

CITY OF NORTH MYRTLE BEACH, SOUTH CAROLINA
NORTH MYRTLE BEACH CITY HALL
CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP
Monday, January 27, 2025, 1:30 PM

Minutes

1. ROLL CALL: 1:30 PM

Marilyn Hatley called the workshop to order and asked the Clerk to call the roll.

Marilyn Hatley

JO Baldwin

Bubba Collins

Fred Coyne

Nicole Fontana

Trey Skidmore, Absent

Hank Thomas, Absent

2. DISCUSSION:

Ryan Fabbri, Interim City Manager, stated the workshop regarded the Wax Myrtle and The Preserve developments. He explained that Wax Myrtle came before Council in September, 2024, and The Preserve came before Council in January, 2025. Council stated concerns regarding both developments and requested changes be made. Council also requested a workshop be held before second reading for both developments. Interim Manager Fabbri stated representatives for both developments were present to answer any questions.

Robert “Shep” Guyton, applicant for the Developer, shared exhibits that depicted the changes made to the previous plan. He stated the stormwater pond had been restored to the middle area as it was in the original plan so that the houses were not back to back. He added that a berm and buffer were added for other areas and would be maintained by the HOA. Mr. Guyton explained that a span bridge was preferred over box culverts and, due to the cost difference, the Developer asked for the density to be raised from 89 homes to 100 homes. Mr. Guyton stated eliminating the second crossing also preserved a grove of trees. Mr. Guyton stated other changes included moving the houses back from the grove of trees and increasing the area in a turn that enabled City trucks to make the turn without impact to the trees. Mr. Guyton stated the approximate cost of the span bridge was \$700,000 and that was the reason for the request to increase the density by 11 houses. Mr. Guyton stated three neighborhoods were originally brought together and the density had been lowered in the other two. Mayor Hatley asked the total number of homes in the three combined neighborhoods. Mr. Guyton stated the original approval was for 536 and the amended total was 467. Mayor Hatley stated she did not see a reason to allow the increase. Mr. Guyton stated the benefit was the addition of the span bridge and the addition of trees. Mayor Pro Tempore Baldwin stated that an additional ingress/egress was required when there were 50 homes and asked for clarification on the second egress. Jim Wood, Planning and Development Director, stated this had been waived in the past when there was unusual topography or for preservation of other environmental features. Mayor Pro Tempore Baldwin asked if Director Wood felt this would be safe and Mr. Wood stated he did. Mr. Guyton stated another advantage was that the span bridge would not touch the existing drainage-way like a box culvert would and the Developer had expanded the area to 3 lanes to allow fire trucks and concrete trucks to get in and out.

Mayor Hatley asked for staff input. Director Wood stated staff preferred the span bridge to box culverts, were comfortable with one ingress/egress due to the 3 lane widening, and felt decreasing by 69 homes total was preferable. Councilwoman Fontana asked about the size of the buffer and Mr. Guyton stated 30’ wide and it would be maintained by the HOA.

Mayor Hatley stated she would have preferred to have decreased the density by more than 10 homes, but after hearing from staff, she would go along with the changes. Councilwoman Fontana stated she was fine with the lower density, the buffer, and the span bridge. Mayor Hatley asked if the units were rentals and Mr. Guyton stated they were not. Mayor Pro Tempore Baldwin stated he was in favor of the increased green spaces but suggested increasing the square footage of 3-4 homes to decrease the density. Mayor Hatley asked for the square footage of the homes and Mr. Guyton stated the smallest home was 1400 square foot. Mayor Hatley inquired about the lot size. Councilman Coyne stated the lots were comparable with lots in Cherry Grove. Mr. Guyton stated he had spoken with the Developer about decreasing the density more but the additional \$700,000 for the span bridge had to be taken into consideration. Councilman Collins stated the Developer was willing to drop from 100 to 98 homes, which was still 9 more than the original approval. Mayor Hatley stated the Developer may need to compromise. Mayor Pro Tempore Baldwin stated he felt decreasing to 92 homes and increasing the square footage of 2-3 homes would decrease the density and allow the Developer to make more money to offset the cost of the bridge. Councilwoman Fontana suggested replacing units 93-100 with 3-4 larger homes. Mr. Guyton suggested combining lots 1 and 2 for one home, combining lots 20 and 21 for one home, and allowing one lot to be used as an additional public access to the water. This would drop from 100 to 97 lots. Mayor Hatley and the Council were in agreement. Mr. Guyton stated he would work with the staff and bring the revised plan back to Council before the next meeting. Councilman Collins asked if there was a way to get two entrances and Mr. Guyton stated the only way was to use box culverts and remove the trees.

