

**City of Camden
Planning Commission
February 28, 2012**

Minutes

The City of Camden Planning Commission met for a regular meeting on Tuesday, February 28, 2012 at 6:00 PM in the City Council Chambers, Second Floor, City Hall. Commission members present were Mr. Bill Ligon, Chairman; Mr. Jim Burns, Mr. Johnny Deal, Mr. Byron Johnson, Mr. Brandon Moore, Mrs. Joanna Craig, Mr. Charles Wood and Mr. Shawn Putnam, Secretary. Also present were Mr. Henry Walker, Ms. Liz Gilland, Ms. Carol Rhea, Ms. Cheryl Matheny, Mr. Martin Cahn, and approximately 45 citizens.

Mr. Ligon entertained a motion to accept the minutes from the January 24, 2012 meeting. Mr. Burns moved to accept the minutes, and Mr. Moore seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

Major Amendment to Bridlewood PDD

Mr. Ligon introduced Mr. Walker to give a presentation on the major amendment to the PDD. Mr. Walker stated the amendment to the plan was to redesign the development to more closely mimic the layout of the adjacent neighborhood. Mrs. Craig asked Mr. Walker to explain the change in the number of lots. Mr. Walker responded that the number of lots was increased from 17 to 42. Mr. Burns asked about the range in size of the lots. Mr. Walker responded they range from half an acre to just over one acre. Mr. Burns asked about the size of lots in the adjacent Springdale neighborhood. Mr. Walker answered they were an acre or more in size. Mrs. Craig asked if the lot on the plan labeled as open space would be a park or green space. Mr. Walker responded that it would not be a park because it is not developable due to a drainage ditch running through it. He indicated the vegetation on that area would be left. Mrs. Craig asked if there would be trails or sidewalks would be installed. Mr. Walker said no because the road is already installed and there is not enough room for sidewalks. Mr. Wood asked about the advantage in changing the layout of lots. Mr. Walker indicated there was not a market for lots of the size in the current layout. He indicated the developer is ready to install the landscaping and has a builder ready to begin building houses. Mr. Deal asked Mr. Walker if the developer would build houses if the lots sized were not reduced. Mr. Walker indicated that in his opinion no houses would be built with the current configuration due to the lack of a market for lots of that size. Mrs. Craig referenced the issue of the trees being clear cut from the property and asked what types of buffers or vegetation would be planted. Mr. Walker said the developer would follow the landscaping plan submitted with the text amendment. Mrs. Craig asked if the fire department had any concerns with the proposal. Mr. Putnam responded that the fire department indicated a fire hydrant would be needed for the proposed cul-de-sac to be added. Mrs. Craig asked if a traffic study would be needed. Mr. Walker indicated a second entrance would be installed but that a traffic study had not been conducted. Mr.

Putnam noted that the land development regulations required a second entrance due to the number of lots. Mr. Putnam also noted that a traffic study is not required unless there are 50 or more lots, but the regulations do allow the Commission the option to require a traffic study for any development.

Mr. Ligon entertained a motion to open the public hearing. Mr. Wood moved to open the hearing, and Mrs. Craig seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

Mr. Frank Trapp stated that he lives in the Springdale neighborhood and is on the architectural control committee. He gave a summary of some of the requirements in the restrictive covenants for the neighborhood. Mr. Trapp expressed concern that the proposed development would reduce the property values of the property in the Springdale neighborhood. He also expressed concern about how the trees were removed.

Mr. William Moser asked about how the pond would be used, if a buffer would be placed around the pond and who would be responsible for maintaining the dam. He noted there is a pile of stumps in the wetland area of the property and asked if they would be cleaned up. Mr. Moser indicated he felt having restrictive covenants for the development is important and that they should be included in the amendment. He also noted there was a discrepancy in the property line between his mother's lot and the boundary of the pond shown on the sketch plan.

Mr. Robert Horton and Mr. Don Cook presented the following on behalf of a group of residents in the Springdale neighborhood.

