

MINUTES OF THE ISLE OF PALMS
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
January 10, 2018

The Isle of Palms Planning Commission met in the City Hall conference room, 1207 Palm Boulevard on January 10, 2018 at 4:30 p.m. Members attending included Ron Denton, Vince DiGangi, Richard Ferencz, Lewis Gregory, Bill Mills and Phillip Pounds; the Director of Planning Douglas Kerr was present as well. Lisa Safford was absent. Mr. Pounds was welcomed to the Commission and it was noted that the press had been notified of the meeting and the agenda for the meeting was posted in City Hall and the Building Department to comply with the Freedom of Information Act.

NOMINATION AND ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE CHAIRMAN

The floor was opened for nominations for Chairman. Mr. Denton nominated Mr. Ferencz for Chairman and Mr. Gregory seconded the nomination. With no other nominations, the floor was closed and the vote was unanimous in favor of the nomination.

The floor was opened for nominations for Vice Chairman. Mr. Gregory nominated Ms. Safford for Vice Chair and Mr. DiGangi seconded the nomination. With no other nominations, the floor was closed and the vote was unanimous in favor of the nomination.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

No public comments were made.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Ferencz explained that the next item on the agenda was the approval of the November 8th, 2017 minutes. Mr. Mills made a motion to approve the minutes as submitted and Mr. DiGangi seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor of the motion.

DISCUSSION WITH CHARLESTON COUNTY REGARDING STORMWATER

Mr. Kerr explained that at the last meeting, the Commission expressed an interest in meeting with Charleston County Public Works about stormwater issues on the island and Mr. Chris Wannamaker was present to discuss these issues. Mr. Kerr gave a brief overview of the Planning Commission's work so far and general direction for the benefit of those that were unaware of what had been discussed in previous meetings.

Mr. Kerr asked what Mr. Wannamaker's opinion about the City working on the SCDOT system and if doing so would result in the City having to take over the portions where

work is done. Mr. Wannamaker answered that traditionally SCDOT has held the position that the purpose of the roadside ditches is only to drain the roads and not to provide drainage for all properties abutting the roadways, but he said they are softening on this position when the cities agree to take over the maintenance of the roads. Mr. Kerr explained that this was what happened with the phase one and phase two drainage projects.

Mr. Gregory asked if the drainage on the island could have drained towards the ocean. Mr. Wannamaker answered that it can be done, but it is extremely expensive because the systems must extend up to a half a mile offshore.

Mr. Wannamaker said that the City has an advantage because the area is an island with very clear boundaries. He added that there appears to be more grant money being made available through flood zone studies including drainage management plans. He said that he is aware of several jurisdictions that have requested drainage plan grants, but he has not yet heard if any of the grants were awarded.

Mr. Mills asked if the County's focus within the City was solely water quality versus water quantity. Mr. Wannamaker answered no, that the County works on both issues, but that his personal job is compliance with the NPDES program, which focuses on water quality.

The group spoke about the lack of clear documentation on which agency is responsible for the maintenance of the various drainage systems. Mr. Wannamaker explained that in some instances there is a clear responsibility outlined on plats or deeds, but more times than not, the documentation is not clear. Mr. Wannamaker stated that it is clear which roads are SCDOT roads and there are some clear dedications to Charleston County, but all other systems that are either dedicated to the public or used by the public would fall to the City.

Mr. Mills asked Mr. Wannamaker what he thought the percentage of the drainage infrastructure maintained by each entity, SCDOT, Charleston County and the City, would be. Mr. Wannamaker stated that most of the system was SCDOT's, probably more than 75%, and a very small percentage was Charleston County, probably less than 5%. He stated that the County has mapped out most of this information and he could forward the maps onto the group for review.

Mr. Wannamaker explained that SCDOT has really improved their maintenance program. He stated that Arnold Blanding is now managing the stormwater maintenance and he is doing a great job. He explained that they have moved from a six-year proactive program to a reactive program where they will come out within a certain

amount of time of receiving a complaint and they have done a good job of resolving drainage issues when they respond.

