



A regular meeting of the Planning Commission was held Tuesday, October 8, 2019, at 6:00 PM in City Council Chambers, City Hall, 155 Johnston Street, Rock Hill, South Carolina.

MEMBERS PRESENT Randy Graham, Duane Christopher, Shelly Goodner, Keith Martens, and Nathan Mallard

MEMBERS ABSENT Gladys Robinson, Justin Smith

STAFF PRESENT Eric Hawkins, Leah Youngblood, Bill Meyer, Amy Jo Denton, Alex Boyce, Matthew Gallman

1. Approval of minutes of the September 3, 2019, meeting.

Commissioner Christopher made a motion to approve the minutes from the September 3, 2019, meeting. Commissioner Martens seconded, and the motion passed unanimously by a vote of 5-0 (Commissioners Robinson and Smith absent).

PUBLIC HEARING ITEMS

2. Hold public hearing and consider a recommendation to City Council on petition M-2019-23 by Jason & Brittaney Rawdon to rezone approximately 2.70 acres at 2175 Mt Gallant Road and two unaddressed parcels from Urban Development District (UD) to Neighborhood Office (NO). The subject properties are proposed to be annexed into the City of Rock Hill. Tax parcels 636-00-00-005 to -007.

Staff member Eric Hawkins, Planner III, presented the staff report. He noted that the applicant was not in attendance, as this annexation had been initiated by the City.

No one from the public spoke about the request.

Commissioner Mallard presented the motion to recommend to City Council approval of Neighborhood Office (NO) zoning as presented. Commissioner Christopher seconded, and the motion carried unanimously with a vote of 5-0 (Commissioners Robinson and Smith absent).

After the Planning Commission completed its action on the agenda item, three members of the public entered the room who had been interested in learning about it. Chairman Graham explained that the Planning Commission had already taken action on the agenda item but that staff could talk with them separately to explain the request and to answer their questions about it.

NEW BUSINESS

3. Consideration of a request for approval of a regular food truck location at The Warehouses on White, 130 W. White Street. (Plan #20180388).

This item was deferred at the request of the applicant.

4. Other Business.

Comprehensive Plan Update Workshop

Long-Range Planning staff Amy Jo Denton, Alex Boyce and Matt Gallman presented a

summary of the draft of the existing conditions section of the Comprehensive Plan Update. A summary of the presentation highlights and Planning Commission discussion follows; no action was taken. A draft of the information reviewed by the Planning Commission is available on the Long-Range Planning page of the City's website.

Expansion of Planning Area Boundaries

The draft shows an expanded planning area for the Comprehensive Plan that matches the area of the Rock Hill School District. The reasons for this include the expected growth in the expanded area over the next couple of decades that should be considered in planning efforts today, especially given that much of the area is served by the City relative to water and sewer services. However, the City remains committed to the "Grow Inside First" value that was put forth during the last Comprehensive Plan review five years ago. In fact, that value likely needs to include a more detailed policy direction as part of this Comprehensive Plan Update.

Commissioner Christopher expressed concern that many people in the more rural areas within the expanded planning area boundary may have concerns about the urbanization of land near them. Staff explained that the intent is not necessarily to urbanize the entire area, but rather to plan for it over time.

Commissioner Christopher wondered whether the City and County might one day consolidate its planning services like the City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County have done. Staff explained that such an arrangement is unlikely to occur here in the near future.

Comparison to Other Ring Cities

Staff explained that the City of Charlotte has six major "ring cities," with Rock Hill being one, and that many of the statistics used in the plan would compare Rock Hill to the other five major ring cities (Mooresville, Kannapolis, Concord, Monroe, and Gastonia).

Population Profile

Rock Hill had an estimated population of about 74,309 people in 2018. The City experienced a net change in population of 49% from 2000 to 2018, which is viewed as a healthy population growth rate.

