

**TOWN OF SULLIVAN’S ISLAND, SOUTH CAROLINA  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
Wednesday, August 10, 2016**

A regular meeting was held at 6:00PM, this date, at Town Hall, 2050-B Middle Street, all requirements of the Freedom of Information Act satisfied. Present: Commissioners Gary Visser (Chair), Sydney Cook (Vice-Chair), Charlie Cole, Hal Currey, Carlson Huey and Carl Hubbard. Staff members present: Zoning Administrator Henderson and Building Official Robinson.

**Call to Order.** Chair Visser called the meeting to order, stated press and public were duly notified pursuant to state law and quorum was present (Manda Poletti has an excused absence); two (2) audience members (no media) present.

Mr. Cole expressed appreciation to Staff for their assistance in ensuring handicap access to the Town Hall’s temporary facility given recent heavy rainfall and concurrent facility construction supply staging and building activity.

**I. Approval of Agenda – Commission approved agenda with no changes**

**II. Approval of Minutes**

**MOTION: Mr. Cole moved to approve the June 8, 2016 minutes; seconded by Mr. Huey; MOTION UNANIMOUSLY PASSED.**

**III. Items for Consideration**

**1. Sullivan’s Island Program for Public Information (CRS-FEMA outreach initiative): Staff requests consideration of the Town’s Program for Public Information (PPI) narrative and final review of flood insurance data and outreach strategies.**

**Staff Report (Zoning Administrator Henderson)**

Overview:

- Program for Public Information (PPI) is a CRS-FEMA outreach program for which the Town decided to develop a local island-specific component.
- CRS program is part of the National Flood Information Program (NFIP) of which the Town has been a member since the mid-1970’s

Background:

- Planning Commission serves as members of the PPI Committee and discussed development of a Town specific PPI program in late 2015. Town Staff has engaged in PPI development activity since late 2015 to present.

- Currently, Commission needs to review the PPI narrative for additional recommendations/activity before the next steps:
  - Review by FEMA
  - Presentation to Town Council for ratification before program implementation

PPI Goals:

1. Protect citizens and property from flood hazards through educational outreach and other initiatives;
2. Opportunity through the Community Rating System (CRS) to increase credit points that impacts the ISO rating. ISO rates the Town's compliance with NFIP. Currently Town is a Class 6; should Town improve rating to a Class 5, all Island residents would realize a 25% reduction in flood insurance premiums.

Staff noted that FEMA flood plain maps are due for release later in 2016; however, the Town seeks to move forward with this PPI program now to allow the opportunity for ISO to include this program in its rating.

Staff reviewed the draft PPI narrative, noting the following highlights:

- Francis Johnson, head broker of Johnson & Johnson Insurance, provides industry-specific assistance to Town Staff regarding policy analysis
  - Properties island-wide without flood insurance: 154 residences
  - Properties without mortgages are not required to have flood insurance
- FEMA zone rating for insured island properties (AE zones traditionally less expensive premiums than those in VE zones):
  - AE zone – 662 policies
  - VE zone – 218 policies
- October 2015 Historic Flooding Event
  - Staff conducted damage assessment of properties: identified high flood risk areas from this historic flood event on data analysis software.

Action item: Town to identify 154 uninsured homes, their locations and ascertain their potential flood risk factor in relation to the data derived from the historic flooding event. Town will extend educational information to the property owners on their potential flood risks and opportunities to obtain flood insurance protection.

Outreach opportunities were reviewed:

- Island specific information mailed to all residents annually;
- Develop Town specific brochures to display in a wide array of locations;
- GIS mapping continuation and data update;
- New Town website – strong focus to enhance its floodplain management page, to include maps, and other data

- Continuation of deed restriction of all new construction, to be recorded at the County RMC, restricting property conversion/development of space under the property that is beneath base flood elevation (BFE). Staff would be allowed to regularly inspect property as needed.
- Participate in joint SI/IOP Disaster Preparedness Expo and other opportunities to educate residents on flood hazards.

Commission briefly reviewed uses allowed below BFE on properties: parking, storage and access, elevator shaft, washout area, etc.

**MOTION: Mr. Hubbard moved to approve PPI narrative, with the final flood insurance coverage assessment as provided by PPI Committee member Francis Johnson of Johnson & Johnson Insurance; approve all public information initiatives, as presented, along with any recommendations following FEMA final plan review and any final correction needed by Planning Commission and Building Department Staff. Further, following FEMA’s final review, Plan is to be referred to Town Council for adoption. Seconded by Ms. Cook. MOTION UNANIMOUSLY PASSED.**

**2. Historic Design Guidelines: Town Council initiated text amendment to modify Zoning Ordinance Section 21-97C. (5) (Criteria for Certificate of Appropriateness) by requiring compliance with the *Secretary of Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties: Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, and Reconstructing Historic Buildings.***

**Staff Report (Zoning Administrator Henderson)**

Land Use & Natural Resources Committee and Council have discussed the topic of historic design guidelines and asked the Commission to study design guidelines and offer recommendations to Council.

Council asked the Design Review Board (DRB), approximately one year ago, to study and consider this issue. The DRB established a Study Group and the DRB recommended against establishing stand-alone historic design guidelines and re-affirmed support for the current DRB review process.

