

CHATHAM COUNTY-SAVANNAH METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION



MPC SPECIAL CALLED PLANNING MEETING

DECEMBER 11, 2007
11:00 AM



Arthur A. Mendonsa Hearing Room

Members Present:

Jon Todd, Chairman
Robert Ray, Vice Chairman
Susan Myers, Treasurer
Douglas Bean
Michael Brown
Stephen Lufburrow
Timothy Mackey
Lacy Manigault
Adam Ragsdale

Members Not Present:

Russ Abolt
Shedrick Coleman
Ben Farmer
Freddie Gilyard
David Hoover

Staff Present

Thomas L. Thomson, P. E., AICP, Executive Director
Charlotte Moore, AICP, Director of Special Projects
Courtland Hyser, AICP, Land Use Planner
Ellen Harris, Preservation Planner
Constance Morgan, Administrative Assistant

I. CALL TO ORDER AND WELCOME

Chairman Todd called the MPC Special Called Planning Meeting to order at 11:00 a.m. He asked that everyone stand for the Pledge of Allegiance and prayer. He announced that this Special Meeting has been called in order that staff may update the Board on the Unified Zoning Ordinance. He explained the agenda for the benefit of those who were attending the meeting for the first time.

II. Old Business

None.

III. REGULAR BUSINESS

Unified Zoning Ordinance Update, Assessment Report and Briefing

Charlotte Moore introduced Component 2 of the Unified Zoning Ordinance. She gave background information regarding the reason for the City and County Ordinance update. She introduced the Technical Committee Board Members. They were: Mr. Craig Myer, Commercial Developer, Mr. Herbert Gilbert, Developer/Realtor, Mr. Albert Brass, representing Pete Shonka of Savannah Dept of Engineering, and Ms. Suzanne Cooler, Chatham County Engineer. Ms. Moore began with a brief outline of the ordinance. She stated that Component 2 addresses zoning related administration and review procedures. This component will identify the authority and role of all review bodies and administrators; provide a standardized application; public notice and neighborhood meeting process; and specify the review process for 21 different zoning- related reviews. This is intended to make the review process more transparent and predictable for all applicants as well as the larger community. Topics of discussion were: Purpose; Governing Bodies; Planning Commission; Zoning Board of Appeals; Historic Preservation Commission; Landmark District Historic Review Board; Planning Director; Building Official; Governing Body Engineer; and Site Development Plan Review.

Ellen Harris gave a brief summary on the Historic Preservation Commission and the Landmark Historic Review Board. She explained the review process for both Boards and their review authority.

Board Discussion

Ms. Myers questioned who would be responsible for the grandfathering of building footprints and parking requirements. Ms. Moore responded that this would fall under the Planning Director. The planning director would have to refer to the City Attorney and the Building Official to determine what the interpretation should be. This will not be left to one person to make that determination. Ms. Myers also questioned if the Historic Review Board's decision would still be appealed at the Zoning Board of Appeals. Ms. Moore explained this process.

Mr. Manigault asked what was meant by the joint Zoning Board of Appeals and how would this be tied in. Ms Moore stated it would be a joint Board of the City and County just as the Planning Commission. Mr. Manigault also questioned what was meant by there being too many Board Members to a Board and would joining these Boards constitute too many members. Ms. Moore replied that this will have to be discussed further with the City and County Attorneys.

Mr. Ragsdale asked: 1) if there was intent to expand the environmental overlay districts in the next component; 2) would it be possible to combine the two Historic Districts, and, 3) will Site Plan Review system be similar in the City and the County. Ms. Moore replied that the environmental overlay districts must be revisited therefore staff will revisit all the districts to determine whether or not they are serving their purpose.

Mr. Ray asked if training for Commissioners would be on a one-time only basis.

Ms. Moore answered that this should be in the policy of the MPC Bylaws but this was a suggestion from the Technical Committee. To have the best Board possible, the Board Members should be informed and educated.

Mr. Mackey requested copies of Zoning Procedures Act and Enabling Legislation for Planning Commissions. He also raised questions such as: 1) what would the review team do that the Board is doing now if anything?; 2) why merge City and County ZBA when 80% of the variances are in the City; and, 3) what was the timeline for the Unified Zoning Ordinance? He also raised concerns regarding the Planning Director's duty expansion and board membership shrinkage. He also questioned whether or not this would squeeze out public review and their ability to be involved. Ms. Moore's response to public involvement was that there will have to be a review through a public hearing process. The public still comes before the Planning Commission, goes on to the City Council and County Commission. She added that public notification has improved as well. Actually, staff is expanding the public's ability to participate in the process and become more knowledgeable about what is happening. She said that as far as Board shrinkage, the board members would go down to about ten members instead of the present fourteen. This may not happen of course, it has to be discussed with the City and County Attorneys.

