



Town of Beaufort, NC

701 Front St. - P.O. Box 390 - Beaufort, N.C. 28516
252-728-2141 - 252-728-3982 fax - www.beaufortnc.org

Town of Beaufort Planning Board Regular Meeting 6:00 PM Monday, February 20, 2023 - Train Depot 614 Broad Street, Beaufort, NC 28516 Minutes

Call to Order

Vice-Chair Merrill called the February 20, 2023 Planning Board meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Roll Call

Members Present: Vice-Chair Merrill, Member Bowler, Member LoPiccolo, Member Meelheim, Member Vreugdenhil

Members Absent: Member Stanziale, Member Willis

A quorum was declared with five members present.

Staff Present: Kyle Garner, Town Attorney Arey Grady, and Laurel Anderson.

Agenda Approval

Vice-Chair Merrill asked if there were any changes to the Agenda and hearing none, he asked for a motion.

Member Meelheim made the motion to approve the agenda as presented and Member Bowler made the second. Vice-Chair Merrill took a vote that was unanimously approved.

Voting yea: Vice-Chair Merrill, Member Bowler, Member LoPiccolo, Member Meelheim, Member Vreugdenhil

Minutes Approval

1. PB Draft Minutes for 1.17.23

Vice-Chair Merrill asked if there were any changes to the Minutes from the January 17, 2023 meeting.

Member Meelheim made the motion to approve the minutes and Member Bowler made the second. Vice-Chair Merrill took a vote that was unanimously approved.

Voting yea: Vice-Chair Merrill, Member Bowler, Member LoPiccolo, Member Meelheim, Member Vreugdenhil

Election of Officers

Town Attorney Grady explained the election process and opened the floor for nominations for the position of Chair of the Planning Board.

Member Meelheim made the motion to nominate Vice-Chair Merrill for the position of Chair.

Member Vreugdenhil made the motion to close the nominations and Member LoPiccolo made the second. Town Attorney Grady took a vote that was unanimously approved.

Voting yea: Vice-Chair Merrill, Member Bowler, Member LoPiccolo, Member Meelheim, Member Vreugdenhil

Town Attorney Grady took a vote for Vice-Chair Merrill to be elected Chair which was unanimously approved.

Voting yea: Vice-Chair Merrill, Member Bowler, Member LoPiccolo, Member Meelheim, Member Vreugdenhil

Town Attorney Grady opened the floor for nominations for the position of Vice-Chair of the Planning Board.

Chair Merrill made the motion to nominate Member Meelheim for the position of Vice-Chair.

Member Bowler made the motion to close the nominations and Member Vreugdenhil made the second. Town Attorney Grady took a vote that was unanimously approved.

Voting yea: Chair Merrill, Member Bowler, Member LoPiccolo, Member Meelheim, Member Vreugdenhil

Town Attorney Grady took a vote for Member Meelheim to be elected Vice-Chair which was unanimously approved.

Voting yea: Chair Merrill, Member Bowler, Member LoPiccolo, Member Meelheim, Member Vreugdenhil

Public Comment

Chair Merrill opened public comments and asked if anyone would like to speak.

Town Attorney explained that Public Comments would be appropriate for anyone who wished to speak about any topic except for the Public Hearing.

Public Hearing

1. Zoning Text Amendment – To recommend approval or denial of a Staff proposed zoning text amendment creating an Affordable Housing District.

Member LoPiccolo made the motion to open the Public Hearing and Member Bowler made the second. Chair Merrill took a vote that was unanimously approved.

Voting yea: Chair Merrill, Vice-Chair Meelheim, Member Bowler, Member LoPiccolo, Member Vreugdenhil

Chair Merrill opened the Public Hearing and invited anyone who would like to speak to approach the podium.

Josh Spruill, 204 Second St, expressed his concerns regarding living across the street from a proposed re-zoned affordable housing parcel, and density issues including traffic and stormwater runoff. He was also concerned with the possibility of the rezoned parcels being sold in the future and he proposed acquiring other parcels and moving the proposed affordable housing to different properties.

Robert Harper, 1020 Broad St, stated that the proposed Land Development Ordinance and CAMA plans provide an iron shield which protects the town against over-development, and claimed that the reasons given for the request seemed fraudulent and perhaps illegal, and if the proposed rezoning were approved the shield would be penetrated and other requests for higher-density rezonings could be open to litigation.

Barney McLaughlin, 517 Turner St, stated that he lives across from the Turner St proposed rezoned parcel, and that he did not see a need to create a new zoning for the housing, and if the goal was more affordable housing exceptions could be given to the existing code. He also stated that the Turner Street parcel could be sold as it was waterfront property and it was not a good place to build new affordable housing, as once it was built it would stay that way forever. He suggested that the waterfront property could be sold and the affordable housing be developed away from the waterfront near Freedom Park. He asked if Beaufort wanted affordable housing to be right at the entrance to the town and stated that he had been told that the public housing on the Turner Street property would be torn down and redeveloped. He stated that he understood there was an affordable housing problem but it didn't require using very expensive land to build on.

