

CHATHAM COUNTY-SAVANNAH METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION

MPC PLANNING MEETING MINUTES

**ARTHUR A. MENDONSA HEARING ROOM
110 EAST STATE STREET**

February 10, 2009

1:00 PM

Members Present:

Jon Todd, Chairman
Shedrick Coleman, Vice-Chairman
Susan Myers, Treasurer
Russ Abolt
Ellis Cook
Ben Farmer
Lacy Manigault

Members Not Present:

Adam Ragsdale, Secretary
Michael Brown
David Hoover
Stephen Lufburrow
Timothy S. Mackey
Robert Ray

Staff Present:

Thomas Thomson, P.E. AICP, Executive Director
Charlotte Moore, AICP, Director of Special Projects
James Hansen, AICP, Director of Development Services
Amanda Bunce, Development Services Planner
Geoff Goins, Development Services Planner
Dennis Hutton, AICP, LEED, Director of Comprehensive Planning
Bethany Jewell, LEED, Comprehensive Planner
Jackie Teel, LEED, Comprehensive Planner
Beth Reiter, AICP, Director of Historic Preservation
Ellen Harris, LEED, Historic Preservation Planner
Sarah Ward, LEED, Historic Preservation Planner
Bri Finau, Administrative Assistant
Constance Morgan, Administrative Assistant

Advisory Staff Present:

I. CALL TO ORDER AND WELCOME

Chairman Todd called the February 10, 2009 MPC Planning Meeting to order at 1:00 PM. He requested everyone to stand for the Invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance. He explained the agenda and asked all in attendance to be sure to record their attendance on the sign-in sheet. All who wished to speak on a petition before the Board were encouraged to fill out the blue speaker cards provided.

II. NOTICES, PROCLAMATIONS AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A. Notice(s)

The Board was notified of upcoming MPC Personnel Committee activities schedule:

February 10, 2009	Executive Session to ask questions of Executive Director
February 17, 2009	Due date for evaluation forms from MPC Board Members
March 3, 2009	Personnel Committee meeting for evaluation forms review
March 24, 2009	Recommendation from Personnel Committee (Executive Session)

B. Acknowledgement(s)

Chairman Todd stated that due to the lack of a quorum for this meeting all votes will need to be ratified at the next Comprehensive Planning Meeting, April 14, 2009.

III. RATIFICATIONS OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

A. Approval of October 14, 2008 Planning Briefing minutes and Planning meeting minutes

Chairman Todd stated that due to the lack of a quorum this item will be continued to the April 14, 2009 MPC Planning Meeting.

B. Approval of December 9, 2008 Planning Briefing minutes and Planning meeting minutes

Chairman Todd stated that due to the lack of a quorum this item will be continued to the April 14, 2009 MPC Planning Meeting.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

None.

V. REGULAR BUSINESS

A. Savannah Gardens

Jim Stevenson, immediate past President of Community Housing Services Agency (CHSA) Development and current Board Member of CHSA, introduced Bernie Beier as current President of CHSA and Darryl Davis as Executive Director. It is a public/private partnership formed in 1989 to provide additional affordable housing in Savannah. The development arm, CHSA Development was formed later to give CHSA the opportunity to actually develop affordable housing for sale or rental. He stated they will also be working with the Sustainable Fellwood project and there are similarities between it and Savannah Gardens. It is funded by the City, major banks, the Housing Authority, and Georgia Power.

Mr. Stevenson noted that Strathmore Estates/Savannah Gardens was purchased in November 2007. The property is owned by CHSA, not the City, though they work closely together. He stated an advisory committee had been informed to include and inform the neighbors of the CHSA plans. The advisory committee has met with Twickenham residents to discuss their concerns.

Ms. Myers and **Mr. Manigault** asked if the driving and parking concerns of the neighbors were satisfied.

Mr. Stevenson stated those concerns were addressed. The neighbors are supportive of the project.

Martin Fretty, City of Savannah Housing Director, stated he provided technical assistance to CHSA. He stated he attended several of the neighborhood meetings. He gave the historical street connectivity of the area. Changes have been made to accommodate building height concerns. CHSA will conduct a traffic study to determine what type of road improvements may be necessary. There will be sidewalks and City Engineering will work to provide the best traffic pattern for all involved. Mr. Fretty stated there will be a combination of rental and homeowners in the development.

Mr. Manigault asked if the prior rental tenants will have an opportunity to return to the development?

Mr. Fretty stated if they met the requirements, they would have the opportunity to return. He stated the rental property will be managed by Mercy Management Company; they are committed to the safety and upkeep of the property.

B. Unified Zoning Ordinance Status Report

Charlotte Moore of the MPC, stated that the scheduled presentation regarding density would be postponed until the next Planning Session due to the absence of the City Manager, Michael Brown.

With regard to the status of the Unified Zoning Ordinance, Ms. Moore mentioned that workshops were held with City Council and County Commission in December 2008 and continued to January 2009. She noted that some elected officials had not attended the workshops but that staff was still attempting to arrange individual meetings.

