

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR SESSION  
STONE HARBOR PLANNING BOARD

November 4, 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 (Delayed Arrival)  
Robert D. Bickford, Jr.  
Jill Gougher

Board Solicitor

Andrew Catanese

Zoning Officer

Joanne Mascia

Board Secretary

Patricia H. Wagner

Alternate Member Present

Julian Miraglia

**Approve Minutes**

**Motion by Mr. Miraglia and seconded by Mr. Conrad to approve the minutes of the September 9, 2013 session.**

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

**Motion by Mr. Miraglia and seconded by Mr. Bickford to approve the minutes of the October 7, 2013 session.**

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

**2014 Budget**

A figure of \$30,000 has been requested to fund professional fees, \$15,000 is for the services of the Board Solicitor and \$15,000 is for professional fees for the Professional Planners. The top priority projects for 2014 are:

Waterfront Business District	\$7,500.00
Hotel/Motel Zone	\$5,000.00
Residential C Zone (Courts)	<u>\$2,500.00</u>
Total	\$15,000.00

**Residential C Zone** – The subcommittee reported they still want to meet with Court residents. At this time the committee feels the Court residents are still concerned with the height of the properties on the adjacent numbered streets and they are also unsure of what they are permitted to construct on their Court residences. The committee will report back at a later date.

**97<sup>th</sup> Street Parking** – Discussion centered on the possible restriping of the parking lots in order to gain more spaces. One lot is half owned by the Borough with the other half being owned by the Reeds Hotel. Mrs. Mascia stated the Reeds lot is deed restricted and this might cause another site

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plan review to amend the original approved plan. Mr. Catanese will also research to see if cross easements are possible for the travel lanes. It is not know at this time the current size of the spaces in question.

Mayor Walters suggested the Borough's Engineers, Remington Vernick, review the Heyer Gruel parking proposal and then give the Planning Board their professional opinion along with an estimate of the cost of restriping project.

Mr. Catanese stated that the Borough Solicitor would be responsible for drawing up any agreement between the Borough and a private property owner for parking responsibilities such as signage and meter enforcement.

Mr. Hand suggested the Borough research having someone operate a valet parking concession. Board members agreed with this & Mrs. Rich suggested the having the cars parked at either the municipal marina or the beach lots, both of which are underutilized during the summer evening hours. The right to operate such a concession would have to be put out to bid.

**Waterfront Business District**

Mr. Conrad noted his personal observations of the Central Business District. They are as follows:

A Set of Tentative Assumptions Concerning Stone Harbor's Central Business District

- 1) While the number of shoppers in our current CBD remains vigorous on summer weekends, those numbers have fallen during non-holiday weekdays in the mid- summer and more dramatically during the off season.
- 2) Most of our recently-constructed residences are primarily, owner-occupied and many of those for shorter periods of time than has been true historically. This means that there are fewer residences available for weekly rentals and therefore there are fewer persons across the summer that will eat in our restaurants, shop for themselves in our stores or purchase gifts to take home for others.
- 3) This suggests (and numerous businesses report) declining revenues for many of our business owners.
- 4) Classic market theory would suggest that the set of aforementioned conditions would bring about a decrease in rental rates charged to business owners who do not own their properties.
- 5) However, this is not the case. Because Stone Harbor is such a beautiful community, with a vibrant CBD for 6-8 summer weekends, coupled with the fact that most of our new business owners do not conduct any formal market analysis and simply report, "I always wanted a shop in Stone Harbor", we never end up with many open store fronts with result that the per foot charge for business usages remains artificially high. (This of course works to exacerbate the difficulties for existing businesses.)

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6) Our CBD would probably benefit from a higher percentage of professional usages because of the tendency of professional usages to bring persons to a CBD.

Moreover, professional business clients tend to be spread more evenly across the calendar year.

7) Our existing stock of motels along Second Avenue is both small and outdated by today's standards and are unheated, thus limiting their year-round appeal.

Specific Observations Related to the Proposed Waterfront Business District

1) Each of the highly respected planning firms who have been hired by Borough Council on the recommendation of the Planning Board has recommended the creation of a Water Front Business District. Each has seemed to sense that the evolution of such usages would have a positive halo effect on existing CBDs.

2) Easy access to our bay water lagoons is something that both existing residents and visitors desire such access and would in themselves draw people into the area.

3) The co-existence of residential and business and professional usages along Shelter Haven basin is probably not ideal for either class of owners. Therefore, to allow the relatively few existing residential usage to continue, but not to be continue when properties are sold is, probably in the best interest of both groups of owners and many thoughtful observers would suggest in the long-term interest of the borough.

