

CITY OF ST. AUGUSTINE

Planning and Zoning Board Special Meeting February 21, 2023

The Planning and Zoning Board met in formal session Tuesday, February 21, 2023, at 1:00 p.m. in the Alcazar Room at City Hall. The meeting was called to order by Mike Davis, Chairperson and the following were present:

1. Roll Call: Mike Davis, Chairperson (arrived at 1:09 p.m.)
Charles Pappas, Vice- Chairperson
Jon DePreter
Carl Blow
Christina Griggs
Matthew Shaffer
Ashleigh Barnes (arrived at 1:09 p.m.)

City Staff: Amy Skinner, Director, Planning & Building Department
Jacob Fredriksson, Planning & Building Planner
Isabelle Lopez, City Attorney
Reuben Franklin, Public Works Director
Jessica Beach, Chief Resiliency Officer
Elyse Wiemann, Recording Secretary

2. General Public hearings for Items Not on the Agenda

Marta Hern
Megan White
Jim White
Terry Hensley
Terry Ruin

3. Consideration and Discussion Related to Updating the City's Parking Code Regulations

Ms. Skinner advised the purpose of the meeting was to take the next steps in Updating the Parking Code. She said mobility was very important to the City's parking. She said to date, around \$600,000 dollars have been collected through mobility fees and was used for mobility projects and implementation. She introduced Jonathan Paul, NUE Urban Concepts to speak about the parking code and the options available. Mr. Davis asked where the money collected would be spent.

Ms. Skinner replied there was a list of projects in the Comprehensive Plan going all the way out to 2040.

(a). Discussion with city Mobility Consultant Jonathan B. Paul, AICP, MA2 NUE Urban Concepts to begin the discussion related to potential updates to the City's Parking Code to incorporate mobility concepts adopted in the City's Mobility Plan and the Comprehensive Plan

Jonathan Paul presented the following items regarding the City of St. Augustine's Parking regulations:

- Transportation Mobility Element Goal Two in the Comprehensive Plan
- Mobility Plan had complete street, shared street, bicycle, pedestrian trails, circulator transit, and parking garages on the outskirts of the City of St. Augustine

- Current Parking Regulations inside the historic preservation district and outside the historic preservation district

Mr. Blow noted the reason parking in the historic district was not required was due to a policy created decades ago. He said it was a fear that if parking was required historic buildings would be demolished in order to create parking lots.

Ms. Skinner said that was correct. She said the designation of the downtown was part of the landmark town plan and keeping the Spanish Colonial town plan intact was a priority.

Ms. Barnes questioned the difference between a complete street and a shared street.

Mr. Paul replied a complete street would retrofit an existing road without a sidewalk, bike lane, or pathway and would add one of those and a shared street were shared spaces for all uses including pedestrians and the speeds were low enough for all users.

Mr. Barnes questioned if there was a plan to have an aerial tram or water taxi.

Mr. Paul replied it would be a circulator, which would be appropriate for St. Augustine.

Ms. Skinner added that the circulator would take people from the parking garage and provide a small loop around downtown. She noted this was the first stage.

Mr. Paul continued:

- Provided considerations for outside the Historic district
- Allow flexible design standards in and outside the historic district
- How to address recovery after a water event with pervious or impervious surfaces

- Provided considerations for resiliency: no additional parking downtown, requirements for off-street parking, mandate impervious surfaces, allow for innovation design(s), promote parking in common or shared garages, reduce citywide impervious surfaces
- Reviewed considerations for different changes in the historic district: reduce maximum allowance, prohibit new off-street parking, address storm water, allow podium parking, allow off-street mechanical lifts, or valet and tandem parking
- Provided items to prohibit and provided alternatives for off-street parking
- Could require alternative treatments that were pervious such as pavers or bricks or other alternative materials
- City could have a shared parking study conducted to review the shared overall parking spaces
- City could provide off-site parking such as private or public, lease reserved parking spots, allow valet parking
- Another option would be to have structured parking

Mr. Paul provided six options for the historic district:

- Leave parking regulations alone
- Establish Tiers with various off sets (if provided)
- Outright prohibit
- Prohibit, unless alternative provided
- Stormwater and pervious design requirements
- Other consideration provided from the PZB

Mr. Paul reviewed more information regarding parking for outside the historic district:

- Had parking requirements minimum spaces, minimal innovation or alternatives
- Provided considerations for outside the historic district

- Could eliminate parking in designated areas
- Parking spaces have been reduced in the parking manual
- Allow offsets for alternative modes and designs
- Mobility hubs could be provided
- Off-site and structured parking options

Mr. Paul provided eight options for outside the district:

- Leave parking regulation alone or as it was currently
- Eliminate minimum parking in designated parking area

Mr. Paul concluded his presentation and asked for the Boards feedback as it was very valuable.

