

MEETING NOTES

Unified Zoning Ordinance-Technical Committee Meeting
Metropolitan Planning Commission
Arthur Mendonsa Hearing Room
January 21, 2009
3:00-5:00 PM

Members Present: Bill Dawers, MarRonde Lumpkin-Lotson, Tiras Petrea (for Randolph Scott), Robert Sebek, Pete Shonka, Commissioner Helen Stone, Lise Sundrla

Members Absent: Gregori Anderson, Stephanie Bock, Suzanne Cooler, Bill Dempsey, Alderman Jeff Felser, Martin Fretty, Harvey Gilbert, Lee Grimes, Robin Haddock, Frank McIntosh, Joe Marshall, E. Craig Meyer, John Mitchell, Ryan Thompson, Jon Todd, Mike Vaquer, Jack Wardlaw, Jerry Wardlaw, Malik Watkins

Staff Present: Amanda Bunce, Debbie Burke, Charlotte Moore, Jackie Jackson-Teel

I. Update of Staff Work

A. Workshops with Elected Officials & Approach to Rezoning

Charlotte Moore presented information regarding the workshops that were held with the elected officials. She stated that the issues regarding the conversion of the zoning map were discussed and that the officials agreed with staff's proposal to remap the approximately 80,000 parcels to appropriate districts.

Staff has begun the process of reviewing maps of the City and County to determine the suitability of zoning designations assigned through the conversion process. She indicated that this is a time-consuming process that will take at least three months. The County and City have been divided into 25 map areas, and planners from Comprehensive Planning and Development Services will be responsible for two or three maps. Amanda Bunce explained that staff has created a system for tracking the changes in order to keep a record of the logic behind each proposed change.

B. Traditional Residential Analysis

Ms. Moore explained that for older areas of the City, staff has used GIS to determine the typical lot sizes such areas. Based on this information, staff can tailor zoning districts for these

neighborhoods. It was suggested that staff should work with the neighborhoods in the mapping process. It is felt that they would be a good resource in determining what zoning designation may be appropriate.

C. Addition of Conservation-Park (C-P) District

Ms. Bunce stated that staff has added a Conservation-Park (C-P) district in response to some concerns that some of the uses found in the Conservation (C) district are somewhat intense for that designation. The C district will be used for more environmentally sensitive areas, while the C-P district would allow for uses such as an active park that may have a significant amount of impervious surface. The C or C-P designation will require a rezoning and public hearing if the property is proposed to be utilized for some other purpose in the future.

D. Airport, Airfield Overlay District

Ms. Bunce reviewed the status of the Airport, Airfield Overlay District, which involves the identification of areas within the high noise areas in the vicinity of the airport and airfield. She indicated that she is waiting for information from officials at Savannah-Hilton Head International Airport and Hunter Army Airfield (HAAF)--which she should receive within the next month--so that she can complete the mapping for this district. The areas surrounding HAAF are of concern because there is already residential development in the area and any additional such development is not ideal because of potential conflicts and BRAC closures. Ms. Bunce showed some of the current maps and discussed measures that new residential development in the area should incorporate for noise reduction.

E. Cluster Development Option

Ms. Bunce presented information regarding the Cluster Development Option. She stated that this option allows the same density as permitted in the base zoning district, but can result in reduced lot sizes if a certain amount of open space is preserved and the lots are clustered together. Staff is proposing this option as a matter of right. In addition, staff is proposing that this option would allow for additional types of housing to be permitted (i.e. two family units would be permitted in a single family district.) A perimeter buffer will be required where reduced size lots are abutting an adjacent conventional subdivision. The minimum size for a project that can apply for the Cluster Development Option will vary depending on the zoning district, but 10-20 acres would be the minimum. Staff is discussing the potential to allow a density bonus if they meet additional

standards. Ms. Moore stated that in single family districts the minimum lot size is as low as 5,000 square feet and if a developer wants to design smaller lots they will have to go with the cluster option and meet additional standards.

There was discussion regarding how this option would apply to the minimum acreage standards of the Health Department when property is on well and septic, as well as how the open space would be protected in the future. Staff indicated that the proposed ordinance does not override the one acre minimum requirement of the Health Department. Staff also stated that the open space would have to be held as open space in perpetuity in an easement or by the homeowners association. Issues concerning the problem with maintenance when such associations dissolve were discussed.

F. Open Space

The question was also raised as to what can be done with the property that is designated as open space, can it be mowed? Staff stated that it is their intent to require active open space in addition to passive open space. The Ordinance will also specify what amount of the open space requirement can be met by using wetlands, etc. Currently the City and County have a requirement for 20% greenspace for multifamily uses, but it is staff's intent to work with the appropriate individuals to amend those ordinances to require some of that to be active recreation not just greenspace.

G. Industrial Land Use Conditions

Ms. Moore presented information regarding the difficulties that staff is having with the Industrial Land Use Conditions, specifically getting needed assistance from State agencies.

