

January 29, 2015

A Special Meeting of Town Council was held on the above date at 6:00 pm at Town Hall, all requirements of the Freedom of Information Act having been satisfied.

Present were: Pat O'Neil, Mayor
Jerry Kaynard, Mayor Pro-Tem
Chauncey Clark, Councilman
Susan Middaugh, Councilwoman

Mayor O'Neil called the meeting to order at 6:04 pm and stated the press and public had been notified in accordance with State law. Town Hall was filled with residents and three members of the media. Mayor O'Neil stated the purpose of the meeting was for staff briefing on the proposed development project on the former Channel 4 site at the end of the causeway.

Mayor O'Neil stated that this discussion was to consider any direct impact the project might have on Sullivan's Island and its residents. The project is within the town limits of Mount Pleasant, and the discussion is not to judge their zoning laws or tell Mt. Pleasant officials what to do. At the end of the discussion as well as comments from the audience, Council will decide if there is anything it might wish to communicate to the leadership of the Town of Mount Pleasant about this project.

Administrator Benke stated that he, along with Mayor O'Neil, Councilman Clark, Building Official Randy Robinson, and Zoning Administrator Joe Henderson, met with Mount Pleasant staff the previous day. The development in Mount Pleasant is called the Atlantic Mount Pleasant by Middle Street Partners, LLC. The Mount Pleasant staff report with comments about the developer's conceptual plan is available on the Mt. Pleasant Town website. The conceptual plan went to the Mt. Pleasant Planning Commission on January 21, 2015. The Planning Commission motions to defer and also to deny the project failed with tie votes. The project now moves to the Planning and Development Committee of the Mt. Pleasant Town Council. The Committee meets on February 2, 2015 at 2:15 p.m. At that meeting, there could be a recommendation for approval, approval with conditions, or denial. Then the plan could move to full Council on February 10th. The discussion this evening will focus on the plan and how the number of units and retail space were determined, as well as the configuration of traffic pattern, which will probably impact Sullivan's Island residents or visitors to Sullivan's Island. The traffic pattern could also be impacted by future developments on this area of 703, as there are other parcels available for development.

Zoning Administrator Henderson gave an overview of the parcel related to the Mt. Pleasant regulations. Mr. Henderson stated since yesterday's meeting with the Mt. Pleasant staff, he quickly reviewed the Mount Pleasant Zoning Ordinance and Comprehensive Plan, and will express his interpretation of the regulations, so some could be incorrect. Within the Town of Mount Pleasant Zoning Ordinance and Comprehensive Plan, it regulates this parcel of land in three different ways. First, the underlying zoning district is zoned AB or Area-wide business. This zoning district is intended to allow businesses that relate to the neighborhood commercial and office professional uses in close proximity to

arterial roads, or Ben Sawyer Boulevard. It is also intended to allow businesses to provide services to one or many neighborhoods in close proximity to major or minor arterial roads. Secondly, the ordinance regulates the use of this parcel by way of the urban corridor overlay district. This is intended to encourage pedestrian traffic, and pedestrian oriented business uses. It is intended to implement a high quality design and to encourage mixed use multi-story development with retail on the first floor. Thirdly, the parcel development is guided by the Coleman and Ben Sawyer Boulevard Revitalization Master Plan. This describes this area as the gateway to the beach. The intent of this gateway is to provide a transition from a more urban setting near the roundabout (proposed roundabout at Chuck Dawley Boulevard) with the least intensive area near the marsh. This sense of transition has been described as a decompression zone, providing transition from more urban to less urban for those approaching the beach, but also provides a transition back to the urban area.

As far as the development data, the developer is proposing density increases with this development. This is gained by providing a certain amount of open space, as well as workforce housing. They are providing adequate parking for the number of multi-family and retail space units. They meet the requirements of the zoning ordinance for parking – it is 1.5 parking spaces per unit in the residential; and one space per 200 square feet for the retail units.

Administrator Benke stated the next area of discussion involves traffic. The data provided by SCDOT shows a year-round average daily transit of 14,500 vehicles average count per day back and forth across the causeway. The Mt. Pleasant staff report shows the developers had a traffic study done by SRS Engineering. The developer anticipates an additional 2,230 weekday trips in and out of the development. The conceptual drawing from the developer shows there is a left turn lane into the development, as well as a left hand turn lane northbound into Simmons Point. Leaving Sullivan's Island, there is not a slow-down lane for right turns into the development. The final determination would be made by SCDOT as far as lanes of traffic. Because both roads into Simmons Point and the new development are private roads, a traffic signal will not be allowed. There was a previous study about a traffic signal at Center Street crossing over to Home Farm, and that could be revisited. For our purposes, the consideration is how traffic flows on and off the island. Obviously it is a difficult left hand turn whether you are coming southbound into the development or coming northbound and trying to get to Simmons Point. Mr. Benke continued there is discussion of a multi-lane roundabout at the intersection of Simmons Point and the Atlantic Mount Pleasant development.

Mayor O'Neil asked for questions and comments from the audience.

Barbara Spell, 1702 Atlantic, asked for an explanation about workforce housing and density. Mr. Henderson stated their ordinance allows for an increase in density if they provide 15% in workforce housing. Workforce housing is defined as housing that has a threshold on price of rent to allow diversity.

Chuck Galis, 1817 Back St., inquired about the total number of bedrooms. The report shows 124 one bedroom units; 110 two bedroom units; and 12 three bedroom units.

Barbara Spell, 1702 Atlantic, stated she was concerned there would be more cars than available parking based on the report statements of 1.5 parking spaces per unit and the majority of residents being adults. Mayor O'Neil stated the parking requirement of their zoning ordinance was met. That question could be directed toward the Mount Pleasant staff.

