

MINUTES

ISLANDS PLANNING COMMISSION SEPTEMBER 16, 2008 - 6:00 P.M. The Casino Bldg, 530 Beachview Drive, SSI

MEMBERS PRESENT: Robert Ussery, Chairman
Preston Kirkendall, Vice Chairman
John Dow, Jr.
Paul Sanders
Joan Wilson
Desiree Watson

ABSENT: William Lawrence

STAFF PRESENT: David Hainley, Community Development Director
York Phillips, Planning Manager
Iris Scheff, Planner III
Janet Loving, Admin/Recording Secretary

Chairman Robert Ussery called the meeting to order and the invocation was given, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. He then gave a brief recap of the rules, voting procedures and audience participation in discussing agenda items.

Minutes

August 19, 2008 Regular Meeting

A motion was made by Mr. Preston Kirkendall to approve the Minutes of the August 19th Islands Planning Commission meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Paul Sanders. Voting Aye: Mr. John Dow, Mr. Preston Kirkendall, Mr. Paul Sanders, Mr. Robert Ussery and Ms. Desiree Watson. Ms. Joan Wilson did not attend the August 19th meeting and therefore abstained from voting.

As one of the agents for the next agenda item, Chairman Ussery turned the gavel over to Vice Chairman Preston Kirkendall and joined his colleagues in the audience.

ZM1305 (I) Epworth by the Sea

Consider a request to rezone from the Forest Agricultural and R-12 One Family Residential to Planned Development, property consisting of 87.9 acres located on St. Simons Island on the west side of Sea Island Road approximately 1,800 feet north of its intersection with Demere Road. The property lies on both sides of Arthur J. Moore Drive and on both sides of Margaret A. Pitts Drive, and has approximately 2,280 feet of frontage on Sea Island Road. The purpose of the rezoning is to define allowed uses, establish definitive development standards, and adopt a master plan. Parcel IDs 04-02705, 04-13905, and 04-13906. Joe Combs/Ussery-Rule Architects, agent for Joel Willis/Epworth by the Sea, Inc., owner.

Messrs. Joel Willis, Joe Combs and Robert Ussery were present for discussion.

The following report from staff was included in the packages and presented by Mrs. Iris Scheff:

The general description in the PD text summarizes the intent and purpose to rezone the property to a Planned Development as follows:

“...The 87.9 acre tract of land is currently zoned Forest Agriculture (sic) (FA) and R-12 as defined in the Glynn County Zoning Ordinance. The FA zoning allows for an “Eleemosynary, religious, semi-public or philanthropic institution or camp.” While this allowed use has been the basis of the development for the Methodist center there is a concern by the Board of Trustees and their consultants that future plans for development could be brought into question because of the lack of any substantive definitions of the allowed uses or definitive development standards in the current zoning classification. The portion of the property zoned R-12 was recently added to the Epworth by the Sea holdings and is undeveloped. There are no immediate plans for any further development of the property; however, future growth is anticipated and this development text will become the basis for the planning of any new facilities or the rebuilding of any existing.”

It was noted that there are no immediate plans for development at this time. A chart within the proposed text outlines maximum thresholds for the use types being established, listing the current existing data with the maximum allowed. The chart indicates the extent to which some uses are planned to expand in the future. The applicant is working with staff on a few technical corrections to be made to the PD text and a revised text will be distributed.

Engineering and transportation staff, as well as fire and police staff have all found the proposal to be compliant. There is no development proposed and therefore there is no impact on schools.

Brunswick-Glynn County Joint Water and Sewer Commission staff requested a narrative change to the PD text to address water and wastewater issues.

In conformance with Section 1103 of the Glynn County Zoning Ordinance, the following findings of fact are to be considered in making a decision on a request for rezoning:

- Whether the zoning proposal will permit a use that is suitable in view of the use and development of adjacent and nearby property.

Yes, the use is not changing at the present time. Additional future development is suitable in view of the use and development of adjacent and nearby property.

- Whether the zoning proposal will adversely affect the existing use or usability of adjacent or nearby property.

No, it is not anticipated to adversely affect adjacent or nearby property.

- Whether the property to be affected by the zoning proposal has a reasonable economic use as currently zoned.

Yes.

- Whether the zoning proposal will result in a use, which will or could cause an excessive or burdensome use of existing streets, transportation facilities, utilities, or schools.