She stated that in late February, UZO staff would meet with city bureau chiefs and department heads. This meeting will provide an opportunity to discuss how the UZO might implement their programs and plans. She added that the Citizen Liaison Officer will assist in public meetings that are to begin this summer.

Ms. Moore mentioned that staff met with the Public Information Officers for the city and county to discuss how they could assist staff with informing the public about the UZO. The Internet, video production, and newspaper articles were among the mediums discussed.

Ms. Moore spoke about the Technical Committee, which includes members from the private and public sectors. She said the participation from private sector members has been waning. These members are needed to provide feedback on draft sections. She added that notification regarding upcoming meetings is sent via e-mail, yet few responses are received from these individuals as to whether they will or will not attend. There has also been a lack of response to e-mails and letters requesting that the member send an alternate, or to inform staff that they no longer wish to participate.

Mr. Manigault suggested replacing members who are not attending because their input is needed. He added that there will be those who state that they did not know about the changes, and it will be too late.

Ms. Myers asked how long have these individuals been involved in this project?

Ms. Moore responded two years, and that only two hours per month have been requested. She added that because a meeting was not held every month in 2008, the total commitment for the year would have been for only 16 hours. However, she appreciates they were volunteering their time. The main concern with a lack of attendance is that some groups will not have a voice in the drafting stage.

Amanda Bunce with the MPC, began a discussion on zoning districts. Ms. Bunce stated there was a need for a third Conservation district—the Conservation Park (C-P) District. The uses for this district will include historic cemeteries; sites such as Fort Jackson and Fort Pulaski; Bacon Park, and other large community parks.

Ms. Bunce is currently completing the Airport and Airfield Overlay District. She stated she has been working closely with officials from the Savannah-Hilton Head International Airport and Hunter Army Air Field (HAAF) to obtain the contours for overlay's boundaries. The current maps show height limits based on the runway and safety zones around the airfield from 1972. She informed that HAAF is working on digitizing their data. The goal is to create one GIS layer that represents the areas to be regulated around the Airport and Airfield. Information from the HAAF Joint Land Use Study indicates that no residences should be in certain noise and accident potential zoned in the areas immediately surrounding the Airfield. The Airport Master Plan also identifies areas where residential uses are not appropriate due to noise and take-off/landing patterns.

Ms. Bunce informed she is working on Cluster Development standards that can be used as a matter of right in all single- and multi-family residential districts. This allows placement of homes on a smaller lot size if a certain amount of open space is provided. There can be less impact in a cluster development as less infrastructure is often needed. It does not increase density as a matter of right; there will be proposed density bonuses that can be obtained if certain performance standards are met. A cap on the amount of density bonus is proposed as well.

The current Open Space requirements for non-residential and multi-family developments is 20%. However, there are no specific requirements for single-family developments. Minimum requirements are being proposed for single-family developments that are in specific zoning districts (5,000 and 6,000 square foot lots), planned developments, and cluster developments. A certain percentage of the open space would be required to be active, which could include recreational areas. The remainder could be retained wetlands, detention ponds, passive recreation areas such as trails or preserved areas. The details of the ordinance are being worked on with City and County Engineering staff.

Mr. Farmer asked will homeowner's associations be required for these types of developments?

Ms. Bunce stated it has been mentioned as a concern with City and County Engineering staff. What happens if it a HOA collapses? Who will maintain the common areas? She stated the issue has been recognized and they are looking into it.

Ms. Bunce also spoke about the lighting ordinance section of the UZO, which has been drafted. This ordinance will indicate how much lighting is appropriate at the property line, interior to the site, etc. She stated that lighting is a safety issue in addition to an aesthetic issue.

Ms. Moore spoke about industrial use standards and mentioned that related environmental aspects are being researched. Alternate energy sources, which include solar and wind are also under development. Based on the limited wind within Chatham County, however, the focus will be on solar energy. She informed there are tax incentives available from Federal and State government.

The revised ordinances for the Historic District and the Victorian District are almost finished. She added that in the Victorian District, new construction must comply with design standards, but there are no standards for rehabilitation. Another review board is proposed to be created for the Victorian District (which will be shared with other historic districts except the Historic District, or Landmark Historic District as it is also known.)

Ms. Myers asked about demolition standards.

Ms. Moore stated there is an ordinance being developed for maintaining historic properties.

Ms. Myers asked what kind of enforcement is in place?

Ellen Harris, with Historic Preservation of the MPC, replied it would be through the City's Department of Inspections where they issue fines and becomes court-sanctioned.

Ms. Moore spoke about the Protected River Corridor Buffer, which presently exists in the zoning ordinance as an overlay zoning district. The river area to be protected extends along the Ogeechee River from Effingham County to Interstate 95. The buffer is state-mandated and prevents certain uses from being built within 100 feet of the river bank. There are a few homes already within the buffer, but they can remain as nonconforming uses.

