

Planning Commission Minutes

Meeting Held May 26, 2026

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr. Raad Joseph, Mr. Craig Daniels, Ms. Delores Gibson, Mr. Graham Osteen, Ms. Cary Farrow, Mr. Nick Robinson, Mr. Kim Robb

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

OTHERS PRESENT: Mrs. Jennifer Boyer & Mrs. Brittany Powell

- I. **Call to Order** “Notice of this meeting has been made in accordance with the South Carolina Code of Laws as Amended.”
- II. **Approval of Minutes for meeting held on March 24, 2026:** Mr. Craig Daniels made a motion to approve the minutes for meeting held on March 24, 2026. Ms. Cary Farrow seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.
- III. **Public Input on Non-Agenda Items:** None
- IV. **Motion to Amend Agenda:** Mr. Raad Joseph made a motion to amend the agenda to move Matters of Information before New Business. Mr. Nick Robinson seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.
- V. **Matters of Information:**
 - A) Staff presented four plats to Chairman Mr. Raad Joseph for signature as matters of information. The plats were described as routine administrative items that did not require Planning Commission action or discussion. One set of plans had previously received Planning Commission approval and was being resubmitted solely for re-signing. The plats presented included a re-subdivision of two lots located at 605 Green Meadows, an accommodation plat for Lots 158 and 159 on Commanders Island Road, and a combination and re-survey of properties located at 219–221 Smith Street. After review, Chairman Mr. Raad Joseph executed all four plats and confirmed the date of signature as the 26th, corresponding with the date of the meeting.
- VI. **New Business:**
 - A) **Approval Of Revised Application Agenda:** Mrs. Jennifer Boyer presented a revised application submission schedule for Planning Commission review. She explained that the proposed changes affect only the application deadlines and do not alter the established meeting dates or meeting times. **Mrs. Jennifer**

Boyer stated that under the previous schedule, all applications were submitted within a similar timeframe, often resulting in delays of 45 days or more between application submission and Planning Commission consideration. The revised schedule was developed to streamline the review process, ensure compliance with statutory review timeframes, and reduce the average waiting period for applicants to less than 30 days. **Mrs. Jennifer Boyer** further explained that application deadlines were adjusted to avoid weekends and holidays, with many deadlines now falling on Mondays to improve efficiency for both applicants and staff. As an example, she noted that the submission deadline for the July Planning Commission meeting was moved from June 10 to June 29, with similar adjustments made to subsequent deadlines through January 6, 2027. **Ms. Cary Farrow** inquired whether applicants requiring approval from other boards, such as the Architectural Review Board or the Board of Zoning Appeals, would be required to obtain those approvals before appearing before the Planning Commission. **Mrs. Jennifer Boyer** responded that it may not always be feasible to complete multiple review processes within the same month and explained that staff would not want to bring an application forward while approvals from another board remained pending, particularly when those approvals could significantly affect or prevent a project from moving forward.

Motion: Mr. Raad Joseph made a motion to approve the revised application submission schedule as presented. The motion was seconded by Ms. Cary Farrow. The motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

VII. Commission Discussion:

- A) Comprehensive Plan Update and Related Planning Initiatives:** **Mrs. Jennifer Boyer** provided an update on the City's Comprehensive Plan process, reporting that the Request for Proposals (RFP) issued for consultant services had been withdrawn prior to the submission deadline, resulting in no proposals being received. **Mrs. Jennifer Boyer** explained that **Ms. Elizabeth Tucker**, the City's new Assistant City Administrator, had recently joined the organization and was reevaluating the City's approach to the Comprehensive Plan update. She noted that it remains possible that the City may postpone the update until the next required review cycle. In the interim, staff continues to work internally on amendments to the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO), with proposed amendments anticipated for Planning Commission review in the coming months. **Mrs. Jennifer Boyer** also reported that work on the Historic District Overlay remains underway with the City's consultant, who conducted a kickoff

meeting in April and has begun drafting ordinance language. Following completion of the Historic District Overlay, the consultant's scope of work will include updates to the Urban Core Overlay District (UCOD), Main Corridor Overlay District (MCOD), Architectural Review Board procedures, and related guidance documents.

