

**TOWN OF SULLIVAN'S ISLAND, SOUTH CAROLINA
PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

Wednesday, January 9, 2019

A regular meeting was held at 6:00PM, this date, at Town Hall, 2056 Middle Street, all requirements of the Freedom of Information Act satisfied. Present: Commissioners Gary Visser (Chair), Charlie Cole, Hal Currey, Carl Hubbard and Manda Poletti. Staff member: Joe Henderson, Director of Planning and Zoning, Randy Robinson, Chief Building Official and Lisa Darrow, Asst. to Administrator.

Call to Order. Chair Visser called the meeting to order, stated press and public were duly notified pursuant to state law and all Commissioners were present except Sydney Cook (Vice-Chair), excused absence. No audience/media present.

I. APPROVAL OF AGENDA – approved as presented

II. ELECTION OF OFFICERS: CHAIR & VICE-CHAIR

Gary Visser was nominated as 2019 Chair (no other nominations from the floor).

MOTION: Mr. Currey moved to elect Gary Visser as 2019 Planning Commission Chair; seconded by Manda Poletti. MOTION UNANIMOUSLY PASSED.

Sydney Cook was nominated as 2019 Vice-Chair (no other nominations from the floor).

MOTION: Chair Visser moved to elect Sydney Cook as 2019 Planning Commission Vice-Chair; seconded by Mr. Currey. MOTION UNANIMOUSLY PASSED.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – November 14, 2018

MOTION: Mr. Currey moved to approve the November 14, 2018 as presented; seconded by Mr. Hubbard. MOTION UNANIMOUSLY PASSED.

IV. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 1. FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) Updates: Town Staff to provide an overview of Flood Insurance Rate Map updates proposed for Charleston County in 2019**

Staff Report: (Director Henderson & Building Official Robinson)

Staff provided Commission, for its reference, an overview of the FEMA flood mapping process, current status on the updated maps and educated Commission on the Town's Zoning Ordinance building restrictions that utilize the FEMA Base Flood Elevation (BFE) as reference. **(Staff Report attached as Exhibit A).**

Highlights:

- Current FEMA flood maps were last published in 2004, but provided a format change only. Current flood maps, and BFE requirements, are based upon flood studies from 1991 map version.
- BFE refers to base flood elevation, the location that the lowest finished floor of a structure can be built per FEMA guidelines. BFE is calculated as the minimum height for

safe construction from the high mean water mark, essentially, to protect against a 100-year flooding event. A BFE requirement of 13ft means finished construction must start at 13ft or higher.

- FEMA provides an insurance premium discount for construction between 1ft-3ft above BFE, with 3ft above BFE being the highest discount rate.
- In the past, Council sought to encourage construction height lower to grade and passed Section 21-31 to address maximum foundation height: construction maximum 3 ft above BFE with the Design Review Board having discretion to increase that height by one (1) foot, to maximum 4 ft BFE.
- Current maps (1991/2004) identify Island as being AE or VE zone, requiring minimum construction height generally BFE 13-17ft.

New Maps/Flood Rating:

- New FEMA flood maps (Countywide flood maps not released due to appeal regarding Kiawah Island) will materially change the flooding designations for Sullivan's Island and, therefore, the FEMA minimum and Town maximum allowed BFE height requirements for new construction.
- New maps will reflect how wave action actually works on Sullivan's Island, which runs east to west:
 - Lower flood levels for bulk of Island
 - Lower BFE requirements for bulk of Island (average BFE 10ft instead of BFE 13-17ft).
- New flood map ratings will result in significant flood insurance premium savings for Sullivan's Island residents. FEMA hopes to release new maps summer 2019.
- New flood map ratings and attendant lower BFE elevation requirements invite consideration as to the impact the Town's current Zoning Ordinance's height requirement will have on future new construction (**See Exhibit A**):
 - Per §21-31, will **prohibit home owners from elevating their homes more than 3'** from the BFE 10' across most of the Island.
 - Will **prohibit** homes from being elevated enough for **parking and access from under the home (i.e. under 6')**
 - May **aesthetically create a built environment different from their neighbors.** Not elevated as high as previously allowed.
- Staff noted that currently if a property owner builds at $\leq 6 \frac{1}{2}$ ft above grade, the homeowner can build a separate garage (accessory structure) on the property of up to ± 750 sf with allowance for a heat/air-controlled room above garage (could not have a bathroom). This garage would not be counted toward the lot's maximum pervious surface.