No, there are conferences held and the property is self contained for that purpose.

- Whether the zoning proposal is in conformity with the policy and intent of the Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

Yes, there is intent within the plan for St. Simons Island to be a tourist destination point, and this facility accommodates their visits to conferences held there.

- Whether there are other existing or changing conditions affecting the use and development of the property, which give supporting grounds for approval or disapproval.

Yes, it is wise to establish specific standards and clearly define uses at the conference center so that potential ordinance changes in the zoning code to the FA or R-12 zoning districts in the future do not inadvertently cause the site to become nonconforming, or present other problems for the center and its operations.

In conclusion, Mrs. Scheff stated that Epworth by the Sea administration proposes to adopt definitive standards and maximum thresholds for their conference center. The proposal has a master plan map establishing the existing buildings, and a text defining existing and future uses for the property. She stated that staff recommends approval of **ZM1305** Epworth by the Sea rezoning from Forest Agricultural and R-12 to Planned Development.

There was a lengthy discussion concerning this proposal, which included questions and comments from the Planning Commission as well as several adjacent property owners regarding density, water and sewer, buffers, setbacks, wetlands, traffic and compliance with the future Comprehensive Plan; all of which were addressed by the applicant and staff.

At the end of discussion, a motion was made by Mr. John Dow recommending to the Board of Commissioners, approval of **ZM1305** Epworth by the Sea rezoning from Forest Agricultural and R-12 to Planned Development. However, the motion was withdrawn and discussion continued; at which time the following revisions were suggested: Add the word “**net**” in front of the word acre (located in three places of the text under *G. Density*); change the staff’s report (before submission to the Board of Commissioners) to state that the plan **does not** conform to the policy and intent of the future Comprehensive Land Use Plan. Also during this discussion, it was determined that two motions were needed in this case; one concerning the rezoning and one concerning the issue of changing the staff’s report.

Following discussion, a motion was made by Mr. John Dow recommending to the Board of Commissioners, approval of **ZM1305** Epworth by the Sea rezoning from Forest Agricultural and R-12 to Planned Development subject to an amendment to include the word “**net**” in front of the word acre in three locations of the planned development text under *G. Density*. The motion was seconded by Mr. Paul Sanders and unanimously adopted.

A motion was then made by Ms. Desiree Watson to change the language in the staff’s report (before its submission to the Board of Commissioners) to reflect that **the plan does not comply with the future Comprehensive Plan for this area which is park, recreation and conservation due to the retirement housing being added**. The motion was seconded by Mr. John Dow. Voting Aye: Mr. John Dow, Mr. Preston Kirkendall, Ms. Joan Wilson and Ms. Desiree Watson. Voting Nay: Mr. Paul Sanders.

Chairman Robert Ussery presided over the remainder of the meeting.

SP1313 (I) Black Banks Professional Offices Amendment

This is a request for approval of an amended site plan for property located on St. Simons Island on the north side of Sea Island Causeway approximately 220 feet east of its intersection with Frederica Road. The project consists of an amendment to a previously approved site plan to add an 11,800 square foot building “D” with associated parking and drive aisles. The property is zoned Planned Development.

Mr. Bill Edenfield was present for discussion.

The following report was included in the packages for review and was presented by Mrs. Scheff:

This site plan amendment consists of adding a “Building D” to a four (4) building campus for a total of approximately 41,800 sq. ft. of office and retail space. The architecture is to reflect the Mizener influence associated with the Cloister.

A portion of the building space on the campus will be devoted to Sea Island Company real estate and security functions with the balance occupied by retail and office space offered to the general public. All buildings are to be one-story not exceeding 35 ft. in height.

As indicated by the site plan there are buffers, including an existing 8 ft. masonry wall with additional plantings. There is to be a perimeter buffer of preserved native trees and additional plantings to be installed against Sea Island Road and Black Banks Drive. Low impact site lighting is to be installed.

The proposed site plan amendments are summarized in the following table:

<p>(1) All building footprints are refined and revised.</p> <p>(2) The total gross building square footage is increased from 38,700 to 41,800.</p> <p>(3) The total parking required is increased from 194 to 209.</p> <p>(4) The total parking provided is increased from 175 to 189.</p> <p>The proposed site plan accommodates the difference between the required parking and provided parking by setting aside adequate green space in compliance with Section 611.7 of the Glynn County Zoning Ordinance</p> <p>(Above summary from application “Exhibit A”)</p>
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Engineering suggested revisions to parking and traffic circulation configuration. Also, utility connection points are indicated and fire hydrant locations are provided.

