailey asked if there were any questions to staff from the Planning Commission.

Commissioner Gladwin asked if the number of parking spaces provided match the requirements.

Mr. Davenport stated multi-family developments require 2 spaces per dwelling unit; however, the developer is proposing more to accommodate visitors.

Commissioner Raker asked why a turnaround wasn't depicted to accommodate fire trucks.

Mr. Davenport stated the drives end in a hammer head style in order to accommodate fire trucks.

Commissioner Folsom asked if the southerly exit onto Bemiss Road that crosses 2 lanes of traffic a concern.

Mr. Davenport stated it is a concern; a consideration would be to depict a right in and right out driveway or place a traffic signal. While staff believes it is not a requirement, GDOT will ultimately make the decision.

There being no further questions, Chairman Bailey asked if anyone was present wishing to speak in favor of the request.

Mr. Bill Holland, 910 N Patterson Street, stated staff accurately presented the request. The developers have constructed a number of similar projects and have done well. Joe Chambers is also present to answer any questions. The developer and staff have communicated throughout the process and made needed changes to the site plan.

Ruthie Cameron, 3939 Guest Drive, stated she supports the request.

There being no questions for the speaker, Chairman Bailey made one final call for those wishing to speak in favor of the request.

Chairman Bailey asked if anyone was present wishing to speak in opposition to the request.

There being none, the public participation portion was closed.

Commissioner Gladwin asked if some adjustments are made from what was presented, can the Planning Commissioner proceed since this is planned development; and, is there a timeline by which the development is started.

Mr. Davenport stated planned developments provide a maximum intensity and the approval by the Board of Commissioners makes the development an enforceable document. Staff asks the developers to provide a maximum density as a cap and if the development is modified to reflect a lesser density or if driveways are modified, an additional public hearing is not necessary. Staff normally works with the developer for planned developments to ensure its compatibility with adjacent land owners. Regarding timelines, the developers will be applying for the grant this summer; unlike other governments, Lowndes County does not have a timeline by which the planned development is started or completed.

There being no further discussion, Chairman Bailey called for a motion.

Commissioner Folsom made a motion to recommend approval of the request as presented. Commissioner Willis seconded the motion.

There being no questions regarding the motion, Chairman Bailey called the motion and it was carried. (Vote 6-0)

AGENDA ITEM #6

REZ-2016-08 – COVENTRY

Nature of Request: Mr. Davenport stated this is a request for a 36 single family dwelling planned development. This development will be similar to nearby development, Glen Laurel, located on Old Pine Road. Staff is recommending approval with 1 condition regarding the distances between houses. The developer and the Fire Department made a compromise regarding the proposed condition. The developer is in agreement. Also, there is a concurrent Variance application for this development for consideration by the Zoning Board of Appeals. The variance request is to the road access type for planned developments – Mulligan Road is considered a local road and planned developments are required to be located on collector or arterial roads.

Commissioner Willis asked what were the Fire Department concerns and how would a fence help.

Mr. Davenport stated the Fire Department is concerned with the side yard setbacks and the increased risk for fire to spread from one house to another. The fencing requirement/condition will be for the rear yard area instead of the side yard. The condition will apply to all lots with less than 20' separation between the houses.

Commissioner Folsom stated the request appears to be an opportunity to maximize the density, whereby the thought for planned developments is a mixed use or a use with some character. Can we require amenities? Consideration and more thought should be required on the front end. Perhaps the ULDC should be amended to consider adding a zoning district for a lesser lot size.

Mr. Davenport stated yes, there is a weakness. The ULDC as currently adopted does not have a zoning district for an affordable housing product with lots that are below 10k square feet – the 2 options are to either request a variance to the lot size or request something that is site specific. Unlike developments that were approved 10+ years ago, staff has seen residential developments with parks, community centers, and other amenities in recent years. Staff believes the developer will add some amenities i.e. playground, gazebo to this development. The Planning Commission can require specific amenities to this development.

Commissioner Gladwin asked what is requirement for green space and what is the assurance they will complete it.

Mr. Davenport stated the minimum requirement for green space is 15% of which 5% must be recreation space. 25% can be used for detention purposes. This development meets or exceeds the requirement. With previous planned developments and when an unusual situation/issue comes forth regarding the residential development, the backdrop is to resort to the R-10 standards. The condition will control what uses are proposed in the green space area – this results in a nicer product than was done in the past.

Commissioner Raker stated the planned development standards provides that the development shall be architecturally and environmentally innovative which make the development unique – what is unique about this development.

Chairman Bailey stated that contractors use a number of horizontal and vertical applications when constructing homes i.e. mixing brick and stone. The covenants normally require specifications of the house type.

Commissioner Folsom stated the idea for planned developments is to come with the plan.