We, the residents of the Springdale neighborhood, respectfully ask the commission to consider our requests concerning the new site plan submitted by BWF, LLC for the 59 acre tract of land adjacent to our subdivision. We are not against this property being developed but do not want it to adversely affect our subdivision or property values.

HISTORY OF PROPERTY

Before it was purchased in 2007, it was a heavily wooded tract of land zoned R-15 and was located in Kershaw County outside the City of Camden. BWF, LLC purchased the property, clear cut the trees and then had it annexed and re-zoned as a PDD (Planned Development District) into the City of Camden.

CURRENT APPROVED SITE PLAN

- 17 Lots ranging from 2-4 acres
- Private road in a gated community ending in 2 cul-de-sacs
- All homes would face the new interior road
- Riding trail for horses on the perimeter of the property

These lots were marketed from \$189,000 and above. With other restrictive covenants, the homes would have appraised for \$500K-\$800K.

NEW SITE PLAN PROPOSAL

- 41 Interior lots off of the current private road (not gated)
- 1 Lot facing Cornwallis Avenue (Springdale subdivision)
- Additional cul-de-sac and extension of one cul-de-sac to connect to Cornwallis Ave and Washington Lane.

We are asking the commission to consider the following:

- Require all homes to face the new road with no driveway access to Cornwallis Avenue (other than Parcel A)
- Require any home constructed on Parcel A to be site built with a crawl space using brick and/or Hardi-plank with a minimum of 2,400 sqft on the first floor with a side loading 2 car garage with the set back similar to 2212 Cornwallis Ave.
- Require a "Type D" buffer from the right corner of Parcel A to the corner of Cornwallis Avenue & Springdale Drive. Require same type of buffer on the "L" shaped perimeter of Lots 6-10 next to 2411 Springdale Drive
- Keep the current cul-de-sac without extending it to Cornwallis Avenue
- Ask that no real estate or directional signs be placed at the corner of Cornwallis Avenue & Springdale Drive or at the new road connecting to Cornwallis Avenue, if approved. Also, ask that no model home may be built or operated on Lots 28-40.
- Ask that no service entrance for construction be used off of Cornwallis Avenue.

To summarize, our main concerns are not to have this new subdivision connect to our subdivision and to have a substantial buffer on Cornwallis Avenue and the opposite side of the property next to 2411 Springdale Drive. We would rather not see any homes face Cornwallis Avenue but understand the developer's need from a financial standpoint to sell Parcel A separately.

We understand the Land Development regulation for the City of Camden requires any new subdivision with at least 30 lots to have 2 entrances which is mainly a safety requirement. With that in mind, we would like for the developer, City Planner & Fire Chief to determine any alternative ways to address this issue without the developer losing potential lots.

A final concern we have with the new road connecting to Cornwallis Avenue is the fact this new road will remain private and any repairs will be the responsibility of the residents (41 possible homeowners) whereas Cornwallis Avenue and all other roads within Springdale are state roads.

Questions we have:

- Can an “emergency only” entrance be constructed off of Springdale or Cornwallis Avenue to satisfy the two entrance requirement?
- Can the buffer requirement include mature trees and be required to be put in place before any building permits are issued?
- Require all new infrastructure and road upgrades to be completed before issuing any building permits?
- Can turning lanes be required on Springdale Drive for safety purposes?
- Should this property revert back to R-15 since it is only to be used as residential?

Mr. Wendell Moser stated he thought with the reduction in lot size that having horse amenities in the development was not feasible. The twenty foot buffer combined with the areas for the riding trail could provide a sufficient buffer to the adjacent neighborhood. Mr. Moser said he felt the clear cutting of the property lowered the value of the property. He also felt that the increase in lots would not cause the gated community component of the development to not be viable. He said a DOT traffic study should be completed due to the increase in traffic due to the neighborhood. The traffic will also increase when the truck route is completed. Mr. Moser stated that the pond must be constructed properly before DHEC would allow it.

