

PUBLIC NOTICE

Aiken Municipal Development Commission Meeting

The Aiken Municipal Development Commission will meet **in-person** on Tuesday, May 18, 2021, at 3:30 P.M. at the Lessie B. Price Senior & Youth Center at 841 Edgefield Avenue NW.

EXECUTIVE SESSION NOTICE

After the regular meeting, the Aiken Municipal Development Commission will meet in Executive Session pursuant to Section 30-4-70(2) of the South Carolina Code to discuss matters relating to the proposed location, expansion, or the provision of services encouraging location or expansion of industries or other businesses in the area served by the public body.

Specifically, the Aiken Municipal Development Commission will discuss matters regarding a proposed development project.

Aiken Municipal Development Commission

Agenda

Lessie B. Price Senior & Youth Center
841 Edgefield Avenue NW

May 18, 2021

3:30 P.M.

CALL TO ORDER

1. Approval of Agenda for May 18, 2021.
2. Approval of Minutes for April 13, 2021.
3. Discussion of Project Manager Job Posting and Candidate Selection.
4. Sub-Committee Reports.
5. Consideration of Incentives Application for The Magnolia of Aiken Development, a 60-unit Senior Affordable Housing Project Near Whiskey and Stratford Drive.
6. Comments by Commission Members.
7. Information and Updates from Staff.
8. Executive Session to Discuss Development Project.

ADJOURNMENT

Aiken Municipal Development Commission Minutes

In-person – Lessie B. Price Senior & Youth Center
April 13, 2021

Present: Keith Wood, Marty Gillam, David Jameson, Stuart MacVean, Philip Merry (via phone), and Chris Verenes. Ms. Catina Broadwater arrived late in the meeting.

Absent: Doug Slaughter and Tom Williams.

Others Present: Tim O’Briant, Stuart Bedenbaugh, Sabina Craig, Sara Ridout, Diana Floyd, Tom Hallman, Mary Catherine Lawton, Lessie Price, Miles Bates and Colin Demarest of the Aiken Standard.

Mr. Wood, Chair, called the meeting of April 14, 2021, to order at 3:35 p.m. He asked for approval of the agenda. Mr. MacVean moved, seconded by Mr. Gillam that the agenda be approved as listed. The motion was unanimously approved.

MINUTES

Mr. Wood asked the members to consider approval of the minutes for the March 16, 2021 and the Special meeting of March 17, 2021. Mr. Jameson moved, seconded by Mr. Verenes, that the minutes for meetings of March 16, and 17, 2021, be approved. The motion was unanimously approved.

JOB DESCRIPTION

Project Manager

Mr. Wood pointed out that a proposed job description for the Project Manager had been distributed to those present. He pointed out that it was very detailed. He said he and Mr. O’Briant had drafted the job description. He said the job description was based on previous discussions regarding a recommendation to City Council that a Project Manager be hired either directly or as a consulting contract employee to help implement the AECOM Economic Development Plan. The job is not only to implement the projects for which the Municipal Development Commission is directly responsible, but also to work with the City and other agencies to help them implement all aspects of the AECOM Plan.

Mr. Wood also provided to the MDC a copy of the letter that Mr. Bedenbaugh had sent to the Commission regarding City Council’s approval of a resolution adopting the AECOM Economic Development Action Plan and approval of \$200,000 funding, a portion of the \$500,000 request. He pointed out some of the funding provided by the City may be used to fund the Project Manager position.

Mr. Wood asked that everyone take a look at the job description and make any comments on any changes to the job description. After comments and any changes, we will move forward with

soliciting someone interested in the position. He noted that the Commission had not discussed the structure for the position and who the employee would be paid by—the MDC or the City. Mr. Wood stated his recommendation is that the employee be paid by the MDC. He noted that if the employee is a full time employee, they may have to be paid by the City. He said that discussion could be had later.

Mr. Wood asked if there were any comments on the job description.

Mr. Jameson pointed out the job description does not indicate whether the job is full time or part time or whether it is a contract job. He also pointed out that the job description indicates what kind of educational level we want the person to have, but it does not emphasize the caliber of the person that we are looking for—someone who has been in the community for a while, a long time, someone who can move among groups in the community, someone who has demonstrated leadership either in their paid profession or in volunteer work in the community. He felt it does not ratchet it up to the caliber that he felt the Commission is looking for.

Mr. Wood stated he did not know the answer to the question as to how many hours per week it will take to do the job. Some weeks it may be a 40 hour a week job, but others may be a 5-hour week. He pointed out the job will be a critical position for the MDC working with the City to implement the AECOM plan.

The Commission members discussed the draft job description for the Project Manager.