H. Alternate Energy Sources

Jackie Jackson-Teel mentioned that staff has been looking at various ordinances and this is likely to be a very technical section. Staff should have something to present at the next meeting with regard to wind and solar energy.

I. Victorian Historic Overlay District

Ms. Moore stated that the Victorian Historic Overlay District section should be brought before the Committee next meeting as well.

J. Public Information Plan

Ms. Moore stated that staff is working on a Public Information Plan. One component will be a video and she is working with the City and County staff to produce. At this point, the Committee should direct people to the MPC's website if they need additional information.

II. Review of Proposed Zoning Districts and other Ordinance Sections

The Technical Committee reviewed the proposed ordinance "Exterior Site Lighting" as well as the following proposed zoning districts: Protected River Corridor Overlay District, Residential Manufactured Home Park, and Residential Single Family Districts. The use table for these districts was also reviewed.

a. Protected River Corridor Overlay District

The Protected River Corridor Overlay District applies to the Ogeechee River from I-95 west to the Chatham County line, and includes property within 100 feet of the river bank. The Ordinance is based on State requirements and can be made to be more restrictive.

The Committee offered the following comments on this district:

- The land uses that are permitted by the State should be more restrictive. The industrial uses and wastewater treatment use, for example, should be eliminated because those are not uses that should be permitted in an environmentally sensitive area. Allowing residential uses in this area should be reviewed also, due to their proximity to Fort Stewart and the area where military exercises are conducted. Staff will incorporate the Committee's comments and will bring a revised draft for review in the future.

b. Exterior Site Lighting

The Exterior Site Lighting section applies to all newly proposed or alterations to existing outdoor lighting for any nonresidential or multi-family development. This section establishes design standards for all sites, as well as specific lighting standards for some individual uses. Single-family residential lighting is addressed in the Subdivision Ordinance. There were no questions or comments on this section.

c. Residential Manufactured Home Park

The Residential Manufactured Home Park section applies to Manufactured Homes (previously referred to as mobile homes) that are located in a park, not on fee simple lots. Staff is discussing the possibility of creating an additional district that would regulate manufactured homes that are not located in a park. The alternative is that such uses would become nonconforming.

The Committee offered the following comments on this district:

- There has been some interest in utilizing shipping containers to construct residential units recently. Staff should incorporate standards that would apply to such development in the Ordinance.
- The issue of setbacks was discussed. Specifically, there may be a need for more than 10 feet between structures but not necessarily a need for a 25 foot front yard setback from the street.
- The use of FEMA pods as temporary housing was discussed and the need to restrict the use of such structures in nonemergency situations.

d. Residential Single-Family Districts

Six single-family detached residential districts are proposed: Residential Single Family-Estate (RSF-E) and five Residential Single Family districts (RSF-20, RSF-10, RSF-8, RSF-6 and RSF-5) on varying lot sizes which are indicated by the number (suffix) following the district name. There will be an option allowing for a lesser lot width and size in the RSF-6 and RSF-5 districts if the lot is located on a lane.

The Committee offered the following comments on this district:

- The issue of parking was thoroughly discussed. Concerns were raised regarding parking on the sidewalks and on streets when adequate parking areas are not provided or when garages are utilized for living space.
- Staff presented pictures of unattractive and ineffective parking on residential lots. Suggestions for addressing such issues included requiring lane access to funnel cars to the rear of the property, establishing maximum area permitted to be utilized for parking, and prohibiting parking areas to be located within the front yard setbacks. Staff is to further explore these options.
- The Committee discussed the possibility of requiring developers to install all utilities underground. Staff is currently working on the cross sections.
- Accessory dwelling units in single family districts were discussed. The Committee was mainly supportive of these units as a means to provide affordable housing and living area for extended family, but issues such as parking, public perception and difficulty in regulating these units were discussed. The possibility of limiting the size or requiring a minimum size for accessory structures, restricting what areas allow these units to where they historically were found, and/or requiring that the unit be attached to the principal structure are all possible means to address potential

problems. It was also stated that there will need to be strict occupant limits established for the accessory units. Staff will further research this issue.

- A participant made the comment that we must get rid of the requirement for a minimum of 600 square feet of land area per unit in the downtown area. This negates any possibility for real high density development.
- The concept of design standards for single family structures was discussed. Concerns regarding incorporating too many design standards for single family structures include the lack of staff for review and the impacts the additional standards will have on affordability and creativity. One minimal standard that may be established is the requirement of eaves.
- The issue of impervious surface restrictions (versus lot coverage) was discussed. One participant stated that there is such a problem in this area with stormwater runoff that it would make a huge impact to reduce the amount of impervious surface allowed. It was explained that there are problems regulating the amount of impervious surface on a site because permits are not required unless there is a roof associated with the impervious surface (i.e. a patio would not require a permit). Staff will work on this and bring it back to the Committee.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, February 18 at 3:00 PM