1. **CALL TO ORDER.** Chairman Pruitt called the Planning & Zoning Commission meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Commission members present: Chairman Pruitt, Vice Chairman Abrams and members Crone, Elliott, Johnson, Lauer, and Lowery. A quorum was present. Others present: Town Clerk Herrmann, Planning Director Morris, and Executive Assistant/Human Resource Administrator Messall.

2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.** Chairman Pruitt led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. **AGENDA APPROVAL.** Ms. Abrams moved to approve the agenda. Ms. Johnson seconded. All voted in favor. **MOTION CARRIED.**

4. **MINUTES APPROVAL.** Ms. Crone moved to approve the August 4, 2015 meeting minutes as submitted. Mr. Lauer seconded. All voted in favor. **MOTION CARRIED.**

5. **DIRECTOR’S REPORT.** Ms. Morris said there was only one plat approved last month to combine two residential lots on 7th Avenue North. The property owner wants to add square footage to his current house and needed additional acreage to meet the setback requirements. The new preliminary flood maps were received; copies were given to each member. In the majority of cases, the flood areas were reduced. Public meetings to discuss the new maps and answer the public’s questions will be held on October 20th at 10:30 a.m. and at 5:30 p.m. at the fire station. The three ordinances were presented to Town Council last month; the permitted uses vs. non-permitted uses and the fence/hedge ordinances had first reading. The water tower/public utilities ordinance was referred back to this commission for additional discussion and is on the agenda. She was glad everyone survived the storm. She thought they did an unbelievable job of keeping the town clear from flooding. There were no calls about structural damage. The town’s property was assessed and no damage was found. There were only calls for three trees that may have been uprooted, which were Cypress and Bradford Pear trees.

   Ms. Lowery asked if the high velocity zones could be added to the map. Ms. Morris said that information would be added and distributed to the members. This particular map shows the special flood hazards existing lines and the new lines.

   Ms. Elliott asked if they could stop by the office to pick up a copy. Ms. Morris said absolutely, and the maps were available on [the town website, www.surfsidebeach.org].

   Chairman Pruitt said the new website looked good.

6. **PUBLIC HEARING**

   Chairman Pruitt opened the public hearing at 6:04 p.m. to hear comments on the proposed amendments to Article III, Section 17-396.41 of the Town’s Zoning Ordinance regarding Water Tower/Public Utilities. There were no public comments. Chairman Pruitt declared the public hearing closed at 6:04:30 p.m.

7. **BUSINESS**

   **Article III, Section 17-396.41 of the Town’s Zoning Ordinance regarding Water Tower/Public Utilities.**

   Chairman Pruitt explained that this ordinance was previously discussed, but there were some changes for the commission to consider. Ms. Morris explained that the ordinance was to include a 60-foot natural buffer all the way around the property. She referred to the map in the packets that showed
Santee Cooper’s proposed substation on a portion of the vacant property behind the Tasty Platter and the old Taco Bell building. Santee Cooper staff met with staff on several occasions. Santee Cooper was asked to try to place the substation in the county, but that was not successful. The Surfside Beach Substation is in Caropines, but it has reached maximum power capacity. Another substation is on Highway 544, but it does not supply power to the town. She said we certainly hope that Surfside grows commercially, which would require a stronger substation to provide adequate power. Santee Cooper asked what staff’s concerns were. Staff’s main concern was developing the remainder of that property, and did not want an eyesore there that would prevent a nice commercial business from locating there. Staff inspected the property and found that you cannot see the substation with a 25- foot barrier of mature trees. The 25-foot setback area all the way around the location already has developed properties. Santee Cooper is buy almost two more acres, and we do not want them to expand. Santee Cooper was asked to create a permanent 60-foot natural buffer where tree cutting would be prohibited. Santee Cooper agreed to that restriction saying they had no intention of expanding what would already be a very large substation. Santee Cooper’s intent is to sell the property, which would create more commercial property and keep the 60-foot natural buffer.

Mr. Lauer asked if this ordinance was tailored for Santee Cooper. Ms. Morris said it was, but she did say that anything else, water towers or any other utilities would also have to meet this ordinance. If there are any existing properties to develop, they would have to meet the 25-feet, and undeveloped property would have to have a 60-foot barrier. Mr. Lauer asked if a 25-foot barrier was sufficient for developed properties; he thought it might need to be more. Ms. Morris said 25-feet with mature trees would prevent you from seeing the substation based on inspection at the site. Staff’s opinion is that a 60-foot natural barrier would promote development of the remaining property. The town does not have many undeveloped tracts of land.

