

**City of Camden
Planning Commission
January 24, 2012**

Minutes

The City of Camden Planning Commission met for a regular meeting on Tuesday, January 24, 2012 at 6:00 PM in the City Council Chambers, Second Floor, City Hall. Commission members present were Mr. Bill Ligon, Chairman; Mr. Jim Burns, Mr. Johnny Deal, Mr. Byron Johnson, Mr. Brandon Moore and Mr. Shawn Putnam, Secretary. Commission members Mr. Charles Wood and Mrs. Joanna Craig were absent.

Mr. Ligon entertained a motion to accept the minutes from the November 22, 2011 meeting. Mr. Deal moved to accept the minutes, and Mr. Burns seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

Elections of Officers

Mr. Ligon asked for nominations for officers. Mr. Deal made a motion to nominate Mr. Ligon as Chairman and Mr. Burns as Vice-Chairman. Mr. Moore seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

Presentation on Zoning Ordinance Update

Mr. Putnam introduced Ms. Cheryl Matheny and Ms. Carol Rhea, who are consultants working with the city on the update to the zoning ordinance. Ms. Matheny gave an introduction into the update process and explained the purpose of being at the meeting was to get input on how to incorporate the Smartcode into the ordinance and to discuss including design standards into the ordinance. The goals are to make the ordinance easier to understand for staff and for the public, update standards and definitions, and to streamline the approval process.

Ms. Rhea went through a brief explanation of the Smartcode and how complex it was to use. She stated that the goal was to identify parts of the Smartcode that could be applied to downtown, and how the design standards in the code could be applied citywide. Ms. Rhea explained the idea in the Smartcode of a Consolidated Review Committee and explained it worked similar to how many communities use a technical review committee to review proposals. Commission members agreed that they would prefer to use the existing technical review committee instead of establishing a Consolidated Review Committee. Ms. Rhea gave a brief explanation of the transects proposed by the Smartcode. She asked if members wanted to use these transects or incorporate standards into the existing zoning districts. Ms. Matheny mentioned that the more zoning districts the ordinance has, the more complicated it can be to administer the ordinance. Commission members agreed to incorporate standards into the existing zoning districts.

Ms. Rhea explained that the Smartcode outlined landscaping requirements by transect. She suggested that it may be better to use a list of trees and shrubs that delineate type by use instead of zoning district. For example, trees would be listed in categories such as street trees and trees most appropriate for parking lots. Mr. Putnam explained that Liz Gilland, the Urban Forester for the city, was developing this list, and the idea was to have her position be the approving authority for landscape plans. Commission members agreed to the concept.

Ms. Rhea talked about the building types listed in the Smartcode and asked how much of those the Commission wanted to keep in the ordinance. Mr. Ligon said they talked about the building types a lot in earlier discussions. Ms. Matheny said that there are ways to address building types with setbacks and other standards without mandating specific building types. Ms. Rhea said they would like to change the terminology in the code to terms that the general public can understand. It would also be beneficial to not use a lot of cross references that the Smartcode uses. Ms. Rhea talked about the concept in the code of warrants and said they were a way to allow staff to have some flexibility in the approval process without having to apply for a variance from the Board of Zoning Appeals or getting an ordinance amendment. Mr. Johnson asked if there would be legal concerns with using waivers. Ms. Rhea responded no, as long as waivers were applied in a consistent manner. Ms. Matheny said waivers in the landscaping standards could allow Liz to work out creative solutions in areas where specific trees or shrubs may not be appropriate. Ms. Rhea said she preferred the term “waiver” instead of “warrant” to avoid any confusion with law enforcement terminology. Commission members stated they would like to allow waivers where they would be appropriate.

Ms. Rhea discussed using street types to identify standards, but said it would be more consistent with other agencies if we used SCDOT terminology. This would allow standards to be created for things such as signage, building setbacks and uses so they could be coordinated with the street type.

Ms. Rhea asked if the Commission would prefer to list specific building types from the Smartcode into the updated ordinance. Mr. Ligon stated he thought it is fairly important. Mr. Putnam said he felt the application of this would be limited to certain parts of Broad and Dekalb Street to require shopfront buildings. Ms. Matheny said they would look at areas where other types could be used, but using them could be limiting, especially in infill areas. Mr. Putnam said the building types work really well in greenfield developments but are difficult to use in developed urban areas. Ms. Matheny indicated it would take many years to see the result of using a lot of building types in the ordinance. Ms. Rhea expressed concern with using the live-work type because of enforcement issues with tracking whether or not the owner uses the commercial and residential component of the building. Mr. Ligon stated that the idea discussed during the development of the Smartcode was to encourage more mixed use buildings that had commercial uses on the ground floor and residential uses on upper floors, especially in the downtown area. Mr. Burns indicated there are several buildings that could be used in this manner. Mr. Ligon explained there are areas where building types could be appropriate in residential areas. Ms. Rhea said standards could be written to require compatibility with

surrounding structures.

Ms. Rhea asked how the Commission felt about incorporating design standards from the Smartcode into the rest of the city. Ms. Matheny said there are elements of the Smartcode that could be used and would be very beneficial. Mr. Ligon stated it would make sense to use some of the standards in the rest of the city. Mr. Putnam said it would be good to use some of these standards into the overlay districts in commercial areas. Ms. Rhea said building siting, parking, landscaping, signage, mechanical equipment, and noise are some of the issues that could be addressed. Commission members agreed to look into using these standards across the city. Ms. Rhea showed a table that listed some design standards and indicated which zoning districts they would be required in. Listing them in a table makes it easier to use for the public and makes it easier for staff to review which standards are required in specific districts. Ms. Rhea said the table would also categorize districts such as mixed use, business and residential so it would be easier to list standards for multiple districts. Commission members said they liked having the standards listed in a table format.

Ms. Rhea mentioned that it would be helpful to have a Board of Architectural Review to conduct reviews using the standards in the ordinance. This would provide more creativity for developers by using subjective standards versus having an ordinance full of objective standards. Commission members agreed that a board would be good, and Mr. Ligon stated that City Council was working on the issue. Mr. Burns agreed that a board was needed so the Planning Commission would not have to spend so much time on those types of issues. Ms. Rhea said it was important that there be a board like this that is quasi-judicial so that it complies with state law.

Ms. Matheny asked if there were other parts of the Smartcode that the Commission felt should be included in the ordinance update. Mr. Ligon said he wanted to use parts of the Smartcode that would make downtown more user-friendly, walkable, and increase the opportunity for people to live downtown. Mr. Deal noted that issues regarding food carts and food trucks needs to be reviewed based on recent problems with a food cart downtown.

Mr. Putnam said at the next meeting the discussion would focus on sections related to buffer areas, landscaping, and tree protection and asked the Commission members to review those sections prior to the next meeting.

There being no further business, Mr. Deal made a motion to adjourn, and Mr. Moore seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously and the meeting was adjourned.

Shawn Putnam
Secretary

Bill Ligon
Chairman