

Edgefield County  
**PLANNING COMMISSION**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**County Council Chambers**  
**August 10, 2023**  
**6:06 PM**

The Edgefield County Planning Commission Meeting was held on Thursday August 10, 2023 in the Edgefield County Council Chambers at 225 Jeter Street in Edgefield at 6:06pm. Notice of the time date and agenda of this meeting was provided to The Edgefield Advertiser, posted on the message board outside of Council Chambers, and provided to others when requested. Any questions regarding the Planning Commission should be directed to the County's Planner April Morgan [Aprilmorgan@edgefieldcounty.sc.gov](mailto:Aprilmorgan@edgefieldcounty.sc.gov)

**Members present:**

Fab Burt-Chairman. V,  
Lisa Whitaker-Dist. III,  
Karlene Butler-Dist. IV,  
Rhonda Nowicki Dist.II,  
Tracy Walsh-At Large,  
Sharron Haden Dist. V  
Daniel Baker At Large

**Members absent:**

**Staff present:**

April Morgan-Planner,  
Dharma Williams-  
Planning Staff,  
Hart Clark-Building and  
Planning Director,  
Andrew Marine-County  
Attorney

**County Council**

**members present:**

Tiffani Ireland,  
Gerry Moody

**Guests:**

David Thompson,  
Stuart Thompson

**I. Call to Order**

Chairman Fab Burt called the meeting to order at 6:06 pm.

A. Invocation

Burt gave an invocation.

B. Pledge

Burt led the pledge of allegiance.

**II. Approval of Agenda**

A. Approval of August 10,2023 Meeting Agenda

Walsh made a motion to approve the June 8,2023 agenda. Butler seconded the motion. Burt put the motion to a vote. All present voted in favor (6-0). Motion passed.

**III. Approval of Minutes**

A. Approval of July 13 ,2023 Work Session Meeting Minutes

Whitaker made a motion to approve the July 13,2023 Work Session Meeting minutes. Butler seconded the motion. Burt put the motion to a vote. All voted in favor (6-0). Motion Passed.

B. Approval of July 13 ,2023 Meeting Minutes

Whitaker made a motion to approve the July 13,2023 Meeting minutes. Butler seconded the motion. Burt put the motion to a vote. Majority voted in favor (6-0). Motion Passed.

**IV. Guest Speakers**

No guest speakers

**V. Public Hearing**

Burt invites citizens to participate in a public hearing regarding the items on the agenda.

Scott Cooper came to the stand and introduced himself and where he is from, 342 Sweetwater Road. "I just came tonight to commend Blue Sky for both the work they have already executed at Annison Pointe as well as Sweetwater Landing: Two recent developments in the Sweetwater community, two different properties targeting two different markets both of which are needed in Edgefield County. As a neighbor to both neighborhoods, I've had the privilege of getting to know new residents in both communities and all I have spoken with love the product that they received in those communities. Annison Pointe, which was controversial at the time, previously had been unproductive for over three decades. You can talk to local farmers if you want about the soils and agricultural activity there if you want to. This area did not not have access to sewer at the time of development. Sweetwater Landing, while it might have been better, had it had access to sewer previously had also been relatively unproductive piece of property. Each of these areas now have thriving young families which our community needs. So, I simply wanted to say thank you to Blue Sky for helping Edgefield County gain new citizens and new taxpayers who are contributing and love our community. I believe the future 253 families who will reside in Trestle Run will also become an asset to Edgefield County. One thing that I would like the Thompson to help with in coordination with other companies who are developing in Edgefield County and this is where you (the commissioners) come in as well is helping to extend the North Augusta Greenway to Edgefield along the rail bed adjacent to this proposed development. Such a project would bring economic benefits to our entire County including the Sweetwater area and including the new future residents of Trestle Run. Thank you."

Katherine Ekre came to the stand and introduced herself and where she lives, at 140 Sandy Springs Road. "I have concerns that don't get addressed when I come to these meetings particularly your dissertation on why we should be making laws instead of comprehensive plan. How many houses now are going to be accessed on Stephens Road? This will not be the first development on Stephens Road. Stephens Road, I agree, is a dangerous, winding, tiny, little, rural road and the way it looks to me it is going to be three or four massive housing developments. What about school busses?"

