

**CHATHAM COUNTY-SAVANNAH METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION**

**MPC PLANNING SESSION MINUTES**

**ARTHUR A. MENDONSA HEARING ROOM**

**110 EAST STATE STREET**

**January 9, 2007**

**Arthur A. Mendonsa Hearing Room**

**1:00 P.M.**

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**Members Present**

Stephen R. Lufburrow, Chairman  
Robert L. Ray, Vice-Chairman  
Jon N. Todd, Secretary  
Susan R. Myers, Treasurer  
Michael Brown  
Shedrick Coleman  
Ben Farmer  
Lacy Manigault  
Timothy Mackey  
Lee Meyer  
Adam Ragsdale

**Members Not Present**

Russ Abolt  
Douglas Bean  
Melissa Jest

**Staff Present**

Thomas Thomson, P.E., AICP, Executive Director  
Harmit Bedi, AICP, Deputy Executive Director  
James Hansen, AICP, Director, Development Services  
Charlotte L. Moore, AICP, Director Special Projects  
Deborah Burke, AICP Development Services Planner  
Amanda Bunce, Development Services Planner  
Marilyn Gignilliat, Executive Assistant  
Constance Morgan, Administrative Assistant

**I. CALL TO ORDER AND WELCOME**

Chairman Lufburrow called the meeting to order and asked everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance and Invocation. He introduced the new appointed Commissioner to the Board, Mr. Adam Ragsdale, and thanked him for his willingness to serve.

## II. NOTICES, PROCLAMATIONS AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

- A. The Joint Workshop on the Wireless Telecommunications Ordinance, will be held on Thursday, January 11, 2007, at 8:00 A.M. – 10:00 A.M., located at the Coastal Georgia Center, Room 115
- B. The next Regular Scheduled MPC Meeting will be held January 16, 2007 at 1:30 P.M. in the MPC Arthur A. Mendonsa Hearing Room.
- C. The next Regular Scheduled Planning Meeting will be held March 13, 2007 at 1:00 P.M. in the MPC Arthur A. Mendonsa Hearing Room

## III. APPROVAL OF THE NOVEMBER 14, 2006 PLANNING MEETING MINUTES AND BRIEFING MINUTES

Mr. Manigault **moved** to approve the November 14, 2006 Planning Meeting Minutes and Briefing minutes. Mr. Todd seconded the motion.

**MPC ACTION: The motion to approve the November 14, 2006 Planning Meeting Minutes and Briefing minutes carried with none opposed.** Voting were Mr. Lufburrow, Mr. Ray, Mr. Farmer, Mr. Coleman, Mr. Todd, Mr. Manigault, Mr. Ragsdale, Mr. Meyer, Ms. Myers and Mr. Mackey. Michael Brown was not in the room when the vote was taken

## IV. OLD BUSINESS

None.

## V. REGULAR BUSINESS

- A. Status: Emergency Access to Gated Communities

Harmit Bedi gave a PowerPoint presentation on the Status of Emergency Access to Gated Communities. He stated that a staff conducted research found that there is currently no standard for the installation of equipment to access gated communities by emergency vehicles during an emergency. This information was presented to the MPC Board. Additional meetings were held with the Chatham County-Savannah Metropolitan Police Department, City of Savannah Fire Department, Southside Fire and EMS Department, Chatham Emergency Management Agency (CEMA), and County Public Works Department to discuss the issue of establishing a unified system to access gated communities during an emergency. He stated that these groups supported the concept of standardized emergency access. He added that vendors had displayed their products at the September 12, 2006 MPC Planning Meeting. The devices presented were the "Knox Box" a lock and key operation and "Click2Enter" a radio signal operated device. He explained how these devices would be operated.

He then referred the Board Members to the copy of the potential Draft Ordinance in their handouts and stated the intent of the draft is to establish standards for accessing these gates during an emergency. He concluded the ordinance will be presented to concerned departments for their input and further refinement and then brought back to the MPC Board Members for recommendation and presented to City and County for adoption.

Mr. Farmer question whether or not both systems would be installed in the gated communities and what it would cost.

Mr. Bedi replied the combined cost would be \$1500.00.

Mr. Ragsdale asked if the new radio operated system would replace the systems in place now or would it be an additional override for the fire department and if all these communities were going to have a standardized radio system that all residents will use.