Mr. Davis asked if there were many considerations to eliminate parking and where their other communities eliminating parking.

Mr. Paul noted many communities were eliminating parking and moving towards structured parking. He noted there was a lot of cost that went along with, but the Mobility Plan wanted to move towards centralized lots and then provide alternative modes of transportation.

Ms. Skinner added when updating the Comprehensive Plan, the goal was to have a balance, and separating the types of users within the City. She said if they were able to separate tourist traffic and parking on the outskirts could potentially reduce the traffic in the downtown area.

Public comment was opened; however, there was no response.

(b). Planning and Zoning Board discussion

Board Discussion:

- Should not require parking on site in the historic preservation districts
- Underground stormwater could not always be easily done and could be extremely expensive
- Could provide incentives to developers or people for impact designs
- If parking were onsite, could implement a semi-pervious type of pavement or porous concrete and now allow pavement
- In favor of having off-site parking to help offset the parking needed on site
- Supportive of having first floor flooding plans
- Shared parking was a great benefit to not only one business but to multiple within reason
- Could reduce the amount of parking for various businesses
- Asked if podium parking was feasible
- City did not have undeveloped property and asked what the choices were for parking
- City needed more parking not less and was not in favor of reducing the parking already established
- Felt there were options for pervious pavement

Mr. Davis said there were issues with pervious pavement. He said in the late 1980's a pervious concrete came out and was supposed to have voids to allow water to flow through and many were poured and worked for around ten years, then the voids filled and where the low points were was where the water gathered the most.

Board discussion:

- Should understand a semi-pervious surface was not pervious and these types of surfaces should have a maintenance plan
- If pervious pavers were allowed, they should have to be cleaned out once a year

- Should provide an incentive for developing the proper parking area

Mr. Paul noted the Comprehensive Plan had lot coverage percentages and the entire lot was not allowed to be paved. He said a percentage of green space was required.

Discussion continued:

- Felt the traffic downtown was caused due to a lack of parking available
- Wanted to explore the best ways to add more parking while still considering resiliency
- Would not want to add additional parking HP district
- Would be in favor of adding more parking closer to the area to help eliminate grid lock traffic and for it to be walkable
- Did not feel there were many options left to add additional parking
- Could find ways to encourage visitors to park on the peripheries and use a shuttle but did not feel that was the main solution for residents or business owners
- Parking would be full no matter how much was available and more would be needed
- Adding more parking would help meet the needs of the businesses in the area
- Should not want to build a parking garage to attract more vehicles to the historic district

Mr. Blow understood that unless in the historic district, a permit was required from the St. Johns River Water Management or from the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). He asked after completing the process, was the water quality from the discharge was good.

Ms. Griggs replied the St. Johns River Water Management had professional engineers that reviewed the calculations provided by the developer to determine the accuracy. She said another thing to keep in mind was stormwater in the historic district would likely

discharge to the Bayfront when the water had nowhere else to go.

Ms. Skinner noted the St. John River Water Management was a regional agency and there were eighteen counties under their jurisdiction. She said they had many departments and they reviewed certain projects and criteria.

Board discussion continued:

- Goal was to not have vehicles in the historic district
- Felt a large issue was the “day tripper” who spent limited time in the City and left the same day
- In order to not lose “day trippers” business, could have remote parking garages on the peripheries
- Thought shared parking could be beneficial but if the businesses changed could create an issue
- Did not feel a “one size fits all” approach would work for all the different districts
- Parking ordinance should have more flexibility
- Allowing offsite parking should be considered
- Implementation of the parking will not be done quickly, and mindsets would have to change
- Did not want to eliminate parking downtown; however, felt there were other options that had more of a balance
- Mobility improvements were not for today but for the future
- Could provide incentives for developers for innovated designs
- Felt by limiting the parking it would provide more local engagement
- Landscaping should be addressed within the parking lots and not just a massive concrete square
- A flexible alternative could be an application called spacer which would allow people to rent parking spaces when available

- Innovative idea was sometimes more difficult to be approved as there was not enough information for permits

Mr. Paul asked if trying something new would be worse than having an asphalt parking lot. He said developers should not be punished for participating in a pilot study for a new innovative idea.

