

MINUTES OF THE ISLE OF PALMS
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
September 20, 2017

The Isle of Palms Planning Commission met in the City Hall conference room, 1207 Palm Boulevard on September 20, 2017 at 4:30 p.m. Members attending included Ron Denton, Richard Ferencz, Lewis Gregory and Lisa Safford; the Director of Planning Douglas Kerr was present as well. Vince DiGangi and Bill Mills were 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.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

With no public comments, Mr. Ferencz explained that the next item on the agenda was the approval of the August 9th, 2017 minutes. Mr. Denton made a motion to approve the minutes and Ms. Safford seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor of the motion.

DISCUSSION OF EXPANDING PUBLIC SEWER SERVICE

Mr. Kerr explained that at the workshop with City Council, five action items were identified and he had circulated draft ordinance amendments for consideration. He explained that he knew the drafts still had some corrections to be made and he that he would like the Planning Commission to review the distance required for new construction to tie into sewer. He stated that the current draft set the distance requiring tying into sewer at 150 feet, but he had the impression that at least some people at the workshop indicated that they felt this distance was too short.

Mr. Ferencz stated that the Commission agreed on recommending 150 feet as a starting point with the understanding that after some time had passed and the Commission had some examples of how the provision would work, they would consider recommending that the distance be extended. Mr. Denton added that currently the Commission does not have any data on how many properties this provision would impact in a year and how much it could cost an owner to comply with the provision, but after some time they would have some useful data on these issues to consider. The Commission generally agreed with this rationale and agreed to leave the recommendation at 150 feet.

Mr. Kerr explained that another item to consider was that the reduction in lot coverage and floor to area ratio (FAR) for properties tying into a septic system did not have a floor or ceiling. He explained that the existing lot coverage and FAR requirements establish limits that correlate to the minimum lot size for the SR1 and SR2 zoning districts. The limit for how large a house can be built, regardless of lot size is set at 40% of 17,500 square feet, which is the minimum lot size for SR1. Therefore, the largest house that can be built is 7,000 square feet of living area and 7,000 square feet of lot coverage.

The provision also establishes a minimum standard for how restrictive the provision will be for small lots at 40% of 8,000 square feet, which is the minimum lot size for SR2. Therefore, no matter how small a lot may be an owner could still build a house with 3,200 square feet of living area and 3,200 square feet of lot coverage.

He explained that to follow this logic through to the new 30% limits for houses tying into septic systems, the maximum size house that could be tied into a septic system would be 5,250 square feet, but the requirement would never limit an owner to a house smaller than 2,400 square feet.

The Commission members discussed the idea of establish some maximum and minimum requirements for the size and coverage of houses tying into septic and agreed to follow the same logic of the existing provisions and recommended that the limits be set at 5,250 for the FAR and lot coverage and set a limit that a house would be allowed to have a FAR and lot coverage of 2,400, regardless of lot size.

Mr. Kerr stated that he would report back to the City Attorney on the changes that the Commission has asked for and have the ordinances put on the next available City Council agenda.

DISCUSS STORMWATER ASSIGNMENT

Mr. Kerr explained that the Council has requested assistance with planning for the stormwater system on the island. He explained that he thought that the Planning Commission could be useful to the Council in establishing a list of priorities for the Council to consider. He explained that for many years, the City has been setting aside funding for phase one and two of the stormwater expansions for the avenues between 57th and 45th Avenues. He stated that phase two of this project should be completed this winter, so there could be new priorities established for future projects.

He explained that in the packets he included a datasheet with some of the top priorities identified by the staff. He stated that he thought that the Commission could gather data about the cost and the severity of each of these priorities and establish an order of priorities. He stated that the method he saw for establishing would include ranking projects in terms of impact on property, impact on roadways, impact on stormwater quality for properties served by septic systems and the cost of each project. At the end of the Commission's effort, they could forward on a list of top priorities that include conceptual ideas for repairs, costs and a ranking of the impact of each problem.

Mr. Ferencz stated that he felt like it would be impractical for the Commission to try to create budgets and solutions for all the problems. Mr. Kerr stated that he believed

that the Commission would have to rely on engineers and contractors to provide concepts of how to fix drainage problems and create budgets, but he thought the Commission could be useful in ranking all of the various problems in terms of their severity and cost.

Mr. Gregory stated that he thought it would be challenging for each Commission member to understand the drainage outside of their personal neighborhoods and asked if there was some documentation that could be reviewed. Administrator Tucker was present and explained that there was an aerial video taken after Irma's flooding. Mr. Kerr stated that he would try to distribute the video.

Mr. Kerr explained that the group had discussed one way of working on the drainage issue, but he thought it would be good for the group to give the issue some thought and they could discuss the matter at a future meeting with all members present.

REVIEW OF IMPERVIOUS SURFACE REQUIREMENT

Mr. Ferencz stated that he had been asked by a member of City Council to discuss the City's policies on impervious surfacing requirement and how they are impacting the drainage systems on the island. He stated that in Europe communities require that driveways be done out of materials that are completely pervious and he knew that it would be challenging to require this on existing developments, but this could be made a requirement for new construction.

Mr. Kerr explained that currently the City set a limit of how much impervious surface can cover a property at 40% and he thought the rationale for not having a hard rule on driveway materials to give property owners a choice of how to comply. Also, it might be punitive to require an owner building a small house to install a more expensive driveway even though they are covering less than a neighboring house.

Mr. Kerr stated that some areas that he thought could use some work on lot coverage are: considering specifications for pervious surfaces, consider a minimum percent of the lot to be left vegetated and considering improving the lot filling provisions to ensure that newly developed properties are not running water onto their neighbors.

The Commission generally discussed lot coverage and agreed that it would be beneficial to investigate further.

ADJOURNMENT

With there being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:15 p.m.
Respectfully submitted, Richard Ferencz, Chairman