

TOWN OF HILTON HEAD ISLAND
Planning Commission Meeting
Wednesday, December 16, 2015
3:00p.m. – Benjamin M. Racusin Council Chambers

Commissioners Present: Chairman Alex Brown, Vice Chairman Peter Kristian, Jim Gant, Judd Carstens, Bryan Hughes, Caroline McVitty, Lavon Stevens, Barry Taylor and Todd Theodore

Commissioners Absent: None

Town Council Present: Tom Lennox

Town Staff Present: Jayme Lopko, Senior Planner & Planning Commission Coordinator
Brian Hulbert, Staff Attorney
Jennifer Ray, Urban Designer
Jill Foster, Deputy Director of Community Development
Shawn Colin, Deputy Director of Community Development
Steve Riley, Jennifer Lyle, Jeff Buckalew, Darrin Shoemaker

1. Call to Order

2. Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag

3. Roll Call

4. Freedom of Information Act Compliance

Public notification of this meeting has been published, posted, and mailed in compliance with the Freedom of Information Act and the Town of Hilton Head Island requirements.

5. Approval of Agenda

The Planning Commission **approved** the agenda as submitted by general consent.

Vice Chairman Kristian requested to speak in regard to a recent Town staff change. Mr. Kristian said that Kathleen Carlin, the long standing recording secretary for this body and several others has chosen to retire. Kathleen over the years has served the Town in various committees and commissions of the Town very, very well. Before he was appointed as a Commissioner, he spent ten years on the Board of Zoning Appeals and Kathleen served as the recording secretary for the Board of Zoning Appeals. Mr. Kristian indicated that he found her to be an extremely efficient public servant, with attention to detail and customer service beyond compare and just excellent work ethic. She is going to be sorely missed and our new recording secretary has some serious shoes to fill. We wish her every success but he wanted to state for the record how much Kathleen has meant to him and hopefully the other commissioners on other public bodies she has served at the Town over the years. Chairman Brown thanked Mr. Kristian and the Commission thanks Kathleen for her efforts.

6. Approval of Minutes

The Planning Commission **approved** the minutes of the December 2, 2015 meeting as presented by general consent.

7. Appearance by Citizens on Items Unrelated to Today's Agenda

None

8. Unfinished Business - None

9. New Business

Public Hearing

PPR-2127-2015 - Application for Public Project Review from the Town of Hilton Head Island for the construction of a new education facility for University of South Carolina Beaufort (USCB) Hospitality Management and Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) in the Office Park Road area. The plans include an academic building, an OLLI building, a student café, parking, leisure trail network, and outdoor gathering spaces.

Mr. Shawn Colin made the presentation on behalf of staff. Mr. Colin presented an in-depth review of the application including the location of the proposed project and plan for the project. The staff recommended that the Planning Commission find this application to be compatible with the Town's Comprehensive Plan for location, character and extent based on those Findings of Facts and Conclusions of Law as determined by the LMO Official and enclosed in the Staff Report.

The current site consists of 57,000 sq. ft. of development. This site is located in the Sea Pines Commercial District and per the LMO could be redeveloped to approximately 90,000 sq. ft. This proposed project is 47,000 sq. ft. of development - a reduction of what is currently there.

In 2003, USCB and Technical College of the Lowcountry (TCL) had 523 students attending classes at that location. Projected attendance for the August 2018 USCB opening is 200 students with a potential expansion over time to 395 students.

Mr. Colin reported on the traffic impact comparisons and traffic counts. In addition, he made the following points:

- Sea Pines Circle does not currently meet the LMO's operational goals which are designed to handle the 45th busiest day (which is a weekday in June).
- The Circle to Circle Committee, along with staff and consultant support, are working to develop recommendations to improve operational conditions of Sea Pines Circle.
- The USCB/OLLI project is designed for off-season use, counter-cyclical to the visitor season. The USCB academic calendar is August 20, 2015 – April 25, 2016.

