

MINUTES OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION WORK SESSION
Wednesday, August 3, 2011
10th Floor Conference Room of the City Hall Building
Newport News, Virginia

PRESENT: Sharyn Fox, Chairwoman; Victor Albea, Vice-Chairman; Robert B. Jones; Clara Swanson; Wesley Maxwell; H. Eugene Roberts; J. Doug Coenen, Jr. (Staff: Sheila W. McAllister, Director of Planning; Kathy James-Webb, Manager of Current Planning; Michael King, Manager of Comprehensive Planning; Angela Hopkins, Senior Planner; Saul Gleiser, Senior Planner; Johnnie Davis, Planner, Sandy Hitchens, Planning Technician; Lauren White Planning Intern; Eduardo Diaz-Etchevehere, Planning Intern; Lynn Sugg, Deputy City Attorney; Christine Mignogna, Zoning Administrator

ABSENT: Cleon Long; Lorraine P. Austin;

Ms. Fox opened the work session at 12:00 PM.

Ms. McAllister introduced the draft Southeast Community Plan and congratulated the team of staff who worked on it. The team consisted of herself, Kathy James-Webb, who managed the project; Angela Hopkins, Saul Gleiser, and Carl Jackson. The plan has been discussed for over ten years and is at a point where the draft can be presented. The plan is a long-range vision for redevelopment and reinvestment of the Southeast Community, Jefferson Park, and the Newsome Park neighborhoods. It takes bold steps to the future by identifying reinvestment, revitalization, and redevelopment areas that can improve conditions of residential property by reducing incompatible land uses and introducing housing types and commercial uses that would attract all income groups. It also incorporates many of the plans that came before such as the Southeast Community Urban Waterfront Design Study, the Jefferson Avenue Corridor Study, and the Newport News Redevelopment and Housing Authority Revitalization Strategy Plan. She also acknowledged the time and energy the Planning District I Task Force put into reviewing the plan and giving input into the plan so that the plan really incorporated the wishes of the community.

Angela Hopkins, Senior Planner, presented draft Southeast Community Plan.

Ms. Fox raised a concern that Interstate 664 and the CSX railroad tracks appear to intersect and separate the Southeast Community from downtown Newport News. There was discussion regarding addressing a better connectivity between the two areas in the next comprehensive plan update process.

Mr. Roberts stated it appeared there was a deliberate movement to take out substandard housing, which did not have a negative impact. Discussion ensued regarding housing, vacancy, and foreclosure rates throughout the community. Ms. Mignogna stated that, unless a housing unit is an unsafe structure, it cannot be demolished.

Mr. Maxwell asked if the city was still trying to buy the vacant properties between 40th and 41st Street. The committee discussed the Housing Authority's involvement and actions regarding those properties.

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Mr. Coenen asked if a reason for the neglect might be caused by some of the apartment projects. He asked are the landlords/property owners not interested in upgrading the properties for higher rents or are they satisfied with the condition of the properties as they are. The committee discussed the reasons such as age, maintenance, and absentee landlords.

Mr. Coenen asked about covered bus stops and how they would be built and maintained. The committee discussed the city's bus shelter plan that guides the replacement and placement of bus shelters throughout the city. New bus shelters will be designed to accommodate bicycles.

Mr. Maxwell asked if the city has a historical group that identifies historical sites in the area, such as the Tucker Building. Discussion about historic designations and maintenance of historical sites ensued, including discussion of tax credits for upkeep of historic buildings.

Ms. Fox thanked Ms. Hopkins for her informative presentation.

Ms. McAllister asked that the Commissioners attend the community meeting at Downing-Gross Cultural Arts Center at 6:00 P.M. on August 4, 2011.

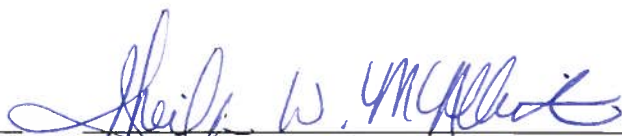
Ms. Mignogna described a recent study regarding an aggressive rental rehabilitation program that would force absentee rental property owners to rehabilitate their property before they moved in new tenants. The committee discussed various areas throughout the city in need or in the process of being rehabilitated in different stages.

Ms. Fox suggested doing a by-laws review in a work session meeting on August 17, 2011.

Ms. Fox and Ms. Swanson shared their experiences at the APA 2011 conference they attended on July 20, 2011.

There being no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 1:37 P.M.


Recording Secretary


Executive Secretary