

TOWN OF SEABROOK ISLAND
Town Council – Planning Workshop Meeting of August 2, 2019

MINUTES

Mayor Ciancio called the August 2, 2019, Town Council – Planning Workshop meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. Councilmembers Finke and Gregg, Town Clerk Allbritton and Town Administrator Cronin attended the meeting. The meeting was properly posted, and the requirements of the SC Freedom of Information Act were met. Mayor Ciancio turned the meeting over to Paul LeBlanc, of PLB Planning Group, who has been hired to do a comprehensive rewrite of the Town’s Development Standards Ordinance (DSO).

Mr. LeBlanc began the meeting by reviewing the purposes of zoning:

- Protect health, safety & welfare
- Balance community goals with private property rights
- Protect property values
- Ensure reasonable use of property
- Support Comprehensive Plan vision and recommendations

He then explained that the difference between the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning (DSO) is that the Comprehensive Plan is a policy, or a long-range vision, that has been adopted by Council; whereas, Zoning is the law. The Town can deviate from the Comprehensive Plan, but it should not be easy to deviate from the DSO since it is the law.

Mr. LeBlanc explained the reasons for rewriting the Town’s DSO are that the DSO should:

- Be tailored specifically to Seabrook Island.
- Support the new Comprehensive Plan.
- Reflect existing conditions and reduce non-conformities.
- Promote improvements and make it easier for people to improve their properties.
- Be simplified and made more user-friendly.

Mr. LeBlanc commented that he had met with many stakeholder groups on his last visit to Seabrook Island in order to learn about their concerns. Among the stakeholder’s concerns were:

- Flooding Protection – The Mayor, at this point, remarked that he would like to make sure that, during the process of construction, drainage onto neighboring properties be considered and also the effect the new FEMA flood maps would have on construction going forward after the maps are adopted.
- Setbacks
- Flexibility
- Permitting
- Layers of Authority – Town, SIPOA and Regimes
- Review Procedures
- Maintenance vs. Improvement
- Simplify
- Nonconforming Conditions – Mr. LeBlanc remarked that the DSO that was adopted after incorporation of the Town did not reflect what had already been built. The rewrite of the DSO will not address all the nonconformities but should give most of the property owners affected some relief.

Mr. LeBlanc stated that more than 30 pages in the DSO Blueprint deal with an audit of the current DSO regulations and his comments are divided into three categories – Housekeeping, Significant and Policy. The comments that are considered “Housekeeping” are things that do not need debate or decisions by the DSO Advisory Committee or Town Council. The DSO Advisory Committee will spend time on the

comments that are considered “Significant” and then pass changes along to Town Council in the form of a draft.

Some issues considered “Policy” and would need to be decided by Council include:

- District Structure – Mr. LeBlanc stated that Council would have to decide if they wanted to maintain the existing zoning district structure, which is essentially Planned Development, or change to a more conventional zoning district structure. Mr. LeBlanc recommended that it be changed to a more conventional zoning district structure since a PD is a good zoning tool, but it is rarely used for the entire island as has been done at Seabrook Island. Town Administrator Cronin commented that there is currently a Master PUD that the County had before the Town incorporated for all of Seabrook Island; but, since incorporation, there are PD’s for Camp St. Christopher, Bohicket Marina Village, Jenkins Point, Ocean Forest, Bohicket Creek Place, St. Christopher Oaks and the Village at Seabrook. Each of these have different requirements, which do not necessarily agree with the requirements of the DSO. If Council wishes to change the zoning structure, requirements can be written for each of the districts. If Council does not eliminate the PD Districts, they all need to be updated individually and that work, which would be quite expensive and time consuming, would not be included in PLB Planning Group’s current contract.
- Density/Minimum Lot Size – Currently, the minimum size for new lots is one acre vs. 17,500 sq. ft. Is that what Council would like in the revised DSO?
- New Multi-Family Development – Currently, no new multi-family development is permitted. Mr. LeBlanc remarked that, considering the broad definition of multi-family in the DSO, is that what Council wants going forward?
- Time Share vs. Rental – The Town Administrator commented that the DSO basically has no regulations relating to rental property; and, if this is changed, it will be a major policy decision. Town Administrator Cronin suggested that the Town would be in a good position to enforce regulations on rentals because the business license for the rental could be revoked if there was cause.
- Buffering – Mr. LeBlanc commented that typically buffering is a landscape separation between dissimilar uses, but the Town’s DSO requires buffering between two commercial uses. Should this be changed?
- Delegation – Mr. LeBlanc stated that, if any decision making is delegated, there should be definite criteria to be followed. Town Administrator Cronin remarked that minor things that have previously been considered by the Planning Commission could be handled by staff and some things that are currently delegated to the Planning Commission are against State law.

Mr. LeBlanc stated that the newly adopted Seabrook Island Comprehensive Plan recommends changing the zoning from Planned Development to more conventional zoning districts, but he would need affirmation that this is the direction that Council would like for him to follow. No matter what the zoning, whatever is done should be based on existing conditions that are in place now.

The format of the current DSO is not easily readable. Mr. LeBlanc recommended using the format that he has included in the DSO Blueprint and suggested using tables and graphics, which usually makes things easier to understand. The graphics will not be included in the initial draft but will be in the second draft of the ordinance.

Mr. LeBlanc stated that the next step is to continuing drafting the ordinance and work with the DSO Advisory Committee. Mr. LeBlanc will hold at least five review sessions with the Committee. Related chapters of the initial draft will be presented to the DSO Advisory Committee for their review and comment before the second draft ordinance is prepared in order to elicit comments from Council, Planning Commission, stakeholders and the general public. Input regarding the second draft will be actively solicited in a manner that will be decided by the Town. After the comments derived from the public are discussed with Council and the Planning Commission, it will be decided if final revisions or edits should be made. Following the decisions regarding changes and edits, a final draft will be prepared and submitted for public hearing and adoption.

Council seemed to have no problem with the format and style guide that Mr. LeBlanc intends to follow. Councilwoman Finke stated that, in general, she had no problem with the direction being taken but she did not completely understand the PUD/zoning issue. Town Administrator Cronin volunteered to send information contained in the Municipal Association of SC Planning Guide that should be helpful to Councilwoman Finke. Councilman Gregg commented that his main concern had been addressed and is comfortable with Mr. LeBlanc moving forward.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 12:30 p.m.

Date: August 27, 2019



Traye Allbritton

Town Clerk