

CITY OF NORTH MYRTLE BEACH, SOUTH CAROLINA
NORTH MYRTLE BEACH CITY HALL
CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP
Tuesday, February 24, 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, Absent

Fred Coyne

Nicole Fontana

Trey Skidmore

Hank Thomas

2. DISCUSSION:

Mayor Hatley stated the workshop was for the Council and staff discussion and public input would be allowed at the end if time permitted. Ryan Fabbri, Interim City Manager, explained that the purpose of the workshop was to discuss Council's concerns regarding The Preserve. Interim Manager Fabbri stated the hope was that Josh Hughes, Developer for The Preserve, presented ideas that helped Council be comfortable with the project's approval.

Mr. Hughes stated Council asked him to come up with alternatives after first reading. He stated it always seemed to come back to the driveways and components of the driveways. He shared two options. First, to increase the right-of-way from 20 feet to 25 feet and keep 30 feet between the houses. Councilman Coyne stated the buildings had not moved; the lines were shifted. Mr. Hughes confirmed that was correct. Councilman Coyne stated that nothing had been gained. Mr. Hughes stated the concern was that a car would cross onto a neighbor's property. He added there were 3 issues: mobility, parking, and utilities. He added that mobility was what Council had gotten hung up on. He stated by adding 2 feet, the area to back out was 4 ½ feet wider than a commercial parking lot. Mayor Hatley asked where the 5 foot increase came from. Mr. Hughes explained that he extended the right-of-way. He added the built environment did not change from what was currently approved, but this secured more certainty around the resident's use of the right-of-way.

Councilman Coyne stated it appeared the problems came in when the property was changed from In-Common to Fee-Simple and asked staff for clarification and a zoning comparison. Suzanne Pritchard, Planning and Development Assistant Director, stated this type of right-of-way would have to be in a PDD. She added the City would not allow a substandard right-of-way in any other zoning district. Assistant Director Pritchard stated that a 50 foot right-of-way was required in any other zoning district and would only be considered in a PDD. Councilman Skidmore stated he still had the same concerns from first reading. He stated his concern was maneuverability. He suggested eliminating a row of 16 units to add space and spread the project out. Mr. Hughes stated what was approved now was what was approved to be built. He stated he understood Councilman Skidmore point but he disagreed with him. Mr. Hughes stated the project, as laid out, was what was approved and all he was asking for was property lines to be added in exchange for reducing the density by 191 units. He added that the project wasn't perfect for everyone on this Council, but it was a good mix with the paired villas and townhomes. Mr. Hughes stated the goal from the beginning in 2021, was to provide variety in housing, different price points, and different sizes for different phases of life.

Mayor Pro Tempore Baldwin stated he agreed with Councilman Skidmore and was concerned about the width of the street and stated it appeared to still be 20 feet. Mr. Hughes stated that in a 50 foot right-of-way, you had 22 feet to turn around so there was only a 2 foot difference. He added he could make the road wider but he felt it would be too much pavement and not visually appealing. Mayor Pro Tempore Baldwin stated that an easy fix would be to eliminate one row of housing. Mr. Hughes stated this was what was approved to be built. He added he could add one foot of asphalt on each side of the driveways if it would give Council comfort, but he would not move the houses. Mayor Pro Tempore Baldwin stated he didn't see that working because the distance from the house to the road would decrease. He added that the only way he could see to achieve a wider right-of-way was to remove one row of units and widen the driveways. Mr. Hughes stated he did not want the driveways to widen out because it would encourage parallel parking. He added there was a purpose in the distance. Councilman Thomas stated he agreed with Councilman Skidmore and Mayor Pro Tempore Baldwin and added that it appeared to be a borderline nightmare. Councilman Thomas stated his suggestion was to take out one unit or build what was approved. Mr. Hughes stated he would be happy to build what was approved but Councilwoman Fontana had constantly asked him to reduce density. He added that he may have misunderstood what was being asked. Councilwoman Fontana stated she was fighting for the lower density. Mayor Pro Tempore Baldwin stated all Council members were fighting for lower density. Mayor Hatley stated the project had already been approved. Mayor Pro Tempore Baldwin stated the 5 story buildings had been removed but more had been added. Mayor Hatley stated at the end of the day there were 191 less units.

Mr. Hughes stated that if the current plan was not approved at Monday night's meeting, the original plan would be put into place without the decrease in density. He added that he felt they had provided a very good product and he was getting mixed messages. Mr. Hughes stated, at the end of the day, this was dealing with a 20 foot right-of-way that impacted maybe 100 of the 250 lots.

Mayor Hatley stated she would personally be happier with the 25 foot right-of-way instead of the 20 foot right-of-way. She stated this would give more maneuverability for cars and emergency vehicles. She added that she was leaning toward lowering the density. Mayor Hatley stated it was important for the public to know that this development had been approved several years ago and Council was revisiting the PDD to lower density.

Councilwoman Fontana stated the buyers would do the research and realize there was not a long driveway. She added this would attract a different demographic and was a different product than what Council was used to seeing. Mayor Hatley stated there were developments on Second Avenue North that had similar driveways.