Chairman Lufburrow answered that the communities will not have to change out their existing equipment. This system would be an addition to and activated by a police radio frequency.

Ms. Myers suggested that representatives from emergency services attend the next meeting in order to give their input, ask questions, and voice their concerns to the vendors.

B. Miscellaneous Text Amendments

1. Text Amendments to the City and County Zoning Ordinances

- a. Group Developments  
Re: Amend Section 8-2046 Group Development Standards  
MPC File No. Z-060815-56925-2

**Issue:** At issue is a proposal to amend section 8-3046 Group Development Standards of the City of Savannah Zoning Regulations to eliminate the requirement that all group developments must be approved by the Metropolitan Planning commission (MPC).

**Policy Analysis:** Amending the group development standard would eliminate the necessity for review and approval by the MPC those group developments which meet all standards and for which no variances are sought. Reviews would be conducted at the staff level.

**Staff Recommendation: Approval** to amend Section 8-3046 Group Development Standards of the City of Savannah Zoning Regulations as follows:

**REPEAL** Sec. 8-3046. Group development standards: Group development projects consisting of two (2) or more principal buildings devoted to a common or similar use and constructed on a single lot may be permitted in any of the various districts established by this chapter; provided that such projects shall be approved by the Metropolitan Planning Commission: (a) Design standards generally: The MPC shall review group development projects according to the requirements and development standards for "P" District development plans under Sec. 8-3030, "Planned Development District; (b) Street access: Any building established as part of a group development project which cannot properly be served by emergency or service vehicles from an abutting street shall be made accessible to such vehicles by a paved driveway having a roadbed width of not less than twenty (20) feet, exclusive of parking spaces. (c) Location: No dwelling structure established as part of a residential group development shall be situated on a lot so as to face the rear of another dwelling structure within the development or an adjoining property. (d) Lot Size: Residential group developments shall comply with the lot area design standards for the zoning district within which they are located; however, drives, parking spaces and other nonenclosed car areas shall not be included in determining land area calculations.

**ENACT** Sec. 8-3046. Group development standards: Group development projects consisting of two (2) or more principal buildings devoted to a common or similar use and constructed on a single lot may be permitted in any of the various districts established by this chapter; provided that such projects shall be approved by the Metropolitan Planning Commission executive director or designee. (a) Design standards generally: The MPC executive director or designee shall review group development projects according to the requirements and development standards for "P" District development plans under Sec. 8-3030, "Planned Development District." (b) Street access: Any building established as part of a group development project which cannot properly be served by emergency or service vehicles from an abutting street shall be made accessible to such vehicles by a paved driveway having a roadbed width of not less than twenty (20) feet, exclusive of parking spaces; (c) Location: No dwelling structure established as part of a residential group development shall be situated on a lot so as to face the rear of another dwelling structure within the development or an adjoining property; (d) Lot Size: Residential group developments shall comply with the lot area design standards for the zoning district within which they are located; however, drives, parking spaces and other non-enclosed car areas shall not be included in determining land area calculations.

James Hansen informed Board Members that the handouts provided in their packets are formatted for the City of Savannah. If these issues move forward then the amendments would be presented for adoption by the City and the County. He stated the Group Development Ordinance will only relate to the City of Savannah.

**Discussion:**

Ms. Myers stated that one of the Commission's prime purposes is to be a public forum to allow the public to voice their concerns.

Mr. Manigault agreed. We must hear concerns from the public and try to do the best job we can on their behalf.

Mr. Farmer added the public needs to be involved in the process.

Mr. Brown interjected that the neighbors and the public need to be informed when a developer meets the requirements and owns a piece of private property that the Board does not have the bases to delay the project. There is a positive to having this publicly known because the neighbors can say that there is a problem and usually the developer will compromise. He suggested that there be some ground rules and stipulations for these kinds of projects so that everyone knows what they are. He suggested a substitute making it subject to staff review on Group Development Plans that meet the requirements that the Chairman might actually say that this is the adopted policy of the Commission letting everyone know what these rules are.

Mr. Brown **moved** that staff prepare a report about process changes that may be made on the Commission so that both the petitioner and effective parties would know the ground rules for Group Developments that meet the requirements. Mr. Farmer seconded the motion.

