

**COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING
MINUTES
MARCH 2, 2011**

Pursuant to Public Notice, Mayor Ferrante convened the special meeting of the City Council on Wednesday, March 2, 2011, at 6:00 p.m., in the Council Chamber. Those present were Mayor Joseph Ferrante, Vice-Mayor Mike Chase, Councilman Jeffrey Fleis, Councilman Scott Rhodes, Councilman William Higginson, City Manager Michael P. Crotty, and City Clerk Barbara Montanaro.

Mayor Ferrante led the Pledge of Allegiance. He announced that staff would present a report on all items and then he would open the meeting to public comments.

CONTINUED REVIEW OF RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED IN THE FINAL REPORT OF THE BLUE RIBBON FINANCIAL/BUDGET COMMITTEE INCLUDING RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE “DEVELOPMENT” SECTION OF THE COMMITTEE’S FINAL REPORT:

Community Development Director Laura Canady stated that there were over one hundred attendees (realtors, businesses, bankers, developers) at the January Virtual Caravan where she and Building Official John Stone highlighted the City’s Mixed Use District and vacant/underutilized properties.

DEVELOPMENT

RECOMMENDATION #1: Task appropriate City board(s) to evaluate 2:1 ratio (residential: commercial) in commercial mixed use district

There are two issues: 1) Policy 1.9.4 of the Comprehensive Plan requires that any commercial property converted to another use must be replaced by the same amount of property being converted to commercial. 2) The ratio 1:1 of Commercial to Residential in the Mixed Use District limits the residential use to an area equal to or less than the commercial use.

Both issues were amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and approved by the Department of Community Affairs after an extensive review process.

There was discussion about a new market study to determine what uses (commercial, residential, or other) are needed and amending the Comp Plan to let the market determine what is developed.

RECOMMENDATION #2: Task appropriate City board(s) to evaluate lot aggregation and closing of some roads west of A1A

Lot aggregation and closing some of the east-west streets entering Highway A1A has been discussed to make the substandard commercial lots large enough to support a business. The land gained by closing a street could provide required parking or stormwater retention. Closing some streets might provide added safety with fewer cuts onto A1A.

Staff recommended evaluation of need and potential uses at board level.

RECOMMENDATION #3: Pursue incentives for housing construction in Pelican Coast

In Pelican Coast, only the property north of Shearwater Parkway is platted for individual sale. The property south of Shearwater Parkway is reserved for potential military housing. However, the owner of that land has determined that there will not be a market for residential uses for the next ten years.

Tax abatement, similar to the Payment in Lieu of Taxes in place on the south side of Shearwater may stimulate sale or development of properties north and south of Shearwater.

The city does not have a history of offering incentives for development but will look at projects on a case-by-case basis. Community Development Director Canady has been working with the Florida State University Institute of Government regarding the economic impact of incentives.

RECOMMENDATION #4: Encourage Hunt Pinnacle and USAF to change allowed use of now cleared 100 acres from low/medium density residential to a corporate campus, including hotel conference center

Rezoning the SR A1A frontage on the south side of Shearwater Parkway to its highest and best use is another tool to stimulate development and revitalization of the A1A corridor and existing businesses located on SR A1A. Changes in land use and zoning should focus on stimulating the workforce and providing clean-tech jobs that support Patrick Air Force Base, the space program, sciences, medical research/education, and future clean/energy growth industries. A hotel/conference center/restaurant would support companies and the workforce. This would create public/private/military partnership and enhance the use of land that would remain vacant.

Community Development Director Canady stated that the City boards have had preliminary discussions on adding hotels to the Land Development Regulations. Also, Lighting Science Group has been working with HP Communities to construct a corporate campus clean-tech facility at Pelican Coast. If they reach agreement, the City will be asked to consider an amendment to the Future Land Use Map and the Pelican Coast PUD regulations.

Jim LaRue, LaRue Planning Associates, explained that this change in use would involve a small scale amendment to the Future Land Use Map of the Comprehensive Plan. A small scale amendment can be adopted by the governing body and presented to the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) without the protracted DCA review process.