Joshua Hughes, Developer, thanked Council for their time and stated he had taken Council's thoughts and concerns into consideration. He stated the revised plan reduced density by 91 homes and he removed the Commercial element. Councilman Collins asked how many units were planned now. Mr. Hughes stated the plan started with 804 units and was now at 613 units. Mayor Hatley asked if the plan was to remove the Commercial element and replace it with more homes. Mr. Hughes stated the revised plan would add more homes where the Commercial element was. He added this was two communities with two amenity centers but they were connected by a 10' trail and this would make the two neighborhoods fit better. He stated the original 5 story units were also replaced with multi-family townhomes. Councilwoman Fontana stated this was a tremendous reduction and a better solution.

Mr. Hughes stated Commercial was a tough market today and he did not feel it would be successful. Councilwoman Fontana stated the residents also would not want the traffic through their neighborhoods either. Mayor Pro Tempore Baldwin stated he still had concerns with removing the Commercial element due to the commute for residents. Mr. Hughes stated there were other Commercial tracts close by that were still vacant because it was a tough market and it required a lot of traffic to be successful. Mayor Hatley stated she felt a Commercial element would need to be built eventually. Mr. Hughes stated he disagreed because even in 10 years and at maximum capacity, the Commercial element would be too far back on the property to be successful. Mayor Hatley stated when the plan was originally brought before Council, Mr. Hughes did not feel that way. Mr. Hughes stated he had always felt that way but Aaron Rucker persuaded him to include it in the plan. He added that with the reduction in density with the multi-family units, it was less likely to succeed.

Councilman Coyne asked if the multi-family element had been discussed before. Mr. Hughes stated the multi-family had been added since the last meeting. He stated there were two plans that were now being submitted as one package. Mayor Hatley stated she was having a hard time following what was previously done and what Mr. Hughes was asking for now. Director Wood stated the original plan did not include the entire development. The new plan eliminated the Commercial element and decreased the density dramatically. Mayor Hatley asked how many homes were added where the Commercial element was before. Director Wood stated there was a slight increase but there was a massive decrease where the 5 story multi-family was replaced with townhomes. Mayor Hatley noted this increased the green space. Councilwoman Fontana stated she liked the trailheads and walking paths. Mr. Hughes noted that

the road improvements would also offer 3 connections to the adjacent development. Mayor Hatley stated she liked the changes but she would like to see all the changes on one map with an explanation of each one. Councilman Collins agreed and suggested including a list of changes to help with understanding. Assistant Director Pritchard suggested bringing the complete plan back to the Planning Commission and then to Council at the next meeting. Councilwoman Fontana thanked Mr. Hughes for listening to Council's concerns about adding more green space, and buffers, and reducing density. Mr. Hughes thanked Council for their time.

Having no public comment, Mayor Hatley closed the floor to public comment.

Mayor Hatley called for a motion to adjourn. The motion to adjourn was made by Mayor Pro Tempore Baldwin and seconded by Councilwoman Fontana. The motion passed 5-0. The meeting adjourned at 2:27 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Allison K. Galbreath, City Clerk

MARILYN HATLEY, MAYOR

Minutes approved and adopted this 17th day of February 2025