**MPC ACTION: the motion to have staff generate a report making process changes that may be made on the Commission carried with none opposed.**

Voting were Mr. Lufburrow, Mr. Ray, Mr. Todd, Ms. Myers, Mr. Brown, Mr. Coleman, Mr. Farmer, Mr. Manigault, Mr. Mackey, Mr. Meyer, and Mr. Ragsdale.

Jim Hansen addressed the Board and asked if staff would be allowed to develop criteria to place in the ordinance that will address concerns of Board Members and serve as an alternative to Mr. Brown's request.

Chairman Lufburrow stated he felt this would be a good idea.

- b. Painted on Signs  
Re: Amend Section 8-3112 (i)(4) Signs Painted on Buildings  
MPC File No. Z-061229-86575-2

**Issue:** This text amendment proposes to delete that portion of Section 8-3112 (i)(4) Signs Painted on Buildings that requires approval by the Metropolitan Planning Commission

**Policy Analysis:** Deleting the requirement that the MPC review and approve painted on signs would eliminate unnecessary time spent by the Metropolitan Planning Commission staff and Board and would also streamline the sign permit process without compromising the sign standards required for all development.

**Staff Recommendation: Approval** of the deletion of a portion of Section 8-3112 (i)(4) of the City of Savannah Zoning Regulations that requires MPC approval as follows: 1) the sign meets all standards and regulations for fascia signs; 2) the sign complements the architectural features of the façade upon which the sign is located in terms of style, color, design, location, etc; 3) the sign is located and applied to the façade of a building in a manner that permits removal or painting over without defacing obscuring or otherwise leaving an unsightly appearance.

**Discussion:**

Mr. Mackey asked if staff was creating a revenue stream.

Amanda Bunce replied that petitions for painted on signs should go through the same process as standard permanent signs. This text amendment would eliminate Board approval of the sign. She added there is no revenue stream. There is no review fee from the City and a minimal review fee from the County. The majority of these signs are in the City.

Mr. Mackey asked for the format for signs in residential districts and if this text amendment would have any effect on sign placement in this district.

Ms. Bunce explained it did not but if another district prohibits painted on signs then it is prohibited. For instance if exterior drawings are not allowed on a child care building then you are not allowed to paint on the outside of your house but if it is allowed someplace else then it goes to the City Development Services instead of coming to MPC Staff then to the Board and then to the City Development Services Department. Painted on signs are prohibited in the Victorian District, therefore, if someone wanted to place a sign they would not come through MPC because it is not allowed same thing with a childcare facility. The exterior drawings would not be permitted. In business districts where painted on signs are allowed then instead of going through the long process they would just go to the permitting agency.

Ms. Myers requested that wording be added to the text that would not allow painted on signs on historic buildings or historic fabric.

Mr. Farmer question if the objective here was to have painted on signs follow the same procedure as permanent signs. Ms. Bunce replied yes.

Mr. Coleman added that historically there have been signs painted on historic buildings and on historic fabric and felt this is an option that needs to remain. To deny this out right would remove the historic potential from buildings. He concluded this constraint may not be appropriate for this body to add.

Mr. Ragsdale stated that he supported Mr. Coleman's comments and that during restorations it has proved necessary to paint on historic buildings.

Mr. Brown added unless it is for a restoration you can not paint a new sign in the Historic District. He added staff does need to do research and that these signs need to be treated the same as any other sign. He proposed that staff compile a worry list and six months from now when staff gets into the Tricentennial Plan implementation then we can say we've got small lots, site planning, and signs and put them all into context adopt them as a group and move on. When its time to do the whole zoning codes the whole worry list can be put together and the changes can all be made at this time.

Mr. Farmer **moved** to have painted on signs follow the same procedure as permanent signs. Mr. Mackey seconded the motion.

Ms. Myers amended the motion to state that buildings with historic fabrics that are designated or are contributing in an historic district can not be painted on.

Mr. Ragsdale added with the exception of a renovation or restoration.

Mr. Brown seconded the motion.

