

**TOWN OF SULLIVAN'S ISLAND  
SOUTH CAROLINA  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
Wednesday, May 8, 2013**

A regular meeting of the Town of Sullivan's Island Planning Commission was held at 6:00 p.m., Wednesday, May 8, 2013 in Town Hall at 2050-B Middle Street, all requirements of the Freedom of Information Act having been satisfied. Present were Commission members Chauncey Clark (Chair), Anne Osborne Kilpatrick (Vice-Chair); Rusty Bennett, Hal Currey, Carl Hubbard and Gary Visser; Staff members present were Asst. to Administrator Darrow and Building Official/Acting Zoning Administrator Robinson.

**I. Call to Order.** Chair Clark called the meeting to order, stated the press and public were duly notified pursuant to state law, noted Commissioner Carlsen Huey had an excused absence and welcomed Council member Pat O'Neil and approximately 35 residents to tonight's meeting. He noted the meeting started one-half hour earlier than usual to accommodate the public hearing (2013 Comprehensive Plan).

**II. Approval of Agenda**

**MOTION: Ms. Kilpatrick made a motion to approve the May 8, 2013 agenda; seconded by Mr. Hubbard. MOTION UNANIMOUSLY PASSED.**

**III. Approval of Minutes**

**MOTION: Mr. Bennett made a motion to approve the April 10, 2013 minutes; seconded by Mr. Visser. MOTION UNANIMOUSLY PASSED.**

**IV. Public Hearing: 2013 Comprehensive Plan**

Mr. Currey noted the draft 2013 Comprehensive Plan is a result of the Commission's five-year interim review of the 2008 Comprehensive Plan, as provided for by SC 6-29-510(E). The Commission held monthly public meetings from April 2012- April 2013 to review the nine (9) elements in this strategic Town Plan.

Mr. Currey briefly reviewed the nine (9) elements noting the Commission and Staff primarily updated the Plan for new statistical data and to reflect progress the Town has made on many Needs & Goals identified in the 2008 Plan. The Planning Commission recommended one new Needs & Goals of note, namely the incorporation of strategic planning to address the effects of erosion, specifically to Town infrastructure and essential services (i.e. water and sewer).

*Chair Clark opened the public hearing for comments at 6:11pm. Seeing and hearing no public comments, he closed the public hearing at 6:11pm.*

**MOTION: Ms. Kilpatrick made a motion that the Commission recommend, by resolution, the 2013 Comprehensive Plan as presented to Council. Seconded by Mr. Bennett. MOTION UNANIMOUSLY PASSED.**

Mr. Clark noted that Council may elect to review and adopt some or all of the Commission's recommendations in this 2013 Comprehensive Plan and, if so, Council would adopt these changes through the ordinance process.

## **V. Correspondence & General Public Comments**

Letter provided this evening from Mr. A.L. Lofton, Jr. and Mrs. Deborah M. Lofton (related to Unfinished Business A: Multi-family uses). Chair Clark read the Lofton's letter in its entirety (**attached to these minutes as Exhibit A**).

## **VI. New Business - None**

## **VII. Unfinished Business**

### **1. Discussion Regarding Potential Multi-family Uses of Certain Historic Buildings and Properties**

Chair Clark provided background on concept:

- Utilize big buildings that are historic (some dilapidated/not being used) by allowing multi-family use under specific restrictions.
- Commission discussed conceptually in February, March and April. Council provided feedback to Commission at its March 19, 2013 meeting (**minutes excerpt attached as Exhibit B**).
- Building Official Robinson provided Commission with two property inventory lists as requested by the Commission (provided to public at meeting **attached hereto as Exhibit C**):
  - Properties that would be eligible under the Council's specifications (note Commission set minimum square footage at 4,000 sf); and
  - Properties that might be eligible for inclusion. These properties are not currently eligible because either the square footage is uncertain or the property is not currently on the National Register (but could be in the future).
- Commission will continue general discussion of this concept at this meeting.

Mr. Clark noted that, while this is not a public hearing, the Commission would be interested in brief comments and questions from those who signed up to speak on the public hearing sign in sheet for the Comprehensive Plan item in error.