Discussion continued:

- Felt the City was at a tipping point with traffic for tourist and residents
- Tourist and Airbnb's have exacerbated the traffic issues
- Most the older homes built in the City were created for one vehicle
- Felt the addition of State Road 313 would be beneficial and could reduce the traffic in the City
- In favor of having a walking City but mobility of all kinds was difficult when traffic laws were not followed
- Questioned how mass transit on San Marco Avenue was able to be accomplished without losing parking
- If parking was eliminated on San Marco Avenue, many businesses would be affected

Mr. Paul replied there were two parts to San Marco Avenue: two lane section and the part along the intercoastal. He said along the intercoastal, other parking options could be provided or use one lane, since it was a two-lane road. He said on San Marco Avenue to the north, 70% was spaces that could not be used for parking, but a trolley, bus, or golf cart lane could be incorporated. He said if these changes took place another space would be located in a parking garage or shared parking in another location. He suggested having dynamic messaging boards notating where parking was available. He noted, in other cities there, were residential parking passes or Airbnb's guest would have to purchase a parking pass for street parking, which had been very successful.

Mr. Davis said he liked the idea of charging for parking for the Airbnb's but was unsure if they were allowed.

Ms. Lopez stated the preemption was for rental duration and frequency. She said those were the two specific things they were not allowed to have a regulation on. She said every legislative session more language was added as to what could and could not be done.

Mr. Paul said the Mobility Plan was providing the parking and directing people to available space, and perhaps on street parking could be eliminated.

Board discussion:

- Not in favor of removing or expanding locations and loading zones as residential traffic could be impacted
- Parking requirements should be updated, and shared parking and flexibility should be noted
- Should compare the current version of the parking code with the new proposed code
- Did not feel there would be less vehicles in the City for at least the next twenty years
- Not in favor of adding a parking garage in the downtown area
- In support of satellite parking and shuttles
- In favor of flexibility for the West King Street area as it was limited
- Broudy project was a comprehensive use and a benefit to the whole neighborhood
- Pervious surfaces even if they only lasted ten years were beneficial
- Suggested having employee parking program; however, the parking garage was not far from employment locations
- Every neighborhood had their own specific needs
- Questioned the height and possibility of having a pedestrian walkover on the Bayfront

- Did not feel the Historical Architectural Review Board (HARB) would support walkovers as it would obstruct the vista
- Thought with the right commitment and plan, could be more forward thinking and changing the culture of how people moved around downtown
- Main goal was livability and downtown could be more fashion forward
- City had a circulator before with a lack of ridership but thought this time would be different
- Satellite parking garages would capture tourist, but residents could also use the space

Mr. Davis asked if a survey could be done regarding parking and mobility in order to obtain public input.¹

4. Information and Discussion Related to City Initiatives Regarding Resiliency and Sustainability including the Federal Back Bay Study, updates to the Vulnerability Assessment data, Resilient Shoreline concepts and other projects

Ms. Skinner thanked the Board for the opportunity to discuss sustainability and resiliency. She said there were many projects and noted the information provided regarding the three-day charette that was being hosted by the Army Corp. Of Engineers about the Federal Back Bay Study.

Ms. Lopez provided information about the charette and offered guidance regarding the Sunshine State Law. She said the Attorney General's office cautioned against board member attendance and noted it could violate the Sunshine Law if Board members were to attend and participate.

Ms. Skinner introduced Jessica Beach, Chief Resiliency Officer and Reuben Franklin, Public Works Director for the City of St. Augustine.

Jessica Beach reviewed the presentation regarding the Resiliency and Stormwater Program.

Board discussion:

- Back Bay study was being evaluated by the Jacksonville Army Corp of Engineers
- Very optimistic with the possible outcomes for the study
- Advised being careful on drafting the ordinance and being mindful of property owners
- Water intrusion would not change in Davis Shores until something was done as it was a heavily impacted neighborhood

Ms. Beach replied that in 2020 a neighborhood meeting was conducted. She said the reality was it the finish floor elevation was at seven or below the home would have to be elevated. She said it would be extremely difficult for the City to be responsible for that.