This project is a result of partnerships with:

- Town of Hilton Head Island
- University of South Carolina- Beaufort
- Beaufort County
- Beaufort County School District
- Hilton Head Public Service District 1

The actual Town tax contribution with Tax Increment Financing monies (TIF) is \$4.4 million to produce a \$24.5 million investment.

Mr. Colin continued the presentation with the following statements that support being compatible with the Comprehensive Plan:

- The proposed project provides more on-island opportunities for higher education and enhances continuing and adult education for Island citizens consistent with the Community Facilities Element.
- The location of the proposed facility will enable a more direct contribution to the Island's largest industry consistent with the Community Facilities and Economic Development Elements.
- The proposed facility will be designed to face Pope Avenue in an effort to control the access point to the property. The intersection of Pope Avenue and Office Park Road will be modified to improve access to the property for vehicle, bicycles, and pedestrians consistent with the Transportation Element.
- Locating the proposed project in the area will eliminate obsolete or run down commercial buildings that have been identified for redevelopment consistent with the Economic Development Element.
- The proposed project is a redevelopment and infill development which is a focus for the Land Use Element.
- The project location contains aging structures making it a prime site for redevelopment as called for in the Land Use Element.
- The project proposes a redevelopment to a less intense use, which will provide a reduction of development potential and decrease potential traffic generation consistent with the Transportation Element.
- The proposed project will bring programs and education opportunities to the Island to meet the needs of the diverse populations and age groups consistent with the Population and Community Facilities Elements.
- The proposed project will provide adult education, higher education, and off-season continuing educational opportunities on-island consistent with the Community Facilities and Economic Development Elements.
- The proposed project will contribute to a workforce that has appropriate education and training to support a sustainable workforce in the largest industry on the Island consistent with the Economic Development Element.
- The proposed facility will attract and retain retirees by providing lifelong learning opportunities through OLLI consistent with the Economic Development Element.
- The proposed project will redevelop an existing site. Redevelopment is a focus for future development on the Island as it reaches build-out consistent with the Land Use and Priority Investment Elements.
- The proposed project will provide a catalyst to encourage redevelopment of other aging structures in the area consistent with the Economic Development, Land Use, and Priority Investment Elements.

Mr. Colin reminded the Commissioners of a previous Planning Commission action in which they recommended that Town Council include USCB in the 2015 Targets for Action; that USCB be included in the Town's 2015 Capital Improvement Program; and then again in the Town's 2016 Capital Improvement Program.

Mr. Colin concluded the presentation by stating that based on a thorough review of the Comprehensive Plan and the previous action by the Planning Commission, this project is compatible with the Town's Comprehensive Plan for location, character and extent based on those Findings of Facts and Conclusions of Law as determined by the LMO Official.

Dr. Al Panu, Chancellor of USCB, thanked the Planning Commission for the opportunity to discuss this proposed project. Dr. Panu stated that he has such an appreciation of the value of higher education. Higher education is incredibly helpful with enhancing the quality of life, it has an impact on economic development, and develops the workforce as well as attracts investments in the area. Dr. Panu stated how pleased he is for the opportunity to refresh a long standing relationship. There is an opportunity to bring authentic programs here that will resonate in ways unimaginable. It will provide the chance to create flagship programs and programs that are beneficial to all ages. Dr. Panu stated that he is very excited about the opportunities that lie ahead.

Dr. Charles Calvert, Professor of Hospitality Management, introduced several USCB students. Dr. Calvert stated that 62% of interns do their internships on the Island. The opportunities for local students include a dual credit course for high school students. Dr. Calvert expressed his appreciation to partner with Hilton Head Island.

Dr. Calvert stated that the impact of the traffic at the Sea Pines Circle is all day long. Traffic generated by USCB will be opposite of the tourist season. If USCB didn't go at this location, it could be a hotel which would bring in a constant flow of traffic. He believes this project will spur economic development. Students can ride their bikes to school. Our goal is to be a good neighbor.

Chairman Brown reminded everyone that it is the Commissioner's charge to consider if the matter is compatible with Comprehensive Plan. **He then asked for Public Comment.**

Public Comment - See attached.