Other population facts include that compared with the other ring cities, Rock Hill:

- has the youngest population, with an average age of 33.5 years;
- is the most diverse, with a minority population of 46%; and
- is ranked a close second in educational attainment, with 88% of its population having a high school degree or higher.

Housing Profile

Rock Hill has about 30,000 housing units, with these units pretty evenly split between owner-occupied units and renter-occupied units. About 2/3rds of the units are single-family residences, and about 1/3 are multi-family residences.

With 2.4 persons per household on average, Rock Hill has a smaller average household size compared with the nation, State, and York County overall. It has the most non-family households among the ring cities at 40%.

Rock Hill's housing market has strong appeal, as more than 70% of the housing stock costs less than \$200,000. However, while only 26% of homeowners in Rock Hill are

cost-burdened, meaning that they spend 30% or more of their income on housing, 57% of renters in Rock Hill are cost-burdened.

Economic Profile

Rock Hill has the second-lowest median household income compared to the other major ring cities, with its median income at \$44,294. The City also has 18% of its population living in poverty, meaning an annual income of \$25,094 or less for a household of four or \$12,488 for a one-person household.

However, Rock Hill has good diversity among industries as well as strong job growth, with a net change of 48% since 2000.

About 66% of Rock Hill residents travel within York County for work, which results in a comparatively low mean travel time to work of about 24 minutes; only 27% of Rock Hill residents travel outside of South Carolina.

Transportation Profile

Most collisions in Rock Hill occur on the City's busiest roadways.

The City and regional partners are working to improve safety and congestion through widening, repaving, intersection and other road improvement projects. However, 55% of the roads in the planning area are owned by the SCDOT (and even in the City's jurisdiction today, the State owns 43% of the roads), which takes some road improvement projects outside of the City's control and ability to fund, particularly in the area of repaving projects. However, funding is limited to around \$1.4 million, which is not enough to maintain our current ratings. While outside sources such as Pennies for Progress help with projects on State roads, the average road improvement project usually takes about seven years to be implemented after it has been approved.

Chairman Graham asked whether thought had been given to the City taking over more State roads, especially in neighborhoods where the State owns part of a road and the City owns another part. Staff explained that the State has a program where it will transfer roads to municipalities, and will even give them funding for about one resurfacing project, but then the municipalities must fund the maintenance of the road in perpetuity after that. Additionally, if the City were to take over more State roads in neighborhoods, questions would arise about how to choose one neighborhood over another. As a result, the City has taken over State roads only in very rare circumstances in the past, such as three miles in the Downtown area a few years ago in order to control the streetscape projects there.

Commissioner Martens brought up the problem where the State will not maintain sidewalks in its rights-of-way, and the City says that the responsibility is the State's, so it will not do so, either, and the result is a situation where no one is maintaining the sidewalks along some State roads. He suggested that the City to look at changing its policies about that so that the sidewalks can be properly maintained for the use of citizens. Staff explained that the City does not have the funds to maintain the sidewalks on all of the State's roads within its jurisdiction, and to change the way this is handled now would require not only City Council approval but also legislative action at the State level.

Community Facilities Profile

Rock Hill is uniquely positioned to serve York County with water and sewer services. Its police and fire departments have the highest ratings in their profession, with the Police

Department being a CALEA Flagship Agency and the Fire Department having an ISO Rating of #1. The City also has world-class parks facilities, and schools with many choices and capacity for growth.

Cultural Resources Profile

Rock Hill has six historic districts and a vibrant arts community. A study was recently completed that indicated that the arts is a \$27 million industry in the City and that it supports 846 full-time jobs. The Comprehensive Plan Update will revisit the numerous types of arts programs in the community to better identify where the gaps are and how those gaps might be best filled.

Natural Resources Profile

Rock Hill has good regulations in place to protect floodplain and other sensitive environmental areas. The City also has good air quality in all areas except for ozone, and the Comprehensive Plan's values of "Growing Inside First" and "Providing Connections (between different use types and areas of the City) should help improve that area as well.

