

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR SESSION
STONE HARBOR PLANNING BOARD

September 9, 2013

4:30 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Hand, who stated that all requirements of the “Open Public Meetings Act of 1975” had been met.

ROLL CALL:

Planning Members Present

Thomas Hand

Mayor Suzanne Walters

Perry Conte

Wayne Conrad

Joselyn O. Rich

Robert D. Bickford, Jr.(via Telephone Conference)

Jill Gougher

Board Solicitor

Andrew Catanese

Board Secretary

Patricia H. Wagner

Zoning Officer

Joanne Mascia

Alternate Member Present

Julian Miraglia

Approve Minutes

Motion by Mrs. Rich and seconded by Mr. Conrad to approve the minutes of the July 22, 2013 session.

Affirmative votes: Mr. Hand, Mayor Walters, Mr. Conte, Mr. Conrad, Mrs. Rich, and Mr. Bickford and Mrs. Gougher.

Residential C Zoning Committee Report

Mr. Miraglia noted they have received correspondence from a property owner on the Courts who expressed her desire to expand her residence by allowing additional height to her home. The committee will continue to meet and will report back to the Board on their progress.

Waterfront Business District Committee Report

Mr. Bickford gave a brief synopsis of the committee’s work to date. Fred Gruel prepared a draft document for the Board to review. Mr. Gruel also had a Power Point presentation prepared for viewing. Highlights include:

Purpose –

1. Maximize potential utility & enjoyment of the Shelter Haven Basin through active and passive uses.
2. Encourage a core area of retail shops, public amenities, restaurants and upscale hotel rooms within the district.
3. Enhance scenic, recreational & social elements of the public realm as they relate to Shelter Haven Basin.

Issues –

1. WBD is a relatively small but critical area of the Borough.
2. WBD has significant unrealized potential.

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3. Pattern of relatively small lots & diverse ownership complicates implementation of the Borough's land use vision and frustrates public access to the Shelter Haven Waterfront.
4. Scattered detached housing breaks up the continuous downtown streetscape. Curb cuts and private driveways create conflicts with pedestrians and limit on street parking.
5. Post Sandy stringent waterfront development standards make ground level development more challenging. Particularly true for first level residential development.
6. DEP minimum public access standards don't necessarily result in public access which is visible, convenient and desirable.
7. The use of an onsite surface parking & residential garages is an inefficient use of potentially valuable property.
8. The area is not within a designated redevelopment area and it is unlikely that it could meet the criteria of the Local Redevelopment Housing Law.

Implementation Strategy

1. To encourage desired development, an incentive based approach is recommended.
2. One potential tool is the use of Variable Density Zoning. Larger parcels are given greater development options than smaller ones in order to encourage assembly and cooperation among adjacent owners. The options may include higher density, increased floor area, greater heights or additional uses.
3. Given the sensitivity and importance of the area a Form Based code approach is recommended. These regulations give greater control over the physical form of development while offering more flexibility in uses than traditional zoning.
4. A definitive off-site parking solution is necessary for the effective development of the area.
5. The development of the zone should include "real" public access, as well as some form of Public Park to create a destination. Otherwise public access is likely to be nothing more than a narrow meandering walkway through a series of backyards.
6. The Borough may wish to consider: limited, upper story residential use; increased height; modify or eliminate on-site parking requirements. Keep 1st floor for commercial uses.
7. Incentives apply only to larger properties (i.e. 60+ frontage lots)

Parking Options

1. The best opportunity is along 97th Street. The area is within a 1 – 5 minute walk of the Waterfront Business District.
2. Various parking configurations were discussed.

Destination

The concept plans call for the creation of one or public gathering places. Options include a public vest pocket park or plaza on 3rd Avenue and various floating park options for the Shelter Have Basin.

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There is a question regarding the ownership of the center of Shelter Haven Basin. Heyer Gruel Associates were not able to ascertain if it is owned by the State of New Jersey (Riparian Land) or the Borough of Stone Harbor. Mr. Catanese stated if it is a man made basin, it is not riparian land. The basin would be considered a public right of way.

The east side of Third Avenue was not included in this particular study.

The bay public access walkway is depicted at 15' in width.

General public/private parking options were discussed.

Potential to have only 1 parking space per hotel bedroom rather than 1½ spaces.

Must weigh the options of allowing any type of commercial use on the 1st floor versus strictly retail uses.

PUBLIC SESSION

Mr. Hand opened the public portion of the meeting.

