

**TOWN OF RAVENEL
REGULAR TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
TUESDAY, JANUARY 30, 2024
6:00 P.M.**

The Regular Town Council Meeting of the Town of Ravenel was held Tuesday, January 30, 2024, 6:00 p.m. at 5962 Highway 165, Ravenel, South Carolina. The following members of Council were present: LaJuanda Brown, Robert Cochran, Jim Rodgers, Jr., Cora Lee Singleton, Terry Wilkinson, and W. Buckey Waters (Mayor Pro Tempore) who presided. Mayor Stephen Tumbleston recused himself from this meeting. Also, in attendance were Town Attorney William B. Harvey, III, Administrator and Planner Michael Hemmer, Clerk-Treasurer Tammy Wood, and Code Inspector and Facilities Manager Jason Moffitt.

The media and public were duly notified of the date, time, and place of the meeting.

1. CALL TO ORDER & ROLL CALL

Mayor Pro Tem Waters called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. A quorum was present to conduct business.

2. INVOCATION & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance was led by Mayor Pro Tem Waters.

3. MAYOR'S COMMENTS/REPORT

a. Does anyone wish to speak during item #11 – Public Comments?

Attendees interested in speaking during Public Comments signed in prior to the meeting with Clerk-Treasurer Wood. Mayor Pro Tem Waters explained that Public Comments are three minutes per speaker and shouldn't be concerning information specific to the Map Amendment 2024-01 Rezoning. The rezoning should only be addressed during Agenda Item #6 by speakers who previously registered; these statements are limited to five minutes per person.

4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

a. Recusals/Conflicts of Interest

Mayor Stephen Tumbleston submitted a Recusal Statement form under the justification that he owns or has vested interest in principal or property (*Attachment 1*).

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. December 19, 2023 – Public Hearing & Regular Council Meeting

Councilmember Wilkinson made a motion to approve the December 19, 2023, Public Hearing & Regular Meeting Minutes; this motion was seconded by Councilmember Cochran. All voted in favor. Motion passed unanimously (6-0).

6. PUBLIC STATEMENTS/PRESENTATIONS (5 MINUTES)

a. Statement forms submitted prior to meeting

Martha Anderson of 5840 Highway 165, hopes that Council will vote against the proposed rezoning. She stated that several Councilmembers made promises to preserve the rurality of the area and would like to see them consider the commitment that they made.

Mike Anderson of 5840 Highway 165, shared that he would like to continue seeing the ruralism of Ravenel.

Matt Collins of 5965 Drayton Street, shared a scripture from the bible. He told Councilmembers that they hold the power to shape the future of the Town and urged them to vote no to the rezoning.

Kelly Cooper of 6049 Drayton Street, stated that this rezoning is not a benefit to the community or current residents of Ravenel. She expressed concerns regarding the increase in traffic this would bring to the two-lane road. In addition, Cooper stated that this rezoning is inconsistent with the Town's current Comprehensive Plan. She is disappointed that public servants who work in Ravenel can't afford to live here and wouldn't be able to purchase a home in the proposed subdivision at the \$500,000 price tag quoted in a previous meeting, as the median household income in the area is too low. Cooper said that if she had to decide, she'd opt for a smaller amount of more expensive homes to combat traffic, overcrowding of schools, the reduction of environmental issues, and more.

John Cordray of 6515 Old Jacksonboro Road, submitted a statement read by his son that stated that he is an advocate for one's right to develop their property within reason. He urged Council to consider a compromise that best addresses everyone's concerns.

David Crosby of 5768 Golden Rice Lane, opposes the request. He stated that if approved, there will be dangerous consequences. Crosby believes that there are too many unanswered questions and asked Council to help protect the Town by ensuring that these questions are all answered before a decision is made.

Michael Felix of 5625 Golden Rice Lane, submitted a statement read by resident Olivia McCarty (Attachment 2).

Lauren Lane of 5460 Highway 165, is against the request. She believes the rezoning will create adverse effects on the Town and surrounding communities with an increase in traffic, the decrease of property values, and the destruction of tranquility. She emotionally shared that Ravenel is the only place she has called home for the past 29 years due to its rural and serene character and expressed how much her young daughter has enjoyed growing up in the community. While she understands change is inevitable, she stated that this type of change is unfathomable and unsustainable. Lane questioned "Why does growth have to consist of new houses?" and said, "We will drown in this sea of growth". She asked that elected officials become more involved in helping their constituents and act in the best interests of the Town.