**MPC ACTION: The motion to have painted on signs follow the same procedure as permanent signs and that buildings with historic fabrics that are designated or are contributing in an historic district can not be painted on carried with none opposed.** Voting were Mr. Lufburrow, Mr. Ray, Mr. Todd, Ms. Myers, Mr. Brown, Mr. Coleman, Mr. Farmer, Mr. Manigault, Mr. Mackey, Mr. Meyer, and Mr. Ragsdale.

2. Text Amendment to the City of Savannah Zoning Ordinance  
Re: Provisions Relating to Childcare Facilities

**Issue:** The text amendment proposed is intended to clarify ambiguities found in the present Ordinance relating to day nurseries, kindergartens, and child care centers, and to strengthen the requirements for establishment thereof.

**Policy Analysis:** Amending the Ordinance as proposed will remove existing ambiguities relating to day nurseries, kindergartens and child care centers, and will also strengthen the requirements and standards for the same.

**Staff Recommendation: Approval** of the text amendment as proposed.

**Discussion:**

Mr. Meyer stated that the City of Savannah should dovetail any requirements with those of the state of Georgia. He explained the state's requirements.

Mr. Coleman supported Mr. Meyer's comments. Interrupting the State procedures at this point to add additional City requirements or criteria would dictate the City's continuous policing of day nurseries, kindergartens, and child care centers to ensure their compliance.

Ms. Myers stated she would welcome these changes to the Zoning Board of Appeals and that they are greatly needed.

Mr. Lufburrow questioned whether the insurance issue was one that the State was handling and if the City would be duplicating this process and whether or not the City's numbers concerning occupancy were in agreement with the State.

Mr. Coleman explained that the numbers have to do with the life safety in these buildings. The building sprinklers may be tied to the number of children in the building. He stated he would like to make sure that any change the Board may make corresponds with these numbers.

Mr. Mackey explained the criteria for operating a daycare facility in a residential neighborhood and its approval/denial process. He expressed with the abundance of daycare facilities popping up in residential areas there is a need to tweak the law.

Mr. Coleman added if any changes are to be made to this text amendment that the concerns of the Board Members must be addressed.

Mr. Hansen stated that under the existing ordinance the only limiting criteria is on the amount of out door play space and that is at 100 sq ft. per child.

Mr. Brown suggested that staff meet with providers including the United Way. He said that this way staff is being thoughtful about childcare services and that this will also allow the consideration for both the protection of the neighbors and availability and quality care services for children.

#### C. SAGIS Governance Briefing

Mr. Thomson reviewed the actions by the SAGIS Board. The Board met on June 6, 2006 voted to create a Business Plan Committee comprised of co-chairs Tom Thomson and Scott Rasplicka and members from the City (Jerry Cornish), County (Lewis Leonard), Georgia Tech (Dr. David Frost) and Georgia Power (Matt Gignilliat). At the November 16, 2006 SAGIS Board Meeting the SAGIS Board directed that the SAGIS be made part of the MPC staff structure with the director of SAGIS to report to the Executive Director of the MPC. As a result of this decision it was also decided that the Executive Director of the MPC would no longer be a member of the SAGIS Board since he would become in effect the staff director. The SAGIS Board also decided to add Georgia Tech to the Board and to make room for up to three additional members who would be determined at a later date. The next steps to implement the new SAGIS governance were 1) a new SAGIS agreement; 2) By-Laws; 3) SAGIS Budget; 4) 2007 Work Program (Outlined in the Business Plan); and 5) hire a director.



He stated that the process is already underway to recruit a SAGIS director.

D. Tricentennial Plan Zoning Project Status and Schedule

Ms. Moore provided a PowerPoint presentation on the status of the Zoning Update. She explained changes that will take place in the ordinance. She said that staff is creating a zoning assessment report that will serve as an educational tool and to give staff some direction. The project approach will be done in various components. These components are: 1) zoning assessment; 2) administrative issues; 3) zoning districts and various uses; 4) general standards i.e. lighting, parking, signage and the general ordinance; 5) public input; and, 6) adoption stage.

E. Executive Director's Report

Mr. Thomson gave a PowerPoint presentation on the Executive Director's Report. He presented an overview on the agency's major accomplishment, awards and special projects, and highlighted from each department. He also touched on other program areas such as budget and funding, and personnel and management.

**VI. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no other business to come before the Commission the January 9, 2006 MPC Planning Meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted

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

**Note: Minutes not official until signed**