



MINUTES
TRAINING SESSION
LAURENS COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
OCTOBER 5, 2021 – 5:00 P.M.
HILLCREST SQUARE – ADMINISTRATION BUILDING

Jim Royer, Chairman and Ed Burns, Vice Chairman;
Commission Members - George Austin, Sylvester Grant,
Casey Robinson, Bobby Smith and Abney Smith

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chairman Jim Royer; Vice-Chairman Ed Burns; Commission Members Sylvester Grant, Bobby Smith and Abney Smith.

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commission Members George Austin and Casey Robinson.

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF: Dale Satterfield, Director of Public Works, Chuck Bobo, Codes Official and Betty C. Walsh, Clerk to Council.

INVITED GUESTS: Rick Green, Director of Government Services, Upper Savannah Council of Governments.

AGENDA ITEMS : 1. Call to Order – Chairman Royer; 2. Invocation; 3. Pledge of Allegiance; 4. Approval of Agenda – October 5, 2021; 5. Overview: a.) What is the Planning Commission?; b.) Who is the Planning Commission; c.) What is the role and responsibilities of the Planning Commission; d.) Educational requirements and training; e.) Associated Parties of the Planning Commission; i.) Planning Tools: ii.) Documents and Structures; iii.) Comprehensive Plan; - Overview of the Comprehensive Plan; The ten Comprehensive Plan Elements; iv.) Zoning Ordinance:-Development and adoption; - Enforcement Personnel; - Board of Zoning Appeals; v.)Development Regulations: 6.) Planning Commission Questions / Comments; 7.) Adjournment.

CALL TO ORDER – Chairman Royer called the meeting to order at 5:04 P.M.

INVOCATION – Commissioner Sylvester Grant led the invocation.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE – Chairman Jim Royer led the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA – OCTOBER 5, 2021 – COMMISSIONER BOBBY SMITH made the MOTION to approve with COMMISSIONER ABNEY SMITH SECONDING; VOTE 5-0.

Public Works Director Dale Satterfield introduced everyone to Rick Green, Director of Government Services, Upper Savannah Council of Governments.

OVERVIEW:

Referring to a recent meeting of the Development Corporation, Commissioner Smith

Mr. Green replied that the discussion was about how to plan, not zoning.

DEVELOPING A PROGRAM OF PLANNING AND ZONING FOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS



The Planning Commission is an advisory body to Council that is appointed by Council charged with developing the Comprehensive Plan, Zoning and Land Development Ordinances. Also, provides recommendations on ordinances amendments, reviews subdivision plats and undertakes special studies at the request of Council. The membership is between five to twelve members with their terms of office staggered as established by Council; No dual offices held meaning that one cannot hold another public office and serve on the Planning Commission; A simple majority of the members must be present to have a quorum; established with organization to keep records of minutes, hearings and resolutions. Communication between Council and the Commission is needed for successful planning by holding Joint Workshops; Reports at Council Meetings and having a Council Member Assigned to Planning Commission. Educational requirements and training is required with certification.

The associated parts of the Planning Commission consists of Planning Tools: A Comprehensive Plan; Zoning Ordinance; Development Regulations such as Subdivision Regulations; Architectural Guidelines and Landscaping Ordinances.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ELEMENTS

Population - This element examines population characteristics and their affect on the community and the future of the area. It might include the following:

Number, size and characteristics of households	Historic trends and projections
Income characteristics and trends	Educational levels and trends
	Race, sex, age, etc

Economic - This element explores workforce trends and projections, and answers questions such as:

Where do people who live here work?	Where do people who work here live?
What is our economic base? Diversity?	What impact does tourism have?
What impact does manufacturing/industry have?	What are our strategies

Natural Resources - Prime agricultural and forest lands Unique park and recreation areas
Unique scenic views and sites Wetlands and flood plains
Plant and animal habitats Air quality, etc.

Cultural Resources: Historic buildings, structures and facilities Resources for historic information
Unique commercial or residential areas Educational or religious resources
Entertainment facilities Archaeological sites
Other cultural aspects Arts

Community Facilities - This element includes activities and facilities essential to community growth, development, and redevelopment:

Sewage System & Wastewater Treatment	Water Supply, Treatment and Distribution
General Government Facilities	Solid Waste Collection and Disposal
Fire Protection	Educational and Recreational Facilities
	Emergency Medical Services

Housing - This element examines housing characteristics and their affect on the community and the future of the area. It might include the following:

Age and Condition of Housing	Affordability of Housing
Owner/Renter Occupancy	Location and Type of Housing
	Other Housing Needs and Issues

Land Use - The Land Use Element addresses policy issues: The findings, projections and conclusions from each of the previous six elements influence the amount of land needed for various uses. This element should be developed to serve the interests of the community by addressing needs identified in the plan though the planning and development process. Base land use decisions on tangible information obtained through development of the plan and plan elements. Existing and Future Land Use by Categories such as: Residential; Commercial; Industrial; Agricultural/Forestry; Public and Quasi-Public Parks and Recreation; Open Space; Vacant or Undeveloped Land.

Transportation - Element must be developed in coordination with the land use element, to ensure transportation efficiency for existing and planned development. Considers transportation facilities such as:

Major road improvements	New road construction	Transit projects
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Pedestrian/Bicycle projects

Other elements of transportation system

Resiliency - This element, added in 2020, considers the impacts of flooding, high water, and natural hazards on individuals, communities, institutions, businesses, economic development, public infrastructure and facilities, and public health, safety and welfare.

