

**CHARLESTON COUNTY
PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
April 14, 2025**

ATTENDEES

Planning Commission: Chair Cindy Floyd, Vice Chair Pete Paulatos, Luke Morris, Garry Lesesne, David Kent, Warwick Jones, Logan Davis, and Susan Cox were present. Adam MacConnell was absent.

County Staff: Joel Evans, Director of Zoning/Planning; Andrea Melocik, Deputy Director of Zoning/Planning; Marc Belle, Assistant County Attorney; Andrew Hethington, Assistant County Attorney; Marche' Miller, Planner I; Win Carlisle, Planner I; Stephanie Ondo, Planning Technician II; and Monica Eustace, Planner II were present.

Members of the Public: Diane Milligan, Emma Berry, Tim Lengen, Brady Cashen, Margaret Ferrin, Patricia Fair, Grant Story, Bob Story, LaDon Paige, Amy Chico, Nancy Theiling, Linda Blanchard, Sam Spence, Melody Dover, Michelle Robbins, and Nathan Hertel were present.

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Floyd called the Charleston County Planning Commission meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

COMPLIANCE WITH THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT & INTRODUCTIONS

(YouTube timestamp: 0:19)

Chair Floyd announced that the meeting was noticed in compliance with the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act and stated the purpose of the Planning Commission. Chair Floyd introduced the Commissioners and asked Mr. Evans to introduce Charleston County staff in attendance.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

(YouTube timestamp: 2:01)

Commissioner Paulatos moved to approve the March 10, 2025 Annual Business meeting minutes and Planning Commission meeting minutes, seconded by Commissioner Kent. The Commission voted, 8-0, to approve the minutes.

ZLDR-03-25-00159: REQUEST TO REZONE TMS # 286-00-00-023 AND -037 FROM LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL (R-4) TO THE STORYBOOK FARM PLANNED DEVELOPMENT (PD-192) ZONING DISTRICT TO ALLOW FOR A MAXIMUM OF 147 MULTI-FAMILY UNITS, A MINIMUM OF SEVEN OF WHICH ARE TO BE WORKFORCE DWELLING UNITS, AND COMMUNITY GATHERING SPACE.

(YouTube timestamp 2:37)

Chair Floyd introduced the next agenda item, a request to rezone TMS # 286-00-00-023 and -037 from Low Density Residential (R-4) to the Storybook Farm Planned Development (PD-192) Zoning District to allow for a maximum of 147 multi-family units, a minimum of seven of which are to be workforce dwelling units, and community gathering space.

Commissioner Lesesne recused himself and left the room at 2:03 pm.

Mr. Carlisle delivered the staff presentation. He summarized the parcels' history, current zoning, future land use designation, and the proposed Planned Development request. He stated because one or more of the approval criteria are not met, Staff recommends disapproval; however, should the request be approved, Staff recommended the following conditions:

- For the health, safety, and welfare of the people using the Light of Christ Ministries parking area, the applicant will be required to go through the Site Plan Review process for improvements to the parking area, meeting all applicable requirements of Article 9.3 of the ZLDR; and
- The Letters of Coordination from USPS, Charleston County Sheriff's Office, Fire Department, and Charleston County EMS must be provided with the site plan review application and any letters already obtained may need to be updated for site plan review.

Chair Floyd invited the applicants to deliver a short presentation. Tim Lengen, Regional Entitlement Manager for NVR, delivered a presentation focusing on how the requested PD would help achieve Charleston County's housing goals and provided a summary of the community engagement completed with Light of Christ Ministries and the Red Top community.

Commissioner Morris asked the applicant if any of the feedback provided at the workshop was implemented into the PD. Mr. Lengen stated the site plan has mostly remained the same; however, the applicants have met three or four times with residents of the Red Top Community and congregants of the Lovely Hill Baptist Church to discuss their concerns regarding drainage, flooding, traffic, and financial contributions to the community. Commissioner Morris asked if the streets on the property will be privately maintained. Mr. Lengen answered in the affirmative. Commissioner Morris inquired about the references to "missing middle housing". Mr. Lengen stated it was more of a price point driven term.

Commissioner Jones asked if any of the residential buildings are sited on the Flood Zone AE areas of the parcel. Mr. Lengen stated the AE portion is mostly the parking lot and there is a piece of one of the buildings currently shown in the AE area, however, they will pursue a Letter of Map Revision through FEMA once the fill is placed on the property.

Chair Floyd opened the floor for public comments. LaDon Paige (886 Hunt Club Run) spoke in opposition to the request referencing the South Carolina Local Government Comprehensive Planning Enabling Act of 1994, Art. 5, § 6-29-710. She stated the proposed PD's density is not appropriate for the location and does not align with the ZLDR, therefore the R-4 zoning should remain in place. She stated the applicants have requested four stories but their renderings show three stories. Additionally, Ms. Paige stated a fire station would be a great use of the property.

Diane Milligan (1134 Idbury Lane) spoke in opposition to the request and asked that the County consider purchasing the land for public use. She stated Storybook Farm is a local gem and part of the Red Top Community, a historic settlement community. She stated concerns related to traffic, safety, and flooding.

Emma Barry (131 Spring Street), Communities and Transportation Project Manager, Coastal Conservation League, spoke in opposition to the request. She stated the location of the proposed Planned Development is near the edge of the Urban Growth Boundary, therefore, it is inappropriate for the high level of density and in order for growth management tools like the UGB to work, there

must be a gradual transition from the highest density in the center and lower density as you draw closer to the outer edge of the boundary. Additionally, she stated concerns related to the exasperation of traffic and growth pressures that would be placed on the Red Top Community due to the proposed development's close proximity to the historic settlement community.

