

MINUTES
GREATER LOWNDES PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
LOWNDES COUNTY SOUTH HEALTH DISTRICT ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE
325 WEST SAVANNAH AVENUE
Monday, September 26, 2016
5:30 P.M.

Members Present:

Franklin Bailey, Chairman
Jody Hall
Gerald McClendon
Ted Raker
Celine Gladwin
W. Keith Sandlin
Tommy Willis
Johnny Ball, III
Brad Folsom

Members Absent:

Chip Wildes
~Dasher representative~

Staff

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

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 5:30 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 McClendon to lead the Invocation followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

AGENDA ITEM #2:

Approval of the Meeting Minutes: August 29, 2016

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

There being none, Chairman Bailey called for a motion.

Commissioner Folsom made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Commissioner Hall seconded the motion.

There being no further discussion, Chairman Bailey called the motion and it was carried unanimously. (Vote 7-0) (Commissioner Ball was not present for the vote)

CITY OF VALDOSTA

AGENDA ITEM #2:

CU-2016-04 Dasher-Little Corporation, 311 N. Patterson Street

Nature of Request: Mr. Martin stated this is a request for conditional use approval. The subject property consists of 1.40 acres and is currently zoned Downtown Commercial (C-D). The subject property is located at 311 N. Patterson Street. This is the former “Southern Stationery” building that is now a multi-tenant space facility. The US Postal Service (USPS) is proposing to both downsize in terms of scope and relocate its existing downtown post office to the subject property. This will not be the sorting and distributing facility as it is currently – but will be used for a retail counter and for post office box spaces. The area will include approximately 4,000 square feet tenant space with a large parking lot. The subject property has about 70 parking spaces of which 40-50 spaces appear to be used by the Biotest facility. In staff’s view, the only consideration is the number of parking spaces. Post offices are listed in the use table and is rarely a use operated outside of a government building on private property. Within the C-D zoning district, the requirement for onsite parking spaces are exempt. The subject property and request are perfect for this location – the post office continues to operate in the downtown area as a center of urban activity. Staff finds the request consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Conditional Use Review Criteria and recommends approval with two (2) conditions: 1) Approval shall be granted for a local post office facility not to exceed 7,000-sf and to be located in the southern portion of the existing building with direct access to the existing parking lot. The facility shall not include any regional (truck-based) sorting or distribution facilities; 2) Conditional Use approval shall expire after 3 years from the date of approval if no plans for a building permit (interior renovation) have been submitted by that time.

Chairman Bailey asked what is the total square feet of the existing building.

Mr. Martin stated the total square feet is 21,678 which is mainly on the ground floor; the post office is occupying about 4,000 square feet. The 7,000 square feet is a condition to allow for any needed expansion and office space without going through the conditional use process again. Any major expansions will trigger a re-review.

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

Commissioner Gladwin asked why an expansion in excess of 7,000-sf a concern if the applicant chooses.

Mr. Martin stated the reason for the expansion may be caused by a high traffic generator, particularly considering other tenants – then traffic consideration becomes an issue which needs addressing. The post office has requested the use of 14 parking spaces.

Chairman Bailey asked about the development’s timeline.

Mr. Martin stated the applicant is anxious to get started.

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

Mr. Howard Dasher, 2701 Green Meadow Drive, stated he is present to answer questions.

There being no questions, 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.

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

Commissioner Willis stated he finds the request consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Conditional Use Review Criteria and made a motion to recommend approval of the CUP with two (2) conditions as presented by staff. Commissioner Folsom 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 unanimously. (Vote 8-0)

Lowndes County

Agenda Item #4

REZ-2016-18 Trip Singletary, Old U.S. Highway 41 North

Nature of Request: Mr. Davenport stated this is a rezoning request for 9 acres to be rezoned from P-D (Planned Development) to C-G (General Commercial) that is speculative. The existing use is a manufactured home park. A large portion of the subject property, 6+ acres, will be developed for mini-storage and the remaining acreage is speculative commercial. Staff reviewed the request and based on future expansion plans for Highway 41, recommends approval.

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

Commissioner Folsom asked if a condition was necessary considering the requirement for interconnectivity.

Mr. Davenport stated there is no need for a condition as the Corridor Overlay District will require interconnectivity along with other development standards.

Commissioner Gladwin asked if staff had received any public input.

Mr. Davenport stated some residents of the park had approached staff to inquire about the proposed changes. Staff believes the developer/owner has reached out to the residents earlier this summer.

Commissioner Hall asked staff about the requirements for screening and/or buffer yard on the back side next to Stewart Circle, and the driveway improvements next to the fire station.

Mr. Davenport stated while a buffer yard is not required against Stewart Circle, it will be along the western portion of the subject property. The applicant will be requesting a variance for a required buffer yard adjacent to the County's fire station. Regarding the driveway access improvements, the developer is planning to provide for interconnection from one property to the next.

Chairman Bailey asked if there is a timeline for developing the speculative commercial 1-acre lots. There was a similar zoning request considered for mini-storage units and there was concerns regarding the visibility of the units.

