



**Town of Sullivan's Island, South Carolina
Planning Commission
Regular Meeting Minutes**

Wednesday, August 9, 2023

A regular meeting was held at 4:00 p.m., on Wednesday, August 9, 2023, in Town Hall at 2056 Middle Street. All requirements of the Freedom of Information Act were verified to have been satisfied.

Present: Commissioners Manda Poletti (Chair), Mark Howard, Laura Schroeder, David Peterseim, and Charles Cole.

Staff Members: Charles Drayton, Director of Planning and Zoning, and Pamela Otto, Planning Commission staff member.

A. Call to Order. Chair Poletti called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m., and it was stated the press and public were duly notified pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act requirements.

Public: There were seven (7) members of the public present, including Historic Preservation and Design Study Group (HPDSG) members Elizabeth Tezza, Mike Walsh, Aussie Geer, Beverly Bohan, and Eddie Fava, as well as Council Member Gary Visser.

Media: There were no members of the media present.

B. Approval of Minutes – May 10, 2023

Motion: A motion was made by Mr. Peterseim to approve the May 10, 2023 meeting minutes as written, seconded by Ms. Schroeder; this motion passed unanimously.

C. Approval of Minutes – July 12, 2023

Motion: A motion was made by Ms. Schroeder to approve the July 12, 2023 meeting minutes with a correction, the minutes mentioned that Chair Hubbard called the meeting to order when it was actually Chair Poletti, seconded, as corrected, by Mr. Howard; the motion to pass the corrected minutes passed unanimously, 5-0.

D. Public input and correspondence.

Aussie Geer (2702 Goldbug) attended as the co-chair of the Historic Preservation and Design Study Group (HPDSG). She wished to discuss the Study Group's

recommendation for the reduction of the Design Review Board's (DRB) discretionary increase in square footage for new construction from twenty-five percent (25%) to ten percent (10%). She stated this would only apply to new construction with no historic structure. She hoped the Planning Commission would consider following the Study Group recommendation as the 10% gives plenty of room for design improvement.

Eddie Fava (2424 Myrtle) stated he was part of the HPDSG with Ms. Geer and he agreed with and supported her statement. If there is a special need, the homeowner can apply for a variance with the Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA).

Mike Walsh (2530 I'On) strongly suggested that the increase discussed by Ms. Geer and Mr. Fava be reduced to 10%.

Beverly Bohan (2018 Central) stated she was the sitting Chair for the DRB and a voting member of the HPDSG. She stated that people apply for the maximum relief possible when coming to the DRB. If the maximum that the DRB can give is lowered, then the DRB can control the massing of new homes.

E. Zoning Ordinance Text Amendments

- 1) **Consideration of Changes to Section 21-27 C. (1)** – Regarding changes to the discretionary increases for Principal Building Square Footage (PBsf) that the DRB may offer new construction.

Drayton summarized the formation of the HPDSG as part of the 2018 Comprehensive Plan for the Town. The HPDSG has now passed their recommendations to Town Council, who moved them to the Planning Commission to draft the ordinance changes. He said that the section being discussed today, §21-27 C. (1), had been reviewed by the HPDSG and their recommendation had been to reduce the DRB discretionary increase for new construction from 25% to 10%. He also said that due to the way the ordinance was arranged, the decision would also apply to attached additions, so there would be a need to craft new ordinance language that deals separately with new construction, attached additions, and additions to historic structures.

Drayton gave the formula used to determine the allowed Principal Building Square Footage (PBsf). The lot area is divided by one hundred (100), that total is then multiplied by ten (10), then that total is added to two thousand four hundred (2400). The DRB can increase this by 25% for neighborhood compatibility. The maximum limit for PBsf is five thousand six hundred square feet (5600sf).

Previously, the Planning Commission had decided to reduce the DRB increase on attached additions from 25% to twenty percent (20%). They had also decided to

allow property owners using the Historic Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) special exception an increase of up to 25% by the DRB, where previously there had been no allowable increase.

Drayton then produced an analysis the Commission had asked for showing the relief granted for PBsf by the DRB according to lot size since 2013. He said that lot size did not seem to have a noticeable effect on the relief given by the DRB. The average increase for small lots (those under a quarter acre) was sixteen point eight percent (16.8%), equating to five hundred thirty-nine square feet (539sf). Medium lots (those from a quarter acre to a half acre) averaged an increase of fifteen point seven percent (15.7%), equating to six hundred forty-five square feet (645sf). Large lots (over a half acre) averaged an increase of sixteen point zero percent (16.0%), equating to seven hundred fifty-four square feet (754sf).

Drayton then showed some examples of neighborhood compatibility issues within the Town and the effect of the DRB.