Ms. Myers asked if the various boards have been approached about these changes, and is it unusual for City and County Managers to serve. Ms. Moore replied that staff would like to meet with each Board individually but has not. Staff has, however, met with the Historic Preservation Commission and staff has been updating the Planning Commission. She also stated City and County Managers (paid employees) typically do not serve on a Board; however, in some states if they do serve on a Board, they are non-voting members.

Mr. Lufburrow stated he would like to have a process where City and County will work together.

Public Comment

Ms. Ardis Wood stated her interest in the enforcement process and follow up. She questioned who was responsible for issuing citations for code violations. She added that there is a very large gap in the enforcement of property maintenance issues; therefore, there should be a recommendation from the Board that there be enforcement of these violations.

Mr. Brown added that he appreciated the input from Ms. Woods but that there was follow through on these issues. In addition to the 24 hour weekly staff, there is a weekend sign enforcement person who, when contacted, will go out and inspect these signs on the weekend and cite the violator.

IV. Recess

Chairman Todd called for recess of the December 11, 2007 Special Called Planning Meeting at 12:00 P.M.

V. Reconvene

Chairman Todd reconvene the December 11, 2007, Special Called Planning Meeting at 1:00 P.M.

VI. Regular Business (continued)

B. Unified Zoning Ordinance Update, Report Briefing (continued)

Ms. Moore continued with Part 2 of the Unified Zoning Ordinance Update, Article 3.0, (Development Application Review Procedures). This section covered topics such as Purpose; Public Notice; Neighborhood Meetings; Development of Regional Impact; Comprehensive Plan Amendments; Map Amendment (Rezoning); Map Amendment Planned Development; Zoning Text Amendment; Site Development Plan; Traffic Impact Analysis; Special Use Permit; Temporary Use Permit; Temporary Placement Permit; Home Occupation (under development); Wireless Telecommunications Facilities; Sign Permits; Local Historic District Designation; Local Historic Property Designation; Certificate of Appropriateness for Local Historic Districts; Certificate of Appropriateness for the Landmark Historic District; Demolition by Neglect; Administrative Adjustment; Variance; Written Interpretation; and, Appeals.

Mr. Hyser highlighted on Sections 3.3 Public Notice (this section of the ordinance establishes the minimum requirement for notice of hearings), including, types of public notice; content of mailed and published notices; public hearing location; size of subject property and material available. He also explained Section 3.4, Neighborhood Meeting. He said that this will be a new section of the ordinance and will include the purpose of a neighborhood meeting which is to ensure early citizen participation. He also covered such topics as Public Notice Requirements (timing of meeting, meeting time; meeting location, and sign in sheet) and Meeting Summary (summary of the materials presented at the meeting, issues raised, and suggestions and concerns of those in attendances).

Ms. Moore explained Section 3.5, The Development of Regional Impact Procedure. The process would be; 1) pre-application meeting; 2) submittal of application; 3) completeness/sufficiency review; and, 4) Georgia Department of Community Affairs review and report.

Mr. Hyser briefly touched on Section 3.6, Comprehensive Plan Map Amendment. This section establishes the procedures for amending the Future Land Use Map in the Comprehensive Plan. The proposal is that a new process be created (the Comprehensive Plan Map Amendment). Rezoning must be consistent with the future land use map. He then explained the two procedural changes in this zoning process.

Additional sections discussed were: 3.9 Zoning Text Amendment, 3.10 Site Development Plan (simple, minor and major) Section 3.11 Traffic Impact Analysis, and Section 3.12 Special Use Permit, Section 3.13 Temporary Use Permit

Ms. Myers asked if staff would consider grandfathering the Special Use Permit.

Ms. Moore outlined Section 3.14, Temporary Placement Permit and Section 3.16 Wireless Telecommunication Facilities.

Mr. Manigault asked if there was a specific law that governs the length of a POD or dumpster in the neighborhood. He asked if this will be viewed and controlled.

Ellen Harris, Historic Preservation Planner briefly described the Local Historic District/Local Historic Property Designation Process and Section 3.20, Certificate of Appropriateness; Local Historic Districts & Properties. There was a period for questions and answers.

Charlotte Moore explained the Administrative Adjustment Process; Section 3.23, and Section 3.24 Variances. There was a period of discussion with questions and answers. In conclusion Ms. Moore stated that staff is in the process of developing a standardized approach for the Development Review Process. She said that staff has visited other cities in order to mirror their process. She added that the Site Development Plan process has staff with given concern as this will be addressed at the next Planning session Meeting. She asked Board Members to review the information in their packets and return to staff with any additional concerns or questions that they may have.

Commissioner Helen Stone stated that Staff is striving to put forth a document that will truly benefit the community. She thanked MPC Staff and Board Members for their dedication and hard work.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

There being no other business to come before the Commission, the December 11, 2007 Special Called Planning Meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Thomas L. Thomson, P.E., AICP
Executive Director

Note: Minutes not official until signed