Mr. Wood asked Mr. Bedenbaugh his ideas and thoughts on the job description. Mr. Bedenbaugh stated he had not looked at it in detail, but with a quick review the specific duties are in line with what he expected for this job description. He said it does need to be decided whether the job is contractual, part time or full time. He noted that the work hours will be irregular depending on the flow of work and the stages of the various projects.

Mr. Wood stated after receiving input from the Commission members on the job description, would the Commission be okay with the Executive Committee moving forward with soliciting applicants for the job. The Executive Committee would bring back two or three of the preferred candidates to the full Commission for action.

Mr. Bedenbaugh pointed out that from his perspective, he thought it would work best from what Mr. Wood's vision is for the Project Manager job, that the reporting authority be more the MDC versus the City. He felt that would make the position more effective with what the goals and expectations are for the job. He pointed out that if the Commission wants the job to be a full time 40 hour a week employee, then that would need Council approval and that could be done as part of the annual budget. The only thing is that employee could not start work until after July 1. The employee could be identified and made an offer. The position could be a contract employee, and that person could be identified and start work within a few days.

Mr. Wood summarized the process. He pointed out that Mr. Gillam, Mr. Jameson, and Mr. MacVean will provide some comments to him to modify the job description. Mr. Bedenbaugh will give his input by the end of the week. Based on feedback received, the job description will

be modified and sent to the Commission members. The Executive Committee will begin soliciting candidates. The Executive Committee will begin looking at candidates and bring back some preferred candidates for the Commission's review.

ALLOCATION OF FUNDS

\$200,000 Allocation

Mt. Wood stated the next topic on the agenda is allocation of \$200,000 to the MDC by City Council. He pointed out that he wanted to call attention to a letter from Mayor Osbon dated March 29, 2021. He noted a listing of five items in the letter.

1. Explore meeting the existing demand for a conference/convention facility that will fulfill the persistent call from regional membership organizations and others who have indicated they would host regular large events in our charming and historic city if there were an appropriate venue here to meet their needs.
2. Such a venue would need to be adjacent to sufficient first-class lodging to accommodate as many as 500 overnight and multi-night attendees. If the venue envisioned above is a feasible addition in the downtown district and becomes a reality, the fate of the downtown hospitality and lodging industry will become immediately brighter for all hotel operators, present and future, citywide.
3. Our stakeholder team should leverage that possibility to find immediate ways to assist the ownership of the Hotel Aiken in expediting the envisioned redevelopment of that presently abandoned facility at the key corner of Laurens Street and Richland Avenue.
4. As the action plan suggests, we must work with existing property owners to package and market sufficient acreage and appropriate sites to meet the development community's desire to create more urban-scale residential condo and apartment inventory within the downtown area. The benefits of this type of housing go well beyond the impact it will have on the City – and County for that matter – coffers through providing additional tax value purely through growth. Such housing will ensure vibrancy in the downtown for decades to come and stimulate the addition of retail, dining and other commerce by providing a steady stream of local 24/7 consumers.
5. Downtown parking will be in need of a long-term solution if and when the prior priorities are met. To provide convenient and accessible parking for the conference center, hotel and residential facilities laid out above, it is clear that surface parking as well as a structured parking solution will be required. Any parking facility must meet our community's sensitivities and be constructed in a way that does not detract from the character and charm that bring so many to our doorstep in the first place.

Mr. Wood asked the Commission members to look at the five key areas that the Mayor noted. He pointed out that those five items are where the MDC's efforts should be. He pointed out that funds from the \$200,000 from the City would be allocated for some of these five items. He pointed out that tying the Mayor's letter with the five key areas in the letter and the document adopted as the Strategic Plan gives a clear vision as to where the MDC's focus should be. He said he wanted to call this to the attention of the MDC members.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INCENTIVE AGREEMENT

Peaks of Aiken LP

Gregg Highway

Multi-Family Housing Project

Mr. Wood stated the next item for consideration is a recommendation to City Council regarding application for Economic Development Incentives related to a multi-family housing project proposed for Gregg Highway.

Mr. O'Briant stated a request had been received from Peaks of Aiken LP to participate in the Economic Incentives Program of the City. They plan to develop a 72-unit multifamily affordable housing development on 10 acres on Gregg Highway. The community will be 100% affordable under the SC State Housing Finance and Development Authority. They plan to close on the property in January/February, 2022, with construction to start in the spring of 2022. The total project cost is estimated at \$15,321,100. He said the request is before the MDC for review and comments. After review the MDC should make a recommendation to City Council.