#### **Commission Comments**

Building Official Robinson clarified for Mr. Visser and public that the Town's current ordinances restrict single-residential structures to 5,600 sft maximum. Therefore, for a property like the 1602 Thompson warehouse (10,000 sf), 5,600sf could be improved to a residential structure and the remaining 4,400 sf would be undeveloped (used as a big garage or storage area).

Commission discussed the inventory list of possibly eligible structures, noting square footage was unknown for some properties and some properties were not currently on the National Historic Registry but could be included in the future. Mr. Currey noted there are a lot "ifs" with this list of properties. Mr. Bennett suggested ordinance language could be put in place to eliminate the uncertainty that the additional properties (on second inventory list) could be included as multi-family use in the future.

## Public Comments

*Howard & Vicky Rudd  
1617 Middle Street, SI*

Mr. Rudd:

- Noted he signed a petition today protesting the multi-family concept, which he learned of this morning.
- Concerned with impact this change would have on his immediate neighborhood.
- Comprehensive Plan the Commission just recommended speaks about multi-family use, specifically stating that the Town strives to keep the Island single-family residential.

Ms. Rudd:

- Family purchased property in 1984, built home and moved into it in 1985.
- Her family shared, since 1985, in the Island's pride that there would be no new condominiumization of property in the future.
- Asked why now?

*Deborah Lofton  
1510 Thompson Avenue, SI*

- Thanked Commission for reading her letter this evening (Exhibit A).
- She remains appalled the Town is considering multi-family on the Island.

*Rita Langley  
1618 Middle Street, SI*

- Expressed concern over increased density in the neighborhood due to the proposed changes.
- Submitted she will feel like she lives in "condo city."
- Expressed frustration at the concept of expanding multi-family use and does not support it.

*Sydney Cook  
1614 Thompson Avenue, SI*

- Question for clarification: how many additional condominiums could become a reality from the proposed list and specifications, best and worst cases?

*Commission clarified that a minimum of 7 additional condominiums could be realized for properties not already grandfathered to have condominium/multi-family use. A maximum of 15 additional condominiums could be added if all properties on the second "potentially eligible" list qualified.*

- Expressed her strong opposition to this concept.
- Noted she has spoken with 150 people on the Island on this controversial topic and received universal agreement that multi-family is not a good idea.
- Questioned the legal ramifications of this change:

- Comprehensive Plan just endorsed by Commission does not support expanding multi-family use;
- Legal system could see this move to multi-family as being an arbitrary zoning change, opening the Town up to many lawsuits from property owners seeking to make their house multi-family too.
- Noted the public has the perception that that this change is part of a “rigged game” to benefit specific property owners (to include the Town, who is now the seller of 1610 Middle Street).
  - Approximately 9 months ago the Town made it clear it would not consider multi-family for the 1602 Thompson warehouse.
  - The property sold for a discount due to that understanding.
  - Now why is the Town changing its viewpoint?

*Ms. Cook clarified, before leaving the meeting, that she has the petition residents reference, she needs to circulate it for additional signatures and will forward it to the Town in the near future.*

*Andy Mithoefer  
407 ONeal Street, SI*

- Noted he has owned property on the Island since 1980.
- Commission spent a long time on the Comprehensive Plan, which does not call for increased multi-family use on the Island.
- Why is Town revisiting this topic? The Island clearly wants to stay single-family residential.
- He is opposed to multi-family.

*William (Red) Wood  
1454 Thompson Ave., SI*

- He has been an Island resident for 63 years, raising his family here.
- He ran for Town Council and served the Town for 30+ years for a primary purpose: to keep this Island single-family residential.
- Understands a handful of the historic structures will be very big houses but they should remain single-family residential.
- Noted the Town incorporated in 1974 from a former Township. One of the first things the new Town engaged in was fighting a lawsuit to prevent apartment/condominiums at 2059 Middle Street. The Town fought against the condominiums/apartments specifically because single-family residential was the Town’s philosophy from the beginning of incorporation. The owners of 2059 Middle Street fought and won the lawsuit to condominiumize the property because the apartments were in existence before the Town incorporated from a Township.
- He noted the Town has taken repeated action to preserve the single-family residential fabric on the Island and rebuff multi-family over the years. Keep single-family residential and reject multi-family use.

