

MINUTES OF THE ISLE OF PALMS
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
November 12, 2008

The Isle of Palms Planning Commission met in the Building Department Conference Room, 1301 Palm Boulevard on November 12, 2008, at 4:30PM. Members attending included Barbara Bergwerf, Pat Campbell, Ron Denton, Sandy Stone and Dick Watson; also the Director of Planning, Douglas Kerr was present. David Stevens 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 Denton called the meeting to order.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The next item on the agenda was the review of the minutes of the October 11th, 2008 meeting. Mr. Stone made a motion to approve the minutes and Mr. Campbell seconded the motion; the vote was unanimous in favor of the motion.

DISCUSSION OF COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Mr. Kerr explained that he had amended the draft by: including Mr. Watson's modifications to the beach section and the description of the PDD, adding strategies regarding monitoring quality of life for residents, adding an explanation of millage rates, deleting the class number when referencing the CRS class and adding mention of the lots behind the Public Works Department. He explained that the traffic counts still needed work and he still had no EMS response times.

Mr. Watson stated that he would like to include a general description of where the EMS station is and an explanation of the EMS response process. Mr. Campbell explained that, as he understood it, the only difference between the City's first response service and the County's EMS service is the County provides transportation.

Mr. Stone brought up the issue of pressures associated with day trippers coming to the beach and asked whether this is an issue that should be addressed in the plan. Mr. Kerr explained that the plan now included a specific strategy for coming up with a comprehensive parking management system with a short deadline and he thought this was an appropriate level of detail to include in the plan. He added that once a management plan is developed it could be included by reference into a future Comprehensive Plan update. The Commission agreed to address this issue in this manner.

The Commission agreed to look at the draft at the next meeting to consider making a recommendation to City Council.

DISCUSSION OF RENTALS AND HOUSE SIZES

Mr. Denton explained that a special meeting had been established for the following Wednesday, November 19th at 5pm to meet with the Isle of Palms Neighborhood Association. He explained that a meeting should also be established to hear from the Isle of Palms Business Council or Community Association. The Commission generally discussed how they would like to conduct the special meetings.

Mr. Stone explained that he thought it would be helpful to have data on the issues of house sizes. He explained that in the rental business the large rental homes are no longer an attractive business investment, because at the current cost of these properties there is a large financial loss in using these homes as short term rentals. He added that he did not see a need to limit the size of houses based on the facts that there are not many built and there is no incentive to build them as rental properties.

Mr. Kerr stated that he agreed that statistically there is not a large percentage of homes that are enormous. However, if it seemed unlikely that owners would want to build these very large homes in the future, then there should be little harm done by reducing the allowable size of future homes. Mr. Stone stated that there are owners that would like to build these homes for their future residences or second homes and there is a tax benefit to the community in having those homes on the island.

Mr. Campbell explained that he had some questions about why the Planning Commission has been given these specific tasks. He explained that the Commission went through numerous long and tough sessions to come up with recommendations on limiting the size of houses and how to deal with the effects of short term rentals. He stated that he would like to know specifically where City Council saw flaws in those ordinances and what changes have taken place since the ordinances were adopted to warrant the review. He made a motion to make a request of Council to identify the flaws in the current ordinance and what changes have taken place since the adoption of the codes to warrant a review. Mr. Watson seconded the motion.

Mr. Kerr explained that as he understood the request from Council, it was simply to analyze the trends of house sizes and rental issues and report back, with recommendations, if necessary. He explained that he felt that it was a good time

to analyze the short term rental ordinances because for the first time the City had a program in place, with a full-time officer, for an entire season, with data that could be used to make an analysis. He added that the Planning Commission had routinely looked at the size of houses and the building trends and he therefore saw the requests as falling in line with what the Planning Commission had always done.

The Commission generally discussed the issue and Mr. Campbell added that he felt that to tackle this was going to be a lot of work and he did not want to spend time on things unnecessarily and if Council could provide additional guidance, it would be helpful. The Commission voted on the issue of asking Council for additional guidance on the perceived flaws in the existing ordinances; and what has changed since the adoption of the ordinances to warrant the review. The vote was four to one in favor of the motion, with Mr. Stone voting against the motion. The Commission clarified that they would continue to work on the issue, while the request is made of Council. Mr. Stone added that he was fully in favor of the review, but did not see a need to request additional clarification.

The Commission reviewed the data that Mr. Kerr had pulled together including: the number of houses built each of the past five years, the average size of homes being built each of the past five years, the percentage of newly built homes that are being rented, the noise complaints organized by house size and the noise complaints in general. The Commission discussed the analysis of noise complaints and generally agreed that the numbers appeared to be inaccurately low.

Mr. Denton explained that he was more concerned with where the problems were occurring and he would like to see a map showing where the complaints were occurring.

Mr. Watson explained that he felt that the responding Police officers often treat the people filing a complaint as the problem and not the rental property. The Commission generally discussed the issue of enforcement of the existing ordinances.

After general discussion of how to analyze the issues of house size and rental issues, the Commission asked for additional data on the range of houses sizes currently on the island (including the number of houses over 5,000), mapping of where the homes are located geographically, the number of rental licenses (including inside the gate and outside the gate), the current ordinances in place and the proposal originally put forward by the Planning Commission. Mr. Kerr answered that he would get this together for the next meeting.

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MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS

Mr. Kerr explained that the all members needed to have their required training before the end of the calendar year.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no more business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:20 p.m..
Respectfully submitted, Ron Denton, Chairman.