

MINUTES OF THE ISLE OF PALMS
SPECIAL PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
March 29, 2016

The Isle of Palms Planning Commission met in the City Hall Conference Room, 1207 Palm Boulevard on March 29, 2016 at 4:30 p.m. Members attending included Ron Denton, Lewis Gregory, Noel Scott, Vince DiGangi, Richard Ferencz and Bill Mills; the Director of Planning Douglas Kerr was present as well. Lisa Safford 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 Richard Ferencz called the meeting to order.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Ferencz opened the floor to public comment.

Bill Campbell, #34- 42nd Avenue, distributed a letter to the Commission and explained that he was opposed to drystack storage. He stated that the Isle of Palms should follow the lead of the City of Charleston and work to preserve the unique history of island life. He stated that the only benefit that he could see to adding drystack would be the revenue and that the additional congestion and commercialization of the project outweighed any benefit. He urged the Commission to dismiss the project, especially the drystack component.

Stuart Coleman, 10 Live Oak Drive, stated that he agreed that improvements are needed at the site, but he felt that these conceptual plans were not the right fit. He stated that with a stack height of 35 feet, boats with T-tops would exceed the height limit. He stated that to his knowledge there has been no study on the demand for drystack on the island and it appears from the existing usage of island residents that there is not a lot of demand, if only eight residents currently keep their boat at the marina. He stated that he was confused by the dock configuration, especially mention of luring mega-yachts as no boats of this size will come down the Intracoastal Waterway out of concerns of the depth of the Waterway. He said that there was mention of crabbing dock, but this would not be allowed within 200 yards of a boat ramp, so this was not possible. He stated that he felt like it would be unsafe to put the gas island so far away from the store. He stated that all of the residents he has spoken to are receptive to the idea of greenspace at the water's edge. He stated that he felt like the plan should include restrooms.

Bea Love, 9 Sand Dollar Drive, submitted a written statement and stated that the marina was purchased by vote of the residents, for the resident's use, not to support the surrounding community.

Laura Watkins, 371 Buccaneer Road, stated that her house is directly across the Waterway from 41st Avenue on Goat Island and she has the lighting from traffic on 41st Avenue and the jet ski dock shine directly into her house. She said that any effort to minimize the glare off the site would be greatly appreciated.

Elizabeth Campsen, 32 Intracoastal Court, stated that she was not directly contacted about this redevelopment project other than by a mailer that she believes went to everybody. She stated that she has been through ATM's report and she has concerns about parking, congestion and noise. She stated that the City's code requires parking spaces to be on site and that the City does not enforce this. She stated that boats being above the height limit is a concern. She stated that if the marina was operating under the current ordinances, there would not be issues with the site. She handed out aerials of other marinas in the area and stated that all of the other marinas were surrounded by commercial or industrial uses and the Isle of Palms Marina was unusual in that it was surrounded by residential communities. She stated that she looked forward to the opportunity the City has to improve the site and address concerns.

Phillip Smith, 8 Intracoastal Court, explained that he is the closest resident to the marina and he feels that there is already too much activity at the marina. He explained that the restaurant has more employees than parking spaces. He stated that the jet ski operation has about 20 employees and not enough parking. He stated that he felt like this redevelopment was an opportunity to make the marina site work for everybody and not just be a revenue stream. He asked if the City agreed to drystack storage, could concessions be made to scale back the other more objectionable uses. He stated that he has been asking the City to move the jet ski operation for years to get it a little farther away from the residential neighborhood, but the City has not been willing to do this. He stated that he feels there is already too much going on at the site.

Jay Clark, owner of the Morgan Creek Grill, stated that he would like for the plan to include new bathrooms, which he thought could be done by floodproofing the facility. He stated that the Morgan Creek Grill would be willing to maintain the bathrooms. He added that the Morgan Creek Grill was planning on adding an elevator to the building in the near future. He stated that he would like for the docks to be configured to be more useful by altering the finger docks. He added that he has been discussing the idea of allowing employees to park at the wastewater facility on 41st Avenue with the Isle of Palms Water and Sewer Commission and they seemed agreeable.

