

The Town of Summerville Planning Commission Meeting
Minutes
October 21, 2019

This meeting of the Town of Summerville Planning Commission was attended by Commission Members, Jim Reaves, Chairman; Sarah Bares; Tom Hart; Jonathan Lee; Elaine Segelken; and Kevin Carroll. Staff in attendance included Jessi Shuler, Director of Planning; Tim Macholl, Zoning Administrator; Becca Zimmerman, Planner II; and Michael Lisle, Economic Development Coordinator.

Jim Reaves, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 4:01 PM.

Approval of Minutes:

The Chairman asked if there were any edits or additions to the minutes from the meeting on September 16, 2019. Hearing none, the Chairman declared the minutes accepted as presented.

Mr. Hart stated that he was unable to make the meeting last month, but he would like the record to show that he was originally in favor of both the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee Priority List and the Economic Development Incentives Ordinance.

Old Business:

The first item under Old Business was for Article VI, Summerville Economic Development Incentive Program proposed to be added to Town Code, Chapter 20, Planning and Development. Mr. Reaves introduced the request. Mr. Hart made a motion to recommend approval of the ordinance, and Mr. Carroll made the second. Mr. Reaves then opened the floor to discussion. Mr. Carroll questioned the process for the incentives, and Mr. Lisle responded that all incentives would be handled as reimbursements that are dependent upon what is approved by Town Council. Mr. Hart clarified that he understood that no funds would be given that had not already been paid and no other taxpayer money would be used for the program. Mr. Carroll asked how much would be reimbursed and how often, and Mr. Lisle explained that the reimbursement amount would be set by the agreement with Council, and could vary based on the quality of the proposal. He stated that the reimbursement could last up to five years based on the benchmarks set in the agreement. Mr. Hart asked for clarification from Mr. Lisle that these incentives would not be automatically given and would be ultimately dependent on Council approval, and Mr. Lisle confirmed that was the case, and he would be the staff person that would carry out the ordinance. Dr. Bares expressed her concern with a single person determining the value of an application and compliance with any approved agreements. Mr. Hart asked Mr. Lisle if he would have the ability to grant approval to any applications or determine non-compliance with any agreements, and Mr. Lisle responded that Town Council would make those determinations. Mr. Hart again asked for clarification from Mr. Lisle that these incentives would only be considered for new businesses; only be rebating money that the business already paid the Town; and use no other public money. Mr. Lisle stated that he was correct on all accounts. Mr. Reaves asked Mr. Lisle where the criteria came from that are used in Section 20-206, and Mr. Lisle noted that he used other ordinances from around the state as examples. Mr. Reaves questioned the difference between "full-service restaurant" and "hospitality-related business," as he felt that restaurants would fall under the category of "hospitality-related business" and could therefore be removed. Dr. Bares asked why manufacturing was not included, and Mr. Lisle stated that it could still be approved by Council. Dr. Bares then expressed her opinion that she would not be in favor of full-service restaurants being included because of the low-wage jobs they provide. Mr. Reaves asked if there was a maximum benefit that could be received, and Mr. Lisle explained that it would depend on the benefits to the Town, including property values, employment, etc. Mr. Lee noted that there is a program that exists (LOCI) to calculate the benefits or value of a project. Mr. Hart pointed out that Section 20-207 specifies the criteria to be considered in deciding the incentives to be given to each project. Mr. Lee then questioned if Section 20-204 should include a definition of job, and Mr. Lisle responded that it would be for full-time jobs only or their equivalent. Mr. Hart asked if other areas are doing similar programs, and Mr. Lisle stated that many other areas in the state are offering incentives. Goose Creek, as an example, has seen \$11 million in improvements in the first year of

offering incentives. Mr. Hart then asked for clarification from Mr. Lisle on the type and frequency of evaluations of each agreement and the program as a whole. Mr. Lisle detailed that evaluations would be done on a regular basis using high-quality evaluation tools, which could include the LOCI tool that Mr. Lee mentioned among others, and an annual report would be provided to Town Council as each agreement comes up for renewal. Dr. Bares mentioned several reports that she had emailed to the Commission members that discussed the costs and benefits of economic development incentives, and one thing they cautioned was that incentives could be canceled out if too many resources are drained from other initiatives that definitely increase property values. Mr. Hart responded that the schools get no funds from us, and this program would not drain anything because it is only for new businesses, so it would be a win-win. Dr. Bares stated that new businesses might come anyway without the need for incentives. Mr. Hart used Nexton as an example to show that many of those businesses are in unincorporated Berkeley County, and we are also losing out to Goose Creek. Mr. Carroll questioned the amount that Goose Creek has rebated so far, and Mr. Lisle did not have the exact amount at this time, but he provided the percentage language from Goose Creek's ordinance. Dr. Bares questioned why the Town's proposed ordinance did not include specific percentages allowed, and Mr. Lisle explained that he did not want to tie Council's hands.

Following the discussion, Mr. Hart made a motion to amend Section 20-204 to add a definition for jobs to include full-time positions or their equivalent added by the business at that location, and to amend Section 20-206(4)(g) to eliminate "full-service restaurants" and replace with "manufacturing industry." Mr. Carroll seconded the amendments. Mr. Reaves called for the vote, and the amendments passed unanimously. Mr. Reaves then called for the vote on the amended motion, and the motion passed 5-1 with Dr. Bares voting in opposition.

Mr. Lee stated that he was concerned about possible lawsuits, and would request that G.W. Parker review the possibility of adding language to the ordinance to prohibit them.

New Business:

The first item under New Business was New Street Names (as applicable). Ms. Shuler explained that they did not have any street names for approval.

Miscellaneous:

The first item under Miscellaneous was the Unified Development Ordinance Approval. Ms. Shuler informed the Commission that the UDO had received second and final reading from Town Council on October 10 and was now adopted. She stated that she would email them the hyperlinked PDF of the final document and the PDF of the map.

Mr. Reaves asked about the timeline of the Comprehensive Plan, and Ms. Shuler stated that she believed that it would still be primarily on target, and she hoped to have an update at their next meeting.

Adjourn

With no further business for the Commission, Ms. Segelken made a motion to adjourn with Mr. Carroll making the second, and Mr. Reaves adjourned the meeting at 4:48 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,



Jessi Shuler
Director of Planning

Date: November 18, 2019

Approved: _____



Jim Reaves, Chairman or Elaine Segelken, Vice Chairman