



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 - 3:30PM

July 21, 2011 Regular 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 welcomed everyone and the called the meeting to order at 3:39 p.m. 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 21, 2011](#)

Attachment: [April 21, 2011 Meeting Minutes.pdf](#)

The minutes for the April 21, 2011 meeting were approved.

Board Action:

- PASS

Vote Results

Motion: Paul H. Wolff

Second: H. Meddy Settles

Elizabeth E. Arndt

- Aye

Mark T. Bouy

- Not Present

Dr. Dionne L. Hoskins

- Aye

Felton Jenkins

- Aye

James L. Miles Jr.

- Aye

H. Meddy Settles

- Aye

Kristina Williams	- Aye
Paul H. Wolff	- Aye

III. Presentations

3. Natural Resources in the Unified Zoning Ordinance, Charlotte Moore - MPC Director of Special Projects and Amanda Bunce - MPC Development Services Planner

Mrs. Joanna Bounds, introduced Ms. Charlotte Moore, Director of Special Projects and Mrs. Amanda Bunce, Development Services Planner at the MPC.

Ms. Moore greeted everyone and stated that she will give a brief overview of the Unified Zoning Ordinance sections with specific to natural resources and then Mrs. Bunce will get into the specifics of the standards.

Some of you may be familiar with the Comprehensive Plan, which was adopted by City Council and County Commission back in 2006. This was the first phase of the Tricentennial Plan, the second phase being the Unified Zoning Ordinance. The UZO was released to the public on June 28, 2011 and we have public comment period going on through September 30, 2011 [NOTE: The public comment period has been extended until January 31, 2012]. This is the opportunity for you to look through the Ordinance and provide us with your feedback. The City of Savannah adopted its ordinance in 1960 and the County followed in 1962. It is not required by state law, but the City and County has chosen to have zoning for almost half a century. Our zoning ordinance really reflects it's age and it's very suburban in orientation. We started from scratch re-writing our ordinance and are also making certain it's consistent with our Comprehensive Plan. In the City and County there 93,000 parcels, and for the first time we will have a color coded map.

We have about 126 zoning districts right now, and we're reducing that to about 40. We're reducing non-conforming lots in many areas and eliminating the redundancy between the City and the County.

We've determined we need three Conservation districts: Conservation, Conservation Marsh and Conservation Park. The intent varies between the different districts, and there are dimensional standards identifying for example what the minimal lot size should be.

We've also made significant changes to all the development procedures that we have. It's going to be very clear to the applicant what is required of him or her. We're also looking at improving our notifications as well. Mail notification radius, for rezoning will go from a 200 foot radius to a 300 foot radius, and certain applications will require a neighborhood meeting. We're hoping that residents can work out issues with the developer in advance rather than during the formal meeting before the Planning Commission.

Mrs. Bunce explained the standards that have been developed as part of the UZO. One feature of the UZO is improve site development regulations. Especially in areas of the ordinance where standards were lacking, such as with access management we're trying to reduce excessive curb cuts on a street which can in affect increase the traffic flow and cruse the capacity of that street. Also we have no current standards for outdoor lighting, and so we proposed maximum standards on 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. One big improvement in our UZO is a reduction in an amount of parking that is required. Right now parking requirements are tied to zoning district and we're proposing to tie it to a geographical area.

We've also allowed added ability for businesses to provide valet parking that's off site and allow that to count toward their parking requirement, as well as employee parking to allow tandem spaces. We've increased the flexibility of how people provide parking so that it all doesn't have to be on site, and we've also increased the ability for shared parking between uses that use parking lots at different times of the day, as another method of reducing the amount of parking required. Victorian and Streetcar neighborhoods see similar parking reductions. For the suburban areas we've 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 lot has to be pervious. We require bicycle parking as certain uses as well.

There is a requirement for open and recreational space within larger subdivisions. The intent of this is to provide a minimal amount of active recreational space, be it a playground equipment or a clubhouse with a swimming pool, or trails within a subdivision. We are adjusting the tree point value based on the lot size.

There is a new section that addresses Cluster Development Subdivisions, sometimes called Conservation Subdivisions. The concept here is that you have your same density as the zoning district allows, but you get to make your lot smaller in exchange for providing a certain amount of open space. There is more design flexibility and more housing types, without having to re-zone. The density stays the same, but we gain a conservation area that would not be there otherwise.

There are provisions for density bonuses if, they meet performance standards such as providing open space in an excess of 50% or increasing the wetland or marsh buffer to a 100 feet. We established eight Performance Standards and assigned them a possible density bonus, although 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. It's not new but, it's required by the State and the portion of the Ogeechee River, west of Highway 17, is the only applicable water body in our jurisdiction, and requires a 100 foot buffer along the river.

IV. Regular Business

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

Mrs. Bounds reviewed a map displaying outdoor recreation areas within Chatham County.

5. [Lower Ogeechee Trails Project Design and Progress](#)

Mrs. Bounds gave a presentation on the Lower Ogeechee Trails Project, and the progress made on it so far. This is a 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 Recreation Trails Program.

Thus far they have completed a number of steps which have led to the design of the trail system. They have completed a property assessment to identify areas of interest and existing elements that could be used for trails, such as berms and old timber roads. 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 sensitive resources during trail construction and future trail use. The project team used the information gathered during these site visits to the design the trail. Joe Burnam and Joanna visited the property to GPS and flag the future trail system.

What's really neat about the trail system we've designed is that it enables visitors to experience four different types : Pine Flatwoods, Bottomland Hardwood Forest, Forested Depressional Wetlands, and Canebreaks. We are going to model this trail after the natural trails on the Whitemarsh Preserve. So, they will be 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.

Our plan is to put the 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 to 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. We've separated this part of the project from the rest of the grant work, because it is a little more involved. In order to reach the best spots of the property, we'll have to build a small bridge to cross a 30 foot wide tidal stream that comes through the property. But, we think it will really be worth it and will really add to the Lower Ogeechee Trail System through the neighboring property and on the Canal Museum Property and if so, the bridge would be necessary to create that connection.

V. Update on Technical Advisory Committee

VI. Commissioners' Items

VII. Adjournment

6. Adjournment

There being no other business to come before the board Dr. Hoskins adjourned the meeting at 4:33 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Joanna Bounds
Resource Protection Planner

Board Action:

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Vote Results

Motion: Paul H. Wolff
Second: Felton Jenkins
Elizabeth E. Arndt -
Mark T. Bouy - Not Present
Dr. Dionne L. Hoskins -
Felton Jenkins -
James L. Miles Jr. -
H. Meddy Settles -
Kristina Williams -
Paul H. Wolff -

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.