

MINUTES OF THE ISLE OF PALMS  
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING  
January 11, 2017

The Isle of Palms Planning Commission met in the City Hall conference room, 1207 Palm Boulevard on January 11, 2017 at 4:30 p.m. Members attending included Richard Ferencz, Lewis Gregory, Vince DiGangi, Ron Denton, Lisa Safford and Bill Mills; the Director of Planning Douglas Kerr was present as well. Noel Scott was absent. 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.

#### **ELECTION FOR CHAIRMAN AND VICE CHAIRMAN**

Mr. Mills made a motion to nominate Rick Ferencz as Chairman and Mr. Denton seconded the motion. With no other nominations, nominations were closed and the vote was unanimous in favor of electing Rick Ferencz as Chairman.

Mr. Ferencz asked for nominations for Vice Chair and Mr. Mills made a motion to nominate Lisa Safford as Vice Chair and Mr. Denton seconded the motion. With no other nominations, nominations were closed and the vote was unanimous in favor of electing Lisa Safford as Vice Chair.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There were no comments from the public.

#### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Ms. Ferencz explained that the next item on the agenda was the approval of the November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2016 minutes. Mr. Ferencz made a motion to approve the minutes and Ms. Safford seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor of the motion.

#### **DISCUSSION OF SEPTIC SYSTEMS ON THE ISLAND**

Mr. Kerr explained that since the last meeting he has prepared an outline and a strategy to hopefully help the Commission come to a consensus and develop some recommendations on the issue of expanding public sewer lines. He stated that he believed that at the last meeting, the Commission generally agreed that an ordinance mandating that every owner on a septic system to tie into sewer was not a practical solution at this time, so the recommendations in the draft were generally middle ground policies that would hopefully lead to incremental expansion of the system.

Mr. Kerr listed a series of recommendations including: improving dialogue with the Isle of Palms Water and Sewer Commission, continuing to monitor water quality in the water bodies

surrounding the island, monitoring grant funding opportunities, pushing for smaller incremental expansions as opportunities arise, prohibiting future subdivisions unless the properties are served by conventional gravity operated sewer lines and considering expanding the distance requiring sewer expansion for new construction.

Mr. Ferencz stated that one of the benefits listed under the benefits was to minimize the number of future grinder pumps. He asked if Mr. Kerr could get a forecast from the Water and Sewer Commission regarding how many new pumps are added each year and what will happen to their system, if the trend is continued for 10 or 20 years into the future.

Mr. Gregory stated that for the recommendation regarding monitoring water quality, it would be good to come up with a framework that would allow for easy comparison of future data to current data. He explained that comparing old data with new data had challenges of as the locations and measures did not align in all situations and it would be good to have these standardized to be able compare results.

Mr. Ferencz stated that he believed the Planning Commission should put a timeframe of when this data should be compiled and analyzed and suggested it be done every three years. The group agreed that every three years was reasonable and this should be included in the recommendation.

Mr. DiGangi asked if the new year-round oyster harvesting regulations would affect monitoring and Mr. Lewis thought these rules would only apply to commercial farming operations. Mr. Kerr stated he would inquire about this.

Mr. Kerr asked if the Commission generally agreed with the idea of prohibited future subdivisions unless the properties are served by conventional gravity sewer. He stated that he did not think this would affect a large number of properties as there are relatively few lots left that meet the zoning code's minimum lot size requirements for two properties. The Commission agreed that this would be good to include in the recommendation.

Mr. Kerr asked how the Commission would feel about requiring a property that sells with public sewer adjacent to it to tie into the sewer line. He stated that he also did not think this would affect a large number of properties as there were relatively few lots with septic systems that had public sewer in front of them, but if some of the other recommendations caused additional expansions of the system, this provision may be useful. The Commission agreed that it would be useful to know how many properties this would affect and whether or not the Water and Sewer Commission would support such a requirement.

Mr. Kerr asked how the Commission would feel about reducing the allowable development for lots not having access to public sewer. He stated that currently the City's code allow owners to build a house having a floor to area ratio (FAR) and lot coverage of up to 40% of the size of the lot. For example a lot of 10,000 square feet could have a new house up to 4,000 square feet of heated area and cover 4,000 square feet with impervious surfacing. He stated that this limit

could be reduced for those properties that are not tied into sewer. He explained that the logic for this would be that lots with septic systems would have less ability to handle the treatment of waste generated from a large house and the more area of the lot that is left open for septic fields, the better the system should be able to perform.

The Commission discussed the various implications of such a code and agreed to analyze the effects of reducing the FAR and lot coverage limit to 30% for houses not tied into the sewer system. The Commission agreed to ask for input on this limitation from the Water and Sewer Commission.

Mr. Kerr asked how the Commission would feel about requiring a property that is reconstructed or to substantially improved within a certain distance, maybe 300 feet, of a sewer line to extend the line to the house. He stated that he felt that this recommendation could lead to the slow incremental expansion of the line. The Commission agreed that this may be a good middle ground position that would allow the sewer system to gradually grow, but they felt like it

would be useful to have input from the Water and Sewer Commission on what a good distance might be and whether or not this would be too challenging for them to administer.

The Commission agreed to get some feedback from various agencies regarding the ideas discussed and aim for discussing that feedback at the February meeting and having a recommendation to forward onto City Council by their March meeting.

## **DISCUSSION OF NEW FLOOD MAPS**

The group agreed that their discussion of sewer lines had gone long and they would postpone this discussion until their February meeting.

## **MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS**

Mr. Ferencz asked if Mr. Kerr generally gave the presentations to the City Council on the Planning Commission's behalf. He answered that when the Commission recommends an ordinance change, he explains those changes to Council, but on general discussions of the Commission he does not give presentations to Council, they are given the minutes to stay up to date.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

With there being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Richard Ferencz, Chairman