

Aiken City Council Minutes

March 17, 2008

CITY COUNCIL AND PLANNING COMMISSION JOINT MEETING

Council Present: Mayor Cavanaugh, Councilmembers, Dewar, Smith, Vaughters, and Wells

Absent: Councilmembers Clyburn and Price

Planning Commission Members Present: Isaac Rucker, Peter Seaha, Liz Stewart, Leonardo Booker, Wilkins Byrd, Ed Giobbe, and Bill Reynolds

Others Present: Roger LeDuc, Gary Smith, Ed Evans, April Bailey of the Aiken Standard, Susan Mimmie, and about 5 citizens.

Mayor Cavanaugh called the meeting to order at 5:11 P.M.

ACTION AGENDA

Planning Commission

Mayor Cavanaugh thanked the Planning Commission and City Council for all they do to make the city a better place. He stated he and Bill Reynolds, Planning Commission Chairman, met and as they talked, he recognized that some of the items on the list may not give the Planning Commission enough information to know what direction to take.

Mr. Giobbe stated the more guidance and direction the Planning Commission has from City Council, the better they will be able to review their issues.

Planning Commission Chairman Bill Reynolds thanked the Councilmembers for appointing an outstanding group on the Planning Commission. He stated the group is interested and engaged, and they have established a slogan: "Working together and planning together for a better Aiken." He said that with guidance from Council, he feels they can do a lot of good for the City.

Mr. LeDuc thanked the Planning Commission for the productive year they have had. He stated the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the current status of the Planning Commission Action Agenda and issues that the Planning Commission and Council may want to consider for next year's Action Agenda.

He said new items for consideration in formulating the new Action Agenda were provided. He stated there may be other projects which Council may like to add. He said staff feels the major item for next year is the five year review of the Comprehensive Plan. He stated this needs to be done as soon as possible and other items can be considered as the Planning Commission moves through this process. He stated most of the other items do not have a set deadline.

Mr. LeDuc reviewed and Council discussed the progress of the 2008 Action Agenda.

Status of FY 2008 Action Agenda

- 1) Amendments to the Zoning Ordinance and City Code to require electric distribution lines and other wiring to be underground
Recommended for approval by the Commission 12/11/07 with first reading of an ordinance by Council set held 1/14/08; second reading postponed pending further discussion by staff with affected companies.
- 2) Evaluate electronic signage. Commission recommended amendments to the Zoning Ordinance to prohibit electronic signage in April. No action by Council yet.

- 3) Determine how to notify the public about proposed amendments to the Zoning Ordinance and Land Development Regulations. Council decided to use the City newsletter distributed with the water bill to notify the public about second readings of proposed amendments.
- 4) Revise the tree protection regulations in the Zoning Ordinance to base them on the zoning of the land and not on the use. Council decided not to change the regulations.
- 5) Update the Traffic Management Ordinance. The Commission recommended amendments 10/9/07 and Council adopted 11/12/07.
- 6) Possible amendments to the Zoning Ordinance regarding residential development in the Downtown Business zone proposed by Jane Page Thompson. The Commission recommended not to pursue these amendments 12/11/07. On 1/14/08, Council directed staff to do further research on the issues and report back; a Council work session is scheduled for 3/3/08.
- 7) Consider amendments to the Land Development Regulations regarding maintenance guarantees. Still under consideration by the Commission.
- 8) Creation of an Institutional zoning category. The Commission has asked staff to prepare a draft of amendments to the Zoning Ordinance to create a new Institutional zoning district requiring a concept plan to be discussed at a work session 3/11/08.
- 9) Evaluation of uses within the Limited Professional category. Consideration of this should begin in April or May of 2008.
- 10) Examine expansion of the Comprehensive Plan area to the south. To be discussed at joint meeting with City Council.
- 11) Examine expansion of the Comprehensive Plan area to the east. To be discussed at joint meeting with City Council.

City Council and the Planning Commission discussed the following proposed Action Agenda:

Action Agenda for 2009 Fiscal Year

Issues on FY 2008 Action Agenda That Will Not Be Addressed In the Current Fiscal Year

Examine expansion of the Comprehensive Plan area to the south. To be discussed at the joint work session with City Council.

