

Aiken City Council Minutes

November 4, 2002

WORKSESSION

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

Absent: Councilwoman Price

Others Present: Roger LeDuc, Gary Smith, Ed Evans, Bill Huggins, Richard Pearce, Sandra Korbelik, Roger Dyar, Jack Wetzel, Wilkins Byrd, and Sara Ridout.

Mayor Cavanaugh called the meeting to order at 7:30 A.M. He stated the purpose of the meeting was to discuss a proposed Traffic Impact Ordinance and the remaining portion of the Comprehensive Plan.

TRAFFIC IMPACT ORDINANCE

Impact Fee

Mr. LeDuc stated earlier this year the city hired Roger Dyar to help the city do a Traffic Impact Study and prepare a Traffic Impact Ordinance. He said a proposed ordinance has been prepared for Council's discussion. He pointed out that at a previous work session Mr. Dyar had a map showing the Levels of Service for the various roadways in the city—Levels A, B, C, D and E. He stated the map would have to be updated every few years to include changes which would occur with new developments, as it is one of the foundational documents for the Traffic Ordinance. He said there were a lot of basic questions in the proposed ordinance that Council will need to discuss and make decisions. He said one major decision is whether to impose a traffic impact fee. He said, with developments, millions of dollars of highway construction will be needed over the next ten years and a connector road needs to be built. He said funds were needed to do this work.

Mr. LeDuc stated in early December a proposed connector roadway between Silver Bluff Road and Whiskey Road will be presented to Council, and he would like to have this as a joint meeting with County Council. He suggested meeting on December 2, 2002, possibly at 7:30 A.M., if the County Council members can meet at that time.

Mr. LeDuc also pointed out the Planning Commission will be looking at the Big Boxes at their next meeting.

Mr. Roger Dyar, on-call Engineer for the City of Aiken, presented a draft Traffic Impact Ordinance for Council's consideration. He presented an updated Level of Service Map (LOS) for 2002 and 2007. He pointed out the Baseline Traffic Report had been completed. He stated the discussion at this meeting was specific requirements for traffic studies and their use and a draft Traffic Impact Ordinance. He said the future will include access management, driveway regulations, and impact fees.

Mr. Dyar then reviewed the proposed Traffic Impact Studies (TIS) and discussed each. Type I is a minimum study for a small development with an average cost of less than \$1,000 and less than 100 trips per day. Type II is a detailed study such as a strip shopping center with a cost of between \$2,000 and \$10,000. Type II would be on a street with LOS A, B or C. The study area would include all traffic signals and all non-signalized intersections with over 4000 ADT on side streets within ¼ mile of the proposed development. The study area is expanded to ½ mile if the expected trip generation is over 5,000. The study would include the current year, full build out year and current year impact plus 5 years. Type III is a detailed and extensive study, such as a mall, at a cost of \$4,000 to \$35,000. A Type III study would be on a street with LOS of D or E. The study area would include all signals and all non-signalized intersections with ADT over 4,000 within ¼ mile of the site. The study area would expanded to ½ mile if

the expected trips would be over 5,000 and to 1 mile if expected trips would be over 7,000. The study would include the current year, full build out year and current plus five years and would require study current plus 10 years if the expected trips exceed 7,000 per day. The process would be administered by the Director of Planning. It was pointed out the volume of traffic generated and where the development would be located determines what type of study would be required.

Mr. Dyar stated the city would maintain a list of pre-approved consultants authorized to conduct Traffic Impact Studies. The developer would select a consultant from the list. The consultant would conduct the study and provide the city with the report. The city would review the report and approve the recommendations. The process may require revisions to the study and report. A report would be required for development approval. This report would help the city to make a much more informed decision on annexation, requests for utilities, etc. The report may have recommendations and would include site access, the way site circulation would tie into the road net work and any improvements that might be needed such as turn lanes, safety improvements, widening, etc. He pointed out the pre and post Level of Service must be acceptable, or at least LOS D. He said if there is a location with new development that the LOS would drop to an E then the report should have recommendations of what has to be done for the development so the LOS can be brought back to at least a D. He said if this can't be done then there would be mitigation and/or traffic impact fees.

Mr. Dyar stated the document would be administered by the Planning Director. Every development would require some sort of Traffic Impact Study as well as requests for rezoning. Section 2 of the proposed ordinance is standards for Level of Service. The standards for how the study is conducted and the format of the report is covered in Section 4. The way the report is used in establishing decision points, criteria for site plan approval and zoning approval is covered in Section 5.

Council discussed the proposals and expressed concern about making regulations too stringent and too expensive, as this would encourage growth outside the city limits. It was pointed out if the connector road goes out too far from the city it will encourage growth in New Ellenton. Then, if the City of Aiken has a traffic impact fee, it would pay for a road that will be in the County. It was pointed out that some growth is good for the city, and the city has to be careful that the fees and requirements don't discourage growth or encourage the growth outside the city. Everyone agreed traffic is a problem in some areas, but getting the solution without discouraging all growth is the key to the problem. It was pointed out there are other areas of the city where growth can go besides the south side and the regulations could help guide future development in other areas.