*Jeri English*

*2014 Middle Street, SI*

- Supports petition protesting the addition of multi-family residential.
- Keep Island single-family residential.

*Alice Morrissey*

*1652 Thompson Avenue, SI*

- Where will the cars for the new multi-family park...on the street?
- Recalled the big discussion of where cars would park when the Town considered 1714 Middle Street for a Town Hall.

*Melissa Kelly*

*1456 Thompson Avenue, SI*

- Lives next to Red Wood (2 year Island resident).
- Discovered this multi-family issue last week.
- She has a family with four boys. Her family sought a community in which to raise the boys that had a single-family residential focus.
- Is against multi-family because of extra traffic on the roads and increased density on the Island.

*Mike Sanka*

*1656 Thompson Avenue, SI*

- Why is the Town talking about doing this (multi-family)?
- Theme is making changes to benefit the few, not the many.
- Noted more people oppose than support multi-family on the Island.

*Councilman O'Neil noted Town Council instructed the Planning Commission to study the multi-family concept and hold a public hearing to get public input on the issue of multi-family. He noted the Town's eventual sale of 1610 Middle Street (old Town Hall) would generate these questions from buyers and this process with the Planning Commission would help Council give guidance to prospective buyers.*

Mr. Bennett noted that some of the structures have been in a state of dilapidation for years. He cited the old theater (1454 Middle Street), circa 1930's, that has been vacant and unutilized/underutilized for decades.

*Andrew Siegel*

*1820 I'On Avenue, SI*

- Moved from Boston and "condo life" to Sullivan's Island specifically because of the single-family residential nature of the Island, its historic elements and lack of commercialism.
- Noted that restrictions on historic buildings can be positive by fostering architectural creativity.

- Asked who is profiting from the 1602 Thompson Avenue warehouse that sold a year ago for a very low price but now stands to gain a windfall profit if this concept materialized and the property could be condominiumized?
- Questioned why this issue of a potential multi-family use zoning change was not raised by Town Council a year ago when the warehouse sale (1602 Thompson Avenue) came through?

*T. Jones*

*1315 Thompson Avenue, SI*

- Just moved back to the Island; wants low density residential on the Island.

*Sidney Langley*

*1618 Middle Street*

- Echoed many others by questioning why do this and why now?

*Cecile Fletcher*

*1618 Middle Street, SI*

- Noted she is a renter of a current multi-family and dreams of owning a home on the Island one day.
- Celebrates urban density but not on a barrier island, specifically this Island.
- Noted Sullivan’s Island is special because it is low development, low density and works to preserve cultural and natural resources. Sullivan’s Island is unique to other barrier islands for these reasons and the ½ acre lots, single-family residential, non-commercialism, and non-tourist-centric philosophy.
- The concentration of buildings in a central area (around Thompson Avenue) would create a condominium corridor that would have a negative impact.

***Seeing and hearing no other residents expressing a desire to speak, Chair Clark directed the discussion back to Commission only comments.***

Chair Clark remarked on the multi-family residential that currently co-exists on the Island. Mr. Visser noted he lives closer to Breach Inlet, away from the Old Town Hall area (1610 Middle Street). Therefore, when he researched this topic, he was surprised at the number of multi-family uses already in existence. Mr. Visser did not express support for or against the multi-family concept, but noted he could see the incentive for the Town to consider the concept since the use already exists/is not new.

Chair Clark spoke about next steps to move toward an official public hearing on this topic. Commission agreed Staff needed to focus on crafting ordinance language and “tighten up” the unknown information on Building Official Robinson’s property inventory list before the Commission held a public hearing.

Commission directed Building Official Robinson to get more detail on the list of potentially eligible properties and tasked the new Zoning Administrator (starting in June) with drafting the ordinance language on this topic, returning to the Commission with it for review. Commission acknowledged the public hearing would probably occur in July or August.

The public present was advised that they would receive letters from the Town regarding the public hearing date/time once it was set. Meanwhile, residents were encouraged to attend future Council and Commission meetings and/or monitor the Town website for further updates.

