



C H A T H A M C O U N T Y
RESOURCE PROTECTION COMMISSION

Metropolitan Planning Commission
112 East State Street, Savannah
Meeting Minutes - 2:00PM

July 18, 2011 Technical Advisory Committee Meeting

This Agenda and supporting material will be available prior to the meeting date at <http://www.thempc.org/administrative/Archive/2012agenda.htm>

I. Call to Order and Welcome

1. [Call to order and welcome](#)

Dr. Hoskins called the meeting to order at 2:14 p.m., and welcomed everyone. The mission of the Commission is to establish a uniform procedure to provide for the protection, enhancement, and perpetuation of areas having significant natural, historic, cultural or aesthetic interest or value, or which protect current or future sources of potable water.

II. Approval of Meeting Minutes

2. [April 18, 2011](#)

Attachment: [April 18, 2011 Meeting Minutes.pdf](#)

The Chatham County Resource Protection Commission Technical Advisory Committee approved the April 18, 2011 meeting minutes.

Board Action:

- PASS

Vote Results

Motion: Dr. Dionne L. Hoskins

Second: Jo Hickson

Elizabeth E. Arndt - Not Present

Mark T. Bouy - Not Present

Joe Burnam - Not Present

Patton Dugas - Not Present

Chris Emmer - Aye

Sonny Emmert - Aye

Louise Grotheer - Not Present

Jo Hickson	- Aye
Dr. Dionne L. Hoskins	- Aye
Diane Houston	- Not Present
Karen Jenkins	- Aye
Felton Jenkins	- Not Present
Shelly Krueger	- Not Present
Bob Marshall	- Aye
Frank McIntosh	- Not Present
Gwen McKee	- Not Present
James L. Miles Jr.	- Not Present
Charlie Milmine	- Not Present
Sue Moore	- Not Present
Maria Procopio	- Not Present
Daniel Ramsay	- Not Present
H. Meddy Settles	- Not Present
Dane Spencer	- Not Present
Dale Thorpe	- Aye
Kristina Williams	- Not Present
Paul H. Wolff	- Aye

III. Presentations

3. [Natural Resources in the Unified Zoning Ordinance, Charlotte Moore - MPC Director of Special Projects](#)

Mrs. Bounds introduced Charlotte Moore, Director of Special Projects and Amanda Bunce, Development Services Planner.

Ms. Moore greeted everyone and stated that she will give a brief overview of the Zoning Ordinance, and then Mrs. Bunce will get into the specific standards.

The Comprehensive Plan, which was adopted by City Council and County Commission back in 2006, was the first phase of the Tricentennial Plan. The second phase, the Unified Zoning Ordinance, was released to the public on June 28, 2011. The public comment period is through September 30, 2011 [NOTE: the public comment period has been extended to January 31, 2012]. Drafting this ordinance was a four year process and we're still in the process of drafting a few sections and they have not been posted to the website. This is the opportunity for you to review the ordinance and provide us with your feedback. Let us know if there is anything you feel that needs to be changed, revised or anything you feel we've overlooked; and we will be glad to incorporate that.

The City of Savannah adopted its zoning ordinance in 1960, and the County followed in 1962. Unfortunately, our Zoning Ordinance really reflects it's age. So, we started from scratch re-writing our Ordinance. We are also making sure it's consistent with our Comprehensive Plan and we're in the process of updating the Zoning Map (between the City and County, there are 93,000 parcels).

We have about 126 zoning districts right now, which makes it impossible to have a color coded map. There are many things zoning districts do: they protect, promote or maintain a certain type of character.

One of the great new things about our new Ordinance is resolving the problems with zoning in some of our older areas of town. For example, the Mid-town neighborhood, currently has zoning that is very suburban, and the minimum lot size reflects something you would find in the Windsor Forest area for example. Right now there are 800 non-conforming lots. With the new zoning that will be improved by 79%.

We're also eliminating the redundancy between the City and the County, so where there's a similar zoning district, for example, the R-6 and R-1 it will be renamed Residential Single Family 6. The uses are going to be similar to what exists right now, and by cleaning all this up we've determined we need about 39 base zoning districts.

We have three conservation types of districts: Conservation, Conservation Marsh, and Conservation Park.

The intent varies between the different districts, as do the standards. For example, the minimum lot size for Conservation Marsh would be two acres. There are other dimensional standards such as set backs and height. The "C" Conservation applies to the Blue Sky property, for example while the "CP" would be Daffin Park.

The uses that are allowed in each of these districts vary, some of them are a matter of right, meaning there are no conditions, some of them have limited uses or maybe standards relating to operational characteristics, such as hours of operation. There are special uses that allow the governing body to determine if the use is appropriate at that particular location. For example, in Conservation Park, we identify major utility as possibly being allowed, but the governing body would have to make that determination. They could add some conditional standards upon the approval of that particular use through a special permit process. If there are any violations of those conditions, it's possible to revoke the permit.

We've also made significant changes to all the development procedures that we have such as rezonings, site plan reviews, and variance requests. It's going to be much clearer to the applicant what is required. We're also looking at improving our notifications as well: mail notification radius for rezoning will go from a 200 ft. radius to a 300 ft. radius. Certain applications will require a neighborhood meetings, such as rezoning and major site development plans. We're hoping that residents can resolve issues with the developer so that they're not trying to resolve it here during the formal meeting before the Planning Commission.

Our review bodies and administrators are identified and it's going to be very clear what their authority is. We've talked about the make-up of the Board and indicated that some of the membership should have experience. For example, in the Planning Commission, they should have some development, planning or architecture experience.

