

MINUTES
JOINT PLANNING COMMISSION
MAY 23, 2016 - 6:00 P.M.
Strickland Auditorium, Epworth-by-the-Sea, SSI

Mainland Planning Commission

Present: Gary Nevill, Chairman
Tom Boland
Mary Hunt
Tim Murphy

Absent: Larissa Harris
Jeff Homans
John Williams

Islands Planning Commission

Present: Karen Ward, Chairman
Ed Ellis
Preston Kirkendall
William Lawrence
Joel Willis

Absent: Stan Humphries
Desiree Watson

Staff Present

David Hainley, Community Development Director
Aaron Mumford, Glynn County Attorney
Janet Loving, Admin/Recording Secretary

Also Present

Richard Strickland, BOC Chairman
Bill Brunson, County Commissioner
Dale Provenzano, County Commissioner
Alan Ours, County Manager

IPC Chairman Karen Ward called the meeting to order and the invocation was given, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. Afterward, Mr. David Hainley outlined the proposed amendment as follows (copies were available for the public):

An amendment to the Zoning Ordinance to revise Section 507 to provide for the merger of certain substandard lots of record in residential zoning districts, to reduce the maximum height permitted for one-family dwellings on substandard lots of record in residential zoning districts, to provide for appeal and variance process, to provide a definition for substandard lots of record, and for other purposes.

Mr. Hainley explained that the reason for this proposed amendment is largely due to the change in the Island's character since the substandard lots of record were recorded

years ago with many being platted prior to the existence of the Glynn County Zoning Ordinance, which came into effect in 1966. Mr. Hainley pointed out that even though there are some substandard lots located on the Mainland; there are more on the Island because years ago many of the homes on the Island were designed as vacation homes as opposed to primary residences. The substandard lots on the Mainland most affected by this proposal are located in the Arco community.

County Attorney Aaron Mumford gave an overview of exceptions and intent of the merger concept as outlined in the proposed amendment. Basically, when two or more contiguous lots are owned by the same person and one or more is a substandard lot less than 6000 sq. ft. and has a lot width less than 60 ft. the lots will be merged into one lot for purposes of the Zoning Ordinance.

Merger of lots of record shall not be required if each individual substandard lot of record to be merged has been developed and currently has its own lawfully existing one-family dwelling as principal use. However, this exemption shall not apply if and/or when the dwelling unit on any such substandard lot of record is demolished, destroyed or removed and a building permit has not been applied for and issued by Glynn County for a one-family dwelling on such substandard lot of record within one year of the demolition, destruction or removal; and construction of a one-family dwelling has not been commenced on such substandard lot of record within one year of the demolition, destruction or removal. This proposed amendment does not take away the ability or the right to build on a substandard lot.

For the most part, the Islands and Mainland Planning Commission members felt that this proposed amendment needed to be thoroughly discussed during a joint worksession before going into a public hearing. In fact, MPC member Mary Hunt stated that she disagrees with how this amendment is being handled; the Planning Commission members have not been allowed enough time to discuss this as a group. She also pointed out that there are between 3000 and 3500 lots that will be affected by this proposal and not all of the owners have been properly notified. She then asked for an explanation as to why this proposal did not follow the same procedure as all others. Mr. Hainley explained that they are acting under the provision of the 45 day moratorium which was enacted by the BOC at its May 5th Regular Meeting. The Board requested that the new ordinance be written, reviewed by the Planning Commission as well as the public, and then brought back to them for a final vote before the moratorium expires. Ms. Hunt stressed that it appears that they are being railroaded and rushed and she is not happy about this.

IPC Chairman Karen Ward stated that in her opinion, this proposal is something that they have needed on St. Simons for a while, and this appears to be the first step in lessening the density on the Island. MPC Chairman Gary Nevill stated that he is in favor of less density and less stress on the infrastructure, but he is particularly concerned about private property rights being diminished.

IPC member Ed Ellis expressed concerns about the possibility of residents not being allowed to rebuild on a substandard lot in the event of a storm or fire. In an effort to prevent this, he suggested adding a provision in the ordinance dealing with catastrophic events. County Attorney Aaron Mumford agreed that language could be

included to address catastrophic events. IPC member William Lawrence asked if this proposal includes any reference to non-conforming uses. Mr. Mumford replied no, but it could be added. MPC member Tom Boland wanted to know how they intend to address condemnation of property without compensation. Mr. Mumford advised that this proposal does not constitute a taking of property. However, Ms. Hunt disagreed. She feels that property will be diminished and devalued. She was especially concerned about the residents of the Arco community. In an effort to avoid penalizing property owners on the Mainland or St. Simons, IPC member Joel Willis stated that he would be in favor of having a separate ordinance for the Mainland and for the Islands.

At this time, the floor was opened for public comments. For the record, there were approximately 50 residents present; however, the following attendants voiced their concerns about the proposed amendment: Julian Smith, Albert Shelander, Burke Harrison, Angie Aimar, Steve Croft, Bruce Garrett, Mary Katherine Hendrix, George Ragsdale, Jay Kaufman and Peter Murphy. The residents were generally in favor of decreasing density on the Island, but they were particularly concerned about the merger concept and the grandfathered status of property relative to this proposal. Residents also expressed concerns about the possibility of extending the moratorium, as well as allowing additional time for more public input.

At the end of discussion, the members were advised that this proposed amendment requires separate action from the Mainland and Islands Planning Commissions.

A motion was then made by Ms. Mary Hunt of the Mainland Planning Commission recommending denial of this proposed amendment. The motion was seconded by Mr. Tom Boland and unanimously adopted.

A motion was made by Mr. Preston Kirkendall of the Islands Planning Commission to defer this proposed amendment to a Joint Planning Commission Worksession on May 31, 2016 beginning at 9:00 a.m. in the 2nd Floor Conference Room of the Harold Pate Building. The motion was seconded by Mr. Joel Willis and unanimously adopted. (During discussion, the Mainland Planning Commission agreed to the Joint Worksession.)

Finally, a motion was made by Mr. Preston Kirkendall, seconded by Mr. Ed Ellis and unanimously adopted by both Planning Commissions to conduct a Joint Planning Commission Meeting and obtain public comments on the proposed amendment on June 14, 2016 with the time and location to be determined; assuming that the Board of Commissioners don't take action on this proposal at its June 2nd Meeting.

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