5:00 p.m.: Chairman Brown closed the public portion of meeting.

Chairman Brown then asked for Commissioner's comments. He stated that a lot of money is being spent and we need to be certain to enhance the service industry for Hilton Head Island and be sustainable. Retaining a workforce that is trained in this area is important. Chairman Brown emphasized that as the Town moves forward with this process; updates do need to be provided to the Commissioners.

All the Commissioners were in support of this project and agreed on these issues:

- The aging, dilapidated buildings and infrastructure in that location will be redeveloped. There will be positive reinvestment on Hilton Head Island.
- Most issues centered on negative impacts of traffic but the benefits outweigh the concerns and it is not fair to place all traffic blame on this project.
- The project will add to quality of life
- The redevelopment and higher education is critical for Hilton Head Island.
- Hospitality program enhances our largest industry on Hilton Head Island.

- USCB will complement that area, provide sustainability, and create a strong and skilled workforce.

Mr. Taylor made a **motion** to **approve** application **PPR-2127-2015** as presented. The application is compatible with the Town's Comprehensive Plan for location, character and extent based on the Findings of Facts and Conclusions of Law contained in the staff's report. Mr. Stevens **seconded** the motion and the motion **passed** with a vote of 9-0-0.

Public Hearing

PPR-2118-2015 - Application for Public Project Review from the Town of Hilton Head Island for improvements at the intersection of Office Park Road, Pope Avenue, and New Orleans Road. These improvements include an expanded, signalized intersection that will widen all three roads.

Mrs. Jayme Lopko made the presentation on behalf of staff. Mrs. Lopko presented an in-depth review of the application including the location of the proposed project and plan for the project. The staff recommended that the Planning Commission find this application to be compatible with the Town's Comprehensive Plan for location, character and extent based on those Findings of Facts and Conclusions of Law as determined by the LMO Official and enclosed in the Staff Report.

The objectives of the project are to improve vehicular traffic and pedestrian conveyance and safety; to minimize costs, environmental impacts, private property impacts, and disruption during construction; and to enhance aesthetics and provide a gateway designation to the new USCB facility. The recommended improvements include an expanded, signalized intersection, which shall include widening New Orleans Road approach from 4 lanes to 5 lanes, widening Office Park Road from 3 lanes to 4 lanes, widening south (beach) bound Pope Avenue from 5 lanes to 6 lanes and retaining the north (mainland) bound Pope Avenue section at its current 6 lane configuration.

After a brief discussion, the Planning Commissioners made the following suggestions:

- Consider using more landscape medians
- Refuges are important – don't over asphalt
- Leisure paths could be wider
- Consider a no turn on red due to so much pedestrian and bike traffic
- Can New Orleans Road have a more sweeping curve over to Pope Avenue?

Mr. Jeff Buckalew stated that New Orleans is a County-owned road but staff will do what they can to flatten the curve. There will be a monument sign for USCB on the corner. Mr. Buckalew stated that they will not make lanes any wider than required for the turning radius and that all suggestions will be taken under consideration.

Mr. Babel stated that he was concerned that this is a car-centric culture vs. bike-friendly culture and asked that staff try to balance this for the safety of pedestrians and bikers.

Mr. Gant made a **motion** to **approve** application **PPR-2118-2015** as presented, as the application is compatible with the Town's Comprehensive Plan for location, character and extent based on the Findings of Facts and Conclusions of Law contained in the staff's report. Mr. Kristian **seconded** the motion and the motion **passed** with a vote of 9-0-0.

10. Chairman's Report - None

11. Committee Report - None

12. Staff Reports

The January 6, 2016 Planning Commission meeting is cancelled due to lack of agenda items. Mrs. Lopko stated that the traffic report will be presented at the January 20, 2016 Planning Commission meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:23 p.m.

Submitted By:

Approved By:

Eileen Wilson
Secretary

1/20/2016
Alex Brown
Chairman