Who determines if a police car could go down? Where is there parking, is it going to be a one car driveway or for each one of these properties, will there be curbing, will the road be widened, will Stephens Road be able to accommodate with the high school right there? Is money always going to be the driving force for Edgefield County? We need quality, we don't need large numbers we need quality housing, quality lots, quality infrastructure, we need sewers, water, gas, and electricity. We have to provide that as County residents and I understand that and we do need development but just look at Stephens Road and those huge develops on both sides of the road. What is traffic going to be like? Where is the red light going to go? How are the school busses going to run? It just boggles my mind, the safety aspect of it boggles my mind. They bulldoze everything down; they've just started on Heritage right there at Bettis Academy. There buffer zone is about four little trees from Highway 25 to the edge, that doesn't speak buffer to me. Everything else is stripped down to the clay dirt and then these big complex huge developments get put in and have access to one little road that goes in and out. Most families have more than one care, so where do they park? It is not for Rural County living and then once it is done and the builder gets through and they pocket their money that is it they are done. Hopefully their properties will sell. Hopefully you can find people that'll want to be there but Stephens Road is just, according to the current map and current issues that you've got developing you've got lots and lots of houses not just Trestle Run that will be using that one tiny dangerous street. Are we going to provide sidewalks, curbing, anything to help regulate High School traffic or is that burden going to be with the sheriff's department now to get traffic safely in and out of the High School areas? Those are some of the things that I don't hear at planning. They may not be a part of the Comprehensive Plan but I would think that it should be and it is all about fear of being sued. Big deal fight if we need to but we should be thinking about safety and decent housing and something that is not so ugly like Bettis Academy Road is the ugliest area ever seen being developed in Aiken County and if you haven't been down to Graniteville and Bettis Academy Road you need to because it is just horrible."

Jay Garrison came to the stand and introduced himself and where he lives, 191 Sweetwater Creek Dr. "I just wanted to make sure I was coming to clarify that I think a couple years ago we were talking about the zoning and make sure we had a good Comprehensive Plan just to remind there's probably maybe more people may feel this way. Make sure you're keeping lot sizes and keeping it more rural. I understand your point, I am about to have my ninth child so I know how tough it is. I could argue with anybody, but I do not think its just for me. I have to deal with what I have to deal with. I appreciate y'all wanting to keep taxes down that'd be great, but make sure I am encouraging y'all to remember keep it rural as possible. Development is good but make sure y'all have a good game plan. I know we talked about having ordinances, and I'd like to say that limit. That was what we were fighting a couple years ago and had those been put in place to where we don't have to worry about this kind of stuff or do we now have to zone to

kind of cover in a minimum zoning. I heard you (pointing toward Clark) said you could do something like that but I just want to make sure because I was confused a little bit about the why were sitting here so many developments are going in. Is it still fitting our plan of larger acre sizes and keeping it more of a rural community. I just want to make sure I still remember reminding y'all that's kind of what we had all that was about zoning a couple years ago is keeping it a more rural community."

Clark reads an emailed comment made by the Becker and Eubanks family who live at 76 Hunters Run. "My family has lived in Edgefield County for over six generations. We love Edgefield and the people of Edgefield. Living in a small village town surrounded by nature is such a part of our culture and heritage. It breaks my heart to see developers and chains wanting to take over. Once we sell out, we will never get it back. I am a real estate agent, so this decision and lifestyle comes at a personal financial loss. I choose to help the people of Edgefield regardless of potential profit and I hope our elected officials feel the same way. I have lived outside of Edgefield in Columbia, Philadelphia and New Jersey. When I had the opportunity to come back home, I had a renewed sense of love for my community and desire to preserve and protect it for myself and future generations. Trust me, we do not want to live in a concrete jungle, overpopulated and full of crime. The motto on your website "It feels different here because it is different here" will only remain true if you fight to preserve the environment and values we currently and have historically held. Please protect the people of Edgefield and the beautiful green space and nature that we all love. If I can be of any assistance serving on committees or anything to voice my concerns and that of many others, please let me know." She also attached an image of a housing complex next to a farmer's field with a tractor behind it plowing the field.

Burt closes the public hearing portion of the meeting assuring citizens that their comments will be taken into consideration.

Burt b

**VI. Reports**

No reports

**VII. Old Business**

No old business

**VIII. New Business**

Burt explains that there will be a vote on a Land Development Application submitted by Blue Sky Properties for the proposed Major Subdivision to be

located off of Stephens Road. On parcels 125-00-00-067-000, 125-00-00-013-000 & 125-00-00-057-000 on a total of 97.04 acres.

Burt explains that it seems that they are in compliance with the minimum lot size, zoning and applicant process. He continues that the density with the Comprehensive Plan is noncompliance but that the parcels proposed for development are designated as Suburban Density Residential. While single family units are compliant with the Comprehensive Plan, this designation has suggested 0.5-2 units per acre regarding density. As proposed this development with a total of 254 lots has a density of around 2.5 units per acre. Burt continues that the Comprehensive Plan is not a law, but rather a guidance. He continues to explain that they are pending approval on DHEC Storm Water, ECWSA Approved from DHEC Waste Water Control, it s going to be on County Sewer and the water taps have been approved, Dominion Energy will be the electric underground, and the SCDOT Encroachment is pending Planning Commission approval. There will be green space between the adjacent properties. They will have an HOA established to maintain responsibility of the green space.