Staff reiterated it provided this information for Commission's general reference and discussion. Staff did not have specific recommendations for any Zoning Ordinance changes.

Commission Questions/Comments:

- Question is whether the Town wants to continue retaining higher elevated homes in the future?
- Current ground level enclosure allowance: currently 200sft maximum solid wall enclosed structure, to include access for elevator and/or stairs. Balance of understory must be lattice.
- Commission noted one unintended consequence of FEMA flood rate change and current Town Zoning Ordinance: lower height new home construction could result in additional separate garages on lots in the future.
- Building height contributes to massing size on a lot. Height compatibility with neighboring adjacent homes is another consideration for new construction.
- Design Review Board could provide for height allowances for neighborhood compatibility.
- Design Review Board members should be included in future discussions of this matter.

Staff advised they would draft, for Commission’s future study, more data and examples (mock-ups, draft language for consideration, photos, etc.)

Commissioners accepted Staff report for information (no motions made).

2. Town of Sullivan’s Island Comprehensive Plan 2018-2028: Update on Town Council workshop dates to consider Comprehensive Plan rewrite

Director Henderson advised Council will consider the 2018-2028 Comprehensive Plan at a Special Council Workshop at 9:00AM on Wednesday, January 23, 2019. Commissioners, along with general public, are encouraged to attend.

Staff identified some noteworthy items in the 2018-2028 Plan:

- Sea level rise & resiliency: Town Plan will be innovative as one of the first communities in SC to progressively address this topic
- House sizes and lot coverage of new construction (biggest public input expressed concern regarding heated square footage)
- Historic preservation of residential structures
- Stormwater management

Commissioners accepted Staff report for information (no motions made).

V. PUBLIC INPUT – no written correspondence received/no public comments made

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at approximately 7:15PM (Mr. Cole moved; Mr. Currey seconded; unanimously passed).

Respectfully submitted,
Lisa Darrow
Asst. to Administrator

Approved at the March 13, 2019 Planning Commission Meeting



Town of Sullivan's Island
Planning Commission
January 9, 2019

Sec. 21-31. Foundation height.

A. Purpose.

Due to FEMA regulations and Hurricane Hugo, the foundations of new Principal Buildings are substantially elevated; in many cases, Principal Buildings are elevated higher than FEMA requirements to provide parking and better views. Decreasing foundation height and the height of the Principal Building (including, but not limited to eliminating under house parking) increases Neighborhood Compatibility.

B. Design standards.

- (1) The bottom elevation of the Principal Building's lowest horizontal structural member shall be no more than the greater of seven feet above grade or two (2) feet above the FEMA base flood elevation
- (2) The finished floor shall be no more than three (3) feet above the FEMA base flood elevation.

C. Design Review Board.

The Design Review Board may grant up to a one foot (1') modification in this Design Standard if the modification or other modifications achieve greater Neighborhood Compatibility as described in ARTICLE XII.

New Flood Insurance Rate maps (FIRMs) will likely be adopted in 2019 for Sullivan's Island. This will result in a lowering of flood zone levels across the Island.

Lower elevations will result in the following considerations:

- Per §21-31, will **prohibit home owners from elevating their homes more than 3'** from the BFE 10' across most of the Island.
- Will **prohibit** homes from being elevated enough for **parking and access from under the home (i.e. under 6')**
- May **aesthetically create a built environment different from their neighbors**. Not elevated as high as previously allowed.