RECOMMENDATION #5: If/when Lighting Sciences Group departs the Regency Center property, encourage the owner to renovate and promote it as an upscale incubator site for high-tech firms involved with Patrick AFB or space operation. Include empty properties across street (South Patrick Drive).

This would increase the City's tax base, attract new or smaller companies in the high-tech/clean-tech fields, and revitalize South Patrick Drive by populating it with employees who will use businesses along this corridor.

RECOMMENDATION #6: Attempt to attract modest two-story, 80-100 unit family-style hotel/motel to vacant bowling alley site

This topic is an Agenda item for the 7:00 p.m. regular meeting.

RECOMMENDATION #7: Support transfer-of-development rights to allow the City's *de facto* community center (bounded by the south side of Pelican Coast, the DeLaura/Satellite High property, Jackson Avenue, and A1A) to be redeveloped as a dense (up to 20+ living units per acre) and intense (up to 6 or 7 stories with a floor area ration of up to 3.5) mixed use residential commercial city core.

Staff has no opinion or recommendation at this time.

RECOMMENDATION #8: Reconsider rezoning oceanfront land to allow for mixed residential-commercial use

Community Development Director Canady reported that this had not been popular in the past. Public opinion may differ in this economy. The market will determine whether this is feasible.

RECOMMENDATION #9: Task City boards to consider a tax-abatement program for those who develop/redevelop commercial properties.

This will be considered at a future workshop.

Mayor Ferrante opened the meeting for public comments asking that comments and questions be directed to him and the Council; the following individuals addressed Council:

- John Fergus, 135 Maple Drive, stated that the City is in abnormal economic times that are temporary, not permanent. However, changes that you make to density and aggregation of land will be permanent. He stated that this is not the best time to do a market study because businesses that were viable for many years are folding in these hard times; but that does not mean it will continue. Regarding evacuation times and improvements that may come as the result of opening the Pineda Extension, he stated that the Department of Community Affairs is considering the time to get off the island worse than when standards were previously published. He cautioned about making permanent changes to solve a temporary problem.
- Dominick Montanaro, 465 Glenwood Avenue, stated the strong hand that DCA had over communities will be ending under current leadership in Tallahassee. Increasing the two to one ratio of residential to commercial in the mixed-use district would allow two stories of residential over one level of commercial and make the site more viable. Closing a couple streets entering A1A would provide more parking for the businesses.
- Richard Eginton stated that recommendations 9 and 4 regarding Lighting Science and changes to the Comprehensive Plan seem to be at odds with Goal 1 in the Comprehensive Plan to provide a safe environment, avoid blight, and preserve residential and natural resources. Hurricanes can destroy businesses and high-density properties and the City can be left with a shell. He was not in favor of altering the goals of the Comp Plan.
- Rodney Smith, 265 South Robert Way, commended staff for the way we do things in the City. Begin with the end in mind: where do we want to be in fifty years and how do we get there? Does the City need to develop, redevelop, or both? Plan to deal with things that are important instead of responding to emergencies.

Council commented as follows:

- None of the development ideas discussed would add infrastructure costs; the Police, Fire, roads, utilities, etc., are already in place. The purpose is to generate revenue so the tax rate can be reduced.
- The City would have input as to size and layout of the Lighting Science project.
- It may not be necessary to do a complete market study, but certain aspects of it need to be updated.
- The requirement to replace any commercial property rezoned to another use is not beneficial to the City.

JOINT EFFORTS WITH OTHER ENTITIES

RECOMMENDATION #3: Encourage the Mayor to approach Space Coast League of Cities about

requesting the State Legislature to reimburse at least a portion of the tax revenue lost for preserving lands for conservation proposes (an effort endorsed and encouraged by the State and of benefit to all State residents.

Mayor Ferrante stated that it is his goal this year to talk with the Legislators asking for funds to offset the tax revenue lost by preserving the oceanfront property; he will also approach the environmental groups.

Mayor Ferrante adjourned the meeting at 6:59 p.m.

Barbara Montanaro
City Clerk