Mr. Davenport stated he believed there is a timeline for mini-storage development but is unsure of the speculative commercial properties. At this time, staff do not have concerns about visibility – the zoning request was located within the city limits – staff believes the city regulations are more restrictive than the county's regulations.

Mr. Martin stated the development was located within the city limits and the concerns were regarding an existing development (funeral home) being located in front of the mini-storage units. Additional concerns were N. Valdosta Road being an elevated road and the applicant's request for greater buffering.

Commissioner Gladwin asked staff to comment on the current zoning map versus the Future Development Map's depiction - Neighborhood Activity Center (NAC). Is the general direction for growth more commercial?

Mr. Davenport stated the future plans do depict more commercial development or multi-family. This can be seen with existing developments and encroachments i.e. a fertilizer plant located to the south of the subject property and the development of ValNorth Commercial Park to the west. The trend is for the development of commercial uses, and offices, rather than smaller lot residential development.

Commissioner Gladwin asked if the applicant was aware of the market and need for the development of mini-storage.

Mr. Davenport stated staff has had some concerns with the mini-storage market, although there have been some speculative interest and inquiries, particularly on Bemiss Road. Staff's understanding is there is a need for climate-controlled units/buildings and vacancies for non-climate controlled units. While this development will be a substantial investment, the developer is present to comment on the market and the increased growth in this area.

Commissioner Willis stated the financial feasibility is not of the Planning Commission's business and should not weigh in on their decision. Additionally, why is a buffer yard required along the north lot line – it is just a field.

Mr. Davenport stated the buffer yard is required because the property to the north and west is currently zoned R-1.

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

Mr. Trip Singletary, 1108 N. Lakeshore Drive, stated he is present to answer any questions and appreciates the consideration.

Chairman Bailey asked if there were any prospects for the commercial development.

Mr. Singletary stated their company is contemplating moving their office next to fire station; the other two proposed lots are speculative.

Chairman Bailey asked how many climate controlled units are they proposing.

Mr. Singletary stated they are planning to develop the mini-storage units in 2 phases - there will be about 50% climate-controlled units and 50% traditional units. With the increased development of Stone Creek and Grove Point subdivisions, there is a good need for this type development. The property was purchased approximately 10 years ago as an investment and due to the increased development in the area.

Commissioner Folsom asked if there are plans to provide access from Stewart Circle due to its current paving activity.

Mr. Singletary stated they are planning to provide a temporary access with a locked gate from Stewart Circle. There will be a fence around the perimeter of the mini-storage development, on all 4 sides. The codes are pretty restrictive on the development of mini-storage units.

Commissioner Gladwin asked will a fence will be constructed between commercial properties in the front and the self-storage units.

Mr. Singletary stated yes – they are contemplating several options.

There being no further questions, 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 among the Planning Commission.

There being none, Chairman Bailey called for a motion.

Commissioner Hall made a motion to recommend approval of the request. Commissioner Folsom seconded the motion.

Chairman Bailey called for questions and discussion on the motion. There being none, Chairman Bailey called the motion and it was carried. (Vote 8-0)

Other Business

Comprehensive Plan: Mr. Davenport stated Ariel Godwin is present from the Regional Commission to answer any questions regarding the Comprehensive Plan Update. Staff has been involved in several meetings and has worked on the document for months. This will be the largest update Greater Lowndes has had since 2006. Staff has exceeded the required number of public hearings and have set up multiple workshops (7) in order that the public is aware. Staff has advertised in the local organ and is presenting the document for public input. After this meeting, there will be more additional public hearings at the local government level i.e. City of Valdosta, Lowndes County, City of Hahira, City of Lake Park, City of Dasher, and City of Remerton. One of the

major changes in the document was the input of language to address sink holes, transit, natural gas pipe lines, and Valdosta's winning football program. After tonight's input, the document will be taken to the local governments to see what changes they may have. Staff is ahead of the deadline and look for final approval by all 6 local governments as part of their October meetings. Staff is appreciative of Mr. Godwin's work on the Plan.

Commissioner Hall asked if there were any comments submitted by Moody Air Force Base (MAFB).

Mr. Martin stated MAFB have been made aware and have been represented at all of the workshops. The Comprehensive Plan document is a big change from what it was 10 years ago – the Plan is substantially smaller. Other changes are the formatting of the Community Work Program, formerly name "Short Term Work Program", for each government and the document name "Greater Lowndes Comprehensive Plan". After the adoption by the local governments, staff is free to make amendments as needed.

Chairman Bailey stated since there was no one present in favor or in opposition to the Greater Lowndes Comprehensive Plan update, he will call for a motion.

Commissioner Folsom made motion to recommend approval of the Greater Lowndes Comprehensive Plan document as presented. Commissioner Hall seconded the motion.

Chairman Bailey called for questions and discussion on the motion. There being none, Chairman Bailey called the motion and it was carried. (Vote 8-0)

There being no other business, Chairman Bailey adjourned meeting (6:15 p.m.).

Franklin S. Bailey, Chairman
Greater Lowndes Planning Commission

Date