



# TOWN OF PAWLEYS ISLAND PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Town Hall – Conference Room | 323 Myrtle Ave | Pawleys Island SC 29585

9/2/2025 – 4:00 PM

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**PRESENT:** John LaMaster, John Hildreth, Ed Fox, Paul Groce, Mark Hawn, Fran Green

**ABSENT:** Buddy Keller

**STAFF PRESENT:** Dan Newquist, Corey Higdon

**ADDITIONAL PRESENT:**

**1) CALL TO ORDER**

- a) Chairman John Hildreth called the meeting to order at 4:00 PM

**2) PUBLIC COMMENTS**

- a) No public comments were presented.

**3) APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- a) Mr. Hildreth requested a motion to approve or amend the 7-31-2025 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes. Mr. LaMaster made a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Hawn seconded the motion. No further discussion. All voted in favor.

**4) HISTORIC PRESERVATION DISCUSSION**

Mr. Hildreth began the discussion by commending Paul Groce for his presentation on historic preservation at the Pawleys Island Civic Association Labor Day meeting. He then explained the benefits the Town could receive by getting a Historic Preservation Specialist on board to help with a historical property inventory, crafting an ordinance, design guidelines, etc. Mr. Groce suggested that the Town inquire about the steps taken by other jurisdictions in terms of historic preservation, recommending that the Town segment its progress into phases to use as a roadmap.

Mr. Newquist referenced the motion made in the previous Planning Commission meeting to recommend to Town Council the funding of \$20,000 to enter the procurement process for hiring a historic preservation consultant. He noted that Town Council is supportive of the idea, but would like to get more details on the ways a consultant could help with historic preservation. Mr. Newquist displayed a handout he prepared for Council, which explains the various ways in which a consultant could help and the level of oversight the Town would need with each objective. For example, the Town would require help with a historic survey, but would not need much assistance with crafting an ordinance. Mr. LaMaster explained that the first step following the procurement process would be for the hired consultant to host a seminar/workshop for the Town. Mr. Groce agreed and commended Mr. Newquist for his work on the handout for Council. He also stated that he is willing to present to Council about the benefits of hiring a historic preservation consultant.

## 5) PRIORITIZING OTHER TOPICS FOR RESEARCH/FUTURE DISCUSSION

Mr. Hildreth opened the discussion by highlighting concerns over the increasing height of homes on the island. Mr. Groce further explained the height requirements in place in the Town's ordinances, noting that FEMA requires municipalities to have height requirements that are at least 1-foot above the base flood elevation (BFE) to participate in the National Flood Insurance Program. The Town's ordinances add two additional feet to the height ordinances, bringing the design flood elevation (DFE) to 3 feet above BFE. Mr. Newquist added that the additional two feet above BFE is to increase the Town's Community Rating System (CRS) rating.

Mr. Hildreth raised the question of what alternative ways the Town can lower its CRS rating while lowering the DFE. Mr. Groce noted that from his research on the topic, he found that minimum height requirements and the substantial improvement threshold are the two primary ways to lower ratings. He continued to state that he believes the primary issue is homes being built several feet above the required DFE, with the first floor of some new homes being as high as 21 feet above grade. Mr. LaMaster suggested that the Town should look into altering the language in the ordinances to prevent new residences from being built too high above ground, citing that the language currently only states "no lower than 3 feet above BFE." Mr. LaMaster also expressed concern over lowering the significant improvement threshold, which is currently 50% of the structure's tax-assessed value. He explained that this would further encourage the demolition of historic, non-compliant structures, which is the opposite of what the committee is trying to achieve.

Mr. Newquist added to Mr. LaMaster's comments, suggesting that the Town ideally could exempt existing houses whose first floor height is between the BFE and DFE requirements from the 50% significant improvement rule. Mr. Groce added to the recommendations on how to ease concerns of houses increasing in height, stating that the Architectural Review Board could deny any plans that have heights more than 3 feet above BFE. The Planning Commission then entertained a motion to recommend this restriction to the Architectural Review Board.

**Mr. Hildreth requested a motion to recommend that the Architectural Review Board no longer approve any houses that are more than 3 feet above BFE. Mr. LaMaster made a motion to make the recommendation. Mr. Groce seconded the motion.** No further discussion. **All voted in favor.**

The Planning Commission then discussed the Flood Mitigation Plan, for which Mr. Groce provided an update. Mr. Groce explained that he and Mr. Newquist are meeting with the consultant group for the project, Seamon Whiteside, to discuss the plan for the proposed berm project on the section of Myrtle Avenue near the Pawleys Island Chapel. He elaborated on how the berm will be in the Department of Transportation's right-of-way. To this, Mr. LaMaster inquired if the creek docks in this section of Myrtle Avenue will have to be moved, which Mr. Groce clarified that part of the easement for the berm would be to raise the docks over the berm. Mr. Hawn expressed concern over the potential loss of parking from the berm addition and questioned how wide the berm is proposed to be. Mr. Groce provided that the berm is 5 ½ feet wide, so there will certainly be parking lost in this section of the island. He proclaimed that he would discuss with the consultants the possibility of placing the berm in the creek to keep the parking around the chapel, but this would require permitting through the Department of Environmental Services to conduct work in the critical area of the marsh. Mr. Groce

explained that the only alternative option to the berm would be to elevate Myrtle Avenue and have the road serve as the berm. Lastly, Mr. LaMaster expressed concerns over the drainage of the areas east of the berm, to which Mr. Groce confirmed that there would need to be improvements to the drainage infrastructure in the area around the berm to mitigate the flooding.

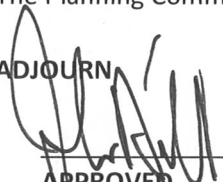
**6) COMMENTS FROM PLANNING COMMISSION MEMBERS**


Mr. Hawn commented regarding a recent rip current simulation hosted by the Pawleys Island YMCA, which was attended by Town Staff. He explained that the local 6<sup>th</sup> graders will go through a program using the rip current simulator in their physical education class to help teach kids what to do if caught in a rip current. Mr. Hawn expressed awe at how quickly the water moves in rip currents, noting that the simulation displayed an estimation of how quickly the water moves in the north inlet. Mrs. Green questioned what the proper method is to exit a rip current, to which Mr. Hawn quoted a North Myrtle Beach lifeguard who stated that one should immediately swim left or right if they are able to. Mr. Hawn suggested that a volunteer group could be formed to assist with rescues, to which several committee members offered to assist with if formed. Mr. Newquist provided an update on emergency access to the beach, stating that Pearce Street is being looked at as a possible location for a designated emergency access for vehicles.

**7) NEXT MEETING DATE**

The Planning Commission decided that the next meeting would be held on October 3<sup>rd</sup>.

**8) ADJOURN**

  
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APPROVED

  
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ATTEST

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DATE

11-7-2025  
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