In conclusion, Mrs. Scheff stated that the proposal to amend the previously approved site plan is consistent with the adopted Comprehensive Plan land use and with applicable regulations. Suggested revisions to improve on-site safety and traffic circulation may be accomplished prior to building plan application submittal for approval by the Community Development Director, if authorized by the Islands Planning Commission.

Mrs. Scheff stated that staff recommends that this request be approved as being consistent with the Comprehensive Plan land use and with applicable regulations. It is also requested that the Planning Commission authorize the Community Development Director to administratively approve some minor design revisions regarding traffic circulation and safety suggested by staff, as applicable, prior to building plan application submittal. Final approval would be subject to meeting all requirements.

Mr. Preston Kirkendall had questions about there being less parking proposed than what is actually required for this site. Mr. Edenfield explained that the parking is based on the theory, which is allowed in the ordinance, that if you provide enough physical space for the parking but you elect not to use all of the space, then you are entitled to have a reduction. He added that the existing site plan approval allowed four buildings. They are proposing to take the fourth building, which is located on the western part of the development, refine that particular footprint and actually make that footprint larger. Mr. Dow stated that in essence, what they are proposing to do is leave the existing greenspace, but in the event that the parking is necessary, there will be adequate space available.

Ms. Joan Wilson stated that there was a lot of concern previously expressed about the trees that existed in the area. It was indicated by the applicant at that time that the trees would remain, but instead, the area has practically been leveled. Mr. Edenfield pointed out that if that was actually said, it was a misrepresentation; however, it was not done on purpose. He assured Ms. Wilson that the new owner is going to use the Sea Island Company to prepare a plan and landscape the area. To ensure that the landscape plan is adequate, copies will be provided for staff's review and/or the board members if necessary.

Ms. Wilson stated that traffic on Sea Island Road is already very heavy and adding a CVS Pharmacy would probably compound this problem. Mr. Edenfield stated that he had a traffic study done with the previous application that showed four buildings; however, it did not include a CVS Pharmacy, but the traffic consultant, Jim Evans, did a report which was filed with the original application. In his professional opinion, Mr. Evans felt that there was adequate service level with the improvements that are shown. Mr. Edenfield pointed out that the consultant's calculations are based on the size and use of the building and it doesn't matter if it's a pharmacy or an office building.

Mr. Dow asked if staff had received comments from anyone from Black Banks regarding the revised site plan, to which Mrs. Scheff replied no. Chairman Ussery stated that he received phone calls and comments from residents concerning the land being cleared and the fact that trees were removed. He stated that he would like to see a tree plan. It doesn't have to be a detailed landscaped plan, but a plan that shows existing trees as well as the trees that the applicant proposes to put back. Mr. Edenfield agreed to provide any type of plan deemed necessary and hopefully to everyone's satisfaction. Chairman Ussery stated that perhaps the tree plan could be submitted prior to issuance of a building permit for the building in question.

For clarification, Mr. Hainley explained that the issue of the tree plan could be handled by way of a condition agreeable to the applicant and subsequently provided to the members for informational purposes. However, Chairman Ussery stated that he would like for it to be part of the motion; that a tree plan be submitted prior to a building permit being issued for Building D. He then suggested that staff bring the plan back to the Planning Commission for informational purposes to be reviewed at a workshop meeting prior to issuance of a building permit. Mr. Edenfield concurred.

Following discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Paul Sanders to approve **SP1313 (I)** Black Banks Professional Offices amendment. However, during the course of discussion, the motion was amended to include that the Islands Planning Commission approves **SP1313 (I)** as being consistent with the Comprehensive Plan land use and with applicable regulations; and that the Community Development Director is authorized to administratively review and approve some minor site plan revisions based on staff's suggestions, as applicable, to be accomplished prior to building plan application submittal; and subject to a tree plan being submitted prior to issuance of a building permit. The amendment was accepted. The motion was seconded by Mr. John Dow and unanimously adopted.

SP1309 (I) Cloister Town Center Bike Shop

This is a request for approval of a site plan for property located on Sea Island on the southwest side of Fourth Street generally northwest of Sea Island Drive at a physical address of 325 Hudson Place. The project consists of a 653 square foot single-story bike shop on a 0.06 acre tract to serve guests of the Cloister Hotel. The property is zoned Planned Development.

