

**Statesboro Planning Commission  
Minutes  
November 13, 2007**

The November 13, 2007 meeting of the Statesboro Planning Commission was called to order by Chair Sharon Tracy at 5:00 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers. Other Planning Commission members present were Ray Hendley, Wyatt Johnson, John Karrh, Lewis Stewart, and Norman Wells. City staff member present was Jim Shaw, Planning Director.

Mr. Johnson moved to approve the minutes of the October 9, 2007 meeting as presented. Dr. Wells seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

The first item of new business was Application RZ 07-11-01; Heard Development, LLC requests rezoning from CR (Commercial Retail) and R-4 (High Density Residential) to CR (Commercial Retail) and R-4 (High Density Residential) to modify the zoning boundaries within the parcel containing approximately 66.6 acres located on the east side of Highway 67 and on the north side of Burkhalter Road.

Mr. Shaw provided the Commission a summary of the staff report. He stated the property was annexed into the city approximately two years ago. The original developer withdrew from the project and another developer is interested in the property, but would like a different configuration. He stated the proposed change would keep the frontage zoned CR and would shift the R-4 zoning from the northeast portion of the property to the southeast. This change would give the R-4 portion of the development direct frontage on Burkhalter Road. The area devoted to CR and R-4 zoning would change by less than one acre. He stated staff recommends approval of the rezoning and variances.

Joey Maxwell of Maxwell-Reddick and Associates was present to represent the applicant.

Mr. Karrh asked if a development plan had been prepared. Mr. Maxwell stated it had not. The applicant is still discussing the property with various developers and expects separate developers for the R-4 and CR portions. Mr. Karrh asked if he expected the R-4 area to have access from Highway 67. Mr. Maxwell stated they anticipated a main entrance into the development from Highway 67 that would also provide access to the R-4 area.

No one spoke against the request.

Mr. Johnson made a motion to approve the rezoning. Mr. Hendley seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

The second item of new business was Application V 07-11-02; Larry Reed of Artech Design Group requests a variance to increase the maximum wall sign area from five percent of the wall area to seven percent of the wall area for the proposed Statesboro

Crossing development located on the south side of Brannen Street and on the west side of Veterans Memorial Parkway.

Mr. Shaw provided the Commission a summary of the staff report. He stated this request is for the Statesboro Crossing development that has been before the Commission for rezoning and subdivision plat approval in the recent past. The Zoning Ordinance limits individual establishments in a commercial development to wall signs that cover no more than 5% of the wall area. Some of the tenants in this development have requested signs that cover 7%. The developer has agreed to limit this request to only those tenants with a floor area of 10,000 square feet or more. He stated that a request was considered a few months ago to increase the building height of some of the buildings. The argument was made that the distance of the development from Brannen Street and Veterans Memorial Parkway reduced the impact of the buildings. The same could be said for the signs. The closest building is 400 feet from either street, which is much greater than the majority of commercial developments. He stated staff recommends approval of the variance.

Larry Reed of Artech Design Group, the applicant, was present. He stated there are one or two stores at this time that have standard signs that will exceed the 5% limitation. This request was submitted to take care of those stores and provide relief for some of the other large tenants if it becomes necessary.

Mr. Karrh stated the setback the building will have is much greater than what is required by about sixteen times.

Mr. Stewart made a motion to approve the rezoning. Mr. Karrh seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

The third item of new business was Application V 07-11-03; Lise Tillman Vranches requests variances of the parking design requirements to allow parking that is not paved and allow vehicles to back onto a public street for 17 West Jones Avenue.

