



**Forest Acres Planning Commission  
Minutes  
April 17, 2018 6:00 P.M.  
Forest Acres Council Chambers  
5205 N. Trenholm Rd.**

**1. Call to order - determination of a quorum.**

Joe Gentry, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:03 P.M. and a quorum was determined by the presence of Ralph Bailey, Ellis Creel, Jack Cantey, and Joe Gentry. Will Dillard, Stephen Powell, and Pendleton Grove were absent.

**2. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes: February 20, 2018 and March 20, 2018**

On a motion by Jack Cantey, seconded by Ellis Creel, the March 20, 2018 minutes were approved unanimously without change.

On a motion by Ellis Creel, seconded by Ralph Bailey, the February 20, 2018 minutes were approved unanimously without change.

**3. New Business**

**1. Continued Discussion of update to Forest Acres Comprehensive Plan**

Mr. Gentry opened discussion noting that, as a number of Commission members were absent, that they would continue to discuss the Plan but take no action at this meeting. He then turned the floor over to City Administrator, Shaun Greenwood.

Mr. Greenwood introduced this topic noting that two Commission members who were absent at the last meeting, were present at the current meeting, so they might benefit from a recap of Mr. Dillard's proposal regarding the Future Land Use map (as presented and discussed by Mr. Dillard at the last meeting).

Mr. Gentry noted his understanding that C-1 zoning is not truly commercial, but rather office/institutional (i.e., service-related entities rather than retail). Asked by Carole Cash of Greenhill Rd. what might constitute institutional, Mr. Gentry noted that examples might include a training/seminar school. Mr. Gentry noted this to point out that there are different tiers of non-residential zoning.

Mr. Greenwood discussed Mr. Dillard's suggestions for areas that are identified as commercial on the 2009 Future Land Use map and shifting them back to residential: along Decker Blvd.; areas along both sides of Beltline, areas on Hanson, Bagnal, and Harrison; Forest Drive at Greenhill and Idalia; Forest Drive at Dalloz; Trenholm Rd. south of Coker; Two Notch and Bayview.

Mr. Creel noted that he lives on Dalloz and he doesn't anticipate the area around Dalloz and Forest will remain residential in the future because of the density of traffic on Forest Drive.

Mr. Gentry then focused on the intersection of Coker and Trenholm noting that Mr. Dillard's proposal leaves the parcel just to the north of that intersection as commercial.

Carole Cash, Greenhill Rd., ask for clarification and received confirmation that Mr. Dillard's proposal leaves the parcel north of Coker as commercial while the one immediately to the south of Coker is residential. She then asked why the Commission would not keep it residential to protect neighborhood access, particularly given the city's recent zoning decisions emphasizing not turning residential corners commercial. Mr. Gentry noted that the Planning Commission's charge is to create a higher level conceptual approach and, as such, they might see this parcel as remaining commercial on the Future Land Use map even though it may stay residential.

Dr. Ralph Owens, Greenhill Rd., noted that the Planning Commission's work does guide zoning decisions.

Ms. Melissa M., Woodleigh Rd., noted her experience with development in the residential areas around downtown Atlanta, particularly the importance placed on preserving in-town neighborhoods. She noted the influence of the Future Land Use map in promoting smart development and the protection of these in-town neighborhoods. She further noted the strain that too high a density and mix of uses puts on schools and infrastructure. She indicated that she was happy to see that in Mr. Dillard's proposal a number of parcels marked commercial were being turned back to residential. Mr. Gentry noted that markets like Atlanta have different considerations than the Columbia area but that her comments were helpful and well received.

Mr. Wentworth, Winthrop Dr., noted his appreciation for Mr. Dillard's willingness to return the parcels along Trenholm Rd. to residential from commercial on the Future Land Use map. He noted that as bad as vacant residential looks, vacant commercial is worse. He noted that the area still has very nice homes and the neighborhood is still viable. Mr. Gentry noted that residential along a commercial corridor has worked in certain areas – like Idalia at Forest Drive. He said that such an opportunity doesn't exist everywhere along the commercial corridors, though.

Mr. Byrd, Coker St., noted his appreciation for Mr. Dillard's map, but wants to see the parcel north of Coker and Trenholm (not just the parcels south) returned to residential as well.

Ms. Dottie Reynolds, Coker St., noted that when the Comprehensive Plan shows a parcel as commercial there may be reticence on the part of the property owner to sell it for residential purposes since they generally wouldn't be able to get as much money with residential zoning. So, they refuse offers that might keep the properties residential. Mr. Gentry noted his conviction that the Planning Commission doesn't have the charge to try to speculate on those matters. Ms. Reynolds reiterated her opinion that the parcel north of Coker on Trenholm should be made residential on the Future Land Use map. She and Mr. Gentry had a brief discussion about pending litigation regarding restrictive covenants on the property.

Ms. Cash noted that developers do look at the Comprehensive Plan to guide their endeavors. Mr. Gentry reiterated that City Council still ultimately has to decide any rezoning proposal.