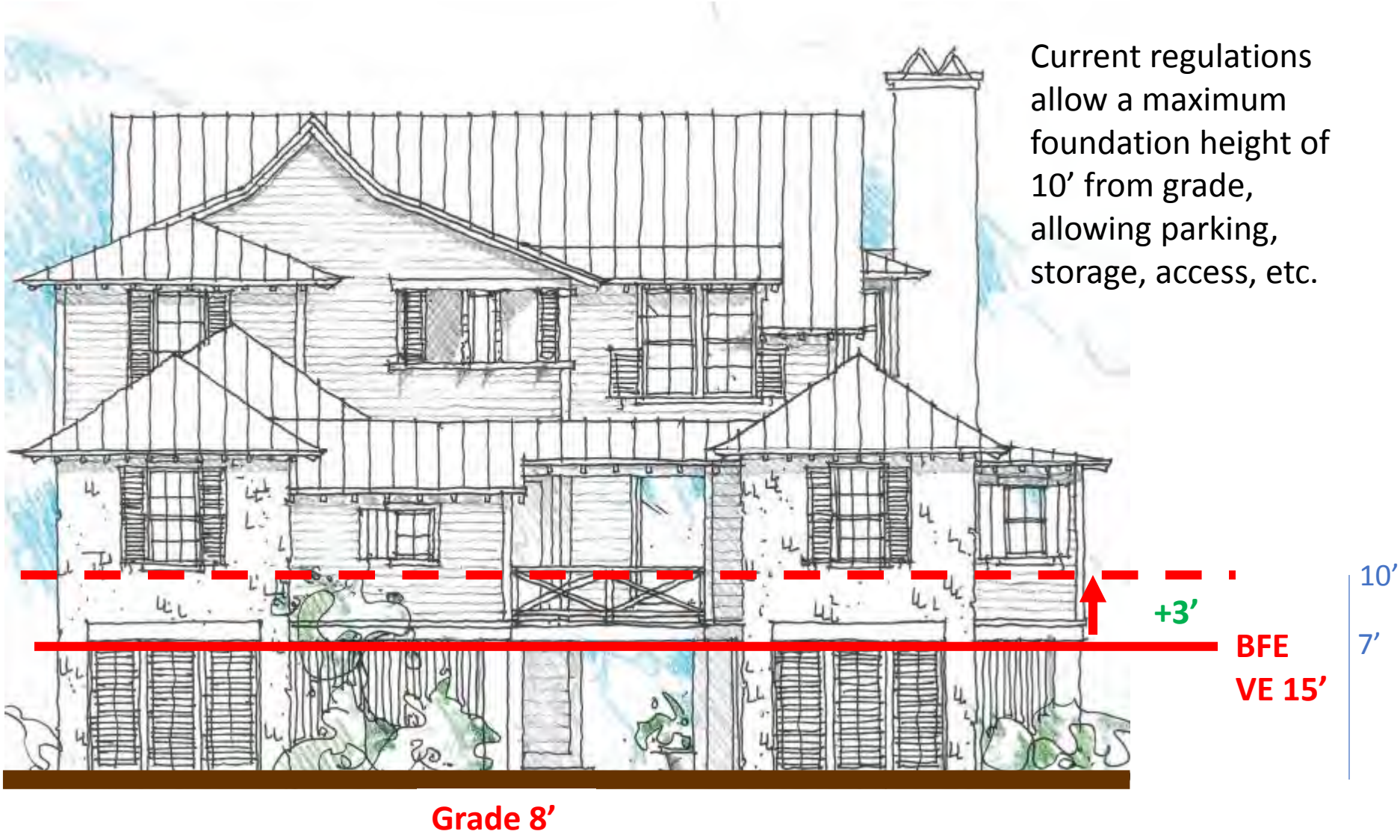
Example: Current Flood map of VE 15



**BFE
VE 15'**

Grade 8'

Current Flood map of VE 15



Current regulations allow a maximum foundation height of 10' from grade, allowing parking, storage, access, etc.

Grade 8'

