

MINUTES OF THE ISLE OF PALMS
PLANNING COMMISSION SPECIAL MEETING
July 27, 2011

The Isle of Palms Planning Commission held a special meeting in the City Hall Conference Room, 1207 Palm Boulevard on July 27, 2011 at 4:30 p.m. Members attending included Bev Ballow, David Cohen, Ron Denton, Diane Oltorik, Noel Scott and Don Smith; the Director of Planning Douglas Kerr was present as well. Pete Doherty 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.

Chairman David Cohen called the meeting to order.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The next item on the agenda was the review of the minutes of the July 13, 2011 meeting. Mr. Smith noted that on the top of page two, the word "what" should be "that".

Ms. Ballow made a motion to approve the minutes with the amendment and Mr. Smith seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor of the motion.

DISCUSSION OF PARKING MANAGEMENT

Mr. Cohen explained that before the group started discussing parking he wanted to address e-mails from the group. He explained that he had been advised by the City Attorney that it is not problematic for a member to send out an e-mail for future discussion, but that it is problematic for members to respond to the e-mail because it could be deemed as deliberation outside of a legal meeting. He stated that he believed that the temptation to respond is natural, so to avoid problems he asked that any e-mails for future discussion be sent to Mr. Kerr for inclusion in the packet for the next meeting.

Mr. Cohen explained that his objective for the meeting was to identify all viable options in regards to parking that could be used for either a future forum or as a starting point for a consultant, if one is hired to work on the issue of parking. He explained that he wanted to divide the discussion of parking into three different areas with "area one" being from the commercial district to Breach Inlet, "area two" being Palm Boulevard between 21st Avenue and 41st Avenue and "area three" being the area from 42nd Avenue to Wild Dunes. He stated that he would like to begin by opening up the floor for suggestions for area one, from Breach Inlet to the commercial district.

Ms. Oltorik explained that she understood that there were objections to the nodes in this area based on the installation of kiosks and other reasons, but she still felt that there was merit in the idea and she felt that it would be better for that neighborhood than what is currently happening, which is haphazard parking everywhere.

Mr. Scott stated that he agreed that to limit parking to a few key areas was better than what is currently allowed in this area. He stated the same objectives could be met with four parking spaces on the edge of the road at each of the 18 public access points and maybe this would be more palatable to the citizens than the larger nodes.

The group discussed the idea and generally agreed that the idea of limiting parking to a few key areas should be included on the list of ideas for future consideration.

Mr. Smith explained that he had the opinion that whatever the Planning Commission suggested, it should be fair and it should be simple. He stated that in his opinion it was not fair to have Palm Boulevard inundated with parking and have the other main ocean front roadway, Ocean Boulevard, be closed to parking. Therefore, he suggested that the ocean side of Ocean Boulevard be included on the list of future considerations for this area.

Ms. Oltorik explained that she supported this idea, as it was consistent with her feeling that the Palm Boulevard should be limited to only ocean side parking. She explained that she is interested in finding an area for the cars that would be displaced by limiting the Palm Boulevard parking to only the ocean side and this would achieve that objective.

Mr. Denton explained that he questioned how much parking should be provided and would this be too accommodating to beach visitors.

Ms. Ballow explained that she felt that the idea of opening the ocean side of Ocean Boulevard was reasonable if the number of spaces it provided is adequate to meet the demand.

The group generally agreed that the idea of allowing parking on the ocean side of Ocean Boulevard should be included on the list of ideas for future consideration.

Mr. Smith explained that one of the ideas brought up at the public forum that he liked was the idea of limiting beach visitors to those holding an annual pass. He stated that the idea was that people willing to pay for an annual pass are the regular visitors that have an interest in returning and keeping the beach an attractive place. He explained that he thought this was a good idea to give additional thought.

Ms. Ballow explained that she has visited beaches that have similar programs and she feels like it is a worthwhile concept for future consideration.

The group generally agreed that the idea of creating a system of allowing parking with an annual pass should be included on the list of ideas for future consideration.

Mr. Cohen said that he would now like to discuss concepts for area two, Palm Boulevard between 21st Avenue and 41st Avenue and asked for suggestions. Ms. Ballow stated that she felt that the idea of keeping cars from parking too close to the intersecting streets should be included.

The group agreed that provisions should be made to ensure that a driver can safely see oncoming traffic on Palm Boulevard when turning from all of the avenues and cars should not be parking in a way that blocks vision.

Ms. Oltorik stated that she was committed to the idea that cars should only be allowed to park on the ocean side of Palm Boulevard.

Mr. Scott explained that he spent time counting cars on the previous weekends and that he counted 123 cars on the ocean side of Palm Boulevard and 127 cars on the inland side. He stated that he then went back and counted the additional spaces that could be available on the ocean side and he estimates that the ocean side of the road could handle approximately 265 cars. Based on these counts, every space available would have been taken at 4:30pm on a regular weekend day and at midday on any regular weekend there would be at least 75 too many cars looking for a place to park. In addition to being too little space, he stated that if 265 cars are pushed onto the ocean side of the road, it will be the densest parking anywhere on the island, which he thought was undesirable. He stated that he felt a better approach would be to allow 15 cars at each of the 21 access points on both sides of the street.

Ms. Oltorik explained that if parking were removed from the inland side of Palm Boulevard, there would still be approximately 1,200 public parking spaces, which she said would fully comply with the standards of the Beach Management Plan and she felt that this would be an acceptable number of spaces.

Mr. Cohen stated that he agreed with Mr. Scott, if the parking areas were evenly distributed along Palm Boulevard, with spaces on both sides of the street.

Ms. Ballow explained that she felt that the chalk lines were extremely helpful and she felt that a similar technique could be developed to continue to control the parking.

Mr. Smith said that he is not convinced that the City has an obligation to accommodate every driver that wants to park on the roadside.

Mr. Denton explained that he liked the idea of spreading out parking areas, but he thought that 15 may be too high and he liked the idea of providing some type of amenity at each parking area.

Ms. Ballow explained that she felt obligated to share the beach and provide access, and added that if the City tries to be too restrictive, it will have the negative effect of causing people to drive in circles on the island while they look for a spot, which is going to negatively impact the quality of life greater than the cars parking do. She suggested that leaving things largely as they are may be wisest.

Mr. Kerr explained that he thought it may be advantageous to leave things as they are. He explained that minor things, like moving people off the pavement and keeping them away from intersections could be done quickly and inexpensively and the avenues could be made no parking easily.

Ms. Oltorik responded that she felt that it would be a copout to not address the problem in a more comprehensive manner.

After additional discussion, the group was evenly divided on the idea of limiting parking to the ocean side of Palm Boulevard.

Mr. Cohen asked for comments on area three, 42nd Avenue to Wild Dunes.

Ms. Oltorik explained that she felt that the group generally came to the consensus at the last meeting about this area.

The group agreed that they still supported the idea of providing 25 spaces on 42nd Avenue, providing 25 spaces on the Palm Boulevard right-of-way at 56th Avenue, providing a small number of spaces at the end of each of the avenue right-of-way where feasible, and attempting to add a path at the Citadel Beach Club with associated parking.

Mr. Cohen explained that the discussions of the three areas had been complete, but that he knew that there were still some island-wide concepts that the group has discussed and he asked for a list of those ideas.

The group identified the following issues as being worth future consideration: providing a program of seasonal passes, requiring non-resident/ non-owners to pay to park, if economically feasible, prohibiting parking in the residential areas outside of the areas discussed tonight as having parking, providing bike racks and golf cart provisions at the parking areas, and removing obstructions in the right-of-ways in the long-term.

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ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
David Cohen, Chairman.