

BLUFFTON TOWN COUNCIL QUARTERLY WORKSHOP MEETING MINUTES

ELECTRONIC MEETING

July 21, 2020

Mayor Sulka called the meeting to order at 5 P.M. Council members present were Mayor Pro Tempore Fred Hamilton, Larry Toomer, Bridgette Frazier, and Dan Wood. Town Manager Marc Orlando, Deputy Town Manager Scott Marshall, Director of Engineering Bryan McIlwee, Director of Finance and Administration Chris Forster, and Town Clerk Kimberly Chapman, and Town Attorney Terry Finger were also present.

Public Comment:

There were none.

Workshop Items:

Buck Island and Simmonsville Road Lighting Plan and Sidewalk Plan:

McIlwee stated that the Buck Island-Simmonsville Neighborhood Plan was adopted in 2009 and established recommendations for priority infrastructure investments in the area including sewer, water, drainage, sidewalks, signage, and lighting.

The last section of Buck Island Road sidewalks (Phase 5) is under construction and scheduled for completion this summer. Phase 6A of Simmonsville Road sidewalks is scheduled to start construction this fall and the final phase (6B) is planned for completion in FY 2022.

In conjunction with the completion of all previous sewer and walkway construction, the Town contracted with Dominion Energy and Palmetto Electric Cooperative to install leased light fixtures adjacent to the road right of way. The existing street lighting was intentionally designed to be low intensity and limited in scope to be consistent with the neighborhood's rural and residential character and to limit light trespass into individual residences. In addition, the existing lighting was not designed to meet SCDOT street lighting standards, as those standards would require many more fixture locations and much higher intensity lamps. In addition, the streetlight locations in the BIS neighborhood are widely spaced out due to existing pole locations thus creating inconsistent light distribution and dark areas between streetlights.

During the BIS update at the October 2019 Quarterly Workshop, neighborhood residents expressed concerns about insufficient and inconsistent lighting and suggested that more lighting is warranted for pedestrian and resident safety. Town Council instructed Staff to investigate the existing area lighting conditions and provide recommendations to improve overall lighting coverage.

Improving the BIS neighborhood street lighting is consistent with the Buck Island-Simmonsville Neighborhood Plan and the FY 2020-2021 Strategic Plan, including the Community Quality of Life and Infrastructure Strategic Focus Area.

Council direction was to have lighting that projects enough light to make people feel safe and comfortable enough to walk down the sidewalk at night, as safety is priority; to bring lighting lower to the ground at a 16- or 20-foot height level. The consensus was that the “Private Light” similar to the light used in Goethe area (Dominion) and the “Yard Light” with hood used in the BIS Neighborhood (Palmetto Electric) were the preferred light fixtures.

Council directed Staff to obtain a photometric plan and bring back a cost estimate to Council.

Oyster Factory Park Master Plan Update:

McIlwee stated that in 2015, Town Council adopted a Conceptual Master Plan for the development of Oyster Factory Park. Since adoption, numerous improvements have been designed and constructed according to the approved Concept Plan including:

1. Courtesy Dock
2. Expanded boat trailer and car parking area west of Wharf Street
3. Garvin-Garvey House preservation and restoration
4. Re-roof and minor improvements to the Bluffton Oyster Company building
5. Boat Ramp widening and Wharf Street drainage improvements
6. New trailer parking lot near the Bridge – Wharf Street intersection
7. Miscellaneous walkway, lighting and landscape improvements

In FY 2020, staff procured Sea Island Land Survey to update the survey of the park to locate all current as-built conditions. In addition, staff requested that Witmer, Jones, Keefer, Ltd provide and update to the 2015 Master Plan for Town Council review and discussion related to determining the next priorities for future development.

The updated Preliminary Master Plan is generally consistent with the 2015 plan regarding the development program, location, scope and character, but provides a more updated picture of the current conditions and potential future park development. This site plan illustrates the conceptual layout of the following elements:

1. Playground and treehouse north of the pavilion
2. Exterior deck connecting the pavilion and restrooms for expanded seating, gathering and/or dining
3. Lower terrace/seating deck located around existing specimen trees and adjacent to the fire pit
4. Bandstand under specimen live oaks in the southeastern corner of the park

5. Service access road from the boat ramp area for food trucks and service vehicles
6. Pervious paving surface throughout the cookout area rather than dirt
7. Conceptual arrangement of oyster tables, tents, food trucks, etc.
8. Conceptual layout of walkways and landscape

Implementation of the next phase of development of the Oyster Factory Park Conceptual Master Plan is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, Old Town Master Plan and FY 2020-2021 Strategic Plan including the Community Quality of Life and Infrastructure Strategic Focus Areas.

Council direction to Staff included on relocating the playground to the west side or another location, power upgrades for the bandstand area, add additional parking, and to modify the drive pile for the service area. Council also requested that Staff communicate with Beaufort County and rural and critical lands so that they know what improvements are being discussed and additionally discuss cost sharing.

