

The Planning Commission met via Zoom Video on Thursday, March 11, 2021 at 6:35 p.m. Commissioners present: Deborah Bidwell, Mark Maher, Ed Steers, Vice Chair, Zennie Quinn, and Bill Lyon, Chairman, who presided. Also: Kristen Crane, Planning Director, Flannery Wood, Planner II, Frances Simmons, Town Clerk and Secretary to the Planning Commission, and Town Councilwoman Cynthia Mignano.

Call to Order: Chairman Lyon called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m. A quorum was present to conduct business.

Compliance with the Freedom of Information Act: Chairman Lyon announced that this meeting was noticed in compliance with the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act.

Introductions: Chairman Lyon introduced the members of the Planning Commission and staff and extended a special welcome to new Commissioner Mark Maher.

Approval of December 10, 2020 Minutes: Minutes were approved upon a motion by Commissioner Steers, seconded by Chairman Lyon and passed unanimously.

Public Comments: None.

Staff Comments: None

Comprehensive Plan 5-Year Review: Planning Director Kristen Crane announced that the Planning Commission would be reviewing the edits recommended by Town Council at its January 21 meeting. She said recommendations made by the Planning Commission tonight would be sent to Town Council for a First Reading on March 18 and the Second Reading and Public Hearing on April 15. She added that when the Comp Plan was sent to Town Council the edits were in multiple colors but is now in yellow for easier reading.

Mrs. Crane reviewed the changes recommended by Town Council:

- Strike the word *services* from ecosystems; which is listed in several other places, including in the Land Use Element Goal also stricken.
- Town Council questioned the definition of the word *mutualistic* and recommended changing the language to read: *Encourage redevelopment to improve current aesthetics and diversity of amenities in the Town's commercial areas*. Mrs. Crane noted that the original word used was positive and it was changed to mutualistic by the Planning Commission, but Town Council struck both of those words. She pointed out the other areas where mutualistic appeared (Land Use Element/Inventory) and was stricken.
- *Vegetation:* Town Council discussed that the language in that section is not specific to James Island and is more generic for the County so the last sentence that talks about countywide vegetation was struck. Mrs. Crane said she is researching information specific to James Island and is waiting to hear back from others more qualified to address this. She added that a section was added regarding the formation of the Town's Trees Advisory Council; its functions, and interns to survey trees and input information in the GeoThinQ program.

- ***Community Facilities Element, Parks and Recreation Services:*** Town Council recommended adding a goal *CF9 to read: to explore opportunities to create and maintain more active recreational activities and facilities for the youth of James Island.*

Mrs. Crane said changes the Planning Commission makes would go back to Town Council and Chairman Lyon opened the floor for discussion.

Commissioner Bidwell said she thought people didn't quite understand what ecosystem services are and that is okay. She said the way it is phrased now in a couple of places where it talks about preserving the suburban character, ecosystems makes it sound like we are trying to preserve suburban ecosystems, and that was not her intention. She said with the phrasing of it, the adjective suburban should not modify the noun ecosystems. Commissioner Bidwell thought we could add *natural ecosystems*. She commented that ecosystem services are just what nature gives us for free, i.e., the marsh gives us blue crabs and fishes and it filters our waters, and the trees gives cleaner air. The marsh absorbs the flood waters, so ecosystem services are what healthy ecosystems do. She said for the benefit of all living creatures there, including humans, its fine to scratch it but she is not interested in maintaining suburban ecosystems but is interested in maintaining nature and would like healthy natural ecosystems that keeps us from flooding and keeps us fed. She suggested using the words *natural ecosystem in the area*.

Mrs. Crane said that she wanted to be sure in the places where the word is stricken that it makes sense. Commissioner Bidwell said she did not know if the changes needed to be in all of the places, but the word services should be taken out anywhere it states maintaining the suburban character (Land Use Element Goal).

Housing Element Goal: There was discussion that the words *high quality* before the word *resilient* was redundant. Commissioner Maher requested striking the words *high quality*. Sentence to read: *Encourage resilient, affordable housing for people of all ages, incomes, and physical abilities.*

After discussion. Chairman Lyon asked for a motion on the recommended changes. Commissioner Bidwell moved, Commissioner Steers seconded, and passed unanimously.

Election of Planning Commission Officers: Chair and Vice Chair: Mrs. Crane announced that local Planning Commissions must elect one of its members as Chairperson and one as Vice Chairperson for one year terms. These appointments will begin immediately following the vote through 2021.

Chairman: Commissioner Steers moved for the nomination of Bill Lyon to serve as Chairman, Commissioner Quinn seconded. There were no other nominations and the motion passed unanimously.

Vice Chairman: Chairman Lyon moved for the nomination of Ed Steers to serve as Vice Chairman, Commissioner Quinn seconded. There were no other nominations and the motion passed unanimously.

Chair's Comments: Chairman Lyon welcomed new Commissioner Mark Maher and hopes to meet him in person once we are able to.

Commissioners Comments: Commissioner Steers expressed wanting to meet in person once we are able to and is looking forwarding to that.

Next Meeting Date: The next Planning Commission meeting is scheduled for April 8, 2021.

Adjourn: There being no further business to come before the Planning Commission, the meeting adjourned at 7:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Frances W. Simmons". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "F".

Frances Simmons
Town Clerk and Secretary to the Planning Commission