

EDGEFIELD COUNTY COUNCIL
&
PLANNING COMMISSION
JOINT MEETING
January 24, 2023
6:00 PM
County Council Chambers

The Edgefield County Council held its regular meeting at 6:00 P.M. Tuesday, January 24, 2023, in the County Council Chambers, 225 Jeter Street, Edgefield, SC. Notice of this meeting was provided to The Edgefield Advertiser and others as requested.

Members Present

Dean Campbell, Chairman
Albert Talbert, Vice Chairman
Tiffani Ireland, Councilwoman
Dr. Jackie Kennion, Councilwoman
Jerry Moody, Councilman

Instrument Book Volume Page
2023-815 OR 2031 49

2023-815
Filed for Record in
Edgefield County, SC
Charles L. Reel, Clerk of Court
03/10/2023 10:24:39 AM
CTY MISCELL \$ 0.00
Bk OR Vol 2031 Page 49 - 55

Planning Commission

James Burt, Chairman
Todd Brown, Vice Chairman
Tracy Walsh
Lisa Whitaker
Karlene Butler
Rhonda Nowicki
Brett McNeill - absent

Others Present

David Caddell, County Administrator
Hart Clark, Building & Planning
April Morgan, County Planner
Aretha Eubanks, Clerk to Council
Roger LeDuc, Facilitator
Andrew Marine, County Attorney

Chairman Campbell called the meeting to order at 6:02 PM. The invocation was given by James Burt, Planning Commission Chairman.

Chairman Campbell thanked the Planning Commission on behalf of the County Council for the good work they are doing and stated, "We appreciate what you do." Chairman Burt thanked County Council for the opportunity to meet with them and stated, "communication is important in order to get things done." Chairman Burt told Council that he felt the Planning Commission had a very productive meeting last year and is looking forward to the same for this year.

Council's priorities in order of preference (basis of the Strategic Plan), and the Planning Commission's role:

EDGEFIELD COUNTY COUNCIL
&
PLANNING COMMISSION
JOINT MEETING
January 24, 2023
6:00 PM
County Council Chambers

Facilitator LeDuc thanked everyone for attending and commented on the importance of the County Council and Planning Commission coming together on a regular basis so both parties can determine ways they can work together for the good of Edgefield County and its citizens. He stated that the main objective of the Joint Meeting is to determine the direction the County should go in. He continued by saying that by the end of this Joint Meeting there will have been three or four items established for Planning Commission to work on in 2023 that will move the County forward. Facilitator LeDuc said that during the County Council's retreat on January 10, 2023, Council established a list of priority items they wish to see addressed.

EMS

Council felt that the County's EMS is a critical item that needs to be addressed. Facilitator Leduc reported that recently, calls for EMS have increased by over 30% with the majority coming from the Merriweather and Sweetwater area. Facilitator Leduc stated that he feels that trend will only continue to increase with all of the development that is taking place in that portion of the County. Facilitator LeDuc continued by saying that because of the growth, there is a need to look to the future to see if there will be a need for things such as a new EMS station, additional ambulances, and first responders. Facilitator LeDuc reported that currently, it takes two years to receive an ambulance once it is ordered, and determining if there will be that need in the near future is crucial.

County Work Force

Facilitator LeDuc stated that ensuring the County has the best individuals working for it and looking at how the county will bring forth the resources to pay its employees is very important. Facilitator LeDuc went on to say that, in addition to competitive pay, creating the opportunity for job satisfaction is a key to retaining good employees.

Fire Departments

Facilitator LeDuc stated that the County currently has seven fire Departments each funded by tax dollars collected from the geographical area that they serve. Facilitator LeDuc continued by saying the rising cost of equipment is a concern today. For example, a Tanker Truck cost over \$400,000 when just two years ago the cost was around \$300,000. Additionally, it has become increasingly more difficult to keep volunteer Fire Fighters. Facilitator LeDuc was pleased to report however that the County has recently stepped in and decided to fund the training for First Responders as well as becoming certified firefighters. Facilitator LeDuc reported that the County's Fire Board has had productive meetings recently and is working together with County Administrator Caddell to find grant aid.

Economic Development

Facilitator LeDuc stated that Industry and Commercial uses are important to Edgefield County because of the revenue they bring. Facilitator LeDuc reported that Generac, the company currently in operation in the County's Industrial Park, will bring about \$185,000 of revenue for

EDGEFIELD COUNTY COUNCIL
&
PLANNING COMMISSION
JOINT MEETING
January 24, 2023
6:00 PM
County Council Chambers

the county this year alone. He went on to say that 85% of growth from industry comes from existing industries through expansion. It is important that the County ensures adequate infrastructure for the increasing needs of our existing industry in order to keep them while at the same time planning for new development, Facilitator LeDuc explained. Facilitator LeDuc stated that typically when you think of Economic Development, you think of residential homes and commercial properties. However, residential properties don't always pay for the services they receive. Facilitator LeDuc continued by saying in 2004-2005 a study was done in the city of Aiken to determine what value a residential dwelling have to have to pay for, through taxes dollars received, the services (Fire, EMS, Law Enforcement, county workforce) that it would receive. Facilitator LeDuc said that the study indicated at that time, the value would need to be about \$170,000 and explained that today the value would be closer to \$200,000. Facilitator LeDuc stated that it is important for Planning Commission to take these things into consideration when looking at the creation or the changing of existing zoning and understand that the County needs a mix of Residential, Commercial and Industrial.

