

MINUTES OF THE ISLE OF PALMS
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
February 17, 2016

The Isle of Palms Planning Commission met in the City Hall Conference Room, 1207 Palm Boulevard on February 17, 2016 at 4:30 p.m. Members attending included Ron Denton, Vince DiGangi, Richard Ferencz, Lewis Gregory, Bill Mills, Lisa Safford and Noel Scott; the Director of Planning Douglas Kerr was present as well. 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.

Chairman Richard Ferencz called the meeting to order.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Ferencz explained that the next item on the agenda was the approval of the January 13th, 2016 minutes. Mr. Mills made a motion to approve the minutes as submitted and Ms. Safford seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor of the motion.

DISCUSS SEPTIC TANKS ON THE ISLAND

Mr. Kerr explained that at the previous meeting the Commission had requested that a representative from the Water and Sewer Commission (IOPWSC) staff be present to discuss the issue of expanding sewer lines, but that they had refused the invitation and requested that the Planning Commission submit questions in writing and the IOPWSC would respond in writing. He stated that he believed that some of the reluctance to meet was because the City's Public Work Committee was also requesting information of the IOPWSC and they did not want to duplicate effort. He explained that since that time, the Public Works Committee has agreed to hold off on their work until the Planning Commission has had an opportunity to research the issue and make recommendations. He stated that he would inquire with IOPWSC again to see if they would be willing to meet with the Planning Commission since the Public Works Committee's work was on hold.

Mr. Kerr explained that the IOPWSC has agreed to provide a plan detailing how they would propose to sewer the entire island. Additionally, they were working on updating the cost estimates for such a project. He stated that this plan would provide a good jumping off point for the Planning Commission's discussions.

Additionally, Mr. Kerr explained that at the beginning of the septic tank discussions the City Attorney was asked to give her opinion on the legality of requiring owners that sell their property outside of the family to tie into sewer. He stated that the City Attorney had completed her research and summarized her opinion by stating that it would be legal to charge such a fee and that several communities including Kiawah and Corrales, NM have similar requirements. He distributed copies of the ordinances for these two

communities. He explained that there would need to be a legitimate reason for exempting any class of people, including family member sales, but that it appeared that there would be a legitimate reason to differentiate between people inheriting property from those buying property.

For informational purposes, Mr. Kerr distributed a schedule created by Councilman Kinghorn showing how the timeframe and information he was proposing to the Public Works Committee while they were discussing the issue. He said he thought he provided a good indication of the expectation of the Public Works Committee.

Mr. Denton stated that he had discussed this issue with a prior IOPWS Commission member and he believe that they did have a long range plan for providing sewer to the entire island, but that there was no expediency to doing the project and it would happen gradually. He stated that prior to moving forward with such an aggressive plan, some analysis should be done on whether or not it would be feasible for the Isle of Palms system to be absorbed by one of the larger utilities operating in the area. He said that it could be that a larger utility could spread the expenses over a larger customer base and they may have greater borrowing power and/or financial reserves.

Mr. Ferencz asked if there was any federal funding available for such a project. Mr. Kerr answered that he had generally been told that this type of money was only available to lower income communities, particularly with wells, but that he would verify this through the Council of Governments. Mr. DiGangi stated that he had done a little research on other funding sources and he also felt that outside funding would be hard to secure. Mr. Kerr added that he had come across a federal study that was being conducted about the effects of sea level rise on septic systems and he would forward information regarding this study.

Mr. Ferencz stated that he thought that public education and outreach would be an important part of this process going forward. He stated that he was surprised to learn that only about half of the houses were on public sewer lines and he was sure many of the residents would be surprised by this fact.

Mr. Denton stated that historically grinder systems and septic systems have been seen as a deterrent from building large houses and the Commission should be mindful of not creating a standard that had an unintended consequence of denser development than expected. Ms. Safford stated that she felt that since the adoption of house size limits and lot coverage limits, the wastewater system is no longer the controlling factor.

Mr. Kerr asked for a list of questions that he could forward to the IOPWSC for responses at the next meeting.

Mr. Ferencz asked how many existing houses have sewer adjacent to their property and available to them, but have not tied into the system.

Mr. Mills asked whether the special assessments for a project like this could be added to a tax bill.

Mr. Ferencz asked for details on the capacity of the existing wastewater treatment systems and if there was some plan that would impact the capacity such as abandoning the Wild Dunes system.

Ms. Safford asked the life expectancy of the Wild Dunes treatment facility.

Ms. Safford asked what the logical phasing of the project would be given the infrastructure that is in place and the areas with poorest soil.

Mr. Ferencz asked if the IOPWSC could give a position of supporting or not supporting the stated goal of providing sewer to the entire island.

Mr. Gregory asked for the IOPWSC position on the idea of joining forces in some way with a larger utility such as the Charleston Water System.

MARINA MASTER PLAN

Mr. Kerr explained that he had distributed hard copies of the ATM report and he would follow up with sending an electronic version. He explained that ATM would be presenting the information at the February 23, 2016 City Council and all Planning Commission members should attend, if they are available.

ADJOURNMENT

With there being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Richard Ferencz, Chairman