Ms. Poletti stated that it had been previously discussed that the Zoning Ordinance took lot size into account, with smaller lots being able to build larger than their allowed PBsf, but that after some research that was not the case. The adjustment allowed for small lots is in Principal Building Coverage Area (PBCA) not PBsf.

Drayton stated that any sort of scaling process would adversely affect the lots just on the other side of the break points. There is no way to scale percentage increases allowed by lot size without penalizing those properties that are just above the size division lines.

Ms. Poletti stated that the DRB has done a great job of regulating homes to this point. She asked the Commission if they wanted to continue to allow the DRB to regulate or if they wanted to give a hard limit to any increase in PBsf.

There was some discussion about historic structures and the ability to get PBsf increases. The intent is to promote conservation of the historic buildings and make it more desirable to preserve them, allowing PBsf increases higher than new construction. There was also some mention of the new historic survey and what the results might be, whether it might change the properties that are deemed historic. Mr. Peterseim mentioned the need for resilience as well, and the need for homes to be above flood waters. Mr. Howard stated that he felt a 10% increase was plenty.

It was asked if the Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) could grant any relief to the owners of small lots, but Drayton said that a small lot was not considered a hardship so the BZA could not help.

Ms. Schroeder was hesitant to go from 20% to 10% as that is a big difference. She asked if fifteen percent (15%) seemed like a good compromise. She said it seems to be what was historically approved looking at the averages shared by Drayton.

Motion: A motion was made by Ms. Schroeder to lower the DRB discretionary increase stated in §21-27 C. (1) with regards to new construction from 25% to 15%, seconded by Mr. Cole; this motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

Discussion

Mr. Howard asked if this included historic structures. Drayton stated the Commission had already voted to allow those properties involving historic structures a discretionary increase of 20%. It was discussed that the DRB has averaged around 15% and they have done a good job of making the right decisions, as making the increase lower will take away the subjectivity for the DRB. Ms. Schroeder feels it is too big of a jump to go from 25% to 10% and that it unfairly penalizes new construction, as historic homes will be allowed 20% relief. Mr. Cole asked Ms. Geer for her thoughts. Ms. Geer feels that 15% is a fair compromise. Ms. Poletti asked Mr. Fava for his thoughts. Mr. Fava feels that in his experience there is not really a need to incentivize for historic structures, but he agreed with Ms. Geer. Mr. Howard asked Ms. Bohan for her thoughts. Ms. Bohan agreed that going from 25% to 15% was an acceptable reduction and that it will take pressure off of the DRB.

2) Consideration of changes to Sections 21-22 C.&D., and 21-29 – Regarding secondary setbacks for principal buildings.

Drayton stated that currently the side façade requirements are that the first floor have an articulation of at least four feet (4ft) for every thirty feet (30ft) of linear side wall, to avoid a long, massive wall. It also requires that the second story wall be set back two feet (2ft) from the first story wall if it is longer than ten feet (10ft). Drayton feels that it does not allow for a real room on the second floor. Drayton says that after consulting with some architects, he came up with an amendment that would allow flexibility in the side setbacks and make them more appropriate for construction standards and lot size. With his recommendation, §21-22 C. (3) (c) would now read

“No side façade shall exceed sixteen (16) feet in length when located within fifteen (15) feet of the side property line, and a total of no more than thirty-two (32) linear feet of side façade may be located within fifteen (15) feet of the side property lines on the lot.”

This is more realistic with construction as it is because a construction block size is sixteen inches (16in) so the 4 feet currently required is about two and a half (2 ½) blocks. Therefore the articulation can be based on block size not square feet. Drayton said that he felt the way it is regulated now is driving square footage relief

requests, as homeowners must come to the DRB for relief on the setbacks and figure why not ask for more square footage while there.

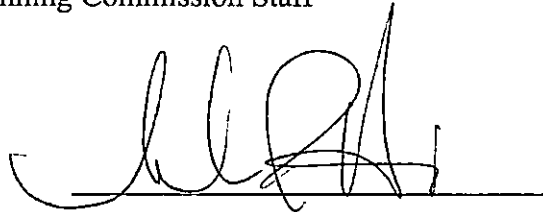
Ms. Poletti asked Drayton what was upcoming. Drayton said the Comprehensive Plan review will occur at the September meeting, as well as the public hearing for the principal building square footage changes. There will also be continuing discussion of the setbacks.

F. Adjourn. There being no new business, nor further discussion, the meeting adjourned at approximately 5:12pm.

Motion: A motion was made by Ms. Schroeder to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Peterseim; this motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Pamela Otto, Planning Commission Staff

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Manda Poletti', written over a horizontal line.

Manda Poletti, Chair

A handwritten date '9-13-23' written in black ink over a horizontal line.

Date