Ms. Sabina Craig reviewed the Incentive Application for the MDC members. The application is for a \$15 million multi-family affordable housing development to be built on the west side of Aiken near the Aiken Center on Gregg Highway. Once the development is completed it will be 100% affordable housing utilizing tax credits from the SC Housing & Finance Development Authority. The plans involve 72 units in five buildings as well as a club house. The proposed development will have different phases for job opportunities during the construction phase and then permanent positions once the complex is completed. She pointed out Exhibit A of the agreement. The developer will pay for building permit and inspection fees, utility impact fees, and business license fees for a total of \$168,456.85. Once all the conditions of the application are met the estimated rebate at 50% to be issued one year after the Certificate of Occupancy is issued is \$84,228.50. The rebate is not to exceed \$85,000. Ms. Craig stated the MDC needs to review the application and make a recommendation to City Council.

The Commission members discussed the proposed development and incentive request. It was pointed out that the incentive reimbursement funds come from the City's General Fund. It was also pointed out that the proposed project matches the results of the Rental Housing Study that was completed in 2018 that said rental housing was needed in every price range, particularly affordable housing. This project would help meet some of that need and the location seems to be good for that need.

Mr. Gillam moved, seconded by Mr. MacVean, that the Commission recommend to Council approval of the Incentive Agreement for Peaks of Aiken LP for a multifamily development on Gregg Highway. The motion was unanimously approved.

SUB-COMMITTEE REPORTS

Mr. Wood stated the next item is reports from the sub-committees.

Aiken Innovation and Impact District

Mr. Jameson, Convenor, stated he had elected not to have a meeting of the group before this meeting. One reason is based on a conversation with the National Lab that until the transition is completed with Battelle, the conversation is too early to try to engage them to be a partner. He noted that Mr. MacVean has said that he will help make a connection with Battelle at the right time. The second reason he did not have a meeting is that on April 1 DOE awarded the contract for the design and construction of the Advance Manufacturing Collaborative Initiative. He said that was very positive and assured him more that the AMC is going to move forward with the contract being awarded. He also pointed out that by July we will know if the State funds \$15 million for the National Guard DreamPort which would mean that project would move forward. He said if we know that AMC is moving forward, and we have a better idea of the National Guard DreamPort, then we have a bigger picture of what the Innovation District could look like, and we could start moving along.

There was discussion about who was involved with AMC and with whom we connect. It was discussed who has what responsibility with AMC. The Department of Energy has the funding and let the contract to construct the building. USCAiken has a role; Battelle/the Savannah River National Lab has a role. SRNL provided the concept. North Wind, the contractor, will now work with USCAiken to develop the final plans. It was noted there are several partners to make this work. We need to make sure the new Lab leadership understands what the community thought they were getting and still want to have. We need to discuss this with them and hope they have a bigger idea than we have to help move this forward. With the transition at the Lab, we want to be sure we are not too late to talk with Battelle. Mr. MacVean stated he would set something up with Battelle.

Whiskey Road Corridor.

Mr. Wood stated Mr. Williams, the Convenor, is not present so there would be no report at this meeting.

Target Potential Areas for Redevelopment/Investment.

Mr. Gillam, Convenor, stated the group met on March 30 at Second Baptist Church. Present were Philip Merry, Doug Slaughter, Catina Broadwater and Marty Gillam. The group discussed ideas and thoughts about overall Target Areas for investment potential and some properties or areas in the four areas of the city—the north, east, west and south.

Some areas discussed by the Target Area Group were:

The Advance Manufacturing and Innovation area around USCAiken. Pointed out were opportunities from Trolley Line Road all the way back to the Six Points area of Hampton, the

Toole Hill area, Old Hospital County building site, neighborhoods, and major intersections on the West side of the city for focus.

The Aiken Overlay District, the AECOM plan and any plans for Hotel Aiken could open up opportunities in the heart of downtown Aiken. Also, opportunities at the Williamsburg-Jackson Petroleum site were pointed out which could have a potential effect on the whole area on the East side of Aiken for redevelopment. It was pointed out that the Williamsburg Street area between Richland and Park Avenue may be an area where the fastest impact could be accomplished and would have an impact on future opportunities on the East side of Aiken. It was noted the possibility of development for the area could be multi-type residential units, office, and commercial in the area between Richland and Park on the East side of town.

The West side of Aiken was mentioned, particularly the area between the Innovation Center to the Price Center, the old Aiken Hospital/County Building and to the Aiken Hotel on Laurens Street as an area for opportunities for redevelopment and improvement to implement the long term goals. It was also noted that the neighborhoods, roads, streetscaping and parks will need to be addressed to encourage future growth.

The Northside was discussed as a key for city growth, for growth of services and tax base. There is much land and opportunities for commercial and residential development on the northside. The intersection of York and Hampton is an area that could be further developed as well as from Hampton to I-20 with commercial and residential development.