Michael DeLorey of 54 Bower Court spoke first. His wife, Barbara, had written to several Board members about the zoning height limitations for the Residential C Zone. He was informed that any variance application would be heard by the Zoning Board of Adjustment and not the Planning Board. Mr. Catanese told him for more specific building requirements he should go directly to the Zoning & Construction Officers for information.

Ron Gordesky, General Manager of the Reeds at Shelter Haven Hotel spoke next. His hotel currently owns approximately 80 parking spaces in two separate parking lots on 97th Street. The Reeds is currently planning for future expansion on additional lots they own, one is the adjacent building to the south of the hotel commonly known as the Polly's building and the lot directly across Third Avenue, the former Henny's Restaurant. They will have a need for more parking spaces and he is asking the Board to consider reducing the required 1 ½ space to 1 space per hotel bedroom. His company is also interested in a public/private partnership for a parking garage on 97th Street.

The possibility of a conversion of hotel rooms into condos is still a concern for the Board.

Mr. Bickford feels it is important for the Board to concentrate on the creation of off-site parking sites. This is not only for the WBD, but for the potential hotel/motel overlay zone and the potential for allowing residential uses on second & third floors in the WBD.

Motion by Mr. Conrad and seconded by Mr. Conte to recommend amending the required hotel/motel parking spaces from 1 ½ spaces per room to 1 space for all new construction.

Board Discussion

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Mr. Conte asked that Mr. Catanese prepare definitions of what constitutes a hotel and what constitutes a hotel room (the number of bedrooms or the number of beds in a single room).

Mrs. Mascia stated the CAFRA standards will apply to the number of parking spaces required. This is dictated by the number of units to be built & not the number of bedrooms.

Mr. Hand, Mayor Walters and Mrs. Rich feel this subject needs further review and study before making a commitment tonight.

Mr. Gruel recommends looking into the context of how this change could affect future plans for the WBD (i.e. increased public access to waterways) before making any reduction in the number of hotel/motel required parking spaces.

Mr. Miraglia stated that Councilman Mastrangelo has also put the parking requirement topic on the agenda for the next Borough Administration & Finance Committee meeting.

Again several members of the Board asked for more time to research this issue.

Motion by Mr. Conrad and seconded by Mr. Conte to recommend amending the required hotel/motel parking spaces from 1 ½ spaces per room to 1 space for all new construction.

Affirmative votes: Mr. Conte, Mr. Bickford

Negative votes: Mr. Hand, Mayor Walters, Mr. Conrad, Mrs. Rich and Mrs. Gougher

Mr. Hand opened the public portion of the discussion.

Randall Turney, 9715 Third Avenue spoke first. He asked that the WBD residents & surrounding basin property owners be kept in communication of the Boards actions. He stated that he did not know that the planners were developing a proposed plan for development of the area.

Minutes of the meetings are posted on the municipal web site as soon as possible after being approved by the Board. Agendas are also posted in advance of any meeting.

Mr. Gruel noted that at this time the intent of this project was just a study to be shared with the Board and that if the Board members wanted to move forward with it, or just sections of it, there would then be a necessary series of public involvement.

No one else spoke

Public session was closed.

NEW BUSINESS

Mrs. Rich noted she had received correspondence from Mr. Wright regarding the current bulkhead elevation height requirement of 7.5'. He would like to have it lowered to 6.2'. This topic comes under the jurisdiction of Borough Council for any amendments to the ordinance.

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Piling Foundations

Mr. Hand and Mrs. Rich again expressed their concern about the heights of the piling foundations now being put in place and asked if there is anything the Planning Board or the Borough Council can require so the exposed areas underneath a house can be disguised by breakaway walls or some type of landscaping.

Mr. Catanese, with the help of Mrs. Mascia, will research what the Borough could require to cover the exposed areas. Mr. Gruel reminded the Board that they can't regulate aesthetics, but they may be able to require a type of minimal landscaping, etc to hide the exposed areas.

Mr. Bickford asked if the Board was planning to hold a meeting on September 23, 2013. Board members felt there was not a need for that session. The next meeting will be held on October 7, 2013 at 4:30pm.

OLD BUSINESS

None

ADJOURNMENT

Having no further business at hand Mr. Hand called for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

A motion to adjourn the meeting by Mr. Conte and seconded by Mayor Walters. All members present voted in the affirmative.

APPROVED: November 4, 2013

ATTESTED: _____
Patricia H. Wagner, Secretary Stone Harbor Planning Board