

Aiken City Council Minutes

August 9, 2004

WORK SESSION

Present: Mayor Cavanaugh, Councilmembers Clyburn, Cuning, Price, Smith, Sprawls and Vaughters.

Others Present: Roger LeDuc, Bill Huggins, Gary Smith, Ed Evans, Sara Ridout, Philip Lord of the Aiken Standard, Josh Gelinas of the Augusta Chronicle, and about 27 citizens.

Mayor Cavanaugh called the meeting to order at 6:33 P.M. He stated Council had one item that they would like to discuss in the work session.

OLD AIKEN MASTER PLAN

Mr. LeDuc stated that for the past couple of years a citizens group made up of five subcommittees involving more than 60 individuals participated in numerous meetings and two open houses to develop the Old Aiken Master Plan. The study area included the original grid developed in the 1830's, as originally laid out by Dexter and Pascalis, which basically includes the area from South Boundary to Hampton Avenue and from Beaufort Street to about Morgan Street. The Plan is a set of action steps that, once approved by City Council, will guide the development and revitalization of Old Aiken and would become part of the Comprehensive Plan Use and Transportation Plan for the City of Aiken. Once the plan is adopted by City Council it will become the backbone for all of the priorities and direction for years to come for this study area. He said staff felt the document had so many parts that were so important that Council will probably want to set a special meeting to discuss the Plan.

At the June Planning Commission meeting, one individual spoke in opposition to the plan and in particular to the designation of the possible rezoning of their property to Single Family/Horse instead of Industrial. The Planning Commission voted unanimously to recommend the Old Aiken Master Plan to City Council to become part of the Comprehensive Land Use and Transportation Plan.

The Steering Committee for the Old Aiken Master Plan developed eight major themes for the future of Old Aiken. These include:

1. Developing and maintaining attractive Parkways and other rights-of-way which should be protected and enhanced and where feasible reestablished for the first time.
2. A strong residential base should thrive in Old Aiken to provide more of a sense of community and to support businesses in the downtown area.
3. Strong retail in the downtown core is needed to serve residents, attract visitors and increase activity in the evening and to provide employment.
4. Property must be maintained to enhance the appearance of Old Aiken and to encourage private investment.
5. Appropriate design of structures and public improvements is of great historical importance. Steps should be taken to protect the attractiveness of the area and improve its historical importance.
6. Pedestrian and bicycle friendly transportation modes, especially in the downtown, should be emphasized.
7. Public facilities and their uses should be strongly encouraged to create a sense of place in Old Aiken.
8. Old Aiken should continue to provide safe and high quality public services for both visitors and residents alike.

Under each of these themes there are a total of 25 goals listed to achieve this future vision for Old Aiken. A listing of these goals and objectives along with a timeframe and who

should be responsible to accomplish each of these steps was given to Council for information. Council should carefully look at each of these goals and objectives to determine whether or not you want to support these as written. Once you approve the goals and objectives, they would then become part of our planning process for both staff and Council alike to follow in implementing any changes in Old Aiken.

Mr. LeDuc pointed out Map 4 and Map 5. He stated the first map shows the existing land uses within the area. The second map shows the suggestions for changes in the Old Aiken area. He pointed out some areas which are shown to be rezoned. He said if Council approves the plan they would be giving a stamp of approval that those sites shown should be rezoned. He said Council needs to be sure that they approve of the proposed land use changes before adopting the plan. He also pointed out the Plan gives a number of goals and objectives. If the Plan is approved, then Council would be giving a stamp of approval for the goals to be done in the future. He pointed out Council also needs to consider carefully the wording in the Plan. Words such as "should", "could", "would" or "might" should be looked at carefully to be sure that's what Council wants the Plan to say.

Mr. LeDuc pointed out a number of hours had been spent on putting the Plan together by staff, Planning Commission and citizens. He said they should be commended for the work done. He felt Council should look at the Plan carefully to be sure the areas are what Council wants because of how the Plan will be used in the future for the planning for 5 to 10 years.

Councilwoman Price commended Mr. Holland and the steering committee for the job they had done for the Plan. She stated, however, in order to be fair to the job they had done she felt Council should study the Plan in further detail. She stated she would like to have a separate meeting to discuss the Plan.

Councilman Cuning expressed concern about some of the proposed zoning for areas in the Master Plan area. He said if the Plan could be a guide and no change in existing zoning made unless the owners requested the rezoning, he might could support the Plan. He said he could not vote for the document because of the rezoning suggestions. He pointed out there are many suggestions for rezoning in the Plan.

After discussion it was the consensus of Council that they needed to go through the document line by line and review it like they did the Comprehensive Plan. Council also asked that the staff let the citizens know what is being proposed for their areas.

Councilwoman Clyburn stated she really wanted to thank the committee for all the work they did. She pointed out the Plan was put together by many citizens and there was input by citizens in the area and others who were interested in the area. She said she saw some areas in the Plan which she felt she would like to see rezoned and felt would be good for the area. She said the goals are the result of people who had worked hard on the Plan. She said Council would have to work through the parts they don't like. She said basically the Plan looked good to her and she appreciated some of the changes which had been suggested.

Mr. LeDuc asked that Council set a date for discussion of the Plan. He pointed out Council has already set August 23, 2004, to discuss business licenses. Also, Council has already set meetings on September 7 for the Traffic Management Ordinance; and September 13 and 27 are regular Council meetings. Council set September 21, 2004, at 6:30 P.M. to discuss the Old Aiken Master Plan.

Council then discussed how citizens should be notified of the proposed Plan and changes proposed for their property.