4) The encouragement of business and professional usages at the ground level along Third Avenue with the possibility of residential usages at the second and third levels should encourage the evolution of a more vital total business district.

5) Furthermore, an increased mixture of business and (second level) residential usage will increase the tax revenue from that area with effect of reducing the tax burden on existing residential owners throughout the borough.

6) Both the proposed bay walk and pocket park are foundational to the proposed, Waterfront Business District. Each is eligible in part and probably in the whole for public support from funds the citizens of Stone Harbor have already placed into public coffers.

7) Meetings with the Cape May County Open Space Committee have indicated that irrespective of what occurs with proposed peace park that body considers each proposal on its own merits and had indicated that it encourages the utilization of its funds for projects which promise benefit to the economic well being of communities.

8) Adequate parking is necessary for the proposed WBD, the upgrading of the set of motels along Second Avenue, as well as the further development of The Reeds complex.

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Final Observations

I think all of these considerations will: 1) necessitate clear-headed analysis of what will foster the greater good, 2) recognize that specific aspects of any worthwhile endeavor may run against the personal interests of particular citizens, 3) this is what both planning boards and municipal leadership is all about, and finally 4) we live in times wherein any proactive public initiative is suspect.

But as McGeorge Bundy, then president of the Ford Foundation has reminded us, the long-term worth of many of our most important initiatives only become apparent to the general public after they have been entered upon and hopefully attained. WWC

**Board Discussion:** Centered around the planner's recommendation to discourage strictly single family usage and to encourage commercial or professional usage on the first floors and residential uses on the second floors. The latter scenario calls for amended residential parking requirements and possibly the creation of a parking utility.

Mrs. Rich noted that she is uncomfortable continuing the discussion about the Waterfront Business District because of the matter facing the Stone Harbor Zoning Board of Adjustment and she is excusing herself from taking part in any further discussion and feels the Planning Board should also not be discussing it further.

Mr. Catanese explained that a complaint was filed against the ZBA's decision for plan approval for a single family residence with bulk variances on the Turney property at 9715 Third Avenue in the WBD. The complaint challenging the approval was filed by Julian Miraglia.

Mr. Catanese feels the ZBA approval will be reviewed on its own legal merit and the Planning Board can continue its own WBD discussion and review. Mr. Catanese also stated that at some point in the discussion some areas of conflict may arise for Mr. Miraglia and he must be aware of this.

Mr. Conte noted the plans for the WBD have been evolving over the past five years and it is important for the Board to continue its review of the WBD vision separate from that of the Central Business District (CBD).

Mr. Bickford also would like for the Board to continue the review of the recommendations and suggestions of Heyer Gruel and fine tune them before recommending any actions be taken by the Borough Council. For example, allowing residential uses for 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> floors could stimulate development in the area and also increase tax revenue. The creation of an offsite parking utility/valet parking could eliminate the need for curb cuts along Third Avenue decreasing the potential for pedestrian accidents.

Mr. Hand asked what the appraised value difference would be between a single family property and one that is of mixed use, commercial plus residential, in the WBD. Mrs. Mascia is to ask the Borough Assessor for this information.

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Mrs. Gougher had several questions. She asked what type of study was performed before the Board originally created the Waterfront Business District. For example, would this district bring additional foot traffic to the area? She was told no formal study was done. Also, is it realistic to have the bay front walkway constructed in the WBD? Mrs. Mascia stated man made lagoons, such as the Shelter Haven Basin are treated differently. For single family homes & duplexes the walkway is not required but a commercial property would have to apply to CAFRA for review.

Did anyone talk to the management of the Reeds Hotel to see how they felt about a pier extending out into the lagoon from their property? Mr. Conrad stated the pier was only a conceptual idea presented by Heyer Gruel and not a central idea of the WBD plan.

Have any meetings been held for area residents to have their input be part of the development process? Several Board members felt that since the Board does not have a solid plan to present it would be premature to hold such meetings at this time. However, the Board will be asking for their input at an appropriate later date.

Mr. Conte and Mr. Hand also suggested the subject of outdoor music to be part of any WBD discussions.

The WBD discussion will be continued at the December 16, 2013 meeting.

**PUBLIC SESSION**

Mr. Hand opened the public portion of the meeting. No one spoke.

Public session was closed.

**OLD BUSINESS**

Mr. Catanese had been asked to research if the Board/Borough Council could require breakaway walls in the V Zones. He feels FEMA regulations encourage some level of municipal control, as long as we are not regulating aesthetics and we do not preempt any FEMA rules. Mr. Catanese will prepare a resolution/proposed ordinance for the next meeting for Board's consideration.

**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. Conrad and seconded by Mrs. Rich. All members present voted in the affirmative.

APPROVED: December 16, 2013

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