- B) Supporting Planning Documents Requiring Updates:** **Ms. Cary Farrow** discussed several planning documents that she believes are in need of revision, including the West End Redevelopment and Revitalization Plan, originally adopted in 2003. **Ms. Cary Farrow** noted that while the plan resulted in the creation of the R-5 zoning district and a task force that remained active until approximately 2017, the document itself has not been updated during subsequent planning cycles despite funding allocations. Discussion also addressed the Special Area Management Plan, which may require revision due to the westward expansion of the Harborwalk and changing conditions near the former steel mill property. Additionally, **Ms. Cary Farrow** expressed concern that the City's 2016 parking study is now outdated and no longer reflective of current conditions. **Mrs. Jennifer Boyer** acknowledged these concerns and stated that staff would continue evaluating these documents as part of future planning efforts.
- C) Budget Reductions Affecting Planning Initiatives:** **Mr. Nick Robinson** raised concerns regarding proposed reductions in funding for planning initiatives within the upcoming fiscal year budget. Discussion indicated that approximately \$150,000 in funding associated with UDO updates had been removed, along with a significant reduction in Comprehensive Plan funding. **Chairman Mr. Raad Joseph** expressed concern that the moratorium had been justified in part as a means of updating planning documents, while funding for those efforts was simultaneously being reduced. **Mrs. Jennifer Boyer** explained that one possible rationale was to spread UDO revisions across multiple budget cycles rather than undertaking a comprehensive rewrite in a single year. Commissioners discussed the importance of maintaining planning priorities and conducting annual reviews of Comprehensive Plan goals and objectives to provide recommendations to City Council during future budget cycles.
- D) Moratorium Status and Development Impacts:** **Mrs. Jennifer Boyer** reported that the development moratorium remains in effect through mid-August, with no information available regarding a possible early termination or extension.

She explained that the moratorium currently restricts new variance applications, subdivisions involving more than three lots, and zoning map amendments. **Chairman Mr. Raad Joseph** noted that developers have expressed frustration with these limitations. **Mrs. Jennifer Boyer** stated that staff frequently receives inquiries from residents seeking variances and clarified that many applicants mistakenly believe the Board of Zoning Appeals can provide relief from all development restrictions. She further noted that the moratorium does not prohibit building permit applications, which has been a common source of confusion. Staff anticipates a significant increase in variance requests once the moratorium is lifted.

- E) Yacht Harbor Development Status:** **Ms. Cary Farrow** inquired about the status of the proposed Yacht Harbor development associated with Mr. Philip Lowe in the Bayview area. **Mrs. Jennifer Boyer** explained that while the applicant successfully obtained a variance, no subdivision application had been submitted prior to the enactment of the moratorium. Because subdivision approval constitutes a separate process, the applicant must wait until the moratorium expires before proceeding to the Planning Commission. Discussion also noted that alternate development concepts may have been considered by the applicant, although no alternate plans had been formally submitted.
- F) Steel Mill Site Redevelopment Update:** **Chairman Mr. Raad Joseph** requested an update regarding redevelopment of the former steel mill property. **Mrs. Jennifer Boyer** stated that she was not aware of any demolition permits having been submitted by the property's new ownership group. **Ms. Cary Farrow** noted that previous owners had participated in voluntary brownfields cleanup efforts, while future demolition activities would require separate permitting. Discussion indicated that environmental cleanup efforts could take several years to complete, with full redevelopment potentially occurring over a period of decades depending on the development approach selected. Commissioners also discussed reports that the prospective purchaser may have acquired both the steel mill property and the former International Paper site, creating an opportunity for a comprehensive master-planned redevelopment effort.
- G) Planning Department Staffing Challenges:** Commissioners discussed staffing shortages within the Planning Department following recent personnel changes. **Mrs. Jennifer Boyer** reported that current staffing includes herself, **Mrs. Brittany Powell**, **Mr. Derek Harrelson** in Code Enforcement, **Mr. Cameron Howard** as Residential Building Inspector, and **Ms. Jackie Donevant** serving

part-time as Building Official. Several vacancies remain, including positions for a full-time Building Official, Zoning Administrator, and additional planning staff. **Mrs. Jennifer Boyer** stated that recruitment efforts are underway and expressed optimism that vacancies could begin to be filled in the near future.

H) Commission Engagement, Bylaws, and Orientation Materials: Chairman Mr.

Raad Joseph expressed the Commission's desire to become more actively involved in long-range planning initiatives, including Comprehensive Plan and UDO updates. Discussion followed regarding the need for orientation materials and onboarding resources for new Commissioners. **Ms. Cary Farrow** noted that the Commission's bylaws have not been updated in many years and currently contain inconsistencies with City Code regarding board membership. **Mrs. Jennifer Boyer** confirmed that staff had begun reviewing board bylaws prior to recent staffing changes and that updating bylaws, policies, and orientation materials remains a priority. Commissioners also discussed the possibility of forming small working groups to review planning documents and provide recommendations for future Commission consideration. **Mrs. Jennifer Boyer** stated that she would consult with the City Solicitor regarding any legal requirements associated with such working groups.

I) Mayor's Advisory Council Discussion: Chairman Mr. Raad Joseph inquired about the status and purpose of the Mayor's Advisory Council. **Mrs. Jennifer Boyer** stated that she had not been involved in discussions regarding the group and had no additional information beyond references made during City Council meetings. **Ms. Cary Farrow** recalled that public sign-up opportunities had previously been advertised and speculated that recent outreach efforts may represent a continuation of that initiative. **Mrs. Jennifer Boyer** confirmed that the Mayor had recently encouraged public participation but indicated that she was unaware of any specific plans or organizational structure for the advisory council at that time.

VIII. Adjournment: With there being no further business to discuss the meeting adjourned.

Submitted By:

Brittany Powell

Board Secretary