Public Health Profile

This was a new element included in the last Comprehensive Plan review a few years ago. The focus during this update will be on disease prevention through nutrition and exercise because four of the top seven leading causes of death in South Carolina are directly correlated to being overweight or obese.

Land Use Profile

This subject will come back to the Planning Commission as one of its focus topics. 39% of the land in the expanded planning area is undeveloped. (This includes forestry areas, agricultural uses, and uses with buildings that are no longer viable for use.)

Public Engagement

Staff solicited the Planning Commission's input about which groups to target during its outreach for the Comprehensive Plan Update. The Commissioners suggested adding the following:

- Riverwalk residents, who are often newcomers to the community
- Young professionals
- Craft brewery patrons (who frequently are newcomers to the community and/or are young professionals)
- The Hispanic population that lives in the Cherry Road area
- High school students
- College students (Chairman Graham suggested that staff explore whether Winthrop University might award cultural credit for participation)
- Rock Hill Eats Facebook page members (Commissioner Mallard said that the group has a lot of members, is very active, and is very opinionated)

Commissioner Goodner also volunteered to review the list of civic groups that has received invitations to participate in the past to make sure that it reflects all that exist that may be interested in doing so.

Discussion Questions

Where do you want to see additional single-family residential growth?

The expanded planning area has undeveloped land to the north, south, east, and west of the current City boundaries. However, several challenges arise when one considers the appropriateness of additional residential development in these different areas:

- Developing more land to the north of Celanese Road would add more congestion to the already congested corridor.
- Developing land to the west of the City would place more demand on all roadways to get commuters to I-77.
- Land near the Interstate has been reserved for industrial and other employment-based uses in the past under both the City and the County's Comprehensive Plans. (However, this has largely led to the development of distribution centers in this area, and the City is now considering whether it should continue to reserve land for that use, which takes a lot of space and does not generally come with high-paying jobs.)

Commissioner Christopher suggested that the City plan its road connections through undeveloped areas first, and then plan neighborhoods around the road network. Staff explained that RFATS already has a collector roads plan.

Commissioner Martens expressed that if people are not making enough money to be able to afford residences, it would be a good idea to plan for neighborhoods to the north of the City (northeast, so as not to overload Celanese Road) so that residents can commute to Charlotte more easily. He suggested that forcing development to the south of the City may result in housing options that do not have lasting value since most of the regional development synergy is occurring to the north of Rock Hill instead of to the south of the City. Staff explained that it may make sense to plan for a neighborhood power center with a grocery store and other services in any new development area first, to better support the future residents so that the neighborhoods are likelier to maintain value over time.

Commissioner Mallard suggested that the east side of I-77 is probably riper for development, and developing more neighborhoods there would not add as much traffic to existing road systems.

Do we want to increase density and mixed-use in support of bus rapid transit and our transit system?

RFATS recently voted to revisit its study of bus rapid transit options; while light rail is appealing in some ways, it costs a lot more and it is hard to figure out where it would run.

Commissioner Christopher pointed out that light rail could be built on Norfolk-Southern's right-of-way. Staff agreed that double-tracking the Norfolk-Southern line for a commuter train may be feasible in the long-term.

Commissioner Christopher expressed that he would like for the City to revisit the funding and construction of another bridge over the Catawba River, as well as to extend Dave Lyle Boulevard east to lessen its congestion issues.

Commissioner Goodner asked whether a Downtown trolley was still in the works for the future. Staff explained that it was not. She also asked staff to seek law enforcement's

perspectives about whether mass transit to and from Charlotte might increase crime in Rock Hill.

Two additional thought questions were asked but were not discussed in detail since the topics had been touched on already in the other discussion questions:

Do we want to extend Dave Lyle Boulevard over the river? How do we work with the County to plan for growth?

What type of business growth should we be planning for? Particularly along I-77?

5. Adjourn.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m.