Mr. Dyar stated the ordinance was prepared with as much flexibility as possible for staff and to be reasonable for developers as well. The actual detailed requirements are spelled out in exhibits or attachments or policies that would be written, published, maintained and updated as needed by staff. He said there could be language in the requirements that give flexibility.

Mr. LeDuc stated the proposed ordinance is the first step. It looks at a lot of different areas, trying to look at all the different scenarios that Council has discussed. It does allow us to reevaluate with the basic map Level of Service in the future. He said Council could look at a higher impact fee in an area with a LOS of D and E versus a level of A, B, or C to encourage development in certain areas. He said they did want to make the ordinance flexible and not absolute so if a certain thing happens they could not build. By giving flexibility the city's hands are not tied. The city can look at the case and try to measure how the particular development will affect that area in comparison to the County, another jurisdiction or another area of the city. He said the city wanted to get the studies and make sure they are correct and answer all the questions. He said the ordinance would state that any mitigation that would be necessary based on the development would be at the cost of the development. He said if the development is causing a problem or something that would happen in the next 5 years, it would be up to the development to pay for improvements to correct the situation. He said the impact fees could be a help or a hindrance. He said the city would not want the development to move a short distance away outside the city's jurisdiction and the city would still get all

the factors from the development. However, the city doesn't want to keep paying for all the improvements that have to be made. He said someone would have to come up with the money to make the connector work. He said Powderhouse Road will have to be improved in the future, and a connector will have to be put between Powderhouse and Whiskey Road. He also pointed out Dougherty Road needs to be improved at both ends and someone has to pay for these improvements. He said this is why Council needs to look at an impact fee or figure out how to pay for the transportation improvements to help relieve the traffic on Whiskey Road or any other road in the future.

It was pointed out the City and the County are going to have to work together on this matter for the good of the whole area in making improvements and helping to solve traffic problems.

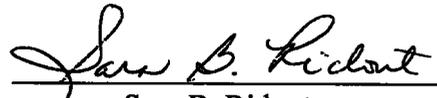
Mr. Jim Wetzel, of Smart Growth, then spoke. He said the proposal was a plan. He said, however, the proposed plan does not deal with the problem on Whiskey Road. He said this is a long term plan which generates income. He said Smart Growth had made a presentation to the Planning Department last summer which focused on Whiskey Road and made some suggestions. He said the city does not yet have an overlay on Whiskey Road, and that is an important aspect of taking care of the traffic on Whiskey Road. He said a traffic ordinance and an overlay on Whiskey Road have to go hand in hand. He said Smart Growth provided a primer on traffic management from Michigan State to the Planning Department. He also mentioned Mt. Pleasant and what they were doing about developments and impact fees to discourage development. He said Mr. Burdett from Mt. Pleasant said one thing necessary to controlling development in any area is being able to say "no" to developers. Mr. Wetzel pointed out that the impact fee in Mt. Pleasant is not just a traffic impact fee, but a system of impact fees having to do with schools, sewers, and other infrastructure. Mr. Wetzel said Smart Growth had mentioned the ordinance from Hilton Head, since it was in South Carolina and has not been challenged, and it was felt it is probably a good ordinance. He said he was not sure about impact fees as they seem to be in wide use, but in the case of Mt. Pleasant there is a system of impact fees. Mr. Wetzel pointed out Mr. Dyar's memo of April 11, 2002, had stated that he would present an executive summary and a report with maps and background data. He said these reports have not been submitted to date. He said he had some concerns with the proposed ordinance, and he reviewed these concerns. He said he felt the proposed ordinance does not touch the problem presently on Whiskey Road. He suggested that Council focus on the problem at hand, focus on an overlay and focus on an ordinance that will deal with the problem on Whiskey Road, which includes acceptance of traffic impact mitigation and the possibility of saying no the maximum has been reached. He said the proposed ordinance deviates from the problem at hand.

Councilman Cunning stated the city can say no, but Aiken is not an island and it is not a Mt. Pleasant. He pointed out that McClellanville is adjacent to Mt. Pleasant and they have no infrastructure so Mt. Pleasant can make any requirements they want as there is no competition. He said if Aiken says no to developments on Whiskey Road they would do something and the development would happen. He said the city needs to work with them so they can help control the development. He said there is a solution on Whiskey Road as it could be widened, but no one wants to do that. He said the city could say no, but what is the alternative to no. He said it could be worse. He felt the city could not look at the matter in a vacuum. He suggested that Smart Growth go the County and help the city get an overlay on Whiskey Road.

Councilwoman Vaughters expressed concern about how to mitigate and ways to mitigate. She felt the city would have to take the initiative to come up with solutions rather than just saying no to development and redirect the efforts.

Council continued to discuss traffic, the proposed ordinance and developments on the south side and how the proposed ordinance could be used as a tool. Council decided to have another meeting to discuss the matter further and discuss the issues raised by Mr. Wetzel. The matter is to be placed on the work session for discussion on November 11, 2002.

The meeting adjourned around 9:45 A.M.



Sara B. Ridout
City Clerk

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