Mr. Mills asked what triggers SCDOT to come out to address a drainage problem. Mr. Wannamaker answered that a complaint on line or by phone call triggers a request to them to come out and deal with a problem.

Mr. Ferencz asked if the City is cleaning SCDOT ditches. Administrator Tucker responded that when a citizen has a problem and SCDOT will not respond, it leaves no other option that then City to address the problems. Mr. Kerr stated that to recap the conversations had, Mr. Wannamaker believes SCDOT was on a 12-year maintenance schedule and the City Council just agreed to increase the frequency that the City restructures all of the ditches from every five years to every three years. This clearly illustrates that the level of service provided by SCDOT does not meet standards of the Isle of Palms.

Mr. DiGangi stated that he perceives part of the problem being that the maintenance response is disorganized and haphazard and if all agencies responding to maintenance issues were better coordinated, maybe the result would be better. Mr. Wannamaker agreed that coordination can be improved and would be helpful.

Mr. Mills asked what percentage of the problems the City is facing are maintenance related. Mr. Wannamaker responded he did not believe they were maintenance related as much as they are issues of an inadequate system. He said typically the system was either undersized at the time it was created or there is not a system in place at all. He added that some of the issues are related to the fact that during an exceptionally high tide cycle, the water cannot get out and that the coastal management policies will not allow jurisdictions to clear marsh outfalls and there is very little that can be done to overcome these obstacles. He said that even with a perfectly maintained and designed system when a major rain event comes during a hightide, some backups are going to be inevitable.

Mr. Kerr asked Mr. Wannamaker how he would advise the Planning Commission in coming up with a program to help address some of these drainage issues. Mr. Wannamaker answered that he thought the first step would be to understand the existing conditions and which agencies are involved with the problem areas. He then suggested that the group decide what issues truly constitute a problem. He stated that part of the challenge in responding to drainage complaints is each owner sees their personal situation as problematic, but when compared to what the community is dealing with overall, it could be that their issue is a lower priority. He stated that there is software that the County uses to help quantify these problems and it may be able to

help in ranking the various problems. And finally, he suggested that the City determine what design standards the City wants to provide in their proposed fixes. He explained that the SCDOT generally designs their roadway systems to handle a 10-year storm event, but that this area is routinely seeing 100-year storms. Additionally, each incremental step up in the level of service a repair provides generally increases the cost exponentially.

Mr. Kerr asked if the County would be able to help the City in prioritizing projects by providing conceptual repair ideas and cost estimates. Mr. Wannamaker answered that there were programs in place to do this, but the group should be aware that guessing at construction costs has a major impact on priority lists and it is risky to base priorities on very rough cost estimates. He thought it would be safer to identify the priorities independently of cost and then begin working on detailed solutions on the top priorities.

Mr. Wannamaker explained that a few things to watch to provide examples are the City of Charleston is starting a major drainage study in the West Ashley area, the City of Folly Beach has requested proposals for another drainage study, which he does not know if it will happen or not, and a third thing to know is that the DNR is offering detailed topographical data on elevations that may help in identifying low areas and potential problem areas. He added that he would suggest that the City start small and see what issues could be resolved without an island-wide comprehensive plan, but rather focus on areas that are known problems.

DISCUSS IMPERVIOUS SURFACE REQUIREMENTS

Mr. Kerr explained that at the last meeting, the Commission discussed Sullivan's Island stormwater management plan requirements and lot coverage requirements and agreed that they may like to use some of their language. He stated that he thought the next step for the Planning Commission would be to look at a list of the requirements and decide if they would like to opt the requirement or not. The group agreed to do this at the next meeting and Mr. Kerr stated that he would get together a list for the groups discussion.

ADJOURNMENT

With there being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:10 p.m.
Respectfully submitted, Richard Ferencz, Chairman