Examine expansion of the Comprehensive Plan area to the east. To be discussed at the joint work session with City Council.

Possible New Issues

Comprehensive Plan Revisions

Five-Year Review. State law requires a “review” of the Plan at least every five years to see if any changes are needed and an “update” or adoption of a new Plan every 10 years. The last update for the 1997 Plan was in 2002-03, so it is time for the five-year review; this would involve each Commissioner reviewing the Plan individually and raising any issues of concern.

Priority Investment Act. A “priority investment element” must be prepared which is essentially a 10-year capital improvements program for public infrastructure and facilities. This element must be submitted to “adjacent and relevant jurisdictions and agencies” for comment before recommendation to City Council.

A "housing element" must be prepared which focuses on obstacles to the development of "affordable" housing.

Open Space Element. City Council has authorized the preparation of this element which will provide a clear direction and specific policies for the acquisition and protection of open space. A consultant will prepare the draft under the direction of a task force appointed by City Council, and the draft will be recommended to the Commission.

Demographic Element. The portion of the Plan containing socioeconomic data should be updated by staff and presented to the Commission.

Creation of Highway Overlay District. City Council has asked the DRB to prepare Design Guidelines (in progress), but the creation of the Overlay District requires amendments to the Zoning Ordinance about which the Commission would have to make a recommendation, so the item should be listed on the Action Agenda. The primary design issues involved would be the façades of the buildings and the site layout of buildings and parking; however, there should probably be an evaluation of appropriate signage, which could lead to amendments to the sign regulations in the Zoning Ordinance, applicable both in and out of the Highway Overlay District.

Amendments to the Zoning Ordinance to clarify the procedure for the approval by the Design Review Board of the demolition of structures condemned by the Building Official. The Building Official sometimes needs to condemn structures under the jurisdiction of the Design Review Board, but there are timing and process issues that need to be clarified. The Design Review Board will be discussing this first, but then the Commission will need to consider amendments to the Zoning Ordinance based on the Board's recommendation.

Possible amendments to the Zoning Ordinance regarding inoperable vehicles at commercial locations. The Zoning Ordinance provisions regarding the storage of inoperable vehicles at commercial locations need to be clarified.

Evaluation of Wording in the Zoning Ordinance Regarding Overlay Districts resulting from recent discussions regarding demolition. There is apparently a need for amendments to the provisions regarding demolition to clarify them and remove inconsistencies.

Unified Land Management Ordinance. Consider combining the Zoning Ordinance and Land Development Regulations into a unified Land Management Ordinance (including an update of the Land Development Regulations) and addressing issues that have arisen since the adoption of the current Zoning Ordinance in 1999.

Revision of Land Development Regulations. If the Unified Land Management Ordinance is not pursued, there still needs to be a major overhaul of the Land Development Regulations.

Revision of the Zoning Ordinance. If the Unified Land Management Ordinance is not pursued, there should still be an update of the Zoning Ordinance, since it has been almost nine years since the 1999 version was adopted.

Mr. LeDuc gave a brief explanation of each of these items.

Mr. LeDuc asked City Council and the Planning Commission if there were any other items to be placed on the Action Agenda and in what order they would like the items to be.

City Council and the Planning Commission briefly discussed the order for the Action Agenda items.

City Council and the Planning Commission agreed on the following for the Action Agenda items:

1. Comprehensive Plan Revisions

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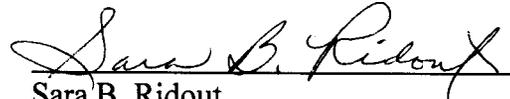
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2. Examine expansion of the Comprehensive Plan area to the east. To be discussed at the joint work session with City Council.
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6. Evaluation of Wording in the Zoning Ordinance Regarding Overlay Districts resulting from recent discussions regarding demolition. There is apparently a need for amendments to the provisions regarding demolition to clarify them and remove inconsistencies.
7. Unified Land Management Ordinance. Consider combining the Zoning Ordinance and Land Development Regulations into a unified Land Management Ordinance including an update of the Land Development Regulations) and addressing issues that have arisen since the adoption of the current Zoning Ordinance in 1999.

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The meeting adjourned at 7:01 P.M.


Sara B. Ridout
City Clerk