

MINUTES OF THE ISLE OF PALMS
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
July 11, 2007

The Isle of Palms Planning Commission met in the Building Department on July 11, 2007, at 4:30PM. Members attending included Barbara Bergwerf, Ron Denton, Michael Loftus, David Stevens, Pat Campbell and Bob Hooper; also the Director of Planning, Douglas Kerr was present. Andrew Roskill was absent. The press had been notified of the meeting and the agenda for the meeting was posted in City Hall and the Building Department to comply with the Freedom of Information Act.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The first item on the agenda was the review of the minutes of the June 13th 2007 meeting. Ms. Bergwerf made a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded and the vote was unanimous in favor of the motion.

DISCUSSION OF PUBLIC SAFETY BUILDING

Mr. Loftus explained that several members of the City staff were present to discuss the new public safety facility and if the members of the Commission did not object, he would like to move this item up on the agenda. Mr. Kerr explained that the 1994 Planning Enabling Legislation required that the Planning Commission comment on the compatibility of any new public facilities with the Comprehensive Plan. He explained that this was on the agenda just to alert the Commission members that this would be coming up for discussion at the next meeting and that each member should review the Comprehensive Plan prior to the next meeting.

The City Administrator, Ms. Linda Tucker, addressed the Commission and explained that after considering numerous alternatives, the City Council has decided to pursue replacing the Fire Station 1 in its current position. She added that the difference would be that the facility would be designed to house the Police Department. She explained that the Building Department would move into the space currently occupied by the Police Department and the building currently used by the Building Department would be removed. Mr. Kerr added that he had been involved with the project from the onset and he did not see any incompatibilities with the Comprehensive Plan and he did not foresee any problems with the plan.

Mr. Hooper asked the Chiefs if they were happy with the way things were progressing and the current proposal. Both Chiefs explained that they felt that the proposed plan would be good for their Departments.

PLAT REVIEW- 3400 HARTNETT BOULEVARD

Mr. Kerr explained that the request is for final approval of a subdivision at 3400 Hartnett Boulevard. He explained that the property is located in the SR-2 zoning district and that there are two historic trees that are required to be preserved (18" and 20" oaks). He added that both properties will be served by public water and individual septic systems. Staff has reviewed the plat and believes that, with the exception of notes being added, the request complies with the requirements of the ordinances and therefore recommends approval with the condition that the proper notes be added to the plat.

Mr. Hooper made a motion to approve the request with the stipulation that the necessary notes be added and Mr. Stevens seconded the motion. Mr. Denton explained that he had concern that the existing house is sitting 13 feet away from the new line, which could be considered as being a rear line, so it would not comply with the rear setback requirement. Mr. Kerr explained that in his interpretation, the rear line is the line that is farther behind the house (approximately 50 feet away), because the ordinance specifies that there should be one front property line and one rear property line and all other lines shall be considered side lines. Mr. Denton explained that he thought this was a reasonable interpretation, but he wanted the point to be discussed.

After general discussion, a vote was taken and the vote was unanimous in favor of the motion to approve the request.

DISCUSSION OF DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS- BEDROOM SIZE

Mr. Loftus explained that this draft of an ordinance came as a result of the discussion at the last meeting. He explained that the intent of this ordinance would be to limit the size of newly created bedrooms to 150 square feet. Mr. Hooper explained that he felt that City Council had already struck this requirement from the short term rental ordinances and he did not feel that there was a need to revisit the issue. Ms. Bergwerf explained that the reason Council struck the requirement is because of the older existing houses and this requirement would not affect them, but it would take away the incentive to increase the maximum occupancy by building smaller bedrooms.

Mr. Denton explained that he felt that there were probably ways that creative designers could get around the size requirement. Mr. Kerr explained that he felt that a prospective developer would be severely limiting the future sale-ability of a house to develop it with such small rooms, so he did not feel that it was a realistic

problem. He suggested monitoring the development and if a trend of building smaller bedrooms began to arise, amend the ordinance at that time. Mr. Loftus explained that he wanted to be proactive and he did not want to have a repeat of the situation that occurred with the marsh house, where something was constructed that the majority of the residents found objectionable. Mr. Campbell explained that the developers on the Island were savvy individuals and he did not think that a dormitory type structure would have a wide appeal to prospective buyers. Mr. Denton explained that he has designed several rental houses that were designed to maximize sleeping space with as many bedrooms as would reasonably fit and each of these rooms were greater than 150 square feet and he added that if the Planning Commission were to do something, he would prefer a more comprehensive set of guidelines that would not be as open to be circumvented.

A motion was made to not recommend this change and the motion was seconded. The motion passed with a vote of four in favor and two against (Bergwerf and Loftus).

DISCUSSION OF ORDINANCE 2007-13, GC1 SETBACKS

Mr. Kerr explained that this proposed zoning amendment would eliminate the front setback requirement for the GC1 zoning district. He added that this change was initiated by City Council as a result of discussions with the architect of the new public facility project. He explained that the designers were attempting to preserve as much parking area as possible in the area between the Pavilion Shops and the fire station. He explained that the current design called for the building to have no setback from the front property line.

He explained that there were two ways to accomplish this for the fire station: one would be to change the front setback requirement for the entire GC1 zoning district and a second alternative would be to rezone just the one piece of property that the fire station sits on to a new district. He explained that he felt that the correct thing was to change the requirements for the entire district, because he felt otherwise it would be spot zoning and he felt that having no setback was a desirable thing for the commercial district. He explained that this would be consistent with the recommendations of Seamon-Whiteside on the district. He explained that he hoped that the Planning Commission would get into all of the other requirements of the commercial district.

Mr. Loftus explained that he felt that there was a sense of urgency with the fire station and that he wanted to move quickly for this project, but he did not feel that

the Planning Commission had studied the ramifications of changing the requirements for the entire district. He stated that he felt that the Commission should recommend that a new district be created for the fire station and then analyze the rest of the area and make recommendations on all aspects of the commercial district. He explained that this was an idea that Dr. Marino had brought up at first reading and he felt that this would be a better way to proceed. He stated that this was a drastic change to make for one project.

Mr. Stevens explained that he wanted to keep this ordinance on tract to accommodate the fire station, but he was concerned about the lack of area for sidewalks. He explained that in some areas with wide right-of-ways no setback may be fine, but in other areas with narrow right-of-ways, it may not leave room for future sidewalks, which he felt would not be good for the district. He made a motion to recommend approval with the understanding that the Commission would resume discussions on the commercial district very quickly. Mr. Hooper seconded the motion. Mr. Loftus reiterated that he felt that this issue had not been adequately studied and he felt that this would be opening a can of worms. The vote was five to one (Loftus) in favor of the motion.

MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS

Mr. Kerr explained that all Commission members were required to have three hours of continuing education credit to retain their certification and he distributed a schedule of meeting dates last month that he would redistribute.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no more business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:30pm.
Respectfully submitted, Michael Loftus, Chairman.