Ms. Abrams asked what zoning district would be assigned to the property Santee Cooper sells, and whether utility substations were allowed in residential areas. Ms. Morris said they were allowed in residential areas. The property is zoned C-1 Commercial; any residential use is prohibited. Substations are allowed in C-1; the buffer would enhance future commercial development.

Ms. Elliott asked if Santee Cooper would subdivide the property at the county and what size property was needed for commercial development on Highway 17 Business. Ms. Morris said 9,000 square feet. The property was not being rezoned. This is just the first step, and the ordinance would apply to any water tower or substation. The Santee Cooper proposal was mentioned, because it is actually in the works. If the commission approves the buffers, Santee Cooper still has to come back before the commission, because it plans to build a street, which has to meet Department of Transportation (DOT) standards and has to be approved by the planning commission.

Ms. Abrams asked if a buffer was required on the right side of the street. Ms. Morris said the distribution must be underground. Plantings will be required. Ms. Morris approached the video screen and described how the buffers would be placed. There is sufficient space to have a 25-foot buffer all around the street.

Ms. Elliott asked how the parceled off property would be accessed. Ms. Morris explained that the road would connect to both parcels so the property would not be landlocked. The property does have access behind the Plantation Resort building to Platt Boulevard. Ms. Elliott asked if a 20-foot wide road would accommodate the town’s fire trucks. Ms. Morris said the road has to meet DOT regulations; the fire department has to sign off on the road, as well.

Chairman Pruitt asked about the underground power distribution. Ms. Morris said some would be incoming; the feeders will support Deerfield and other feeders would support town growth. Chairman Pruitt asked if that lends itself to future development. Santee Cooper could easily tunnel under Highway 17 and continue with underground service into the whole town. He believed the goal would be to underground all wiring in town at some point. Everyone could see on 14th Avenue what the underground looks like. This would be a good access point to undertake that project.
Ms. Morris said since the road has to meet DOT standards, it would be nice to have a traffic light at that location.

Mr. Lauer suggested adding language to require fencing pursuant to Town Code. Sometimes things were a little too broad. Ms. Lowery asked if that was the security fence. Ms. Morris said yes, a 7-foot fence is allowed/required and what Santee Cooper wants.

Ms. Abrams moved to recommend to Town Council that the ordinance be adopted with the proposed changes to Section 17-396.41 Water Towers/Public Utilities with one change to Section F to read that fencing around structures shall be required in accordance with Town Codes. Ms. Johnson seconded. All voted in favor. MOTION CARRIED.

8. DISCUSSION ITEMS.

1. Garages/storage buildings in R-1 District. This was discussed at the last meeting. Ms. Morris said a councilmember asked that the commission consider allowing R-1 non-conforming lots to have less stringent [detached] garage setbacks. There are 1,043 lots in the R-1 zoning district; 745 are conforming, and 298 are non-conforming. Currently, garage setbacks are the same as for the house. Garages can be as tall as the house, and the size is based on the size of the home. Garages cannot exceed 850 square feet or 50-percent of the footprint of the principle building. Sheds must be in the backyard. The setback for a shed is 5-feet from the property line in the rear and on the side, when the shed does not exceed 15-feet in height. If the shed height exceeds 15-feet, but does not exceed 25-feet, the setback is 10-feet. When the shed is over 25-feet the current setback requirement must be met. Sheds cannot cover more than 20-percent of the rear yard. Stormwater plans are required for any garage or shed.

Ms. Lowery asked if a carport and garage were considered the same. Ms. Morris said no; if the sides were open on all sides the setbacks were the same as a shed.

There was a lengthy discussion about garage and storage building setbacks requirements. Chairman Pruitt believed it might be best to let residents seek variances from the board of zoning appeals, because he did not see clearly how the commission could address all the variables at one time, and perhaps reduce the size allowed for a garage. Ms. Abrams did not support reducing setbacks. Ms. Johnson was not in favor of reducing the setbacks and believed that the garage size should be reduced. Mr. Lauer also agreed. Ms. Morris asked if she should bring an ordinance to reduce the size of garages. Several commission members agreed. Ms. Abrams said storage sufficient for three cars and a golf cart should be adequate. Chairman Pruitt said garages should be attached to the house; detached garages were outbuildings.