Ms. Mary Reynolds, Citadel Ave., noted that there has been much discussion about the charge and mission of the Planning Commission and that she's concerned that the charge seems to be to "take people's homes and influence what's going to happen to them in the future and say it's for the betterment of Forest Acres". Mr. Gentry stated any Planning Commission in any municipality is charged to make an educated assessment based on growth patterns and trends. He noted that developers and others will use the map to guide their plans, but that the public always has recourse with their elected officials. He noted the importance of planning as an activity, citing areas that have not had good planning. Ms. Reynolds asked about her voice and that of likeminded residents.

Ms. Meadows noted her hope to see improvement along Beltline toward Two Notch Rd., given the City of Columbia's recent initiatives to make improvements farther down Beltline within their city limits.

Ms. Cash noted that she appreciated the clarification she heard at this meeting.

A resident asked what influences and directs the Planning Commission. Mr. Gentry noted that what drives their decisions is the desire to allow growth in an orderly fashion that produces a good community.

Dr. Owens noted that growth should be responsible, avoiding such development as strip malls, etc.

Asked about the posting of maps on the city's website, Mr. Gentry noted that the future land use map will only be posted after the Comprehensive Plan is voted on and adopted.

**2. AN ORDINANCE FOR THE CITY OF FOREST ACRES, STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA, PROVIDING THAT THE CODE OF ORDINANCES, CITY OF FOREST ACRES, BE AMENDED BY REVISING SECTION 21.236 OF SAID CODE, IN ORDER TO PROVIDE FOR ATTENDANCE OF THE MEMBERS OF THE ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS; AND BE FURTHER AMENDED BY REVISING SECTION 21.236.1 PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD IN ORDER TO LIMIT TERMS OF THE CHAIRPERSON.**

Mr. Gentry introduced this item noting that this has been a consideration for a year or so. What is specifically before the Planning Commission involves the Zoning Board of Appeals, but a similar change would be considered for the Planning Commission, as well.

Mr. Creel noted that he agrees with the attendance requirement, but that is generally not in favor of term limits for the chairperson because of the importance of experience in leading such boards.

Mr. Gentry noted that his opinion was that initiating term limits beneath one's office was applying a different set of standards for those below you than you hold. "If Council will apply term limits to themselves, then I support [implementing term limits for boards]. If not, I don't support [implementing term limits for boards]." He noted that if the board wishes to elect a new chairperson under its current governance, that it wouldn't bother him. He noted his conviction that the process is not broken so it shouldn't necessarily be fixed.

A resident asked about how appointments work. Mr. Gentry noted that Council is elected and that they appoint members of the ZBA (3-year terms, staggered) and Planning Commission (2-year terms, staggered) and that these members serve at the pleasure of Council.

Mr. Greenwood clarified that the proposed ordinance above, regarding the ZBA, came before the Planning Commission because it is part of the city's Zoning Ordinance. The proposed "sister" ordinance regarding the Planning Commission is part of the city's general Code of Ordinances and is, therefore, not under the Planning Commission's purview, which is why it's not specifically on the agenda. A recommendation to Council is required for the ZBA ordinance, but the Planning Commission could also informally comment on the Planning Commission version.

Mr. Bailey noted that they looked at this a year or so ago and concurred with Mr. Gentry regarding the position of the chair. He noted that a 2- or 3-year stint is not enough time to learn everything needed to be chair.

Mr. Gentry directed the Commission to look at the ordinance regarding the ZBA first noting that he's opposed to the term limits (noting that while he's a good friend of the chair, that this is not about him personally). Mr. Cantey asked if there were any legal implications to these proposed term limits or is it merely a recommended practice from a conference? Mr. Greenwood noted that his understanding is that it was the latter, and perhaps some comments from the community. Mr. Creel noted that he thinks there's a big difference between being a good volunteer for a committee and possessing the skill set to chair the committee.

**Mr. Cantey made a motion regarding section 21.236, that the Planning Commission recommend the changes with respect to attendance, seconded by Ellis Creel. The motion passed unanimously.**

**Mr. Cantey made a motion regarding section 21.236.1, that the Planning Commission not recommend term limits for the chairperson, seconded by Ellis Creel. The motion passed unanimously.**

Mr. Cantey noted that the chairperson could easily be changed in one of two ways – either 1. through the election of the chairperson by the commission itself or 2. by the decision of the Council not to reappoint any member, including the chairperson, when his or her term ends (or, in effect, at any given point during the term since members serve at the pleasure of Council).

Mr. Greenwood noted that administration keeps applications for positions on the boards/commissions on file and use those filed applications to make recommendations

to Council if a vacancy arises. He noted that, in our sized city, the waiting list of willing volunteers is not very long. Mr. Greenwood noted that its his observation that there was very little turnover on the Planning Commission when he was formerly with the city, but that in the 6 or 7 years since then all of the positions except one have turned over (a comparatively high rate for Forest Acres and compared to other cities in the area).

**4. Adjourn**

Mr. Cantey made a motion to adjourn; Mr. Bailey seconded. Mr. Gentry declared the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Andy Smith, Asst. City Administrator/Finance Director  
*(Administrative support of Planning Commission)*