Al Dawson, 18 Intracoastal Court, stated that he did not see the logic in reducing the number of ramps from three to two. He also stated that he felt everybody should visit a 20 year old drystack facility and see what an eyesore and environment hazard they turn

into. He stated that he felt a drystack facility would negatively change the character of the neighborhood.

Elizabeth Campsen readdressed the Commission and added that she has safety concerns and her dock had a large boat crash into it.

William Warner, 20 Morgan Place, explained that he thought this was a beautiful area and he would be cautious of the environmental impact of having fuel stacked up in a drystack facility. He felt that this sounded like a potentially hazardous arrangement.

Matt D'Antonio, 210 Forest Trail, stated that he was a regular user of the marina and he was appreciative of the drystack option for a financial standpoint, but out of concerns for the residential nature of the area he had concerns. He added that it would be beneficial to improve pedestrian and golf cart accessibility.

Mr. Ferencz asked if Mr. Shaffer could talk the Commission through the work he has done on the site. John Shaffer, SHFR Consulting, explained that he worked with the marina operator to develop a conceptual plan to look at the feasibility of drystack. He stated that his study did not include as much stakeholder involvement as ATM has done, so that should be considered. He stated that he has spent considerable time researching the site and agrees that it is very challenging to accommodate the number of parking spaces needed along with the boat ramps. He then described the plan that he had prepared for the marina operator and stated that their plan included 194 drystack spaces and 176 vehicles.

Mr. Mills asked if there has ever been a study done of the residents' demand for drystack.

Mr. Shaffer answered that he had not done this work and to his knowledge it has not been done. He stated that there is plenty of evidence to show regional demand, but he does not know about local Isle of Palms residents' demands.

Mr. Ferencz stated that he believed that it has been relayed to the Commission that of the 50 wet slips, only eight are used by residents and of the launches only ten percent are residents, so he cannot believe that the residents would fill up a 200 space drystack facility.

Mr. Shaffer agreed that it may be tough to have it 100% filled by residents.

Mr. Ferencz asked what rate was being considered in the financial pro forma he developed. Mr. Shaffer answered \$18 per foot.

Mr. Mills asked what the number of drystack spaces needed to break even would be. Mr. Shaffer answered that the rule of thumb is about 200 spaces.

Mr. Shaffer explained that he looked at the pro forma developed by ATM and that it was very close to the one he developed with the exception that his pro forma assumed the project would be funded by banks and not with bonds, so that resulted in a higher interest rate. Also, he stated that his pro forma accounted for income tax, which he thought ATM's might not because of the assumption that it would be a City run facility. He stated that as a result of these differences, his pro forma predicted that the facility would operate at an \$80,000 loss in the first year.

Mr. Ferencz stated that there should be some maintenance reserve built into the budget and asked if he built this into his pro forma. Mr. Shaffer answered yes, there was an overall percentage built in for maintenance.

Mr. Ferencz asked if the City would have needed to add anything to the site under the pro forma he developed.

Mr. Shaffer answered that his pro forma included the minimal parking lot adjustments that would be necessary for the drystack to be built, but it did not include all of the parking improvements shown on the conceptual plan he developed.

Mr. Ferencz asked under the current conditions at the site what a resident would have to do to get a slip. Mr. Shaffer answered that he believed there currently is a waitlist and he did not know if residents were given preferential priority on that list.

Mr. Ferencz stated that it is not unusual for major changes in a site to require a change in lease agreements and he asked if the marina operator would be willing to renegotiate the lease on the site. Mr. Shaffer stated that he could not answer for the operator.

Mr. Mills asked if there would be problem with securing financing on a leased site. Mr. Shaffer did not think this would be a problem with a long term lease.

Audience member, Mr. Coleman, asked how designers typically calculate the area needed for dock staging area for drystack operations. Mr. Shaffer answered typically a design accounts for 10% of the boats to be at a dock space at one time, but that this plan provided less than that.

Mr. Denton asked if the gas tanks on the land were critical to the operation. Mr. Shaffer answered that without the gas on the land, boats will be launching at the ramp and then waiting to get gas in the water and it would add to the water congestion considerably.

Mr. DiGangi asked how common it was for marinas to have both a drystack storage area and a boat ramp. Mr. Shaffer answered that he worked on a municipal site in Delaware that had both, but he was not sure how common it was to have both.

