

Committee on Real Estate

May 22, 2025

A meeting of the Committee on Real Estate was held on this date at 3:04 p.m. via Zoom.

Notice of this meeting was sent to all local news media.

PRESENT

Committee members: Mayor William S. Cogswell, Councilmember Keith Waring, Councilmember Ross Appel (Chair), Councilmember William Tinkler (Vice-Chair), and Councilmember Stephen Bowden

City Staff and Others: Daniel McQueeney, Julia Copeland, Malena Dinwoodie, Mollie Conner, Magalie Creech, Katie Dahlheim, Melissa Cruthirds, Matt Frohlich, Hampton Logan, Christopher Morgan, Philip Clapper, and Donna Constance

Chair Appel called the meeting to order.

Invocation

The meeting was opened with a moment of silence led by Councilmember Waring.

Approval of Minutes

On a motion by Councilmember Waring, seconded by Councilmember Bowden, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the April 21, 2025, Real Estate meeting minutes.

- a. **Consider an ordinance to quitclaim 50' right-of-way identified as Scott Island Court, at Rushland Landing Road as it abuts TMS# 311-00-00-302, to Scott Island Court, LLC. The property is owned by the City of Charleston. (1901 Scott Island Court, Johns Island, SC) (TMS# 311-00-00-302) [Ordinance].**

Ms. Creech said that the property owner possessed the adjoining parcel, which was submitted through Real Estate as a dual-track request to approve the quitclaim deed. This was forwarded to Public Works in April as part of the request to abandon the right-of-way and is set to be presented to the Council in June. They received a request from CPW for a utility easement that must be recorded before any transfer to the property owner.

- b. **Authorization for Mayor to execute on behalf of the City of Charleston a Governmental Real Estate Lease with Clemson University for use of 292 and 296 Meeting Street as a temporary fire station for \$1.00 annually. The property is owned by Clemson University (292 and 296 Meeting Street) (TMS# 458-01-01-028).**

Ms. Copeland said this was a three-year term with two one-year options to extend. This would be to refurbish a single-family home to house firefighters. There would also be demolition of the dialysis clinic on the corner of George and Meeting to install a temporary shelter for vehicles.

Mayor Cogswell said that Clemson had been a great partner in helping them find a temporary station so they could maintain coverage.

Councilmember Bowden said this was a great job by the staff and the Mayor in finding a partner

who could manage this. He understood this would be a costly renovation, not to mention all the other priorities they had for the Fire Department, and they were grateful to their friends in upstate New York.

Chair Appel asked how a temporary fire station would operate and if they planned to erect a structure.

Mayor Cogswell said these were prefab buildings. They were demolishing the old dialysis clinic, which would improve the corner since the building had been vacant for years. They struggled to determine suitable living quarters for the firefighters, and because Clemson owned the house, it turned out to be more cost-effective to make modest renovations than to bring in trailers for the firefighters during the interim.

- c. **Authorization for the Mayor to execute on behalf of the City of Charleston a First Amendment to Lease of Freddie Whaley Park owned by Dominion Energy extending the term an additional five (5) years for \$1.00 annually. The property is owned by Dominion Energy, South Carolina (Freddie Whaley Park) (TMS# 464-01-00-001).**

Ms. Copeland said they had a long-term lease with Dominion. They were asking for a 5-year extension because they were considering selling at some point in the future. They asked if they could extend the lease because of the activity on that spot. Everyone agreed that they should entertain this.

Councilmember Waring said that it seemed like they were considering selling within the next 5 years, which could be sooner rather than later.

Ms. Copeland said when they spoke to Mr. Kassis, this could be an option.

Councilmember Waring said they did not want to lose the recreational space and that they should talk to them now to extend the lease.

Mayor Cogswell said absolutely, and that they would be glad to accelerate those conversations.

Councilmember Waring said five years from now, the price could be higher than it is today.

- d. **Authorization for the Mayor to execute on behalf of the City of Charleston a deed to approximately 695 square feet (.02 ac) to Charleston County for \$2,600.00 for the purposes of planned intersection improvements. The property is owned by the City of Charleston (Wappoo Road/Savannah Highway) (TMS# 350-02-00-017) [Ordinance]**

Ms. Copeland said this was for part of their intersection improvements for this intersection, which required an acquisition for curb and gutter purposes.

Councilmember Bowden asked why \$2,600.00. He said this was not a valuable piece of land, but it was a critical piece of infrastructure for everyone. They would be transferring taxpayer money at the end of the day. He wondered, with recent negotiations with other government entities, why they would need to exchange money for certain things and how they determined this number.