Ms. Elliott said some lots are too small for attached garages, so they are detached so there is a place to store their vehicles out of the weather. Sometimes they make workshops; the commission was making decisions for people and believed the size should be based on a percentage of the lot size. Some people have double lots, or an acre. She believed the height was the problem, to prevent lofts that turn into housing. Ms. Johnson disagreed saying she did not want an 850 square foot garage by her house. Ms. Abrams agreed with Ms. Johnson.

Ms. Lowery said using a percent of the lot size might prohibit someone with a smaller lot from having a building large enough to use as a garage. Chairman Pruitt said on a nonconforming lot, the garage would have to be attached, because there would not be enough room. Ms. Morris said the lots are still pretty large. If they cannot meet the setbacks, they can always seek a variance from the board of zoning appeals, because they have a nonconforming lot of record. There is no guaranty that the variance would be granted; but when a genuine hardship was found, it would be.

Ms. Elliott asked if the garage heights could be lowered; a lower metal garage would not be so imposing. Ms. Johnson asked if metal garages were allowed, and whether garages could be required to match the exterior of the house. Ms. Morris said that could be done, which would be an overlay in the
residential district. There are a lot of residential overlays. That was up to the planning commission to make a recommendation. Ms. Johnson suggested just prohibiting metal garage construction in residential areas, because it looks too commercial. Ms. Abrams believed materials should be left alone until the commission was prepared to discuss residential overlay. The question now is the setback requirement. Ms. Morris added the size and height.

The commission CONCURRED to reconsider the following at a future meeting:

- A reduction in detached garage size to accommodate three cars up in R-1 nonconforming lots and be no higher than the house as long as setback requirements were met
- Garage setbacks on R-1 nonconforming lots are to remain the same, variances may be requested from the board of zoning appeals
- Sheds heights should be reduced to 15-feet, regardless of setback

Chairman Pruitt said outbuildings were not needed in the town limits. Those people with nonconforming lots could seek variances, if there was a hardship. If the garage was attached to the house and looked like the house that was not a problem.

2. Amend Article III, Section 17-396.42 regarding Warehouses and Storage Facilities. Ms. Morris showed a slide of the town with the overlay district. The C-1 district currently allows warehouses and storage facilities. Those business could be on Highway 17 frontage, if they meet the conditions. The commission discussed this section before, but was brought back because there are so few parcels left in the C-1 district and the future land use is seeking restaurants, retail, or similar businesses on Highway 17. She suggested that warehouse/storage facilities be limited to the C-1 district not in the overlay area, which would be on Sandy Lane. The mini-warehouses already in town would be grandfathered. Ms. Johnson, Chairman Pruitt, Mr. Lauer and others agreed. The commission CONCURRED to consider this at the next meeting.

3. Any other matter of concern to be discussed by the Planning Commission.

Ms. Johnson disagreed with plantings on Ocean Boulevard to prohibit parking. Ms. Morris said that, the public works director, administrator, and police chief discussed this, and plantings will continue to be prohibited in the rights-of-way. The rights-of-way need to remain clear, so people could pull over during an emergency. If anything comes forward that affects the zoning ordinances, it would be presented to the planning commission first. Ms. Johnson said that residents on Ocean Boulevard should understand that people coming to the beach will park everywhere they can.

Ms. Elliott said some Century plants were already put in the rights-of-way. Ms. Morris explained that the town planted those where there is no room for parking. Council was discussing private property owners planting in the rights-of-way.

Ms. Lowery said visitors also leave trash along the boulevard. Ms. Johnson said she never saw people leaving trash on the boulevard, but they did leave trash on the beach.

Mr. Lauer just recently notice action was being taken at the strip mall between 6th and 8th Avenue South. Ms. Morris said the building was condemned. Once the asbestos is cleaned up, the building will be razed, except for the NAPA Auto Parts store. Mr. Lauer asked if the NAPA store was in reasonable condition. Ms. Abrams said that was a separate building. Ms. Morris said there are two other buildings behind the strip mall that were also being removed.