Calhoun Street Streetscape Master Plan Update:

McIlwee gave an overview. Planning for the Calhoun Street and Adjacent Area Study started in 2014 with public workshops, public opinion surveys, traffic/parking studies, and ended with Town Council adoption of the study in 2016.

In FY 2020, the Town engaged a Greenville Planning firm (MKSK) and a local engineering firm (Ward Edwards) to develop a Conceptual Streetscape Master Plan incorporating the ideas and recommendations provided in the 2016 Calhoun Street and Adjacent Area Study. Some key elements proposed in the Conceptual Streetscape Master Plan include:

1. Wider sidewalks – 5’ minimum tabby concrete walks within the right of way and wider if easements can be obtained from any adjacent property owners
2. Sidewalk connections to adjacent streets and parking (Boundary, Bridge, etc.)
3. Improve stormwater management within the corridor by incorporating pervious paver parking, rain gardens and improve outfalls to reduce contaminants from entering the coves
4. Upgrade street intersections to improve pedestrian safety including bulb-outs, pavement striping, handicap detectable warnings, site furnishings, etc.
5. Maintain sidewalks flush with parking to reduce grading impacts with adjacent structures, provide handicap access and maintain a similar street character.
6. Eliminate overhead powerlines to maintain the existing tree canopy and add new street trees to provide more shade to walkways and further define the street edge
7. Provide specialty street paving at farmers market/festival area between Lawton and Lawrence
8. Recommends art component to crosswalk striping at key intersections

9. Improve street lighting, landscaping, and site furnishings
10. Provide mail stations rather than individual mailboxes to accommodate a more centralized mail delivery

The Conceptual Streetscape Master Plan presentation provides several recommendations. Staff requests Town Council input and preferences for the following items:

1. Street Section
2. Specialty Paving
3. Pervious Parking Spaces
4. Crosswalk Style
5. Parking Improvements South of Bridge Street

The implementation of the Calhoun Street Streetscape Master Plan is consistent with the recommendations provided within the 2006 Old Town Master Plan, the 2016 Calhoun Street and Adjacent

Area Study and the FY 2020-2021 Strategic Plan, including the Infrastructure and Community Quality of Life Strategic Focus Areas.

Council direction and feedback was that they loved the design and were very pleased with the plan that was presented. It was requested that the “center of Town” be re-added to Calhoun Street.

Dominion Power Burial Update:

McIlwee stated that on September 9, 2014, the Town of Bluffton executed an Agreement with South Carolina Electric and Gas (SCE&G, now Dominion Energy) to settle a past deficiency in the collection of required franchise fees. This Settlement Agreement requires SCE&G/Dominion Energy to install and pay the expense of placing existing overhead electric distribution lines underground within the following project limits:

1. North side of May River Road
2. South Side of Water Street
3. East side of Hickory Trace and Maiden Lane
4. West side of Dubois Lane

The Agreement includes the following conditions:

1. The Town is required to obtain all easements required to place underground electric facilities and equipment or secondary service lines on any private property.
2. The Town must pay the cost for installing service connections from the underground distribution lines and equipment to the individual residences.
3. SCE&G/Dominion Energy will install and pay the cost for the electrical conduit and

associated equipment required to implement the burial of the main transmission lines in the project area

4. SCE&G will remove overhead powerlines and power poles after conversion to underground power
5. No street lighting upgrades are included in the project
6. The Town may elect to use non-standard service funds to defray half the cost for items 2 and 5 listed above.

In addition to the above conditions, SCE&G/Dominion has requested that all powerline burial construction be completed in a single construction phase rather than implemented in multi-phases or piecemeal.

In FY 2020, Staff directed Urban Designers (MKSK) and Engineers (Ward Edwards) to develop a Conceptual Streetscape Master Plan for Calhoun Street (described above). This Conceptual Master Plan takes into account the locations of the proposed transformers, switch gears and easement locations proposed for the powerline burial project.

The FY 2021 Strategic Plan, and adopted CIP budget, includes funding for engineering design services for the Calhoun, Boundary, and the Bridge Street Streetscape projects. These three streetscape projects cover approximately 60% of the powerline burial project area.

Implementation of this project is consistent with recommendations and goals provided within the 2006 Old Town Master Plan, the 2016 Calhoun Street and Adjacent Area Study and the FY 2020-2021 Strategic Plan, including the Infrastructure Strategic Focus Area.

Council appreciated the update. Terry Finger will meet with Marc Orlando and Bryan McIlwee to discuss the agreement.

Squire Pope Carriage House Update:

McIlwee stated on May 9, 2017, the Town of Bluffton, in conjunction with the Beaufort County Rural and Critical Land Preservation Program acquired 111 Calhoun Street from the Martin Family. The circa 1850 Squire Pope Carriage House is located on the northern portion of the property and was identified in 1996 as contributing structure to the Town of Bluffton's National Register Designated Historic District

In FY 2019, Town Staff contracted with Meadors, Inc. to conduct a structural and historic assessment of the Carriage House and to prepare a Preservation Plan. The Preservation Plan was completed under the direction of the Growth Management Staff and with input from a designated Stakeholder Group. The Preservation Plan process included the results of a public opinion survey that was conducted in July 2019 to determine the desired use of the structure. A Museum/Visitor's Center use received the highest amount of support (by votes) from the public

with Rentable Space for Small Functions receiving the second highest amount of support. The Preservation Plan was adopted by Town Council on November 12, 2019.