Micah McCarty of 5634 Golden Rice Lane, presented a map of parcels surrounding the proposed rezoning. The map highlighted property owners who are in opposition of the request. In addition, McCarty submitted a petition against the rezoning with over 420 signatures. His concerns involve flooding, the absence of a sense of rurality, overpopulation of area schools, transportation and traffic, the difficulty surrounding emergency personnel effectively doing their jobs due to the oftentimes blocked railroad tracks, and the elimination of natural resources and wetlands. McCarty stated that the process is premature and reversed, as appropriate plans (traffic studies, proposed site layouts, etc.) should be primarily provided before the request is presented to and decided on by voting members.

Elizabeth Moore of 5507 Golden Rice Lane, expressed her opposition to the rezoning due to concerns similar to her fellow citizens regarding emergency personnel functions. She shared that currently in Ravenel, emergency services can take anywhere from 14-30 minutes + to arrive at the scene after a call is made. At any given time, trains block one or both entrances of the railroad tracks, which is the only way to access Drayton Street where the rezoning request is located. She stated that this creates a major inconvenience and danger to residents and passersby and that the problem would only increase with an added number of homes. Moore stated that Ravenel doesn't have its own police force and that the EMS and fire departments that service the community are far too small, even currently. Another concern she shared is the overcrowding of local schools. She encouraged Council think about the citizens they represent and vote no.

Gabriel Russell of 5942 Martin Street, thinks the rezoning is a complete travesty that would aid in overdevelopment and irresponsible infrastructure. Russell urged Council to support the ruralism of Ravenel and vote against the request.

Stephanie Russell of 5942 Martin Street, chose Ravenel after years of hard work in preparation of starting a family and exposing them to the rural lifestyle you can't find anywhere else. She is concerned about the increase in traffic, accidents, and the frequently stopped trains blocking roadways. Russell stated that she is disheartened by the rezoning and wants the members of Council that people have elected and believed in, to vote no and consider prioritizing residents and their safety.

Don Scutt of 5737 Golden Rice Lane, opposes the rezoning. He stated that while he is aware that growth is coming to the area, it must be done in a sensible way.

Roy Smith of 5982 Drayton Street, strongly opposes this request. He is curious as to why the Planning and Zoning Commission voted on the rezoning and why Council is getting ready to do the same thing with no viable information. Smith has several questions including the development name, the number of houses that will be built, ingress and egress amounts, and what the impacts on wetlands would be. He mentioned that there is no traffic study, site plan, no plans to reflect infrastructure to include stormwater runoff, drainage requirements, street lighting, sidewalks, traffic signals and more. He firmly recommended that Council vote no.

Timothy Young of 5919 Drayton Street spoke on behalf of Phillip and Susan Ramsey of 5769 Golden Rice Lane, who are urging Council to vote no. They believe this rezoning would have no benefit to the community. In addition, the Ramseys shared that there are too many unknown factors regarding this rezoning, and that there needs to be appropriate studies completed that coincide with the Town's Zoning Code and Comprehensive Plan.

7. REPORTS FROM STAFF AND OFFICERS

a. Town Attorney

Attorney Harvey shared the details of a recently dismissed magistrate court case for a Business License violation appealed by James Hannifin, owner of The Thriftory.

b. Charleston County Sheriff's Office

Sergeant Brandon Wade reported offenses that occurred in Town over the last month including multiple drug violations, theft at local establishments (CVS and Ravenel Ford), and stolen vehicles. These resulted in citations, arrests, and/or ongoing investigations. He encouraged Town officials, staff, and residents to contact him with any questions, concerns, or tips.

c. Clerk-Treasurer

Mrs. Wood provided Council with the current General and Sewer Fund Financial Reports.

d. Administrator and Planner

Mr. Hemmer shared that moving forward, Town Council Meetings with Public Hearings will start at 6:00 p.m. as opposed to 5:45 p.m. as previously scheduled.

e. Code Inspector and Facilities Manager

Mr. Moffitt provided Councilmembers with a copy of his report on pending enforcement cases, information regarding repairs and upgrades at Town facilities, and the status of work order requests submitted to Charleston County and SCDOT.

8. REPORTS OF COMMISSIONS, BOARDS AND COMMITTEES

a. Sewer Advisory Board

i. Recent Meeting: January 17, 2024

Board members discussed prospective grants available for the Town to apply for. Additionally, a rate study is in the process of being created.

b. Planning & Zoning Commission

i. Recent Meeting: January 4, 2024

Mr. Hemmer submitted a detailed report about the recent Planning and Zoning Commission Meeting where Request Map Amendment 2024-01 was originally heard, including information about the rezoning, statements from the applicant, and public comments and concerns. Ultimately, Commissioner Masi introduced a motion to recommend approval of the rezoning and Commissioner Barron seconded the motion. Commissioner Masi indicated that the maximum number of homes was not practical and that there will be much more information requiring approval during the Site Plan process. There was more discussion regarding the density, the process of when a seller decides to rezone the property, and when a buyer might become involved. There was also continued discussion regarding the affordability of homes on smaller lots as a benefit to the Town. After discussion, the Commission voted 4-1 to recommend approval.