Burt opens the panel for any discussion from the commissioners.

Nowicki states "Earlier I asked Doc (Clark) were there any major subdivisions, which is what y'all are presenting a major subdivision, now in our County that have a mixed use element and he said no there aren't any and the reason why is because you can't. Because it's not zoned, you're presenting a mixed use under a major subdivision, right? I get it. I have a lot of issues with the safety of Stephens Road and while I am not DOT and I can't decide, I do see in our ordinances section 24-164 and it talks about zoned and unzoned areas and talks about the design. It literally says the purpose of this article is to advance the objectives of South Carolina Local Planning Enabling Act of 1994 to require harmonious, orderly, progressive development of land and in pursuit of public health and safety and that is where I have an issue with this road. I have an issue with the safety. Number three it goes down to ensure that adequate provisions of the safe and convenient travel access and circulation of both vehicular and pedestrian in and through new land developments. This is section 24.64 of our ordinance. This doesn't do that. Number five says to ensure in general the wise and timely development of new areas in harmony with the comp plan. This is in section 24-164. And this is for zoned and unzoned areas. So, section 24-166 it talks about the ability of the road to serve the safety and convenience of the expected user citizens. It talks about the circulation design road system shall be designed to permit the safe and efficient orderly movement of traffic. There again, Stephens Road is an issue. The arrangements of roads will be such as will not cause hardships to owners of adjoining properties or general public in providing ingress or egress. That road is horrible. DOT has already told me that there is a driveway spacing that has not been met for this apparently. But here's the real part that the attorneys will like. Section 24-5 in our ordinance's regulations applicable to

zoned and unzoned areas of the County, section 3 2466 townhouse projects, so you click on 2466 and it takes you to townhouse projects, number seven. Doc (Clark) mentioned earlier the maximum size units per acre but the density shall not exceed the maximum allowed per the land use area of the Edgefield County Comprehensive Plan. It says zoned and unzoned in section 24-5. Townhouses. This is for zoned and unzoned townhouses. The townhouse element does not meet our Comprehensive Plan. That's all I got."

Walsh states that she has "Been searching to see what other Counties may have denied a major subdivision based on their Comprehensive Plan alone in an unzoned area and in 2021 Greenville County lost a lawsuit because they approved a development on unzoned land that violated their Comprehensive Plan. So, I feel confident that with this project not being compliant with our Comprehensive Plan, I feel confident not being in favor of it."

Andrew Marine introduces himself as the county attorney. "I do want to let you know that there are court cases around the state on this. A few weeks ago there were cases in Georgetown where basically Georgetown said that the Comprehensive Plan is just a general guideline that is not used for implementing zoning decisions that you have to use the zoning ordinances and that the Comprehensive Plan is just a riding idea."

Walsh says that she is aware of other cases and that it seems that the South Carolina Court judges are disagreeing on the interpretation and that she believes it may be time for some cases to go to the Supreme Court as the Supreme Court has not seen a case on this yet. She believes this would give a firm opinion on how to apply our Comprehensive Plan and Ordinances.

Hadden says that she remembers when the Comprehensive Plan started in the early 2000's and it was originally called "The Vision 2020" , when 2020 seemed far away. She explains her problems with this project are that the Merriwether/Sweetwater area seems to be the "hot seat" of the County and that we do not want to see that part of the County become a part of annexation into North Augusta. She explains that the density is a large issue that needs to be controlled to control growth and follow our plan. She goes on to tell that she understands the affordable housing being needed. But that she is "Not okay with this project being presented as if it's some philanthropic endeavor that we're providing affordable housing for the County because it is not. It like everything else is for profit, and I don't feel like the profit of a developer should be at the expense of our County."

Burt recommends that the preliminary plat should be approved conditionally, and the conditions could be negotiated upon.

Burt invites the Commissioners to make a motion to vote upon approve the preliminary plat for the Land Development Application submitted by Blue Sky Properties for the proposed Major Subdivision to be located off of Stephens Road on parcels 125-00-00-067-000, 125-00-00-013-000 & 125-00-00-057-

000. Whitaker makes a motion. Butler seconds the motion. Burt put the motion to a vote. Majority voted against. (4-3) Motion was not approved.

**IX. Executive Session**

No Executive Session

**X. Comments by the Planning Commission Chair**

No Comments Made

**XI. Adjourn**

Whitaker made a motion to adjourn. Butler seconded the motion. Burt put the motion to a vote. All voted in favor (6-0). Motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 6:33 pm.

Respectfully Submitted:

  
April Morgan, Planner

Approved: September 14,  
2023



Fab Burt-Chairman