**Current DRB Process:**

- Secretary of Interior’s ten (10) design standards are incorporated in Town code;
- The *Secretary of Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties: Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, and Reconstructing Historic Buildings* are also required by the Zoning Ordinance when reviewing historic projects;
- DRB uses these standards to review and evaluation project applications
- If deemed acceptable, the DRB issues a Certificate of Appropriateness

- Property owner is eligible to submit building permit requests and develop/improve property based upon DRB approval and issuance of Certificate of Appropriateness.

The Secretary of Interior publishes a pamphlet entitled, *Secretary of Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties: Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, and Reconstructing Historic Buildings* (hereinafter "The SIS Guidelines"). This pamphlet provides guidelines for a variety of items ranging from hurricane protection, piazzas, historic roofing, porches, landscaping, etc.

Question: Does the Town need to clarify the mandate to use these guidelines when reviewing historic projects or should the Town create a set of stand-alone design guidelines or other mechanisms?

### **Commission Questions:**

SC Historic Preservation Office (SCHPO) administers grant-funded projects for individual properties whose owners applied for financial assistance in preservation work for historic homes. Commission noted SCHPO appeared very stringent in what a property owner could/could not do on a property receiving grant funds.

Staff noted that changes made to historic homes with this grant funding are subject to review and compliance with the SIS Guidelines. The question is whether the Town needs to do the same for its historic properties and, if so, how that process would work.

### **Public Comment**

Patrick M. O'Neil, Mayor

- Noted the question of historic design guidelines extends to 2001-2002 when consultants (team led by Connie Cooper) were retained to assist with the Zoning Ordinance revision and the Town was developing its historic preservation overlay districts, DRB, etc. The DRB was established circa 2004.
- One member of the Connie Cooper team was David Schneider who conducted an historic asset inventory assessment in early 2000's (followed up by a second site visit in mid-2000's). Mr. Schneider provided a rough draft for historic guidelines around 2002. The DRB members, at that time, reviewed the draft historic guidelines document and deemed it too general in nature. The design guidelines document was not pursued, refined to accommodate Town of Sullivan's Island specifics.

Mayor O'Neil noted how he views design standards and guidelines:

- Standards are aspirational
- Guidelines provide specific information/examples to achieve aspirational standards

- Submitted that the Town needs some level of subjectivity and flexibility but also boundaries for residents and potential property owners, and, a mechanism to allow for special design exceptions if a proposal is deemed unique/special.
- Design guidelines can be the mechanism to provide these boundaries and expectations.

Zoning Administrator Henderson briefly reviewed various ways the Town could proceed on this issue:

1. Refer to Secretary of Interior's Guidelines (The SIS Guidelines) in the Town Code;
2. Establish a stand-alone design guideline manual;
3. Establish a set of policy statements on various design issues that would be made part of the DRB's Rules of Procedure. These would be policy statements binding upon the DRB.

He noted that the City of Charleston follows item #3 above. They utilize the 10 design standards, refer to the SIS Guidelines and have a set of binding policy statements, established between City Council and the Board of Architectural Review (BAR), that the Charleston BAR follow. He reiterated the policy documents are not codified in the ordinances.

Commission briefly discussed the aforementioned policy options mentioned by the Zoning Administrator, expressing interest in reviewing examples and obtaining more information. Staff noted that there are 112 historic structures on the Island: 71 in Landmark status and 41 in Traditional Island Resources status.

Staff and Commission noted that the Commission could request expertise in historic preservation field attend future Commission meetings, for example: Eddie Fava (on the City of Charleston Board of Architectural Review), Eddie Bellow, a former preservation planner from the City of Charleston and architect in current practice, and members of the Town's DRB who comprised the Study Team on this matter. Copies of the Schneider historic guidelines sample for Sullivan's Island (circa 2005) would be helpful to consider, too.

**Zoning Administrator Henderson indicated he would, for the next Planning Commission meeting, develop a set of policy options that would allow the Town to incorporate a set of historic guidelines into the review process for historic property improvement requests. He will enumerate for the Commission a variety options, provide examples of how these options are being used in other municipalities, identify strengths and weaknesses for each option and provide sample white papers for Commission to examine.**

**Public Comment (continued):**

Councilmember Langley expressed an option to proceed with the 112 Island historic structures:

- Create a file for each historic structure and provide historic data on each. Research the historic structures to include historic construction design standards and period photography of the structures, where available.

- Noted that the Design Review Board recently allowed modification of a row house on Middle Street in the form of an addition. While the addition was to the rear of the structure, it will materially break the visual line along the historic row of houses and detract from the historic integrity of the entire block of historic row homes.
- Submitted roof-lines make a difference by changing the line of sight for historic homes, particularly those gathered together on a block. Materials make a difference in the historic integrity of the structure. A good looking design is not necessarily historic in nature. A true historic homes looks like its original structure.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at approximately 7:40PM (Mr. Huey motioned; Mr. Hubbard seconded; unanimously passed).

**3. October Planning Commission Meeting**

Originally scheduled meeting on October 12, 2016 falls on Rosh Hashana. Commission agreed to reschedule October meeting to 6:00PM on Monday, October 3, 2016.

Next Commission meeting will be 6:00PM on Wednesday, September 14, 2016

Respectfully submitted,  
Lisa Darrow  
Asst. to Administrator

Approved at the Wednesday, September 14, 2016 Planning Commission Meeting