Mr. Ligon entertained a motion to close the public hearing. Mrs. Craig moved to close the hearing, and Mr. Wood seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

Mrs. Craig recommended that a traffic study be required to determine if improvements such as a deceleration lane are needed. Mr. Wood commented that the stumps in the wetlands area should be cleaned up. He indicated he approved of the amendment. Mr. Moore stated that the buffer should be required to be completed first. Mr. Ligon said he did not believe that could be required. Mr. Burns expressed some concerns about the guidelines of the PDD would mesh with the proposal. Mr. Putnam said that the advantage of the PDD zoning is that there is not a minimum lot size which provides flexibility to the design.

Mr. Burns asked if the requirements for the buffer areas would remain. Mr. Putnam responded that the requirement would stay in place, and building permits could not be issued until all the improvements are complete and a final plat is approved or the developer has an approved improvement guarantee. Mr. Burns asked if the Commission could require restrictive covenants for the development. Mr. Putnam indicated that the Commission could not require the developer to have restrictive covenants on the project.

Mr. Deal said his understanding was that if the amendment was not approved that the property would not be developed. He agreed that a traffic study was needed. Mr. Deal said he felt that lots of the size in the amendment was needed in Camden and that it should be approved. Mrs. Craig disagreed saying that the number of lots in the neighborhood was too many for the area.

Mr. Ligon asked if a traffic study could be required. Mr. Putnam responded yes it could. Mr. Ligon said he felt a study would be appropriate. Mr. Putnam noted that the second entrance

required is not only for emergency access but for normal resident access as well. He related a story about a car crash in front of a neighborhood that blocked the single entrance to the neighborhood and no one could get in or out.

Mrs. Craig noted that the comprehensive plan and other plans talk about green space but that we were looking to put as many lots as possible. There are no green spaces or user friendly aspects of the development. Mr. Ligon noted that the ordinance does not have a requirement for green space or parks. Mrs. Craig asked if there was a way to increase the size of the buffer. Mr. Putnam noted the ordinance requires a twenty-foot buffer, which is four times the width of a Type A buffer. Mr. Burns asked for clarification that the landscaping and buffers would be installed before building permits would be issued. Mr. Putnam said that is correct.

Mr. Deal made a motion to recommend approval of the amendment as presented. Mr. Wood seconded the motion. Mr. Ligon asked if Mr. Deal would amend his motion to require a traffic study. Mr. Deal agreed to the amendment. Mr. Ligon asked for a vote on the motion, which was approved unanimously.

Revision to sketch plans for Southern Oaks and Black River Place developments

Mr. Walker explained that Randy Bock, who is the developer for Southern Oaks, has purchased a portion of Black River Place. Mr. Bock has asked to revise the plan to install a road to connect the two developments. Mr. Ligon noted the Review Committee had no concerns regarding the request. Mr. Putnam noted that this road would provide a second entrance for both neighborhoods.

Mr. Deal made a motion to approve the request as presented. Mr. Burns seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

Mr. Deal asked to discuss item six, other business, on the agenda prior to item five, discussion of the zoning ordinance. The Commission agreed to discuss item six. Mr. Putnam stated that City Council changed their meeting schedule and the change would have their meeting the same time as the Planning Commission meeting. Mr. Ligon said he thought it would be good to move the meetings to the third Tuesday of each month. Mrs. Craig made a motion to hold the Planning Commission meetings on the third Tuesday of each month. Mr. Wood seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

Presentation on Zoning Ordinance Update

Ms. Rhea gave a brief summary of the topics discussed at the meeting in January and the points the Commission had agreed upon relating to formatting and use of Smartcode elements. Ms. Matheny discussed the goals and intent of the landscaping and tree protection sections of the ordinance. She explained some of the reasons why communities used landscaping and buffer yards, including softening elements such as buildings and fences, breaking up large expanses of pavement, and screening items such as dumpsters. Ms. Matheny asked what the goals of the

tree protection section should be. Mr. Ligon noted that current ordinance calls for replacement trees for significant trees that are removed. Ms. Matheny noted some of the environmental benefits trees provide. Mr. Burns noted that trees provide habitat for wildlife and should be a consideration. Ms. Craig stated that Camden is blessed with numerous parks but that they provide a different area for trees than residential areas or downtown. Ms. Matheny reviewed the current intent of the landscaping, buffer area and tree protection requirements and asked if the requirements meet the stated intent. Commission members agreed that the current ordinance language does not meet the stated intent of these sections, and that the ordinance does not prevent landowners from clear cutting trees from their property. Ms. Craig stated that landscaping requirements should be designed to provide a specific look in downtown. Mr. Ligon said that he thought developers should not be allowed to take down significant trees randomly but that the requirements should not be so strict as to prevent development.