County Recreation

Facilitator LeDuc explained that in regard to Recreation, quality of life for families and individuals has become more and more critical. He went on to say that 80%-90% of citizens in the Merriweather area go to North Augusta for Recreational needs. Because of the length of time it will take before a Recreation Center could be operational, 3 to 5 years Facilitator LeDuc said, the County would need to start looking for land now if recreation is decided to be a priority. Facilitator LeDuc did report that the County is currently working with a couple of towns in the upgrade of their town gyms. Facilitator LeDuc continued by saying the County needs to continue to look at ways to work jointly with the Towns in our County in order to ensure the best quality of life for our citizens through recreational activities. He concluded by asking Council and Commission "where do we want to go in the future with recreation?"

Residential Development

This topic was merged with discussions regarding Planned Development and Subdivisions

Solid Waste

Currently, all of Edgefield County's solid waste goes through Tri-County (Saluda, McCormick, Edgefield) and is collected and transported to Three Rivers Landfill at the Savannah River site. Facilitator Leduc stated that this process costs the County \$1.5 million just for the transfer of waste with cost going up 25% this year alone due to an increase in labor and disposal cost as well as the volume of waste. He continued by saying that because of the increase in volume of waste being produced, the County may need to look at expanding the existing Convenience Centers or possibly look at additional Convenience Centers in areas that are more densely populated, such as Merriweather. Along with the additional staff that has been added at the Sweetwater Facility, extended hours of operation may also be necessary as the vast majority of the County's residents do not receive trash pick-up.

EDGEFIELD COUNTY COUNCIL
&
PLANNING COMMISSION
JOINT MEETING
January 24, 2023
6:00 PM
County Council Chambers

Future of County-Owned Buildings

Currently, there are a number of County-owned buildings that will soon be vacant which include the current Sherriff's Office/County Jail, the Current Magistrate's Office, as well as Judge Keesley's old office. Facilitator LeDuc stated that the County will need to look at what to do with those buildings or how to reuse them.

Leadership Academy

Facilitator Leduc stated that the establishment of a Leadership Academy was discussed which would include business owners, employees, and citizens in order to give them the opportunity to learn about the different services at the County level.

What changes are needed in the development of ordinances (ex. Lot sizes in major subdivisions)?

Facilitator LeDuc stated that one area of concern that comes up often is the County's development ordinances. He went on to say that the ordinances were last reviewed in 2021 and revisions were made on minimum lot size requirements, and density. This will be an ongoing issue Facilitator LeDuc said as development occurs. Hart Clark stated that changes to development ordinances have been looked at repeatedly and the need is to now "not look at the broad sense" but to look at specific areas, items, and issues in order to address future issues and allow Planning Commission to make a recommendation to Council. Hart Clark continued to explain that pinpointing specific items of concern, such as a particular section along Sweetwater Road, and then allowing the Planning Commission to look at that area of Sweetwater Road, is the approach that needs to be taken in regard to zoning at this time. He stated that in regard to major subdivisions, Planning Commission and County Council did a major re-write and made the County's Ordinances twice as restrictive as it was before. Hart Clark explained that whatever is written in the County's Ordinances regarding Subdivisions is set, meaning staff will not even consider a Land Development Application that does not fall within the County's Subdivision requirements that have already been written.

Planned Developments versus Subdivisions under the Comprehensive Plan

Facilitator LeDuc stated that at times there seemed to be some confusion in defining what a Planned Development (PD) is versus a Subdivision. He continued to explain that regarding a Subdivision, regulations such as lot sizes, open space, and density have already been established in the ordinances. Planned Developments, however, give the Planning Commission and County Council the opportunity to work with a developer to produce a subdivision that meets the needs of the citizens. Facilitator LeDuc continued to say that a good example would be Heritage Place. Last year Dr. Jackie Kennion worked with residents along Williams Road as well as the Developer and requested the removal of the commercial parcel as well as the entrance from Williams Road. County Council continued to work with the Developer by allowing additional

EDGEFIELD COUNTY COUNCIL
&
PLANNING COMMISSION
JOINT MEETING
January 24, 2023
6:00 PM
County Council Chambers

Townhomes to take the place of the Commercial and as a result, the citizens, Council, and the Developer were satisfied. Facilitator LeDuc stated that sometimes, however, things will not work out for a Planned Development because an agreement cannot be reached. Facilitator LeDuc reminded Commissioners and Council that 80% of the County still remains unzoned where subdivision regulations are not already set in place through zoning and a Planned Development will be the direction the developer chooses to go. Facilitator LeDuc said that if Planning Commission and County Council feel that changes or greater clarity needs to be brought to the existing ordinances or PD (Planned Development) regulations that would be something that could be worked on. Campbell asked for clarification in regard to commercial being a required part of the mixed-use of a Planned Development. Facilitator LeDuc stated that PUDs (Planned Unit Developments) do require commercial to be a part of its mixed-use however, Planned Developments do not.