Priority Investment - The priority investment element analyzes the likely federal, state, and local funds available for public infrastructure and facilities during the next ten years and recommends the projects for expenditure of those funds during the next ten years for needed public infrastructure and facilities such as water, sewer, roads, and schools.

The Plan should be developed to serve the community and make it useful and easy to understand by keeping the following in mind: The Plan should accurately reflect existing conditions; The Plan should identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats; The Plan should outline attainable goals and list recommendations that can be implemented; The Plan can assign responsibilities and time-frames to promote implementation of recommendations. It can be used to apply for grants.

ZONING

Zoning Ordinance - The Zoning Ordinance is adopted for the general purposes of guiding development in accordance with existing and future needs of the community. It is traditionally segregated land uses in order to separate incompatible land uses and to protect property values. Current ordinances will often allow some mixing of uses through overlay districts, mixed use zoning, and planned unit developments. And is guided by the Comprehensive Plan to prevent or reduce overcrowding; promoting quality of life issues; protect resources; regulate density and land use; ensure adequate public services and utilities are provided and to further the public welfare.

Elements of Zoning Ordinance consist of two major components - Map – designates areas for types of land use activities and text – addresses regulations and development specifications. The regulations can address: Uses by Districts; Setbacks; Buffers; Parking; Signs; Landscape Requirements; and other areas.

To adopt and amend zoning ordinances, there needs to be a Public Hearing held by Planning Commission or Council with notification published at least fifteen days prior to Public Hearing in the Newspaper of General Circulation. The adopting by Ordinance: Municipalities must have two readings and counties having three readings. Zoning Map Amendments Require: Posting Notices on property in question that is visible from each street and notification of adjacent property owners.

Zoning is developed by the Planning Commission and adopted by Council, enforced by Zoning Administrator. Any appeals and variances and uses by Special Exceptions is addressed by Board of Zoning Appeals. This is a Quasi Judicial Body responsible for settling administrative appeals and requests for variances from ordinance application and is appointed by Council but independent decision maker. The Board of Zoning Appeals should have a membership of three to nine members and all procedures should follow a judicial process with decisions based on facts of case. Members cannot accept evidence outside of the input process adopted in the Zoning Ordinance. Any Board decisions may be further appealed to Circuit Court – No review by Council. An accurate record of proceedings is critical because court will base its decision on the transcripts of the Board. The roles and responsibilities include reviewing appeals of alleged administrative errors; Review of requests for variances for relief from an unreasonable hardship; Review uses by Special Exceptions, as defined in local ordinances. An appeals process resolves disputes over administrative decisions or interpretations made in application of the zoning ordinance with any decisions based on facts.

Variances consists of relief from strict application of an Ordinance; an unreasonable hardship due to unique physical characteristics of the property; minimum relief necessary to overcome hardship and allow a

reasonable use of property; can not allow use not permitted by zoning ordinance or expand existing non-conforming use.

Special Exceptions contain discretionary uses may be allowed within a zoning category; Board reviews requests for special exceptions to determine if they meet criteria included in the zoning ordinance; special exception reviews are conducted as prescribed by ordinance through a public hearing process.

Training - All Planning Commissioners, Building Zoning members, and staff are required by state law to have an introductory class (6 hours) and a continuing education class (3 hours) every year during service. Those that are considered exceptions are Attorneys, Graduates of City Planning Programs, American Institute of Certified Planners.

COMMISSION MEMBER DISCUSSION / COMMENTS – There was an array of comments with discussions from the Planning Commission Members as follows:

Commissioner Bobby Smith questioned if the upcoming Comprehensive Plan was a five year upgrade or a ten year redo? Mrs. Walsh replied, “The last Plan was in 2013 and was an overall new plan. One way it was reviewed and created was various agencies such as the Water/ Sewer Commission, the Cities of Laurens and Clinton were all invited to a meeting to provide an overview of their planning process. From these presentations, it was incorporated in to the County Comprehensive Plan”.

Mrs. Walsh said that she would provide the members with an electronic copy of the plan for them to see how it was all pulled together.

Commissioner Abney Smith brought up the subject of zoning and if the County was still intending to hire a Planner with staff. Mr. Green replied that he understood that the County will be hiring a Planner for the County.

Commissioner Bobby Smith referenced a previous discussion concerning using the fire districts and zoning districts and asked for clarification as to the County Council having put into effect a binding ordinance that stated if the Council ever considered zoning again that it would have to go out to the public as a referendum again. Mr. Green replied that that was possible and the one modeled here for Laurens County was what Anderson County had implemented and a petition was required from those fire districts. But before anything could be done, the resolution would need to be rescinded. As to considering zoning again Mrs. Walsh replied that that was true and that she remembered it being in the form of a Resolution and that she would provide copies of it along with the Comprehensive Plan copies.


Commissioner Smith asked if there were specific areas that voted down the zoning options. Mr. Green replied that he did not know that answer.

Commissioner Grant referenced a situation on Lick Creek Circle where a landowner has allowed utility buildings to be placed on their property and used as housing. Some without utilities and some with power cords run to them.

Mr. Green replied, “What is allowed to happen, does impact a community”.

ADJOURNMENT – There was a Commission CONSENSUS to adjourn at 6:30. P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,



Betty C. Walsh
Laurens County Clerk to Council