Mrs. Bunce greeted everyone and began her presentation. One feature of the UZO is improved site development regulations. Some areas of the current Ordinance the standards were lacking, such as with access management to reduce excessive curb cuts on a street. We currently have no standards for outdoor lighting, and so we proposed standards on maximum lighting level, not only at the property line, but also at any point on the site. New development is going to be mostly affected by these improved site development standards, or existing developments as they seek to expand or significantly redevelop.

One big improvement in our Ordinance is a reduction in the amount of parking that is required. There are reduced parking requirements downtown but right now it's tied to zoning districts. So, we're

proposing to let it be tied to geographical area.

We've also increased our remote parking distance to a quarter mile in the downtown, right now it's only 150 feet. The Victorian District is different- it allows 300 feet. We've also allowed for businesses to provide valet parking off site, and allow that to count toward their parking requirement. Employee parking to allowed to use tandem spaces- one right behind the other. So, we've increased the flexibility of how people provide parking so that it all doesn't have to be on site. We've also increased the ability for shared parking between uses that use parking lots at different times of the day.

Victorian and Streetcar Neighborhoods see similar parking reductions. Suburban areas have increased the remote parking distance to 600 feet, and no limit for employee parking. There are many uses where we have decreased the parking ratios. We have proposed that any amount of parking that's 125% or more of the minimum has to be pervious. We require bicycle parking for certain uses as well. For our buffer section of the Ordinance, we're proposing a street yard buffer- a minimal amount of plantings along the street for all non-residential and multi-family development along arterial and collector streets.

There is a requirement for open and recreational space within subdivisions of a certain size.

There is an allowance for Cluster Development Subdivisions, that are sometimes called Conservation Subdivisions. The concept here is, that you have your same density as the zoning district allows, but you get get to make your lot smaller in exchange for providing a certain amount of open space. We will be requiring a minimum of 30% of the buildable area, and there's certain standards for what Zoning Districts you can do this in. The developer gain smaller lot size, more design flexibility and more housing types, without having to rezone. The density stays the same, but we gain conservation area that would not be there otherwise.

There are provisions for density bonuses, if they do certain things such as providing open space in an excess of 50% or increasing the wetland or marsh buffer to a 100 feet. The maximum bonus you can achieve is 20% over what is allowed by the base zoning district.

Another section is the Protected River Corridor Buffer. Currently this exist as an Overlay District in our current Ordinance. It's not new and is required by the State. The Ogeechee River, west of Highway 17, is the only applicable water body in our jurisdiction, and it requires a 100 foot buffer along river with a few permitted uses.

We have had a lot of groups working with us in the drafting process of the UZO. City and County Staff, a Technical Committee of 20 to 30 representatives from the business community and focus groups, and an Advisory Committee of which some of you sat on of about 80 people. We have a website and a blog where you can submit your feedback, and view a list of scheduled meetings. We've also developed a tool called UZOOM, it allows you to enter an address or P.I.N, and it will display your current and proposed zoning side-by-side.

In October going into the first of November, we anticipate the Planning Commission recommendation, and then hopefully we will have Governing Body approval by the end of the year. [NOTE: The public comment period has been extended to January 31, 2012 which has pushed back anticipated approval dates.]

IV. Regular Business

4. [Chatham County Conservation Lands Map: Phase I](#)

Mrs. Bounds presented and explained the Greenspace Map.

5. [Lower Ogeechee Trails Project Design and Progress, Joanna Bounds - MPC Resource Protection Planner](#)

Mrs. Bounds reviewed the Lower Ogeechee Trails Project and the progress she's made on it so far. This is the project to create two miles of trails on the Blue Sky Preserve and it is being funded by a grant from the Georgia Department of Natural Resources Recreational Trails Program.

We initially completed a property assessment to identify areas of interest and existing elements that could be used for trails, such as berms and older timber roads. Then, Joe Burnam, a member of our TAC and a wildlife biologist with Georgia DNR, completed an ecological survey of the area to determine which areas were too sensitive for trail development, to identify habitat types present and environmental points of interest, and to locate endangered species currently existing on the site in order to prevent disturbance to these resources during trail and future trail use. Then, the project team, which consists of Joanna, Joe, and several staff at the County, used the information during these visits to design the trail. Joe Burnam and Joanna visited the property to GPS and flag the future trail system and this is the design that we they came up with.

What's really neat about the trail system we've designed is that it enables visitors to experience four different habitat types: Pine Flatwoods, Bottomland Hardwood Forest, Forested Wetlands, and Canebreaks. We are going to model this trail after the natural trails on the Whitemarsh Preserve. So, they will 5 to 7 feet wide and created by cutting the vegetation and mulching it, so it leaves a nice natural surface for hiking and mountain biking.

Now that we've got the design, we are ready to put the project out to bid. Our plan is to put there project out to bid this month and to make a contract award in August. If all of this goes according to plan, the trail should be completed by January. We actually have until December 2012 to finish the project, so if we can stick to this schedule we'll finish with plenty of time to spare. In addition t the two mile trail, the project team wanted to build a spur trail that would take visitors to some of the most picturesque parts of the property.

6. [Election of Vice-Chair](#)

Dr. Hoskins asked the committee to nominate a Vice-Chair but no nominations were made.

V. Update on Technical Advisory Committee

VI. Commissioners' Items

7. [Commissioners' Items](#)

Dr. Hoskins asked the committee members to please designate someone to fill-in for them, if they plan to be absent in the future.

VII. Adjournment

8. [Adjournment](#)

There being no other business to come before the board Dr. Hoskins declared, the Chatham County Resource Protection Technical Advisory Committee meeting adjourned at 3:42 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Joanna Bounds
Resource Protection Planner

Board Action:

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Vote Results

Motion: Dale Thorpe

Second: Jo Hickson

The Chatham County - Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission provides meeting summary minutes which are adopted by the respective Board. Verbatim transcripts of minutes are the responsibility of the interested party.