Highway overlay districts

Facilitator LeDuc explained that the intent of Overlay Districts is to provide consistency along the County's main corridors. Overlays can include things like curb cuts, acceleration lanes, fences and lighting. Facilitator LeDuc continued to say that Overlays for specific areas can be a tool used when planning for the future of our corridors. Facilitator LeDuc explained that Planning Commission would look at surrounding jurisdictions to determine what would be reasonable.

User Fees

Facilitator LeDuc stated that in the last couple of years, Edgefield County has seen the addition of over 200 new single-family units. He continued by saying that an increase in population will require additional infrastructure (schools, ambulances, Sherriff deputies, EMS personnel). Currently, the existing residents in the county are paying for this via tax dollars, to satisfy that need. Facilitator LeDuc then asked the question "should we place the burden on the existing residents of the County or should that be placed on the new residents." Facilitator LeDuc explained that in many Counties, there are User Fees implemented on new residential units to aid in the cost of additional infrastructure. He explained that if user fees are implemented, the legislature mandates they must be very specific as to what they are to be used for and used for that purpose alone. In regard to the dollar amount, Facilitator LeDuc explained that Planning Commission would look at surrounding jurisdictions to determine what would be reasonable.

Priority items for the Planning Commission over the next year

Facilitator LeDuc asked County Council and Planning Commission to voice what they individually would like to see as the "Priority Items" for Planning Commission over the next year.

Commissioner Brown stated that Edgefield County has been under a tremendous amount of pressure in regard to growth and he does not want our children to say we should have done a

EDGEFIELD COUNTY COUNCIL
&
PLANNING COMMISSION
JOINT MEETING
January 24, 2023
6:00 PM
County Council Chambers

better job planning for the future. Commissioner Brown stated that he wanted to see Overlays as a priority.

Chairman Burt stated that he wanted us to consider “Balance” as we plan for our future. Commissioner Whitaker stated that she would like to see growth but with a balance.

Councilman Talbert stated that he would like to see Public Safety be a priority.

Chairman Campbell stated that because density is “in the eye of the beholder” and what may be dense to one may not be to another, he would like to see density flexibility in zoning.

Councilwoman Ireland stated that growth is coming, and we need to prepare for it and would like to see impact and User fees implemented.

Councilman Moody stated that we need a future vision in order to protect what we have and would like to see User Fees implemented.

Dr. Kennion stated that she is for growth but with balance.

Commissioner Butler stated that she would like to see recreation be made a priority as well as User Fees.

Commissioner Nowicki stated that she is concerned with all the spending with requesting more money for EMS, Fire departments, and that taxes are already too high.

Commissioner Walsh stated that we can keep the County’s rural feel if we offer lots with two to five acres. She continued to say that she understands that growth is coming, however, it needs to fit with the surrounding area and have the County’s zoning and ordinances address the issue. Commissioner Walsh continued to say she would like to see Retail Strategies in order to market growth up Highway 25. She also agreed with overlays and User Fees.

Commissioner Brown stated that if we continue to look at models that are broken then the model that is applied will be broken as well. He went on to say that conventional models we have used in the past continue to create issues. He then suggested that we look at other places that have been successful at growing while preserving a rural feel and let that be the model that is used.

The top three priorities for Planning Commission have been jointly agreed upon by Planning Commission and County Council to be the following:

- 1) Growth with Balance/ Density Flexibility in Zoning
- 2) User Fees
- 3) Overlays

EDGEFIELD COUNTY COUNCIL
&
PLANNING COMMISSION
JOINT MEETING
January 24, 2023
6:00 PM
County Council Chambers

Closing statements were made by both the Chairman of the County Council as well as Planning Commission. Chairman Burt stated that we need to always look at the big picture and what is best for all citizens. Chairman Campbell thanked Roger LeDuc, Administrator Caddell, Building and Planning Official Hart Clark, County Planner April Morgan, and Aretha Eubanks for all they did to help in the preparation and set up of the Joint Meeting and for providing guardrails in which elected and appointed officials can safely operate within.

Facilitator LeDuc concluded the Joint Meeting by saying that through the recently revised zoning ordinances, a general vision for the County was established and now is the time to start “tweaking” it to ensure we are going in the right direction in order to preserve the County’s rural nature. He continued to say that the Planning Commission does not get enough recognition for all the hard work they do and thanked them for all they do.

Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by Councilwoman Ireland with Dr. Kennion seconding the motion. All voting in favor, the motion passed unanimously. Joint Meeting was adjourned at 7:12 PM.

Edgefield County Council



Dean Campbell, Council Chairman

ATTEST



Aretha Eubanks, Clerk to Council