Mr. Shaw provided the Commission a summary of the staff report. He stated the property was rezoned from R-3 to CR in October of last year. Staff recommended approval of the rezoning, but did raise a concern regarding the need for parking. In August of this year a site plan was submitted showing a parking lot at the rear of the structure that met most Zoning Ordinance requirements so a business license could be obtained. A few weeks later this application was submitted to allow the property to have unpaved parking with direct access on Walnut Street. He stated the request raises safety concerns. The northernmost parking area has limited site distance and the southernmost parking area is close to the West Jones Avenue intersection which could create conflicts. These potential problems are increased by the fact that vehicles must back onto or off of Walnut Street. In addition, gravel from the parking areas could wash onto the street making traction difficult. The applicant has shown no hardship that necessitates the variances. He stated staff recommends denial of the variances.

John Dotson of Maxwell-Reddick and Associates was present to represent the applicant. He stated there are two parking areas with two spaces each that have been on the site for a number of years. The applicant wants to expand each of those with an additional space to meet the total requirement of six spaces. He stated that further south there is a business with parking similar to what is being proposed.

Mr. Karrh asked if there is sufficient room to build a parking lot at the rear of the structure. Mr. Dotson stated there is. Mr. Karrh asked if there is a problem related to the property that prevents the construction of the parking lot. Mr. Dotson stated it is just the owner's desire to not build a parking area.

Dr. Wells asked what business was south of there with similar parking and if it was close to the bank. Mr. Dotson stated it was almost to the bank, at the corner of Mikell Street.

Mr. Karrh made a motion to deny the variance. Mr. Johnson seconded the motion and it carried by a vote of 4 to 1 with Dr. Wells voting against.

The fourth item of new business was Application T 07-11-04; Amendment of Article 4, Improvements Required and Design Standards, of the Subdivision Ordinance to require fire apparatus access roads for certain subdivisions.

Mr. Shaw provided the Commission a summary of the staff report. He stated the Subdivision Ordinance does not limit the number of lots that may use a single entrance for access onto a main road. The Fire Chief recently raised the issue while reviewing subdivision plans because of his concern that a single entrance could become blocked and prohibit access for emergency vehicles. The International Fire Code contains a requirement for a separate fire apparatus access road for single-family and two-family developments with more than thirty dwelling units. The Chief asked that the same requirement be included in the Subdivision Ordinance so design professionals would be aware of the requirement early in the process. Mr. Shaw stated the requirement is not for a second full entrance. There are alternatives that would not require paving. The language is broad to provide flexibility for each development. He stated staff recommends approval of the text amendment.

Fire Chief Dennis Merrifield was present to discuss the request. He stated the Fire Department had reviewed plans for large residential subdivisions recently that only had one access. The designers were not aware of the second access requirement in the International Fire Code and adding a second access after the plans had been developed proved difficult. This amendment is requested so the requirement will be in the Subdivision Ordinance, which is the ordinance engineers and surveyors consult when developing plans.

Mr. Karrh stated "two-family" should be "multifamily" so it applies to all residential developments. Another ordinance should be adopted to require sprinkler testing and the submittal of the corresponding paperwork to the Fire Department. Mr. Shaw stated the suggested wording change to "multifamily" would cover condominium and similar

developments in which individual units are sold. However, it would not cover apartment developments. Additional research would be necessary to determine where and how to include that requirement.

Mr. Maxwell stated he was in favor of a second access requirement, but asked that some consideration be given to allowing grass-paved or similar type of construction. For some projects a second street access would make a project unsuitable. Also, there is a desire to increase green space and a grass-paved access would serve both purposes. Chief Merrifield stated he has experience elsewhere with secondary accesses that are not paved and anticipates those would be utilized under this amendment. He stated he would prefer that. Mr. Shaw stated the original discussion among staff centered on options other than paved roads. The most likely access would probably be along the edge of a common area so it can be used by the residents for recreation, but would be available to the Fire Department in an emergency.

Dr. Wells made a motion to modify the amendment by changing “two-family” to “multifamily”. Mr. Stewart seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

Mr. Karrh made a motion to approve the amendment, as amended. Mr. Stewart seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

There being no other business for the Commission’s consideration, Dr. Tracy adjourned the meeting at 5:40 p.m.