Mr. Hughes stated he was excited about the project and felt it mixed well with the proposed town homes and others that were currently being developed in the area. He stated he would happily make the adjustment to widen the right-of-way.

Councilman Coyne stated he felt a row or two of houses needed to come out to make this manageable. He added he understood why Mr. Hughes wanted to change the units to Fee-Simple because the rental market was oversaturated. Mr. Hughes stated he highly disagreed with Councilman Coyne. Mayor Pro Tempore Baldwin stated approval was very close but there were still concerns that could be corrected very simply by removing some of the units. Mr. Hughes asked what Mayor Pro Tempore Baldwin thought the appropriate width for the driveway was that made him feel comfortable. Mayor Pro Tempore Baldwin stated he would defer to staff on that. Mr. Hughes stated staff had commented that they felt this layout was better than what was approved In-Common.

Councilman Skidmore suggested offering recycling dumpsters. Mr. Hughes stated the project would be serviced by a private pick-up company and there was a compacter on site as well.

Councilwoman Fontana stated the Fire Chief confirmed at the last meeting there were adequate turn arounds for EMS vehicles.

Discussion continued concerning parking. Councilman Thomas asked if the green space would be reduced for the additional parking. Mr. Hughes stated the green space had increased with pocket parks. Mr. Hughes stated reducing density also enhanced green spaces. He added that there was twice what the PDD required and more than what was approved initially.

Mr. Hughes noted there were 40 acres of retail and 42 acres of mixed-use entitled in the Parkway Group. Mayor Hatley asked if the PDD stated a timeline for the commercial to be built. Chris Noury, City Attorney, checked the Development Agreement (DA) and stated the trigger for the commercial was at 80 percent of the Certificates of Occupancy for the RDU's.

Councilman Thomas asked about the amenity centers and Mr. Hughes stated nothing had changed from the original plan.

Mayor Pro Tempore Baldwin stated he did not want to lose the opportunity to reduce density by 191 units but there were still concerns that almost caused the project to fail at first reading. Mr. Hughes stated he understood but Councilwoman Fontana was persistent about lowering the density and he felt he had gone to the max by reducing the density by 191 units. Mr. Hughes stated if the vote did not go in his favor, the project would still be built without lowering the density. Councilman Skidmore asked if he was willing to go back to his partners and have a conversation. He stated he would but it had been hard to cut the density by 191 units already.

Councilman Coyne stated the density reduction would be achieved between Phase 2 and Phase 3 and asked what the timeframe would be between the phases. Mr. Hughes stated if the project was approved on Monday, he would order engineering that would take 18 months and then 12 months after that for completion.

Mayor Hatley asked to hear from Planning and Development. Director Wood stated in order to widen the rights-of-way; 12-16 units would have to be eliminated. Mayor Hatley asked how many units the alleys affected. Mr. Wood stated 16-20. Councilwoman Fontana asked the length of the alleys and Director Wood stated they were all limited to 150 feet. Councilman Skidmore stated they were not all 150 feet. Mr. Hughes stated they weren't all that length but they could not be more than 150 feet.

Mr. Hughes asked if there was anything other than the driveways that could help some Council members get comfort. He stated the plan worked because it was approved but he was trying to be helpful and accommodating where he could. Mayor Pro Tempore Baldwin stated he had nothing to add to that but stated there were also concerns about utilities and asked Kevin Blayton, Public Works Director, for an update. Director Blayton stated he had not received any additional submittals or drawings to review from the engineers regarding Public Works concerns. Mr. Hughes stated no changes had been made to the utilities.

Councilman Coyne asked for the timeline on the DA between Phase 2 and Phase 3. Mr. Noury quoted Exhibit N, which did not state exact dates for completion of future phases. Mr. Noury stated the exhibit did state that within 24 months of receiving permits, approximately one-third of the project would be completed within four years of the effective date of the Agreement with an additional two-thirds of the project being completed in the subsequent 5-year timeframe. Director Wood stated there was no phasing map showing which phase would come first, second, or third. Mayor Hatley asked if this was a combined timeframe. Mr. Noury stated it was combined and had 5 years for completion but market demand typically dictated when a project would be completed.

Mayor Hatley asked Assistant Director Pritchard for examples of other similar developments. Assistant Director Pritchard stated Mr. Hughes referenced Emmens Preserve in Market Commons and showed visuals. She stated there were 27 feet between houses. Mayor Hatley stated this looked like ample space for cars to back out. Assistant Director Pritchard shared photos of other duplexes and townhomes in the area including Grande Dunes North, Park Ridge, Grand Harbour, and Barefoot Resort. Mayor Hatley asked if any of the examples had alleys and Assistant Director Pritchard stated they did not. Mayor Hatley stated she would like a visual of what the alleys would look like. Assistant Director Pritchard stated she would provide an elevation view for Council before second reading.

Mayor Hatley adjourned the workshop at 2:27 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Angela C. Westmoreland, Assistant City Clerk

MARILYN HATLEY, MAYOR

Minutes approved and adopted this 3rd day of March 2025