Mr. Bill Edenfield was present for discussion.

In presenting the staff's report, Mrs. Scheff explained that the proposed bicycle shop is to be a small retail and service facility, which is an accessory use for the Cloister Hotel. There are no specific standards for the retail shop. Pedestrian and bike paths are not required but were discussed in staff comments as facilities associated with a bike shop in a tourist area. Required information was addressed and submitted in a revised proposal for Planning Commission's review.

Engineering staff pointed out that the proposed building is located on top of a storm pipe. The applicant was advised that if repair work and subsequent restoration of the property were to be needed, it would be the owner's responsibility and not Glynn County's.

Transportation staff advised protecting the structure from vehicles in the adjacent parking lot, and inquired about the possibility of sidewalks.

Water is provided by Sea Island Company, with public sewerage being provided by Glynn County.

Fire Department staff found the site plan to be compliant; however, the Police Department had no comments with regard to public safety.

Mrs. Scheff stated that this proposal is consistent with the adopted Comprehensive Plan land use with applicable regulations, and therefore staff recommends approval subject to meeting all requirements.

Following review, a motion was made by Mr. Preston Kirkendall to approve *SP1309 (I)* Cloister Town Bike Shop as being consistent with the adopted Comprehensive Plan and with applicable regulations subject to meeting all requirements. The motion was seconded by Mr. Paul Sanders and unanimously adopted.

VP1229 (I) Hotel Inn and Suites

Application by Abbas Vakili for approval to amend a twice previously approved renovation of an existing hotel with glass sliding doors, lengthened windows, and decorative railed balconies at the Ocean Inn and Suites Hotel located on property at 599 Beachview Drive (VP-2008-001 I approved January 15, 2008). There have been slight modifications in the previously approved elevations but there is still no change in building footprint and no increase in building height. The property is zoned General Commercial. Parcel ID 04-04667. Property owned by Abbas Vakili.

Mr. Vakili was present for discussion.

Mrs. Scheff reported that the Community Development Department received news that construction occurring at the Hotel Inn and Suites was not according to the approved plans. This information proved to be true in part, and misunderstanding in part, due to the appearance of unfinished, partially constructed improvements. It was decided to bring new plans and sketches back to the Planning Commission for clarification of the issue in the public forum.

This is a request for approval of previously proposed iron balconies as depicted in the present submittal in overview and elevation views of the hotel. The new version of the overview and elevations were marked by Mr. Vakili to depict the differences, and resubmitted for purposes of comparison. Mr. Vakili marked copies of the plans approved in January to show slight modifications to be made during the process of construction. These were reviewed again under the Village Preservation provisions (§709 of the Zoning Ordinance).

The Village Preservation regulations provide the following criteria for review of proposed exterior changes, including signs:

- A) Conformity of the plans submitted to the purpose and provision of this Ordinance.
- B) Conformity and harmony of external material and design with existing and neighboring structures.
- C) The effect of the improvements on neighboring structures or sites.
- D) The consistence and compatibility with existing architectural design building exterior finishes used on neighboring properties or in the overlay zone.
- E) Exterior materials, exterior doors and windows, color schemes and other building elements which are considered compatible with neighboring structures in the overlay zone and appropriate for the area.
- F) The use of landscaping to cause the improvement to conform to the character of the area or to buffer the improvement from the neighboring sites.

Mrs. Scheff stated that staff recommends that this request be approved because the proposed changes are exterior only and appear to be harmonious with the existing structure as well as in-keeping with the Village area.

At this time, Mr. Vakili presented a sketch showing the proposed stone veneer on the outside of the columns surrounding the wall and asked that it be approved as part of his application. He stated that this addition would be more appealing.

Following discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Paul Sanders to approve **VP1229 (I)** as written. However, the motion died for lack of a second.

A motion was then made by Ms. Desiree Watson to approve the amended modified application **VP1229 (I)** including the stone veneer on the columns pursuant to the submitted sketch. The motion was seconded by Mr. John Dow and unanimously adopted.

In other business, Mr. Hainley reminded everyone of the next workshop meeting scheduled for Tuesday, September 23rd at 9:30 a.m., third floor conference room of the Harold Pate Building.

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 7:45 p.m.