

*Jasper County Planning Commission
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**Minutes of the August 09, 2022
Regular Scheduled Meeting**

Members Present: Chairman, Mr. Alex Pinckney; Vice-Chairman, Mr. Randy Waite; Dr. Earl Bostick; Dr. Debora Butler; Ms. Sharon Ferguson; Mr. Thomas Jenkins; and Mr. Arthur Rothenberg.

Staff Present: Ms. Lisa Wagner

Others Present: Mr. Chip Larkby and Mr. William Rhangos

In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act the electronic and print media were notified. During periods of discussion and/or presentations minutes are typically condensed and paraphrased. The recorded version is available online at:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCBmloqX05cKAsHm_ggXCJIA

Call to Order: Chairman Pinckney brought the meeting to order at approximately 6:00 pm.

Invocation & Pledge of Allegiance: Invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance was given by Dr. Bostick.

Approval of Agenda: Mr. Rothenberg motioned to approve the Agenda as published, seconded by Mr. Waite. The Commission Members voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

Approval of Minutes: Mr. Jenkins motioned to approve the Minutes of the **April 12, 2022 Meeting**, seconded by Mr. Waite. The Commission Members voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

Approval of Minutes: Mr. Rothenberg motioned to approve the Minutes of the **May 10, 2022 Meeting**, seconded by Dr. Butler. The Commission Members voted unanimously in favor of the motion

New Business:

Zoning Map Amendment- General Commercial, Tax Map Number, 083-00-03-057: Ms. Wagner said the subject property consists of 4.08 acres and is located at 5787 Lowcountry Drive. The Applicant has requested a Zoning Map Amendment to have the properties designated as General Commercial. The subject property is currently zoned Community Commercial and is undeveloped. The applicant would like to have the property re-zoned to General Commercial to allow a business and to rent out some flex space. The applicant believes General Commercial is a better fit for the area. She said the 2018 Jasper County Comprehensive Plan's Future Land Use Map identifies this area as "Rural Conservation," which seeks to protect and promote the character of Jasper County that largely exists today outside of the municipalities.

The Jasper County Comprehensive Plan's Land Use Exhibit shows this area as industrial and commercial uses, with residential uses nearby. The adjacent parcels are zoned Mixed Business and Community Commercial with Industrial, Residential, Rural Preservation and General Commercial nearby. Adjacent land uses are commercial and vacant property. The property is accessed by Lowcountry Drive (Highway 462), which is a two-lane state-maintained highway. From a land use perspective, staff recommends approval to have the property designated as General Commercial.

Dr. Butler asked about the area being designated as Community Commercial and if it was applied for by the residents in the community or the consultants who helped the County set up the Zoning Districts. Ms. Wagner said the area along Highway 462 was designated as Community Commercial in 2007 during the county wide re-zoning by the consultants, but the community did want their properties to be zoned Community Commercial because of all the existing commercial around them, they felt they would be able to sell their land at a higher value if they ever decided to leave the immediate area. Dr. Butler asked if the applicant is able to do what he wants to do in Community Commercial. Ms. Wagner said she would prefer the applicant or his representative to answer that question. She said she knows the applicant felt that he needed General Commercial for his business, and he would like to build additional space for lease.

Mr. Chip Larkby, the applicant's representative, addressed the Commission. He said the applicant runs a business in downtown Ridgeland and he has enough internet base that the current zoning would not allow him to operate his own business there. He said the applicant intends to operate his business at this location and he would like to have the ability to build and rent out additional space. He said commercial zoning would allow for some flexibility and allow other businesses to operate in the County that may not otherwise be able to with the current zoning.

Mr. Rothenberg said according to the Zoning Ordinance, General Commercial is intended to support large commercial developments in major unincorporated areas of Jasper County, and he asked if there are any guidelines that quantify the size for large developments. Ms. Wagner said no, and Article 7 of the Zoning Ordinance requires minimum lot sizes in General Commercial to be at least 10,000 s.f. Mr. Rothenberg asked Mr. Larkby if the applicant intends to maintain his business in Ridgeland. Mr. Larkby said yes.

Mr. Waite said there is nothing developed on the subject property and the entire area surrounding the property is Community Commercial. He is concerned about changing the zoning without knowing what type of uses are going to take place. He said he would feel better if there was something there or plans for the proposed use.

Dr. Bostick asked if the area would be Residential if the community had not wanted Community Commercial. Ms. Wagner said the community in large would be Residential except for the properties along Highway 462, which are Community Commercial. Dr. Bostick said he is concerned with re-zoning to General Commercial when there is a residential community in the area.

Mr. Waite asked if General Commercial allows residential uses. Ms. Wagner said yes, it allows stick-built homes, townhouses, duplexes, apartments, but it does not allow mobile homes.