Mr. Franklin said one of the challenges was all private property owners that faced the marsh would have to be on board. He said everyone would have to come together and agree with a solution before it could come to fruition.

Ms. Barnes asked what percentage of the sixty homes that applied for Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) were in Davis Shores.

Ms. Beach replied she did not have a breakdown of the neighborhoods. She said if a wall could be built in South Davis Shores, the infrastructure was limited. She said after the neighborhood meeting, options for the neighborhood was reviewed; however, every property owner had to agree.

Mr. Davis said as a Board they should review the thirty-five-foot height limit. He said eight

¹ Break from 3:45p.m.-4:01p.m.

foot was where the thirty-five-foot height limit started. He explained if the area was prone to flooding the owner should be allowed to build higher. He thought this should be explored to help reduce flooding.

Ms. Skinner said if in a flood zone, the measurement started at the one-foot freeboard requirement.

Mr. Davis said every house over fifty years that was being demoed had to be reviewed by HARB and the applicant had to provide drawings of the replacement structure. He understood the historic homes in the downtown area; however, he felt this should change if the home was in a flood zone.

Ms. Skinner said there was a state amendment to the building code that required administrative review for homes within a flood zone, which the state had preempted. She said there had been a few homes reviewed by the Historic Preservation Officer and approved for demolition; however, noted there was a rigorous process for historic structures.

Mr. Davis said it should be encouraged for homeowners to lift the home especially in a flood zone and not make it more cumbersome. He said there were various way people had tried to fix flooding in South Davis Shores. He felt the worst option was adding fill dirt under the house and asked how this could be encouraged to help those who have not been able to raise their house.

Ms. Beach said an ordinance had been passed that capped the impervious surface for residential lots. She said a lot grading plan was being finalized and was hoping to be effective by April 1, 2023.

Ms. Beach said there was a great team from Jacksonville area to work with the Back-Bay Study, and the Charleston, South Carolina team would be able to assist in the strategic planning as Charleston was similar to the City.

Board discussion:

- Thanked the City for working on the project and obtaining grant money to do the study
- In support of the neighborhood meetings and the process
- In favor of the living shoreline concept and on a macro scale, it provided a natural setting to the City but unsure if it would work everywhere
- Felt it would be useful if broken down by neighborhood
- Zoning system was established in 1974 and most of the density was along the water
- Now it was an adjustment for planning, but happy to see the adjustment take place
- Understood wanting to provide homeowners the ability to build higher to avoid flooding; however, did not want to encourage building new over thirty-five-feet
- If the home was existing and was allowed to be raised by two feet, that would be fine; however, would not want new homes or remodeling projects to be increased
- Felt providing a variance for building higher than thirty-five-feet should only be in flood areas
- Would be good to incentivize stilts walls instead of cinder blocks or fill dirt

Mr. DePreter asked if the City had a grading planner.

Ms. Lopez said there was a packet in the works. She said the other issue was when vacant areas were filled in there would be a change in the water flow.

Ms. Beach said this new packet would require the homeowner to show how they would not impact their neighbor and provide a solution.

Board discussion:

- Not opposed to having the homes be built higher
- Single family home drainage was reviewed by the contractor but thought a seal from a land surveyor showing the post development water would not impact adjacent properties

Mr. Blow asked if the permit was applied for, could a seal from an engineer would be required.

Ms. Beach said it could be done by the surveyor or the general contractor.

Ms. Lopez said that was the compromise with the packet.

Mr. Blow said it would be better to have a plan sealed by a Florida engineer that confirmed that post development, water would not trespass on the adjacent properties.

Ms. Skinner said a homeowner was allowed to act as their own contractor and by requiring certain things, the cost increased, and it was a difficult balance.

Mr. Davis felt the compromise would work for now, but it might need to be reviewed again in the future.

Mr. Shaffer asked if the City had the requirement to show that water would not be displaced onto the neighbor's property without an engineer's seal.

Ms. Skinner replied in the affirmative. She said when submitting for a building permit, it was required to show where the water would be going. She said it was reviewed by the Building Official. She said water trespass was a civil matter between neighbors; however, they were working on formalizing the process and the site plans now would have to be surveyed and the heights would

have to be indicated. She said this would extend the review time.

5. Adjournment

Having no further business, Mr. Davis adjourned the meeting at 5:20 P.M.²



Mike Davis, Chairperson

² Transcribed by Elyse Wiemann