*Chair Clark announced a five-minute break to allow residents interested in leaving to depart (7:15-7:20pm).*

## **2. 2013 Planning Commission Work Projects (Update) – Deferred**

Chair Clark noted the variety of Commission identified work products would carry to next month's agenda for future consideration and discussion.

### **3. Long Term Boat/Leisure Vehicle Parking on Middle Street & Jasper -** (Deferred to June meeting)

Ms. Kilpatrick stated she was working on a parking ordinance and consulting with public safety directors on this topic. She anticipated have a working ordinance for the Commission in June.

### **4. Demolition by Neglect – Deferred (New Zoning Administrator project)**

### **5. Ongoing Town Projects – Staff reported the following progress:**

- a. **Zoning Administrator** – Joe Henderson (Planner in Conway, SC) hired and will start Monday, June 3<sup>rd</sup>
- b. **New Town Hall/Police Station** – Council checking references for three finalists and will discuss at May 21, 2013 Council meeting. Three finalists are (1) Creech & Associates, (2) McMillan Pazdan Smith and (3) Stubbs Muldrow Herin.
- c. **Sullivan's Island Elementary School** – Project in-progress.
- d. **Accreted Land** – Town continues to take steps to create public access, currently concentrating on Station 16 beach path area, and taking steps to eradicate invasive plant species along the paths.

## **VII. Next Meeting – (6:30pm) Wednesday, June 12, 2013**

Mr. Visser noted he would be absent from June meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at approximately 7:50 pm (Mr. Bennett motioned; Mr. Currey seconded; unanimously passed).

Respectfully submitted,  
Lisa Darrow  
Asst. to Administrator

Approved at the Wednesday, July 10, 2013 Planning Commission Meeting  
(June 12, 2013 meeting cancelled – no quorum)

## EXHIBIT A

### **Correspondence received by Planning Commission at May 8, 2013 meeting**

1510 Thompson Avenue  
Sullivan's Island, SC 29482

The Town of Sullivan's Island was steadfast in adamantly answering inquiries when the dock and warehouse were for sale by the State of South Carolina that it was zoned single family. It is quite hypocritical of the Town to be looking for ways to accomplish a change in zoning status for the old town hall and police station, as well as other properties, now that the Town is planning to sell its property. Many of the properties that are under consideration are clustered between Stations 14 Vz and Station 18 along Middle Street and Thompson Avenue. Multi-family zoning would adversely impact this area with greater density, parking problems, and increased traffic along Thompson Avenue and Middle Street.

The Town has no mandate to make properties more marketable. The sale of the warehouse and old quartermaster dock is a good example that people will purchase a large building with full knowledge that it has zoning of single family residential. These large buildings offer certain people the opportunity to have large homes that are now denied because of the formula of lot size to house size. 1514 Middle Street, the former ordnance warehouse, shows that the desire for multi-family zoning is not a deciding factor as to how property will be utilized. 1514 Middle Street had previously been multi-family and is now zoned single family.

I would like to emphasize that prices here have certainly not returned to the levels they were eight or nine years ago. Perhaps, now is not the time to be selling these properties. I sympathize with anyone who is trying to sell one of these properties. My husband's family sold his family home in Mount Pleasant last fall for about 60% of what it would have been in 2004 or 2005.

My husband and I have been residents here since 1979. We are very opposed to the idea of selective zoning, no matter if it is being accomplished with an historical overlay. We implore this commission not to open this Pandora's box.

Deborah M. Lofton

A. L. Lofton, Jr.



## **EXHIBIT B**

**Excerpt – March 19, 2013 Regular Council Meeting Minutes (page 5 of 5)**

### **Topic: Overlay District – Multifamily Use**

Motion was made by Councilman O'Neil, seconded by Councilwoman Watson, to ask the Planning Commission to investigate and hold a Public Hearing on the possibility of establishing a new zoning category which would permit multi-family residential use of certain historic buildings within the Ft. Moultrie Quartermaster and Support Facilities National Register Historic District providing that the building be listed to contributing to the National Register District and that it contain at least 5,000 square feet of interior space; that any resulting residential units be no smaller than 2,000 square feet; that there be no more than 3 residential units within a single structure; and provided that the original historic purpose of the structure was not single family residential.

