

Community Development Committee

March 20, 2025

A meeting of the Community Development Committee was held on this date beginning at 3:02 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 Gregorie, Councilmember Parker (joined at 3:07 p.m.) and Mayor Cogswell (joined at 3:04 p.m.). **Also Present:** Robert Summerfield, Rebecca Dail, Josh Martin, Geona Shaw Johnson, Julia Copeland, Magalie Creech, Amy Wharton, Mandi Herring, Christopher Morgan, Robert Somerville, Jason Kronsberg, and Patrick Carlson, recording.

The meeting opened with an invocation led by Reverend Kylon Middleton.

Approval of Minutes

On a motion of Mayor Cogswell, seconded by Chairman McBride, the committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes from the February 20, 2025, meeting.

Public Participation

Anthony Bryant spoke about the importance of establishing proper names in business transactions.

Old Business

None

New Business

1. Update on 993 and 995 Morrison Drive Acquisition

Mayor Cogswell said the City had made an offer to Charleston County to purchase the land at 993 and 995 Morrison Drive for \$30 million and the County said they were open to accepting the offer and wanted to work together to ensure affordable housing would be developed on the site. The County owned a total of 6.3 acres across the two parcels, except for two right of ways that cut between North Hanover St. and Morrison Drive. Those sections were previously sold to the owners of Laurel Island to create space to eventually build a bridge over to any future development. Mayor Cogswell said the City proposed a \$5 million reduction in purchase price if those two parcels could not be guaranteed as public rights-of-way. He said the County Council also had concerns about the amount of affordable housing that would be developed. He proposed using Cooper River Bridge TIF funds to purchase the property and restricting 50% of any potential residential units to varying degrees of affordability. By asking Charleston County to extend its participation in the Cooper River Bridge TIF and Laurel Island TIF for an additional ten years, the City could request that future tax revenue to be further utilized for any onsite development.

Councilmember Gregorie asked if the property appraisal included the two parcels owned by the Laurel Island developers.

Mayor Cogswell said he did not know, but he believed the appraisal assumed they would remain as roadways.

Councilmember Gregorie said the County had affordable housing goals and the City should try to improve the County's contribution to ensure more vertical development.

Mayor Cogswell said the County also had other commitments that would require funding from this deal and thought the TIF extension would help alleviate some of those pressures for both parties.

Chairman Mitchell said the proposed AMI levels needed to be lowered to help keep people in the downtown neighborhoods. He also said the original intention for the Cooper River Bridge TIF was to provide a source of revenue to redevelop the Eastside and the proposed purchase of the two properties would only leave around \$10 million for any other investments. He hoped that there would be a greater emphasis on Eastside investments, regardless of whether they decide to purchase the two parcels on Morrison Drive.

Mayor Cogswell agreed that the AMI levels needed to be lowered, but the proposal was just a starting point for what would be guaranteed to the County. He also said by extending the TIF they could set aside more funding for development in that part of the City.

Councilmember Appel said they should also explore more partnership options with the County and try to utilize funding from the proposed \$30 million purchase price to provide more affordable housing at lower tiers.

Mayor Cogswell said the City had made an initial offer of \$20 million to purchase the property, but based on their financial obligations and the recent appraisal, the County refused the offer.

Councilmember Parker said it was an expensive proposal and asked if there were any more affordable sites off the peninsula that were being considered for development.

Mayor Cogswell said it was a good investment option because it could be funded by the available TIF revenue and had already been considered for potential affordable housing development for close to twenty years.

Councilmember Gregorie asked about the intended affordability levels for the remaining 50% of the proposed housing units because offering some units at market rate would allow the City to subsidize the project by some measure.

Mayor Cogswell said he agreed, and it was important to accommodate multiple incomes throughout the project.

Councilmember Parker asked if the Charleston Housing Authority was involved in the project and if there were any proposed partners for developing the site.

Mayor Cogswell said the Housing Authority was not involved in the project, but the City had had multiple conversations with several interested developers at that point.

Councilmember Gregorie said they should not ignore using the City or County Housing Authority resources because they could provide Section 8 certificates to several proposed units and that commitment would become a part of the proposed financial package.

On a motion of Mayor Cogswell, seconded by Councilmember Gregorie, the committee unanimously approved of amending the agenda to consider committee approval of the proposed acquisition terms and outlines and direct the Mayor and staff to negotiate with the County to arrive at an agreed price, terms and conditions.

On a motion of Councilmember Gregorie, seconded by Mayor Cogswell, the committee voted to approve the proposed acquisition terms and outlines and direct the Mayor and staff to negotiate with the County to arrive at an agreed price, terms and conditions. The vote was not unanimous. Councilmember Parker abstained.

2. Charleston Redevelopment Corporation Presentation

Jonathan Oakman said he was going to present an annual update about the work of the Charleston Redevelopment Corporation (CRC). He said the systemic challenges in addressing affordable housing provided multiple roadblocks, but they were grateful to their founding partners, the Historic Charleston Foundation (HCF) and Charleston Housing Authority, and their community partners across multiple public and no-profit organizations. The CRC's recent successes included nine single family home ownership units that targeted people with 80% AMI, and 114 units under construction.

April Wood said the CRC and the HCF created the Common Cause Loan Fund to assist long-term qualifying homeowners of historic homes to assist with repairing the exteriors of their properties. They also were planning to collaborate with the City's Department of Housing & Community Development on rehabilitating multiple properties.

F.A. Johnson said the Palmetto Community Land Trust was another way to pursue long-term affordability and leverage more money into new projects and proposals.

3. Presentation regarding proposed changes to establish a definition for pools, provide clarity regarding setbacks, location, and other related zoning standards, as well as, provide an exception to the zoning setback requirements for elevated mechanical equipment stands – Planning & Preservation staff

Robert Summerfield gave a presentation about a proposed amendment to define pools in the City code. By adding a common zoning definition for a pool, they could also add provisions to protect against casual interpretations involving important setbacks and buffer zones. This would also align the City expectations with the County's existing restrictions and provide clarity to pool and landscape developers. In addition, the proposal wanted to provide a stand-alone exception for allowing utility platforms and shed installation without requiring BZA approval.

Councilmember Parker asked if it would be a City-wide ordinance and how it would change property expectations off the peninsula.

Mr. Summerfield said it was just intended to clarify what a pool was and how they could be positioned in the traditionally larger lots off the peninsula.

Adjourn

Having no further business, the Committee adjourned at 4:14 p.m.

Patrick Carlson
Clerk of Council's Office