Dr. Bostick asked what is the most offense use that could be allowed in General Commercial with residential around it. Ms. Wagner said a flea market, go-kart track, and bars.

Ms. Ferguson said she agrees with Mr. Waite because the proposed uses are vague, and the uses Ms. Wagner named could be allowed, which would not blend in with the residences.

Mr. Jenkins asked if the community has been notified about the re-zoning request and if we have received any feedback. Ms. Wagner said no, but once the public hearing is scheduled a notice would be sent to the nearby property owners.

Chairman Pinckney asked how far the landfill is from the subject property. Ms. Wagner said the landfill entrance is on Strobbart Road and the property is just a little less than ¼ mile from Strobbart Road and the entrance to the landfill is approximately ½ mile from Highway 462. Chairman Pinckney said the property is near the landfill and there is Mixed Business adjacent to the property.

Dr. Bostick asked if Mixed Business would be more appropriate for what the applicant is proposing. Chairman Pinckney asked Ms. Wagner to show the Use Chart so the Commission could see what is allowed in Mixed Business. Ms. Wagner pointed out the uses that are allowed and not allowed in both Mixed Business and General Commercial.

Mr. Rothenberg said one concern he has is not knowing what the intended uses are. He said if the Commission was better informed of what the proposed uses are, they could alleviate fears that the homeowners may have and could better act on their behalf.

Chairman Pickney said the public hearing takes place at the County Council level, which is when the property owners are notified, but the staff post a zoning application sign on the property at Planning Commission level. He said regardless of how the Commission votes on the application the final determination is made by Council. He said the Planning Commission's recommendation should be based on the Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Waite motioned to forward an unfavorable recommendation to County Council not to re-zone the property identified as Tax Map Number #083-00-03-057 from Community Commercial to General Commercial, seconded by Dr. Butler. The motion passed with Mr. Waite, Dr. Butler, Dr. Bostick, Mr. Rothenberg, and Ms. Ferguson voting in favor of the motion and Mr. Jenkins opposed the motion.

Road Name Petition– Barton's Trail, Tax Map Number 081-00-02-002: Ms. Wagner said the applicant is requesting that an existing road be named Barton's Trail. The subject road is a private maintained road and serves 17 lots that have recently been recorded as an Exempt Subdivision through the state's exemption for lots that are 5 acres and greater, and where the lots abut an existing road or right of way. As part of the plat approval, the Fire Marshal determined that the road meets the International Fire Code; however, Emergency Services requires the road to be named because it is greater than 500' in length. A road name petition was properly completed and submitted to Emergency Services for review. She said the road name petition meets the criteria of the County's Road Naming Ordinance for New Road Names with the exception of the subject road serving three (3) households; however, the road will serve 17 lots, which are planned for single family residences. Emergency Services has determined that the road should be named to facilitate postal delivery and emergency responses. Emergency Services has reviewed the application for phonetic conflict and duplication of other road names. No conflicts were found.

Dr. Bostick motioned to approve the road name Barton's Trail, seconded by Ms. Ferguson. The Commission Members voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

Discussion:

Planned Development District (PDD) Proposal by Mr. William Rhangos: Ms. Wagner said Mr. William Rhangos owns Savannah Hardscapes located at 64 McDowell Circle in the Levy community. She said Mr. Rhangos asked for an opportunity to speak to the Planning Commission and would like to speak about his intent to pursue a Planned Development District in the near future. The proposed PDD would consist of 527 acres and is located just north of Levy. His proposal would include setting aside 481 acres for Resource Conservation, 40 acres for General Commercial uses, 5 acres for Community Commercial uses, and 1 acre for Residential use.

Mr. Rhangos addressed the Commission. He said over the past few years he has heard from people who operate small businesses as to whether there are properties, they could locate their businesses on. He said whether you live in Jasper County, Beaufort County, or Chatham County all you see is big warehouses going up for regional and national distributors, which are very expensive and usually are only rented to people who are looking for at least 100,000 square feet. He said his business is on 3 acres, and they have about 10,000 square feet under roof and outdoor storage, and this type of use is hard to find anywhere in the three-county area, so he thought about developing 46 acres, which are part of 527 acres he owns. He said his intent would be to develop 40 acres for General Commercial that could be used for small warehouses and office space with outdoor storage. He said there is a 2-acre and 3-acre tract that would be designated for Community Commercial uses and 1 acre along Nelsons Court for residential use. He said the remaining 481 acres would be set aside for Resource Conservation, which will never be developed. He said the 40-acre General Commercial piece would be buffered on all sides. He said he would like to get the Commissioners thoughts or comments about his proposal. He said the General Commercial property is about 450' away from Mungin Creek Road where there are some residential uses. He said their business down the street is overflowing at their current site so they would like to move a portion of their business to this site. He said one of the people he would be doing this development with imports slate for roofs, and they would like the ability to have a lay down yard and build a small warehouse with an office. He said this is the type of use that people are looking for, 3 – 5 acres with the ability to have some outdoor storage and indoor storage and office space.