Laurie Infinger was elected as Chairperson and Eric Grant was elected as Vice-Chairperson of the Planning and Zoning Commission.

ii. Upcoming Meeting: February 1, 2024

Rezoning Request Map Amendment 2024-02 to change the zoning district for three parcels located near Burbage Mobile Home Park at 6059 Roper Run Road Extension.

- TMS #: 187-00-00-062 (1 acre) from Agricultural Residential (AR) to Residential Three (R-3)
- TMS #: 187-00-00-064 (3.1 acres) from Residential Two (R-2) to Service Warehouse (SW)
- TMS #: 187-00-00-070 (25.26 acres) from Agricultural Residential (AR) to Service Warehouse (SW)

c. Board of Zoning Appeals

No recent meeting.

9. OLD BUSINESS

None.

10. NEW BUSINESS

a. Election of 2024-2026 Mayor Pro Tempore

Councilmember Singleton made a motion to table the election of the Mayor Pro Tem until the Mayor is in attendance; this motion was seconded by Councilmember Wilkinson. All voted in favor. Motion passed unanimously (6-0).

b. Introduction of Ordinance 01-24 (Map Amendment 2024-01 Rezoning)

An Ordinance rezoning 96.54 acres of property located on Drayton Street with TMS #: 188-00-00-116 from Agricultural Residential (AR) to Residential Three (R-3).

Mr. Hemmer explained that the request is to change the zoning district for a 97-acre parcel with TMS #: 188-00-00-116 located off Drayton Street. This is adjacent to the Rice Hope Subdivision and behind Ravenel Community Hall (5700 Connors Street). The property is currently zoned Agricultural Residential (AR), and the request is to rezone it to Residential Three (R-3). The property is adjacent to AR on the East, West, and South, and R-3 on the North. While there is no proposed development or subdivision currently, the Comprehensive Plan makes no recommendation for the area other than general planning standards. Mr. Hemmer shared that a Proposed Development requires a Site Plan with Planning and Zoning Commission approval, a plat approved by Charleston County (septic, draining, and roadway permitting), and approval from the Army Corps of Engineers for disturbance of any wetlands. Before zoning can be issued, a traffic impact study is required at the time of the Site Plan. Lastly, Charleston Water is available, and the Town won't be providing any sewer capacity.

Councilmember Wilkinson made a motion to discuss the Introduction of Ordinance 01-24; this motion was seconded by Councilmember Brown. Councilmember Wilkinson and Singleton expressed uncertainty about not having adequate information to make a proper decision.

Grace Tumbleston provided a presentation on behalf of the Tumbleston Family Trust, noting that the history of the property goes back to 1938 and original plats were for ½ acre lots with no concern for the wetlands. Of the 96.54 acres, about 12 acres are wetlands, 11 acres would be required for stormwater ponds, and nearly 10 acres for right-of-way commitments. This would leave around 63 acres for housing. There could be multiple access points provided on existing public right-of-way to help minimize any traffic impact to Drayton Street. Ms. Tumbleston indicated that there is not a buyer at this time, but the family would enter into a Development Agreement that would guide the specifics of the expansion. She assured attendees that the maximum number of homes built on the property would not exceed 150. Furthermore, Tumbleston shared the community benefits of this rezoning to include more businesses and families moving to the area creating more revenue for the Town. She urged Council to consider the endless possibilities and assets that can strengthen the community.

Councilmember Wilkinson questioned why Council is expected to vote on the rezoning at this time.

Councilmember Cochran inquired if the family considered any other zoning classification for the request.

Councilmember Rodgers stated that he believes Council isn't fully informed or prepared to make a decision at this time.

The previous motion to discuss the Introduction of Ordinance 01-24 failed.

Councilmember Rodgers made a motion to table the Introduction of Ordinance 01-24 until a later date; this motion was seconded by Councilmember Singleton. All voted in favor. Motion passed unanimously (6-0).

Councilmembers agreed to schedule a workshop to further educate themselves on the rezoning. The workshop was scheduled for Thursday, February 15, 2024, at 6:00 p.m.

11. PUBLIC COMMENTS (3 MINUTES)

Kelly Cooper of 6049 Drayton Street, believes that the Town should begin applying for sewer grants now, as they won't be easily attainable after an influx in development.

