

Community Development Committee

February 20, 2025

A meeting of the Community Development Committee was held on this date beginning at 3:04 p.m. at 80 Broad St. and over video conference call.

Notice of this meeting was sent out to the news media.

Committee Members: Councilmember Mitchell, Chairman, Councilmember Appel, Councilmember McBride, Councilmember Parker (left at 3:58 p.m.), Councilmember Gregorie (joined at 3:07 p.m.) and Mayor Cogswell.

Also Present: Robert Summerfield, Rebecca Dail, Malena Dinwoodie, Josh Martin, Geona Shaw Johnson, Latosha Jenkins-Fludd, Julia Copeland, Magalie Creech, Amy Wharton, Florence Peters, Melissa Cruthirds, Logan McVey, Christopher Morgan, and Patrick Carlson, recording.

The meeting opened with an invocation led by Chairman Mitchell.

Approval of Minutes

On a motion of Mayor Cogswell, seconded by Chairman Mitchell, the committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes from the December 19, 2024, meeting.

Public Participation

Anthony Bryant submitted a comment and spoke in person about the economic and community impacts of developers and certain investment strategies.

Old Business

1. Presentation of rapid housing options and potential action

Mayor Cogswell said the number of people experiencing homelessness in the Charleston region was increasing and wanted to invest in a rapid housing solution to support those who were experiencing housing insecurity and did not qualify for the existing programs. Establishing a solution of this size would require a regional and collaborative approach that would complement other current initiatives. One approach would be to create a series of individual units next to the Hope Center with controlled access, adjacent bathrooms, and comprehensive support services. This would be intended to be utilized as temporary housing to help secure assistance and transition housing insecure men to more supportive and permanent situations. The original proposal called for 118 individual units, but it had been revised to 80 units that were arranged in groups of four and connected to adjacent bathrooms.

Councilmember Gregorie asked if there was any data about the length of time it took for individuals to adequately address mental difficulties that would allow them to transition to more permanent housing. He also asked if there was any dedicated commitment from anyone outside of the City and wondered if the state of South Carolina could help subsidize the proposed program.

Mayor Cogswell said he had engaged in several conversations with Mayor Burgess of North Charleston about the topic but had not received a commitment of any specific resources. Mayor Cogswell said Charleston needed to lead the charge but would not commit to shouldering the project alone.

Latisha Jenkins-Fludd said assessments and partnerships with clinicians and counselors determine the initial steps for recovery and they had successfully entered over 50 individuals into the recovery process. They also had relationships with other groups to help people connect with the state program Continuum of Care that would also support their recovery and housing efforts.

Councilmember Gregorie asked about the difference between the proposed project and the Cunningham Avenue project.

Geona Shaw Johnson said that the proposed center for Cunningham Avenue did not intend to have permanent shelter on site but to build 98 units of permanent housing next door.

Councilmember Gregorie said they wanted to address issues across the board but did not understand why the rapid housing proposal only accommodated men.

Ms. Shaw Johnson said that the overall housing insecure population was predominately women and children, however the number of men living outside was much higher compared to women. Rapid housing would seek to get men dealing with these issues immediately housed.

Councilmember Gregorie asked if they could expand the focus of all housing initiatives to a more a regional effort and not just support a regional project to establish rapid housing.

Ms. Shaw Johnson said that rapid housing was a need for the community right now until all those other housing initiatives could provide enough shelter for everyone in question and by filling this void the City could begin to close the transitional housing gap.

Councilmember McBride said he supported the changes to the originally proposed plan.

Chairman Mitchell said he did not understand how the number of proposed inhabitants could be housed on the planned site, but recognized the homelessness issue needed to be addressed on a regional level.

On a motion of Councilmember Gregorie, seconded by Councilmember Mitchell, the committee voted to combine the concepts for rapid housing with the concepts for Cunningham Avenue. The vote was not unanimous. Councilmember Parker abstained.

New Business

1. Cunningham Avenue Discussion
2. Presentation and approval of the City of Charleston Accommodations Tax Revenue Housing Impact Analysis

Rebecca Dail gave a presentation about impact analysis from accommodations tax revenue. She said the associated Senate bill was passed in 2023 that allowed the use of 15% of accommodations tax revenue for affordable housing initiatives. The City developed a housing impact analysis that had been approved by the Planning Commission to amend to the Comprehensive Plan. The analysis revealed multiple challenges to the goal of generating more housing and studied the long-term impact of this continued

investment. Some of the challenges included high costs, population growth, and housing typology. Upon approval, the City would need to submit the analysis to the South Carolina Department of Revenue and the South Carolina Tourism Expenditure Committee.

On a motion of Mayor Cogswell, seconded by Councilmember McBride, the committee unanimously approved the Accommodations Tax revenue housing impact analysis.

3. Update on Comprehensive Plan Amendment for the Waterfront Development District-Planning, Preservation & Sustainability

Robert Summerfield gave a presentation about a proposed amendment to the Comprehensive Plan. The proposal was to add an Urban Waterfront designation to the future land use matrix in the Comprehensive Plan to describe detailed expectations for future development in the urban waterfront areas. In addition, the Planning Commission unanimously approved the proposed language.

On a motion of Mayor Cogswell, seconded by Councilmember Appel, the committee voted to approve the update to the comprehensive plan amendment and send the proposal to the full Council. The vote was not unanimous. Councilmember McBride abstained.

Adjourn

Having no further business, the Committee adjourned at 4:13 p.m.

Patrick Carlson
Clerk of Council's Office