Chairman Pruitt said he learned some things at the annual training. Any public building that has Wi-Fi should have an open access point. You should not need a password. It seemed to him that one of the goals was to make the community a healthy, thriving environment, and to attract younger families that would take roots here. To do that, we need cheap, high speed internet. One easy way to do that is to open all the access points that the town actually controls that our tax dollars pay for. He thinks that would
be a big help. Chairman Pruitt said they also talked about how to concentrate or zone for the future. He
had been thinking about that a lot, since he began serving on the planning commission. How do we want
the town to look in 20- or 30-years? The dilapidated strip mall coming down is a stepping stone along
that path. The main corridor of the town should be an attractive place to encourage people to stop and
shop, and to entice businesses to rent. We need to have a way to funnel people from the highway after
they shop and dine to the beach. There needs to be an easy, free way for them to park to enjoy the
beaches and make them want to come again next year. Greenways, running paths, and similar projects
were discussed. Chairman Pruitt did not think the town should have a dedicated running path, but
runners and pedestrians should be encouraged to use areas like Dogwood Drive where there is low
traffic. Funnel cars down to the beach on some main streets, and direct pedestrians on to other roads to
separate foot and bike traffic from the vehicles to lead them to the parks and town facilities. He though
the planning commission could set the roots for the next 30-years.

Ms. Abrams liked Chairman Pruitt’s comments.

Ms. Johnson also liked Chairman Pruitt’s comments, and added that Surfside Drive should look
like Market Common. It should be rezoned to allow mixed use; stores with residences above. Ms. Morris
was very glad that Ms. Johnson said that. The town’s vision meeting is coming up. Plans were just
approved, and bids would be let to put parallel parking on Surfside Drive. That would be done before the
vision meeting. Council will be asked to pursue mixed use on Surfside Drive. There are many vacant lots
on Surfside Drive. Some owners have already discussed taking down their homes, and would love to live
above a business. Some of the vision topics include changing the central business district regulations to
allow living above the business; three people have been turned down. Chairman Pruitt said that was
awful. Ms. Morris said there is an alley between Surfside Drive and 3rd Avenue South, so the zoning
could stipulate that if parking was available in the rear for the residential unit, then residential could be
allowed upstairs. Conway allows mixed use, and has no vacancy in the upstairs residential units. They
have leased parking spaces for the residents. The goal is to allow mixed use all the way down Surfside
Drive. A round-about is still being considered for Surfside Drive at the pier. Something has to be done to
slow traffic, if there is a walkable community. The right-of-way is available to build it. People passing on
Highway 17 could see the round-about and know that something was down there. Ms. Johnson asked if
Pickled Cucumber had closed. Ms. Morris said no, there was death in their family.

Ms. Morris said another topic being taken to the vision meeting was a discussion about 3rd
Avenue South. It is like the street that time has forgotten. We are going to ask council to consider taking
over 3rd Avenue South from Highway 17 to Poplar Drive, then parallel parking could be placed on both
sides, and have the same size sidewalk and lights as Surfside Drive to really make it part of our walking
community. She would also ask for a facade grant so the properties on 3rd Avenue could get awnings
and beautify their buildings. Chairman Pruitt said that was the key. Somebody had to build something to
give other inspiration to improve their property. Ms. Crone asked if sidewalks could be large enough to
accommodate bicycles. Ms. Morris said the sidewalk would be wide enough to share the road on that
section. That particular street really needs some attention, and she thought this was the only way it
would happen.

Chairman Pruitt said people have to see things happening so they could get behind them. Very
commendable recommendation. He also thought it would be beneficial for all the municipalities and
county planning commissions to meet to determine if some regional goals could be established for the
benefit of the entire community. Ms. Morris said that was a great idea. Chairman Pruitt jokingly said that
was the 80-year plan. (Laughter.) Mr. Lauer liked the way they were thinking.

Ms. Morris hoped that the commission would eventually reconsider the overlay. Chairman Pruitt
said this commission exists for the overlay, because they were like-minded, along with Ms. Morris. If it
would happen, now might be the time. Several members agreed. Ms. Abrams said recommendations
would need to be written carefully, so council would accept them.

10. PUBLIC COMMENTS - General. There were no public comments.
11. COMMISSION COMMENTS.

Chairman Pruitt said the town did a great job managing the flooding during the recent rain event. He knew Ms. Morris was responsible for it all. (Laughter.)

Ms. Morris introduced Ann Messall, the town’s human resource administrator and executive assistant for the town administrator. She attended to see how the planning commission worked.

12. ADJOURNMENT.

Ms. Johnson moved to adjourn at 7:07 p.m. Mr. Lauer seconded. All voted in favor. MOTION CARRIED.

Prepared and submitted by,

Debra E. Herrmann, CMC, Town Clerk

Approved: November 3, 2015.

Mikey Pruitt, Chairman

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