Audience member, Bill Campbell, stated that the last thing he would want to do after he launched his boat would be to line up for gas on the docks.

Mike Fiem, Tidal Wave Watersports, added that gas pumps on the land are quick and on the dock you can be waiting for a large boat to fuel up and it can take 30 minutes to get gas, which would create tremendous boat congestion.

DISCUSSION OF ISLE OF PALMS MARINA MASTERPLAN

Mr. Ferencz closed the public comment section of the meeting and stated that the Planning Commission needed to work on a recommendation to Council and he felt that one of the primary points is whether or not drystack storage should be included at the site or not. He stated that he was convinced that there were enough problems with the idea of drystack that he was ready to make a motion to recommend that drystack storage not be included in future plans. Mr. Denton seconded the motion.

Mr. Mills proposed an amendment to the motion to include a recommendation that a design be considered that left space on the site to provide for future drystack storage, if the idea becomes favored in the future.

Mr. Ferencz stated that he felt that it could encumber the efficiency of the design to leave space for a future drystack and he would advocate disregarding the idea of drystack entirely to develop the best plan possible.

The motion to amend died because of a lack of a second.

Mr. Denton stated that he wanted to support the tenants of the marina, but not at the expense of the surrounding neighbors, especially if there is not a clear benefit to the island's residents.

Mr. Kerr stated that before voting on the motion, he wanted to remind the Commission that they had requested a pros and cons list of including drystack and not, revised financial information on the pro forma developed by ATM and additional survey information of the residents to help determine demand among residents. He stated that all of these items are being worked on and he hoped would be available soon. He stated that if any of these factors may make a difference in the thinking, he wanted the group to be aware these items could be provided.

Mr. DiGangi stated that he believed that the idea of drystack storage may be in conflict with the City's Comprehensive Plan as the plan establishes a goal of the marina being supported primarily by the residents.

Mr. Gregory asked if the City had to make the marina open to the public or could it be made to be more beneficial to the residents of the island.

Mr. Mills stated that even as a public marina, with heavy usage it does not operate as cash positive for the City. Money has to be taken out of tourist funds each year to cover the gap between income and expenses.

Mr. Scott stated that he felt like drystack may have been feasible if the lot was larger, but on such a limited site he felt like it would be putting too much on one site.

With no more discussion, the vote was unanimous in favor of recommending that drystack not be included.

Mr. Ferencz stated that ATM was scheduled to attend the next meeting and he wanted Commission members to provide questions that they wanted to be addressed prior to the next meeting. He stated that he knew some issues he had questions about included the turning radii of the trailer aisles, the fuel station being adjacent to the residential area and what could be done to make the site more bike friendly.

Mr. Mills stated that he was interested in having the financial projections revised to show the actual situation of the marina and not be based on an assumption that the City operates the marina. Mr. Kerr stated that if the Commission is recommending against drystack he did not know if this was relevant as there would be no perceivable increase in revenues associated with the other improvements.

Mr. Denton stated that he liked the idea of tenants carpooling via shuttle or golf cart and wondered if this could be accommodated for in the plan.

Mr. Ferencz stated that there have been a number of people suggesting a bathroom being incorporated into the plan, which he liked.

Mr. Kerr stated that he has heard tenants mention the need for an attendant station when entering the site to better direct traffic to the appropriate location.

Mr. Ferencz asked what the expectation was on the timing of the Planning Commission's review. Mr. Kerr answered that the Planning Commission would have

ATM present at their next meeting on April 13th, then City Council would meet and discuss the project with ATM at their April 28th meeting, and he was hopeful that the Planning Commission could formulate a recommendation to Council at their regular May meeting. Mr. Ferencz asked which committee of City Council would have purview over the issue. Mr. Kerr asked the City Administrator what her opinion was on this question.

Administrator Tucker responded that to go back to the issue of timing, the Council is in the process of developing next year's budget and if there are items that come out of this exercise that require money, those items should be identified quickly to be included in the budget before it gets finalized. She added that all members of Council would be discussing this issue, but she felt that Real Property in particular would focus on the plan.

Mr. Ferencz asked that between now and the next meeting each member develop questions for ATM and forward them to Mr. Kerr so they could be addressed by ATM at the next meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

With there being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Richard Ferencz, Chairman