Joanie Driggers of 5768 Golden Rice Lane, mentioned that the meetings' live feed was not working properly and asked that this issue be resolved prior to future meetings.

Derald McMillan of 6308 Old Jacksonboro Road, spoke about the lengthy amount of time it usually takes emergency personnel to respond to calls in the area. He is curious as to how this will affect incoming future developments. McMillan also mentioned that there is only one grocery store in Town and very few restaurants that will only drive residents to spend their money elsewhere, consequently, not monetarily benefiting the Town.

Roy Smith of 5982 Drayton Street, inquired about the details of the recent Sewer Advisory Board Meeting.

Olivia McCarty of 5364 Golden Rice Lane, inquired about the Town's Sewer Fund deficit.

12. TOWN COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilmember Wilkinson asked about the chances of getting changes made to the newly installed turning light at the intersection of Savannah Highway and Highway 165; the light currently flashes yellow for drivers to turn left when they believe the way is clear, but he and other residents are interested in a light that turns fully green and makes oncoming traffic come to a complete halt. Mr. Hemmer explained that this is the responsibility of SCDOT and only they have the authority to decide if a traffic light improvement is warranted.

13. EXECUTIVE SESSION

None.

14. ACTION/S AS A RESULT OF EXECUTIVE SESSION

None.

15. ADJOURNMENT

Councilmember Rodgers made a motion to adjourn at 8:05 p.m.; this motion was seconded by Councilmember Wilkinson. All voted in favor. Motion passed unanimously (6-0).



RECUSAL STATEMENT

Member Name: STEPHEN Tumbleston

Meeting Date: 1-30-24

Agenda Item: Section 10 Number: B

Topic: MA 2024-01 - REZONING
ORD. 0124

The Ethics Act, SC Code §8-13-700, provides that no public official may knowingly use his office to obtain an economic interest for himself, a family member of his immediate family, an individual with whom he is associated, or a business with which he is associated. No public official may make, participate in making, or influence a governmental decision in which he or any such person or business has an economic interest. Failure to recuse oneself from an issue in which there is or may be conflict of interest is the sole responsibility of the council member (1991 Op. Atty. Gen. No. 91-37.) A written statement describing the matter requiring action and the nature of the potential conflict of interest is required.

Justification to Recuse:

Professionally employed by or under contract with principal

Owns or has vested interest in principal or property

Other: _____

Date: 1-30-24 St. Tumbleston
Member

Approved by Parliamentarian: _____

My name is Michael Felix and I reside at 5625 Golden Rice Lane. I have asked Olivia McCarty to speak on my behalf as I am on business travel for my employer, Lockheed Martin. I thank you in advance for this opportunity.

As a full time consultant to Lockheed Martin one of my major functions is to provide solutions which minimize risk for Lockheed Martin and ultimately our customer the United States Government. Usually that entails negotiations with suppliers in an attempt to transfer risk to the rightful entity responsible for the goods or services being provided in the manufacturing of fighter jet aircraft.

That being said, I believe this rezoning initiative also deserves a discussion of risk and where the risk best resides from the **Ravenel Community prospective.**

You are being asked tonight to approve a rezoning effort bursting with risk both known and unknown. From wetlands to traffic studies, from infrastructure to affordability, risk abounds yet not one study has been provided. Further, Ravenel constituents have asked “what is the benefit to Ravenel” with no answer being provided to date. What has been stated is that “this rezoning would be better for the developer” and in my opinion “being better for the developer” is simply another way of saying “removing risk from the developer” and by default placing it on the steps of the town hall.

By provided the rezoning “upfront” the developers risk and subsequent fiduciary duties are minimized as they “have what they want”. Just as a youngster is apt to do a “so so” job cutting the grass when paid “upfront” so too is a developer apt to provide less than stellar studies / information since they already have the zoning they want. That mentality “shifts” the fiduciary duty / risk from the developer to Ravenel and reallocates Ravenel’s “negotiation power” from itself to the developer. Neither of those are in keeping with the fiduciary duties of the City Council.

That being said, a NO VOTE, maintains Ravenels negotiation authority / power over the development effort, minimizes known and unknow risks based on having the rezoning effort yet to be determined and fulfills the City Councils fiduciary duty of minimizing risk to the town and its citizens.

I thank you for your time and consideration.



Mayor Stephen Tumbleston

LaJuanda Brown

Robert Cochran

Jim Rodgers, Jr.

Cora Lee Singleton

W. Buckey Waters

Terry Wilkinson

Minutes transcribed from tape and respectfully submitted by: Mikayla White, Clerk-Receptionist