Member Bowler made the motion to close the Public Hearing and Member LoPiccolo made the second. Chair Merrill took a vote that was unanimously approved.

Voting yea: Chair Merrill, Vice-Chair Meelheim, Member Bowler, Member LoPiccolo, Member Vreugdenhil

Chair Merrill then asked Mr. Garner to give the Staff Report. Mr. Garner explained that in developing this proposal over the course of several months, the Town partnered with the Beaufort Housing Authority (BHA) to develop specific criteria that could be applied in the development of new housing to reach the needs of a growing community. At present this new district would only apply to properties that are owned by the BHA and Federal Government (HUD) and would be capped at 16 units per acre. This proposed amendment is not a one size fits all proposal but more of a starting point. It's anticipated that through the development of a new Unified Development Ordinance that other options be presented that will aid in providing multiple housing options to those wanting to live and work in Beaufort. It should also be noted that the creation of this new district is not consistent with the 2006 CAMA Land Use Plan - Future Land Use Map, which recommended that the density be between 3-5 dwellings per acre. Even though in conflict with that portion the 2006 Executive Summary 1.3.1 Areas of Local Concern included the following bulleted item: "Implementation of redevelopment/revitalization projects to eliminate substandard housing." (2006 CAMA Land Use Plan pages 11 & 22) so there is consistency in the policy recommendations for this amendment.

Mr. Garner also explained that the 16 unit criteria was decided by the amount of units the BHA requested, also incorporating stormwater and parking needs, explaining that the current land use plan maximum density is 16 units per acre. He identified the seven total properties, their current and proposed zoning and densities, the permitted uses, explained that the Town was being transparent in showing all properties that would be in the text amendment and rezoning request, and reminded the Board that they had the option to modify the text amendment and rezoning requests.

Dick deButts, Chair of the BHA, gave a history and overview of the BHA and explained that the Town owns the land and Housing and Urban Development (HUD) acts as trustee between the Town and the federal government. The 100 units are operated and subsidized under HUD and the land can never be sold and must always be used as low-income, affordable housing. Extensive renovations are necessary to the 100 existing units and as HUD appropriations decreased between 2008-2018, there is not enough funding for the renovations. HUD has initiated a program to approve public/private partnerships between towns and developers to tear down and rebuild new units, keeping 100 units dedicated to low-income housing.

Rachel Carroll, Executive Director of the BHA, explained that there is a strict application process and currently only 30 families qualify for the housing waitlist.

Member Meelheim stated her concern with a couple of the housing properties being in the floodplain area. Member LoPiccolo also expressed his concern with rezoning the downtown properties and how the density would affect the way Beaufort looks. Member Bowler stated that she was in favor of affordable housing but felt the need for the housing required quantifying. Member Vreugdenhil asked Mr. deButts where the first housing would be built and recommended the Legion St. parcel be used as a pilot to show how the other units would be built.

Member Vreugdenhil made a motion to recommend tabling of the Zoning Text Amendment until the Board received more information.

Chair Merrill expressed his concern with the higher density, the 300 extra units, increased traffic, and the proposed 100 units being built as affordable housing but the other 300 units being leased at market value, with no increase of actual affordable housing units. He asked the Board specifically what further information they requested for the next meeting.

Member Vreugdenhil asked for more information regarding income parameters for residents, environmental impacts including parking, impervious surfaces and stormwater issues, and if the proposed housing was working in other municipalities. Member Bowler agreed and asked for the need for extra units to be quantified, and the location of the downtown housing potentially changing the appearance and character of Beaufort, noting that she would love to live downtown but budgeting required that she live outside of town. Chair Merrill requested that Member Vreugdenhil revise his motion to include the Board's specific questions.

Member Vreugdenhil revised his motion to recommend tabling of the Zoning Text Amendment and the Rezoning until the Board received more information to include specifically quantifying need for the requested units of affordable housing, income parameters for residents, environmental impacts including parking, impervious surfaces and stormwater issues, and if the proposed housing was working in other municipalities.

Vice-Chair Meelheim made the second and Chair Merrill took a vote that was unanimously approved.

Voting yea: Chair Merrill, Vice-Chair Meelheim, Member Bowler, Member LoPiccolo, Member Vreugdenhil

Commission / Board Comments

Member Bowler recognized past Planning Board member and chair Doug Doubleday who had recently passed away, and Ryan Neve, who had served on the Planning Board as a member and chair, and the other members echoed her recognition of the two past Planning Board members.

Staff Comments

Mr. Garner recognized Doug Doubleday and stated that he was a leader that the Town should be proud of, and how much he appreciated past member and chair Ryan Neve's dedication to the Planning Board for so many years.

Adjourn

Member Vreugdenhil made the motion to adjourn and Member Bowler made the second. Chair Merrill took a vote that was unanimously approved.

Voting yea: Chair Merrill, Vice-Chair Meelheim, Member Bowler, Member LoPiccolo, Member Vreugdenhil

Chair Merrill then declared the meeting adjourned.

Ralph Merrill, Chair

Laurel Anderson, Board Secretary