Motion was made by Councilman Kaynard, seconded by Councilman Perkis, to amend the motion to read "multiple single family dwelling units" instead of "multi-family residential" and "Overlay District of the Ft. Moultrie Quartermaster and Support Facilities National Register Historic District" instead of just "Ft. Moultrie Quartermaster and Support Facilities National Historic District/" carried unanimously.

Motion, as amended, carried unanimously.

Final motion read:

to ask the Planning Commission to investigate and hold a Public Hearing on the possibility of establishing a new zoning category which would permit multiple single family dwelling units of certain historic buildings within the Overlay District of the Ft. Moultrie Quartermaster and Support Facilities National Register Historic District, providing that the building be listed to contributing to the National Register District and that it contain at least 5,000 square feet of interior space; that any resulting residential units be no smaller than 2,000 square feet; that there be no more than 3 residential units within a single structure; and provided that the original historic purpose of the structure was not single family residential.

## EXHIBIT C

May 8, 2013 Planning Commission Meeting  
R. Robinson, Staff

5/6/2013

<b>ELIGIBLE STRUCTURES</b>							
<b>COMMON ELEMENTS:</b> 4000 SQUARE FEET IN SIZE, NOT ORIGINALLY SINGLE FAMILY, INDIVIDUALLY LISTED ON NATIONAL REGISTER OR LANDMARK STRUCTURE CONTRIBUTING TO A HISTORIC DISTRICT							
HIST#	ADDED UNITS	ADDRESS	ORIGINAL USE	EXISTING USE	SQ FT	YEAR BUILT	DESCRIPTION
268	3	1610 MIDDLE	WAREHOUSE/OFFICE	VACANT	7000	1915	OLD TOWN HALL
269	0	1618 MIDDLE	WAREHOUSE/OFFICE	2 APARTMENTS	4446	1915	QUARTERMASTERS/NEXT TO TOWN HALL
266	0	1504 MIDDLE	STOREHOUSE	3 APARTMENTS	6608	1905	APTS BETWEEN TOWN HALL / THEATRE
259	3	1454 MIDDLE	THEATRE	VACANT	6208	1930	OLD THEATRE
274	0	1701 MIDDLE	ADMIN BUILDING	3 APARTMENTS	7552	1900	EXISTING APTS ON CORNER STA 17 & MIDDLE
260	1	1714 MIDDLE	POST EXCHANGE	SINGLE FAMILY	5881	1906	LG BUILDING NEXT TO WATER PLANT
372	3	1602 THOMPSON	WAREHOUSE/DOCK	VACANT	10,000	?	WAREHOUSE BEHIND TOWN HALL
275	0	1766 I'ON	B O Q	SANDBIPER CONDO	4255	1900	1900--CONVERTED 1945-55
076	0	2302 MIDDLE	SCHOOL/CHURCH	APARTMENTS	9184	1925	BLOCKWAY APARTMENTS

May 8, 2013 Planning Commission Meeting  
R. Robinson, Staff

5/6/2013

<b>OTHER POSSIBLE ELIGIBLE STRUCTURES</b>							
HIST#	Added units	ADDRESS	ORIGINAL USE	EXISTING USE	SQ FT		DESCRIPTION
027	3	3020 BROWNELL	FORT GUN BATTERY	SINGLE FAMILY	7712	1943	GUN BATTERY IN MOUND
026	2	3032 BROWNELL	FORT GUN BATTERY	SINGLE FAMILY	5391		GUN BATTERY IN MOUND
188	2	ION	FORT GUN BATTERY	LIBRARY/CULTURAL SOCIETY		1906	BATTERY GADSEN
187	2	ION	FORT GUN BATTERY	FIRE DEPT. TRAINING		1905	BATTERY THOMPSON
291	2	POE AVE	FORT GUN BATTERY	FORT MUSEUM		1889	BATTERY JASPER
100	2	2520 MIDDLE	CHURCH	EPISCOPAL CHURCH	4838	1907	
358	2	1204 MIDDLE	CHURCH	CATHOLIC CHURCH	4000+	1873	