

Aiken City Council Minutes

September 21, 2004

WORKSESSION

Council Present: Mayor Cavanaugh, Councilmembers Clyburn, Cunning, Price, Smith, Sprawls, and Vaughters

Others Present: Roger LeDuc, Bill Huggins, Gary Smith, Ed Evans, Sandra Korbelik, Rachel d'Entremont, Susan Mimmie, and about 20 citizens.

Councilman Sprawls called the meeting to order at 6:35 P.M. He stated the Mayor would be in attendance shortly.

OLD AIKEN MASTER PLAN

Mr. LeDuc stated that the purpose of the work session was to talk about the Old Aiken Master Plan. He stated that a lot of hard work went into this process. Mr. LeDuc stated that the major concern that Council has heard from citizens is the consideration to rezone many properties in this area. Mr. LeDuc stated that James Holland, the Chairman of the Planning Commission and the Old Aiken Master Plan Committee, was present to answer any questions Council may have.

Mr. James Holland gave an overview of the Old Aiken Master Plan project.

City Council agreed to start with the controversial section 5.1 and then go through the rest of the plan line by line.

Mr. LeDuc stated that there have been several examples on the Comprehensive Plan that Council has approved in the past where it shows that sometime in the future there would be a proposed different type of zoning than what is currently there. He stated that it did not say an immediate change, but that sometime in the future it would be possible. He stated that there were a couple of different ways that Section 5.1 could be approached. He stated that one of the ways is to take Section 5.1 out of the Old Aiken Master Plan. Mr. LeDuc stated that he did not favor that way of dealing with Section 5.1. He stated that he had spoken with staff and they agreed that Council would be making a statement and it would be binding other Councils in the future. He stated that if Council had a particular project that needed every property owner's signature, there is a good possibility that the project could not be completed because the property owners probably could not all be found. He stated that there has only been one instance in the past where property was rezoned without the consent of the property owners.

Mr. LeDuc stated that the best way to eliminate the position that Council is in right now would be to delete Section 5.1. He stated that staff could not find other areas that would be affected. He stated that the map would remain the same.

City Council stated that the Old Aiken Master Plan Committee had done a wonderful job in preparing the Old Aiken Master Plan. They stated their concerns about Section 5.1 of the Goals and Objectives of the Old Aiken Master Plan. This objective attempts to rezone property to single-family residential where appropriate. Council discussed Section 5.1 at length. Council agreed that property should not be rezoned against the property owners' will. They stated that another concern was that property values could possibly be negatively affected by rezoning.

Mr. Mike Anaclerio, 306 Colleton Avenue, stated that he was a member of one of the committees that worked on the Old Aiken Master Plan. He stated that it was never intended for zoning to be changed all at one time. He stated it was a plan that the committee would like to see happen 10 to 15 years from now. He stated that the word "rezone" may need to be taken out and the word "goal" replaces it.

Mr. Ed Giobbe, 541 Grace Avenue, stated it is clearly stated that the information before Council is goals and objectives. He stated that allows Section 5.1 to be kept as a goal or objective, not as a requirement.

Mr. Lee Poe, 807 Rollingwood Road, stated he was a member of the Old Aiken Master Plan Committee. He stated that Section 5.1 of the Old Aiken Master Plan can not be removed without affecting the rest of the plan. He stated that this plan shows the direction the committee would like to see Aiken go in. He stated that none of it is mandatory. It will all be discussed as certain projects occur. He stated that there are wording problems throughout the entire Old Aiken Plan that will need to be dealt with on an individual basis.

Mr. Bob Meadows, 900 Magnolia Street, SE, complimented James Holland on the work that was done on the Old Aiken Master Plan. He stated he was opposed to rezoning property without permission from the property owners.

Mr. LeDuc stated that the plan was originally intended to be an ongoing project. He stated that the wording of Section 5.1 could be changed to reflect that intent.

Ms. Barbara Gunter, Wesley's Automotive on Park Avenue behind the Railroad Depot, stated her problem was that her business is behind the railroad depot and she has neighbors with horses. She stated that she did not feel it was practical for houses to be placed in this area. She feels it is a dangerous place for children or horses because of the railroad track. She was also concerned with the rezoning of the property without the consent of the property owners.

Mr. Mike Farmer, an attorney in Aiken, stated he was speaking for Billy Jackson, Rodney Boatwright, and Paul Scott. He stated that in reviewing the goals and objectives that he agreed it would be wrong for rezoning to be forced on any of the property owners. He stated that the area around the Farmers' Market and Beaufort was a bad area of town, and that it would be inappropriate for single-family. He stated that many people have purchased commercial property in this area with no intention of using it for anything but commercial uses. He stated that commercial property has a much higher value than residential property. He stated that if the Old Aiken Master Plan is approved with Section 5.1, then people will be less likely to purchase property for fear of the zoning being changed. He stated that it is important to have businesses in downtown Aiken. He stated that rezoning will chase businesses out of the city.

Ms. Leslie Giobbe, 541 Grace Avenue, stated that she worked with District 5 on the Old Aiken Master Plan Committee. She stated that a survey was conducted of the citizens in that area. She stated that the majority of the people surveyed wanted to be zoned residential. There was also interest in having home-based businesses.

City Council discussed changing the wording of Section 5.1.

Mr. Gary Smith stated that Council needed to carefully think of how they want Section 5.1 worded. He stated that they do not want to make it say that Council will never rezone property without the permission of the property owner because there is a possibility that the property owner may not be able to be contacted.

Mr. LeDuc stated that he and staff would work on rewording Section 5.1 and bring it back to City Council for their approval. He stated that if Council had any questions concerning the map, that they let him know and they will be discussed.

Councilman Smith stated that the Old Aiken Master Plan should reference the map. He stated that it should be directly tied to the plan.

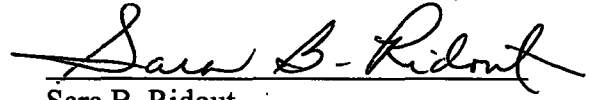
Mr. LeDuc stated that a map has always been the major part of the plan. He stated that even if Section 5.1 is removed, then the map will remain the main part of the plan.

City Council stated that the Old Aiken Master Plan needed much more reviewing.

Mr. Ed Evans stated that the plan is already broken up into five sectors. Mr. LeDuc stated that City Council would have a meeting for each sector and that a map would be with each agenda to reference while reviewing that particular sector.

City Council set the next work session to discuss the Old Aiken Master Plan for October 13, 2004 at 8:00 a.m.

The meeting adjourned at 9:01 P.M.


Sara B. Ridout
City Clerk