Ms. Moore stated that a Residential Manufactured Home Park district has been developed. This district will apply only to parks where lots are leased. The Manufactured Home Overlay district will apply to fee-simple lots where manufactured homes are interspersed with stick-built homes and that are not located in the Agricultural zoning district.

The Residential Single-Family zoning districts have been completed. A district (RSF-5) has been added that will allow lots with a minimum lot size of 5,000 square feet. A smaller lot option (4,000 square feet) is possible if there is a lane in the rear of the lot.

Ms. Moore also noted that garage and carport placement is being examined. Depending on location and driveway width, a good portion of a front yard area could be pavement. Some limitations could be placed on driveway placement to create a more vibrant streetscape.

Ms. Moore noted that other ordinances are in varying draft stages. These ordinances include: Traffic Management and Circulation; Standardized Street Cross-sections; Outdoor Storage and Display Areas; and Traditional Residential Districts.

Ms. Bunce spoke about rezoning, noting that zoning and parcels lines do not always match. The spatial inaccuracy is an on-going issue because of the use of pre-GIS data and lack of specific standards and protocol. Because so many areas are inaccurate, it adds time to completing the UZO project. Staff is using 2008 aerial photo imagery to help draw zoning lines correctly, and also uses historical zoning maps and files to determine the zoning line intent for a particular area.

Mr. Manigault suggested notification to individuals that will be affected by the modified zonings.

Ms. Bunce stated that is part of the public participation plan. As zoning line errors are corrected, remapping (or rezoning) is also being done. In the future, the parcel layer can be repaired if funding is available; the cost is being researched.

As part of the remapping process, the unincorporated county and Savannah have been divided into 25 maps. All MPC Development Services and Comprehensive Planning planners are participating in the remapping process. After a map is prepared by a planner, staff reviews the map as a group. This is to determine correct zoning and all other necessary scenarios. A note that justifies a zoning change is provided.

Another difficulty with remapping is that some neighborhoods have no clear lot size or housing type pattern. GIS is used to analyze neighborhoods on a case-by-case basis to tailor the zoning district. Some neighborhoods may have more than one zoning district due to varying lot sizes and housing types. Determining the appropriate density is also being done on a case-by-case basis; several factors, such as lane usage, are used to determine appropriate density. Non-conforming situations may apply to lot size or the use. It is possible for standards of new districts no longer permit a lot size that currently exists.

Ms. Moore concluded that a number of UZO items are in varying stages of draft, but the majority is completed. When it is completed, it will be presented to the Planning Commission for its review. She reiterated that information regarding the UZO can be found on the MPC's website, including meeting minutes and presentations. The MPC's Web address is: www.thempc.org.

C. Proposed Stormwater Regulations for Construction Sites

Chairman Todd stated that due to the lack of a quorum this item will be continued to the February 17, 2009 MPC Meeting. Mr. Thomson stated the slide show is in the distributed packets to review.

Jackie Teel informed Georgia already has this process in place. This information is the Federal aspect from the EPA. She stated there is a link on the last slide where comments can be submitted.

D. Proposed Revision to the Chatham County Historic Preservation Ordinance

Ellen Harris, Historic Preservation Planner of the MPC, stated the need became apparent to revise the ordinance when Chatham County submitted an application for Certified Local Government status through the State Historic Preservation office in 2008. It was noted that the current ordinance has inconsistencies with the State Historic Preservation Act. The ordinance has an Owner Consent Clause, which prevents the Chatham County Board of Commissioners from designating an area as historic if the majority of the property owners within the district do not consent. However, that authority was specifically granted through the State Historic Preservation Act. The ordinance was revised to be consistent; there was no interest in forcing historic designation to areas that do not want it. Therefore, the clause was removed from the ordinance and made a part of the application process.

The Conservation District category was removed in the revision. This applied to areas with character but less than 50 years old. We currently don't have any in our area; it was felt the ordinance was not the correct place to designate non-historic areas.

The first reading will be held by the County Commission on February 13, 2009, and the second reading on February 27, 2009.

E. Historic Ordinance Revisions Status Report

Sarah Ward, Historic Preservation Planner with the MPC, stated the revisions were forwarded to the City for review. There is also a draft document with the City Attorney and are awaiting his comments. Afterwards, we will go back to the committee or go forward with a 30-day public comment period, which will be determined by the City Attorney's comments.

F. Executive Director's Report

Chairman Todd stated that due to the lack of a quorum this item will be continued to the April 14, 2009 MPC Planning Meeting. Mr. Thomson requested that the next scheduled meeting is March 24, 2009, not the 17th.

VI. OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business to discuss.

VII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Chairman Todd stated that due to the lack of a quorum this item will be continued to the April 14, 2009 MPC Planning Meeting.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Being no further business to come before the Commission, the February 10, 2009 Planning Meeting adjourned at 3:20 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Thomas L. Thomson
Executive Director

Note: Minutes not official until signed.

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