Margaret Ferrin (822 Biberry Court) spoke in opposition to the request. She stated concerns relating to traffic, construction traffic for Long Savannah, traffic safety along Bear Swamp Road, and how development will affect schools.

Patricia Fair (3956 Gift Boulevard) spoke in opposition to the request. She stated residents of Johns Island do not have a quality grocery store and therefore must travel along Bees Ferry Road in the same places that are being considered for higher density. She stated there is a traffic crisis and suggested that local government put together a task force to address the issue. Ms. Fair asked the Commission to vote no to the proposed request.

Bob Story (1154 Bees Ferry Road), property owner, spoke in support of the request. He stated the property has been in his family for 50 years and development was always in their plan. He stated NVR listened to what they wanted for the property – lots of green space. He stated if there were 40 tract homes, there would be no maintenance or green space. He asked that the Commission vote to approve the request.

Linda Blanchard (2430 Sylvan Shores Drive), spoke in opposition to the request and stated concerns regarding traffic, traffic lights, density, and infrastructure.

Sam Spence (147 King Street), Director of Public Affairs for the Preservation Society of Charleston, spoke in opposition to the request. He stated the Preservation Society is part of the Johns Island Task Force and supports the Gullah Geechee Heritage Preservation Project which is a County-supported project that the Red Top Community is a participant in as well. He stated the County ZLDR calls for new PDs to incorporate innovative site planning that contributes public benefits to the surrounding communities. He stated recent and continued development along Bees Ferry Road and Highway 17 already significantly impacts the Red Top Community.

Melody Dover (645 Hughes Road) stated she and the rest of the Red Top Community, as well as Lovely Hill Baptist Church, have been speaking with the applicant. She stated they are not completely opposed to what the applicants are doing, however, they are opposed to the impact it may have on the community. She stated now that development in the area has gotten to its current state, they feel that one more couldn't hurt, but all previously noted concerns about traffic, flooding, and cultural changes remain true. She stated if the developer can help to mitigate those concerns, they could work with that. She stated this applicant is the only developer who has ever spoken with the community about their plans.

Commissioner Jones put forward a motion to disapprove the request; seconded by Commissioner Morris for discussion.

Commissioner Jones stated if proposing a PD with increased density there is typically a benefit to the community and it seems the public benefit from the view of the developers is more density, however, from the letters received and majority of comments it does not seem the public is seeing any benefits from the proposed development.

Commissioner Morris stated he agrees that housing is a dire need in the county and stated the following points as reasons why he could not support the requested PD as presented:

- Housing affordability is directly impacted by a current zoning code which artificially caps supply to *not* meet demand;
- The proposed PD, as *presented*, would further erode public sentiment for any kind of additional density;
- The proposed PD would meet his current definition of Bad Density because the development's car-centric design reinforces car dependency for day-to-day needs and there is essentially only one housing type being presented in relation to its scale (affirming an expectation for an array of housing types being dependent on the size of the project).
- He defined Good Density as narrow streets, a highly connected gridded street system; an array of housing types, reduced setbacks, reduced off-street parking requirements, and scaling to pedestrian experience.
- He noted Downtown Charleston as an example of Good Density, highlighting the ways in which this Good Density is not allowed under current zoning laws.

On the motion of Commissioner Jones, seconded by Commissioner Morris, the Commission voted, 7-0-1, to recommend disapproval of the request (Commissioner Lesesne recused).

ZLDR-03-25-00160: REQUEST TO REZONE TMS 352-13-00-069, 1488 ORANGE GROVE ROAD, FROM THE LOW-DENSITY RESIDENTIAL (R-4) ZONING DISTRICT TO THE URBAN RESIDENTIAL (UR) ZONING DISTRICT.

(YouTube timestamp 54:33)

Chair Floyd introduced the next agenda item, a request to rezone TMS 352-13-00-069, 1488 Orange Grove Road, from the Low-Density Residential (R-4) Zoning District to the Urban Residential (UR) Zoning District.

Commissioner Lesesne returned to the meeting at 2:54 pm.

Ms. Miller delivered the staff presentation. She summarized the parcel's history, current zoning, and future land use designation. She stated because criteria A and B may have been met, staff recommended approval.

Chair Floyd invited the applicant to deliver a short presentation. Nathan Hertel, 1488 Orange Grove Road, gave his presentation which focused on: the need for affordable mixed use housing, the March 2025 average prices of single-family detached homes versus townhouses/condos, the average median income for the 29407 area code, incentivization for families to move in and invest in the neighborhood, and the fact that the subject parcel is on relatively high ground and within walking distance to a school, park, library, fitness center, and several other businesses.

Chair Floyd opened the floor for public comments. No one spoke in opposition or support of the request.

Chair Floyd asked if there was a motion for discussion. Commissioner Lesesne put forward a motion to approve the request, seconded by Vice Chair Paulatos. Commissioner Morris stated this request is an example of good density because it is an incremental increase in density, it is on high land within a more connected street pattern area, closer within the Urban Growth Boundary, within walking distance to commercial nodes, and it is actually missing middle housing, if it were provided.

On the motion of Commissioner Lesesne, seconded by Vice Chair Paulatos, the Commission voted, 8-0, to recommend approval of the request.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Floyd announced that the next Planning Commission meeting will be held on May 12, 2025.
Chair Floyd adjourned the meeting 3:07 pm.

YOUTUBE VIDEO RECORDING

Video recordings of meetings are posted to the Charleston County YouTube Channel.
Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ye46UGYHlsg>

Stephanie Ondo

Recording for the Planning Department

Ratified by the Charleston County Planning Commission
this 12th day of May 2025.



Cindy Floyd
Chair

Attest: 

Joel Evans, PLA, AICP, Director
Zoning & Planning Department