Simultaneous with the development of the Preservation Plan, archeological investigations were conducted on the Wright Family property to collect artifacts and attempt to locate any remnants of the original Squire Pope Home that was burnt during the Civil War. These investigations were completed by Brockington and Associates and local volunteers directed by the Historic Bluffton Foundation/Heyward House Museum. Artifact has been cleaned, mapped, and cataloged for use in future displays and exhibits to be located within the Squire Pope Carriage House. In addition, six brick piers were discovered and are thought to be from structures built with the original Squire Pope house and associated outbuildings. These pier locations were photographed, mapped, and buried in place. An interpretive sign and map will be placed in the park to tell the story of the Squire Pope Family and the "Burning of Bluffton".

As a result of direction provided by Town Council during the 2020-21 Strategic Plan, Town Staff executed the second phase of the Meadors, Inc design services contract to include final Construction Documents for the preservation and rehabilitation of the Squire Pope Carriage House. Town Staff met with representatives of Meadors Inc. on May 15, 2020 to kick off the next phase of design services. At this meeting, the follow items were discussed:

1. Preservation Plan Treatment Philosophy:
 - Due to the deteriorated condition of the building foundation, the structure will require select disassembly to elevate the building and construct a new foundation. Building to be left in the current location
 - During construction, the hyphen and second floor porch infill may need to be disassembled and reinstalled due to their deteriorated condition.
2. Schematic Design Decisions/Programming:
 - 1st Floor to be designed for public access for a Welcome/Visitors Center/ Municipal Museum use.
 - 2nd Floor to be designed for use by Town Staff. Although a potential use for wedding party preparation may be considered (no wedding receptions).
 - Other potential alterations to the building's current layout

The preservation and rehabilitation of the historically significant Squire Pope Carriage House is consistent with the Town of Bluffton Vision Statement and recommendations provided within the 2006 Old Town Master Plan, the 2016 Calhoun Street and Adjacent Area Study and the FY 2020-2021 Strategic Plan, including the Community Quality of Life and Infrastructure Strategic Focus Areas.

Town Staff requests input from Council regarding the items identified above and in the workshop presentation regarding development of the Squire Pope Carriage House.

- Preserve as much of the existing original materials as possible.
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Council appreciated the update and had no questions.

FY21 Capital Improvement Project Funding Sources:

Chris Forster, Director of Finance and Administration gave an overview. Forster stated that the Town of Bluffton has four budgeted funds, the General Fund, Stormwater Utility Fund, Debt Service Fund and the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) Fund. Combined, they are supported by approximately 24 major revenue sources. Additionally, there are tourism tax revenues, government grants and transfers between funds to support various Council approved purposes.

There are approximately 12 major revenue categories that support the CIP Fund, in addition, transfers from the General Fund have supported major projects as well. In FY 20, the estimated expenditures out of the CIP Fund is approximately \$5.9 million. In FY 21 we have almost \$9.2 million budgeted in the CIP Fund. The largest allocation of dollars comes from TIF revenue at approximately \$2.3 million. Other CIP revenue sources include the following:

- State Proviso Funds
- Grants
- Municipal Improvement Development Fees (MIDF)
- State and Local Accommodations Tax dollars

- Hospitality Tax dollars
- Transfers from other funds; Stormwater Utility Fund, General Fund and TIF
- Assessment District Municipal Improvement District Fees (MID)
- Multi County Industrial Park Fees (MCIP)
- Boat Ramp Fees
- Utility Tax Credits
- Buckwalter Park Funds

Council appreciated the update and had no questions.

Executive Session:

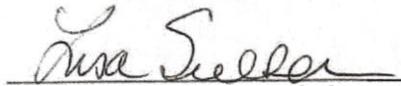
1. Contractual Matters Pertaining to Marshall L. Horton, Esq. for Services as a Town of Bluffton Municipal Judge (Pursuant to SC Freedom of Information Act 30-4-70 [a][2])

Frazier made a motion to move into Executive Session at 6:44 PM to discuss the aforementioned item. Toomer seconded. The motion was unanimous.

Town Council exited Executive Session at 7:04 PM. No motions were made, and no votes were taken during Executive Session.

Hamilton made a motion to renew the contract for Marshall Horton as the Town of Bluffton Associate Municipal Judge for three years with no increase in benefits or salary. Toomer seconded. Roll call was taken, and the motion carried unanimously.

Wood made a motion to adjourn at 7:05 PM. Hamilton seconded. The motion carried unanimously.



Lisa Sulka, Mayor



Kimberly Chapman, Town Clerk