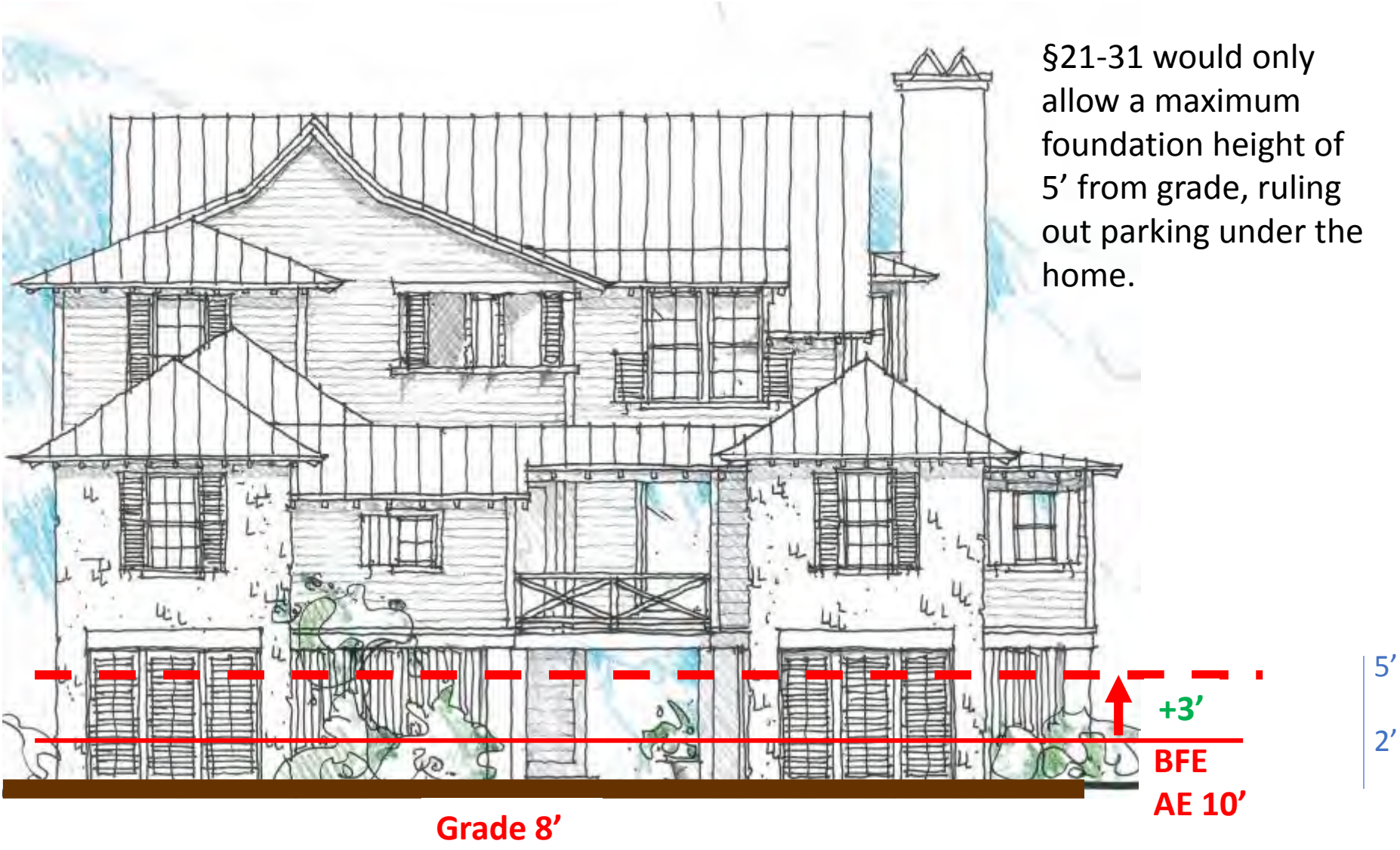
BFE
VE 15'

10'
7'

Proposed flood maps of AE 10



Proposed flood maps of AE 10



Is there a benefit to changing the 3' maximum limitation on elevating the floor to address the below issues?

- Per §21-31, will prohibit home owners from elevating their homes more than 3' from the BFE 10' across most of the Island.
- Will prohibit homes from being elevated enough for parking and access from under the home (i.e. under 6')
- May aesthetically create a built environment different from their neighbors. Not elevated as high as previously allowed.

Existing residential foundation height regulations:

Zoning Ordinance				
District	Section Number	Title	Page Number	Explanation
<i>RS-District</i>	21-20. C (c)	A.D.U. Special Exception	10	FFE height maximum of 2' over BFE for the new home construction
<i>RS-District</i>	21-31 B (2)	Foundation Height	21	FFE height maximum of 3' over BFE
<i>RS-District</i>	21-28	Third Story	20	Maximum of 400' sq. for the third story. Design standard for hidden construction.

Existing commercial foundation height regulations:

Zoning Ordinance				
District	Section Number	Title	Page Number	Explanation
<i>CC-District</i>	21-49 E	CCOD-1 Residential construction	28	1st Floor no more than 2' over BFE
<i>CC-District</i>	21-49 F	CCOD-2 Residential construction	30	1st Floor no more than 3' over BFE
<i>CC-District</i>	21-59	CCOD-2 commercial construction	38	1st Floor no more than 3' over BFE