Ms. Matheny reviewed some strategies to consider in the ordinance update, such as consolidating all landscape requirements into one section, revising requirements to ensure plant health and enhance/improve roadways, parking lots, development, review and revise tree preservation requirements to assist in accomplishing community goals and objectives, incorporating existing tree inventory for expansions and new developments/construction, and incorporating landscaping plan and tree inventory review by the Urban Forester to enable flexibility and creativity, ensure plant health.

Mr. Ligon referenced the ordinance from Forest Acres that requires a permit to remove a tree and asked if the revised ordinance would require a permit to cut down a significant tree. Ms. Gilland noted that she has received comments from residents that are for and against requiring a permit to remove a tree. Mr. Ligon said he was not in favor of requiring a permit. Ms. Craig said she thought it would be good to have the Urban Forester make site visits to houses to assess trees. Ms. Gilland said she was already providing that service for residents. Ms. Rhea stated that some communities put their emphasis on protection requirements during construction instead of requiring permits after construction is complete. Mr. Moore noted that the main issue is preventing clear cutting of trees.

Ms. Gilland introduced herself to the Commission and explained her role as the Urban Forester with the city. She explained that there were three main problems with landscaping: deficient design, plant quality and size, and improper installation and/or maintenance. Deficient design includes not accommodating long-term growth by not allowing enough room for the plants to grow. Ms. Rhea noted that often screening requirements require plants to be planted too close together in order to provide an immediate screen, which causes problems with the long-term health of the plants. Ms. Gilland noted that there is a difference between the installation size and mature size of a tree and those need to be separated in the ordinance. Ms. Gilland stated that plant quality and size and the way trees are maintained can be problems. Ms. Matheny asked if standards could be listed in the ordinance. Ms. Gilland responded that there are industry standards that can be incorporated into the ordinance. She also indicated that planting standards are recommended to prevent problems such as trees being planted too deep or not deep enough and incorrect use of mulch. Ms. Gilland commented that irrigation of

landscaping and trees is important and should be accounted for in the design. Ms. Gilland stated that her approach is to have the right tree in the right place. She provided some examples of this, such as placing small maturing trees underneath overhead utility lines. She also encouraged consideration of including specifications for plant quality, installation and maintenance, such as ANSI standards.

Ms. Gilland suggested that the term “tree preservation” be changed to “tree conservation.” She commented that preservation normally applies to buildings and not living things such as trees. Ms. Gilland noted that requirements to protect trees during construction are particularly important to help them survive after construction is complete. She also noted that requiring smaller size trees at installation will improve survivability of the tree versus planting larger trees to provide a large tree immediately. Trees grow quicker than most people think and need adequate space to grow. Irrigation is also important to trees getting established. Ms. Gilland said she is developing a list of trees that developers can use to ensure the right tree for the right use. This list will be referenced by the ordinance.

Commission members agreed they were in favor of controls for landscaping and tree conservation, prohibiting clear cutting, providing a preferred list of trees and shrubs, change “tree preservation” to “tree conservation”, using standards such as ANSI standards, and providing flexibility in design of landscaping and tree conservation.

Ms. Matheny noted that at the next meeting the discussion would focus on setbacks and buffers and asked members to review these sections of the ordinance prior to the next meeting. Mr. Putnam noted that the next meeting would be March 20.

There being no further business, Mr. Deal made a motion to adjourn, and Mr. Moore seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously and the meeting was adjourned.

Shawn Putnam
Secretary

Bill Ligon
Chairman