Dr. Butler said the proposal sounds like it is more for an industrial park use where the owner is going to subdivide for businesses. She asked if that is allowed to be zoned as PDD. Ms. Wagner said yes, based on the acreage. She said a Concept Map for a PDD on this particular tract of land would have mixed uses with the 40 acres being General Commercial, the 2 and 3 acre tracts being Community Commercial, the 1 acre tract being Residential, and the remaining 481 acre tract being preserved for conservation. Dr. Butler asked if the 481 acres will be turned over to a conservation group. Mr. Rhangos said it would be put in a land trust and set aside permanently never to be developed. Dr. Butler asked if the property to be set aside are wetlands. Mr. Rhangos said there are wetlands, but a lot of the property includes high land as well.

Mr. Waite said he would feel better about the proposal if there was more of a buffer between the subject property and Mungin Creek Road because there are a lot of residents on the opposite side of Mungin Creek Road. He suggested moving the commercial tracts a little more south along the highway. Mr.

Rhangos said they created the parcels where they did so that the access to the property is on the straight portion of the highway, making the access safer and there is a wetland area south of the 40-acre property.

Mr. Jenkins asked if there are any plans to do an archeological study. Mr. Rhangos said once they submit for a PDD, they will comply with all requirements of the Ordinance.

Dr. Butler asked if there is a church across the street. Mr. Rhangos said yes. Dr. Butler asked if the church would have any impact on this proposal. Ms. Wagner said the church is located across from the area that will be preserved, but the church would be notified of the zoning application.

Chairman Pinckney thanked Mr. Rhangos for the information and asked how soon he plans to bring his project forward. Mr. Rhangos said he has been working with Whitmer Keffer Jones, but it is hard to predict because everything takes longer than what you think it will take. Chairman Pinckney said Highway 315 has problems with traffic and suggested that Mr. Rhangos consider the traffic when planning his project. Mr. Rhangos said he believes a traffic analysis for the project will require a deceleration and acceleration lane, but they will consider the best way to deal with the traffic.

Open Discussion: Chairman Pinckney expressed his condolences to Commissioner Waite and Commissioner Bostick for the loss of their loved ones. He suggested in the future sending an email to the other Commissioners letting them know when one of the Commissioners loses a family member. Dr. Bostick and Mr. Waite thanked the Commissioners and staff for the cards they received.

Mr. Waite said he would like to see the Commission revisit the sidewalk regulations. He thinks it would be a good idea to see if there is a way to incentivize developers to incorporate sidewalks in their projects. He suggested placing this item on a future agenda. Dr. Butler said if sidewalks are going to be required, there should also be a requirement for maintaining the sidewalks.

Mr. Jenkins wanted to follow up on road names and cemeteries. He asked Ms. Wagner who is in charge of road names. Ms. Wagner said Emergency Services is in charge of road names. She said she followed up with Emergency Services about the cemeteries and Ms. Georgia Deloach said they receive calls about cemeteries, and they are not sure where some of them are located. She said she also contacted Chief Wells who was supposed to look deeper into the cemetery issues, but he did not get back to her. Mr. Jenkins said his concern is if someone has a medical emergency how does EMS find them because 75% of the roads in Jasper County do not have a name. Ms. Wagner said EMS uses the County's GIS system when responding to calls. She said anyone can make a request to have a road named.

Mr. Jenkins said in regard to affordable housing, he knows there is a lot of federal dollars available for affordable housing, and Jasper County ty is not doing anything about affordable housing. He suggested that the County open their own housing authority where someone can apply for grants and bring some of these federal dollars into the county for affordable housing. Ms. Wagner said Jasper County is working with Beaufort County and the municipalities to set up a SOLOCO Regional Housing Trust Fund. Chairman Pinckney said he was assigned to the stakeholders group for the SOLOCO Regional Housing Trust Fund. He said affordability is based on a percentage of the average income in this area. He said in a subdivision a developer builds a certain number of houses that can be obtained by teachers, county employees, etc. He said there are several different organizations for individuals to get help with subsidized housing, but they are two different categories.

Ms. Ferguson was concerned about the property owners not being notified of requests for re-zonings. Chairman Pinckney said the public hearings are held at Council level, but staff does place a sign on the property prior to Planning Commission's review of the application and if someone wanted to comment on the application, they would be given the opportunity. He said the Commission only makes recommendations to County Council.

Adjourn: Mr. Jenkins motioned to adjourn, seconded by Dr. Bostick. The Commission Members voted unanimously in favor of the motion. The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:52 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lisa Wagner