Sydney Cook, 1614 Thompson, asked Mr. Henderson about the formula of the decompression zone and also what the parcel is zoned. Mr. Henderson stated there was not a definition of decompression zone in the Mount Pleasant Master Plan that he had seen, and the parcel is zoned AB or Area-Wide business. That is the underlying zone, and it also falls within the urban corridor overlay.

Tim Reese, 305 Station 20, stated he attended the meeting yesterday and expressed his concern of the impact to Sullivan's Island from a traffic perspective. The traffic study used by Mount Pleasant was from a standardized weekly traffic flow. It did not consider the five months of congested beach traffic. He also encouraged Sullivan's Island residents to participate at meetings and let the Mount Pleasant officials know their concerns.

Jimmy Bagwell of Mount Pleasant, an officer with Save Shem Creek Corporation, stated their organization's major concern is to have positive growth. They are not averse to growth; however, the inundation of multi-family developments in Mount Pleasant will affect everyone – it will impact the transportation systems, the schools, and the infrastructure. The Atlantic Mount Pleasant would be a very intense development on a unique piece of property, and the Town of Mount Pleasant needs to first revisit this plan. Along with that, the plan for the Coleman Corridor, if completed as planned, would allow buildings from 75-90 feet tall. This would be too intense for Mount Pleasant, as well as losing the coastal character.

Barbara Spell, 1702 Atlantic, stated that the plan includes a passive park. With Mt. Pleasant's law, it allows a greater density because of the passive park, along with the workforce housing. The park would have visitors other than the residents, which would also increase traffic.

Jimmy Bagwell responded that the Mount Pleasant ordinance has bonus densities, and The Boulevard in Mount Pleasant is an example of that. The bonus densities and the increase in densities need to be reviewed by Mount Pleasant officials.

Sarah Church, 2215 l'on, read a letter written by her father, Toby VanBuren, who was not able to be present. He was a clam fisherman off Breach Inlet for about 30 years and commented on his concerns about the effect on the wetlands and the ecosystem. A large complex of housing and shops would cause non-point source pollution even with retention ponds and buffers. Stormwater runoff is accelerated and homeowners and restaurants can sometimes be careless with what goes into the storm drains.

Jamie Moore, 2857 Jasper, inquired if there are any implications for flood zone and flood insurance costs. Building Official Randy Robinson stated that the property has recently been rezoned from a VE to an AE flood designation. The buildings have to be flood-proofed, and they do not have to be elevated.

The flood zone changes that have occurred for this property will not have any impact on the Sullivan's Island flood zoning or rating.

Vince Musi, 2002 Middle, stated his concern about the effect on the traffic is from an emergency management standpoint. Sullivan's Island Public Safety is responsible for the thousands of people who visit the island in addition to its residents. If emergency vehicles cannot get on and off the island easily, it is a big problem.

Alice Morrissey, 1650 Thompson, stated at a meeting she attended, it was said that there were approximately 30 historical trees on the property, and 13 of those trees would be cut.

Mayor O'Neil concluded the public comment, and asked Councilmembers for their input and discussion on the impacts on Sullivan's Island.

Councilwoman Middaugh stated there are three items for Mt. Pleasant to consider if they are still working on traffic patterns: Evacuations, bridge closing and re-opening back-ups, as well as the impact of the Rifle Range traffic signal timing on those back-ups.

Councilman Clark stated that while we may not be able to affect the actual development, we can inform the Mount Pleasant officials of our concerns. He would like the input from our Police and Fire Chiefs. The public safety aspect is a concern for our residents, as well as the thousands of visitors and Mount Pleasant residents who visit the beach every year. He stated that this concern also extends to future developments in Mount Pleasant. He added that their report referred to this area as the gateway to the beach, and he hoped they would encourage an appropriate design for a transition gateway to a beach community.

Councilman Kaynard stated he also wanted input from our Police and Fire Chiefs about how this development might affect the public safety issues on the island. It is not yet known if there will be a traffic circle or an intersection. It is not yet known if there would be a yield or acceleration lane leaving the development coming into Mount Pleasant. The wide road should be studied with the traffic pattern to determine if additional lanes for merging traffic could be used. Councilman Kaynard commented that the causeway was originally poorly constructed without pipes or culverts for water flow underneath it. For long-term planning consideration, the causeway should probably have pipes installed underneath, and perhaps a third lane in the future for emergency vehicle use as currently on the Isle of Palms Connector.

Administrator Benke stated the SC DOT vehicle counter from a previous study showed heavy traffic on the causeway during peak months. For instance, on a Saturday in February it peaks with about 400 cars an hour on and off the island. On a Saturday in June; however, it peaks in the evening with almost 1,200 vehicles an hour leaving the island. With the northbound and southbound vehicles added together, it is about 1,500 to 2,000 cars an hour. It would be difficult for vehicles leaving Simmons Point

or the proposed development if a roundabout was not there. Mt. Pleasant officials did not use these statistics; their traffic evaluation was only to the proposed development destination.

Motion was made by Councilwoman Middaugh, seconded by Councilman Clark, to communicate the following concerns to the Mount Pleasant Town Council via letter, with initial contact from Mayor O'Neil to Mayor Page.

- **Emergency vehicles and public safety**
- **Evacuation times for hurricanes**
- **Bridge opening/closing back-ups as well as impact of Rifle Range traffic signal timing**
- **Take into account actual DOT counts on the causeway, especially in five summer months**
- **Impact on marshland and water**

Motion carried unanimously.

Motion was made by Councilman Kaynard, seconded by Councilman Clark to adjourn at 7:10 pm., carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,



Ellen Miller