The Southside area was also discussed. It was noted the southside seems to be growing, but there are other areas that could be developed and redeveloped along with connectors for smart growth to help the Whiskey Road Corridor.

Also discussed was improvements to the four entranceways to the city, with improvements in appearance and streetscaping. It was felt improvements in the entranceways would help enhance new development growth. The group also discussed mixed use, cottages, townhomes, affordable rental properties for business and living were all mentioned and discussed as City needs and future growth.

The group also discussed the need to add citizen members to their group, to outline their short and long term goals and list their priorities.

Mr. Wood pointed out that Mr. Gillam had mentioned the entranceways to the city need to be improved. He noted that there is a company that has interest in funding one of the potential entrances to the parkway to our city. He pointed out that AECOM had mentioned improving the entrances east, west, north and south to the city in their plan. He said we could follow up on that. Of course, the City would have to take the lead on what the entranceway would look like.

Make Aiken More Business Friendly

Mr. Merry, Convenor, reviewed the Business Friendly sub-committee meeting. Present were Marty Gillam, Philip Merry, Catina Broadwater and Doug Slaughter. He said they discussed

what they wanted to do and how they could go about doing it. They reviewed the business friendly suggestions of the prior ad hoc committee that Mayor Osbon created four years ago and what they came up with. The Committee added some additional thoughts and ideas of things that had been talked about and worked on over the years. The Committee also discussed some key pieces. They want to bring in the expertise of certain strategic thinkers. One person they wanted to talk with was Ryan Bland, the Planning Director. Another person was Tilden Hilderbrand. It was felt that no one knows the nuance of city ordinances, regulations and development impediments better than Tilden Hildebrand. They also talked about small businesses. They talked about how they could proceed with the listing of ideas. They have many, many ideas for improvements to Aiken's business climate that would have to be approved, adopted or changed by City Council. They talked about the best way to go about getting changes made.

Mr. Hallman stated the Commission has the opportunity to develop ideas and characterize them. He stated that it is very important as to how we go about getting changes made. He said all the ideas need to be characterized into where the action part is and work with those in that area. He said he would not go to City Council until he had talked with the people who are involved about what their issues are. Then you would better understand where the opposition would come from when proposed changes are taken to City Council. The process may take longer, but he felt it would be a better process to get input from those affected before going directly to Council without conversations with the people who would be affected. It would improve the process for success.

Ms. Broadwater arrived at the meeting.

Marketing Aiken for Economic Development

Mr. Verenes, Convenor, reviewed the meeting of the Marketing sub-committee. Present were David Jameson, Keith Wood, Chris Verenes, Tim O'Briant. They have outlined a process whereby they can conduct research on some specific economic development proposals that come before them in the future. They want to provide education to the City of Aiken stakeholders so there would be a clear understanding of what the proposal is. They want to provide an education process to the stakeholders on proposals and related public/private partnerships. They also are going to try to determine how similar commissions like the MDC interact with stakeholders regarding public/private partnerships. What are the ways and means they use to interact with those stakeholders. They are also looking at grooming developers in marketing information projects which they believe will be impactful. They want to make a recommendation to the City about updating the website. They also want to make a recommendation to the City about a comprehensive marketing plan for the city. They felt they should leapfrog that in the next 90 days and focus on activities in concert with the AMDC efforts to facilitate the progress of project Pascalis.

COMMENTS FROM STAFF

Ms. Diana Floyd stated regarding marketing for the city, we have worked with Bandwagon who works for the city for tourism, about expansion of their services. We have also received some

information about another company, Urban3. They are a more data based numbers driven company. The thought at this time is that they might be a more valuable company to talk with. She felt Bandwagon has some things that would be beneficial to the overall marketing plan for the City, but think that Urban3 would really directly impact economic development more so.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mr. Wood stated the Municipal Development Commission needed to go into executive session pursuant to Section 30-4-70(2) of the South Carolina Code to discuss matters relating to the proposed location, expansion, or the provision of services encouraging location or expansion of industries or other businesses in the area serviced by the public body. Specifically, the Aiken Municipal Development Commission will discuss matters regarding property in the downtown area.

Mr. Verenes moved, seconded by Mr. Gillam, that the Commission go into executive session as noted by Mr. Wood. The motion was unanimously approved.

The Commission went into executive session at 4:35 p.m.

After discussion by the Commission Mr. MacVean moved seconded by Mr. Gillam, that the Commission come out of executive session. The Commission came out of executive session at 5:05 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business. The meeting adjourned at 5:05 P.M.

Sara B. Ridout
City Clerk