Mr. Davenport stated he respected the thoughts and opinions of the Planning Commission of a better looking site plan; however, the hurdle is providing affordable housing and this is the avenue to provide such. The bar has been raised from what it required several years ago.

Chairman Bailey stated in our city and county, there are no residential developments for first time home buyers. While he appreciates the comments, architectural features do not appear to play a factor in this request.

Commissioner Folsom stated this request appears that we are relying on what we think the developer is going to do instead of having a plan before us. The problem is that the county does not have a specific zoning classification for a project like this.

There being no further questions or discussion, Chairman Bailey asked if anyone was present wishing to speak in favor of the request.

There being none, Chairman Bailey asked if anyone was present wishing to speak in opposition to the request.

Mrs. Gretchen Quarterman, 6565 Quarterman Road, stated she wished that this project will not be another Nelson Hill or Blue Pool development in our community. What does it mean to be affordable? Our community has a vast amount of rentals that are available. How is this development adding something special to our community? This development needs more work.

There being no questions for the presenter, Chairman Bailey asked if anyone else was present wishing to speak in opposition to the request.

There being none, the public participation was closed.

Chairman Bailey called for further discussion and questions concerning the request.

Commissioner Gladwin asked what is the typical lot size for a Suburban Character Area on the Future Development Map.

Mr. Davenport stated 10k square feet.

There being no further questions or discussion, Chairman Bailey called for a motion.

Commissioner Willis stated because the development is a cookie cutter approach to get more lots, the unawareness of the housing elevation, and the green space area not specific enough, he makes a motion to recommend denial of the request as presented. Commissioner Folsom seconded the motion.

Chairman Bailey called for discussion on the motion.

Commissioner Wildes stated if the request is denied, the request cannot come back for one year; will the Planning Commission entertain a motion to table the request in order to get more detailed information.

Commissioner Willis stated the developer and/or their representative should have been interested enough to come to the lectern to speak during the public hearing call.

Chairman Bailey called the question on the motion. (Vote 3-3)

Because of the tie vote, Chairman Bailey opposed the motion. (Vote 4-3)

Because of the failed motion, Chairman Bailey called for a new motion.

Commissioner Wildes made a motion to table the request until the next regularly scheduled meeting (30 days) in order to give the developer an opportunity to address the concerns of the Planning Commission. Commissioner Ball seconded the motion.

Chairman Bailey called for questions or discussion concerning the motion.

There being none, Chairman Bailey called the motion and it was carried. (Vote 6-0)

AGENDA ITEM #7

REZ-2016-09 - SCHROEPHFER

Nature of Request: Mr. Davenport stated that the applicant is a new property owner who would like to take the boundary on their existing property and reduce it to coincide with the 100-yr flood plain and wetland boundary. The applicant's intention is to construct a house further away from New Statenville Highway. The existing Conservation zoning line is prohibiting the construction of their home. The requested zoning will allow the applicants an additional 2 acres of usable space while protecting the flood line and wetland boundary. Staff is recommending approval.

Chairman Bailey asked if the Health Department had any comments.

Mr. Davenport stated there is ample room on the property for septic system.

Chairman Bailey asked if there were any questions to staff from the Planning Commission.

Commissioner Gladwin asked if any of the area that is proposed for rezoning located in the flood plain.

Mr. Davenport stated it should not – they are not rezoning any of the flood or wetland areas.

There being no further questions for staff, Chairman Bailey asked if anyone was present wishing to speak in favor of the request.

Mr. Jack Schroepfer, 1725 Poplar Street, stated they are only extending the usable land to the actual flood boundary and would like the option to build a home at least 300-350 feet away from New Statenville Highway. They have had the property for about one year. The rezoning process was the least resistance to the process in lieu of obtaining a flood elevation certificate to build their home.

There being no questions for the speaker, Chairman Bailey asked if anyone else was present wishing to speak in favor of the request.

There being none, Chairman Bailey asked if anyone was present wishing to speak in opposition to the request.

There being none, the public participation was closed and Chairman Bailey entertained further discussion from the Planning Commission.

There being no further discussion, Chairman Bailey called for a motion.

Commissioner Folsom made a motion to recommend approval of the request as presented. Commissioner Wildes seconded the motion.

Chairman Bailey called for questions and discussion concerning the motion.

There being none, Chairman Bailey called the motion and it was carried. (Vote 6-0)

ADJOURNMENT

Prior to adjourning the meeting, Mr. Davenport asked the Chairman and the Planning Commission for clarification on the concerns raised for agenda Item #6 (REZ-2016-08) – the residential development being pedestrian friendly, the proposed green space, amenities, etc.

Chairman Bailey responded to staff's concerns.

There being no further discussions, Chairman Bailey adjourned the meeting 6:55 p.m.

Franklin Bailey, Chairman
Greater Lowndes Planning Commission

Date