Ms. Copeland said that when the county was doing those intersections, they started with their right-of-way agents and ran appraisals on the property. Since the county reached out to them, they were paying the City \$2,600 for the .02 acre.

Councilmember Bowden said they were happy to get it, but at the end of the day, it added money to their costs, which would slow things down if they had to do that at every intersection. It would not add a ton, but it would add something, and then they would have to negotiate it, which would require work, which did not make a lot of sense, but would forward.

Chair Appel said maybe they could waive the right-of-way acquisition costs for this intersection if they agreed to waive it at Avondale.

Ms. Copeland said that was a fair proposition.

Councilmember Bowden said if everything was given and taken, it would be the taxpayers who lost in the end of the day.

Chair Appel said they had to work together with their partners because multiple intersection improvements were happening on Savannah Highway. At the end of the day, their constituents would want to see them all working together, and it was great to see this moving forward.

Councilmember Waring asked if they had followed up or if they would have conversations at a later date.

Mayor Cogswell said that when he spoke to the chairman and several council members, there was more communication and collaboration than they had experienced in a long time. He appreciated everyone's connections to various council members, which strengthened the bonds between them. He acknowledged that while this was standard protocol, at a larger scale, it could be significant, and that things were progressing rapidly.

Ms. Copeland said they had asked for them to waive in certain situations when the number was higher.

On a motion by Councilmember Waring, seconded by Mayor Cogswell, the Committee voted unanimously for the Mayor to execute the right-of-way deed on behalf of the City of Charleston for 695 square feet to Charleston County for \$2,600.00 for planned intersection improvements at Wappoo Road and Savannah Highway.

- e. **Authorization for the Mayor, on behalf of the City of Charleston, to enter into a License Agreement with TMP SRE 1, LLC for the continued use of licensed space within the Citadel Mall by the Charleston Police Department as a police substation. The property is owned by TMP SRE 1, LLC [2070 Sam Rittenberg Blvd. (The Citadel Mall) (TMS# 351-09-00-015)]**

Ms. Dinwoodie said this was the same license agreement they did every year for a substation at the Citadel Mall. She met with the Chief and other PD team members, and they were happy with the space and wanted to remain there. It was about 650 square feet, and the cost was \$1.00 for the fee.

- f. **Please consider the following annexations:**

- (i) **1963 Green Park Avenue (0.21 acre) (TMS# 355-15-00-141), West Ashley, (District 2). The property is owned by Kevin M. Gainey**
- (ii) **1812 Debbenshire Drive (0.26 acre) (TMS# 353-14-00-204), West Ashley, (District 7). The property is owned by Palmetto Equity Solutions, LLC.**

Chair Appel asked if these were standard residential annexations.

Ms. Conner said yes.

On a motion by Councilmember Waring, seconded by Mayor Cogswell, the Committee voted unanimously to approve both annexations together.

Chair Appel said Councilmember Waring wanted to bring up an issue for them to talk about at the Real Estate Committee meeting, which involved zoning issues.

Councilmember Waring said that he had a discussion with Mr. Batchelder and Mr. Morgan regarding the creation of smaller lots. He aimed to propose an amendment to the SR6, which would reduce the lot size from 35 feet to 27 feet. Bowen's Development in Hanahan featured a mix of apartments, retail office space, smaller houses, and larger houses. One of the areas included cottages that were approximately 900 square feet, starting in the mid-\$250,000 range. These represented affordable, owner-occupied housing created by the private sector without government subsidies. This could not be achieved in the City of Charleston unless it went through a PUD. There were many opportunities in West Ashley, James Island, and the Upper Peninsula where infill opportunities existed if they had the right to build smaller houses. If they drove around the City of Charleston, smaller lots could be found that were buildable, but that could not be done in West Ashley, James Island, and some of the larger parts of the City. Since this was a minor amendment, he intended to present it to the Council, then send it to the Planning Commission, and subsequently to Community Development. This was also forwarded to Ms. Copeland and those who were in the Planning Department.

Chair Appel said that the Real Estate Committee did not have direct purview over zoning matters and could not be voted on presently, but this could be reported out to get this started for the rezoning tax amendment process.

Councilmember Waring suggested that this could be forwarded to the Council for discussion, and then a motion could be made, which, if approved, would be sent to the Planning Commission.

Councilmember Bowden said he would be in favor of this, as well as exploring other ideas. When they talked about hearkening back to a time when they created the middle class, which was a key driver of economic stability was having attainable housing. The only way they were going to get there was to allow market forces to work with something like this.

Councilmember Waring expressed sympathy for young people facing high rents. Previously, they could rent a place and save money for a down payment on a house. By the time young people finished paying rent, they had not saved enough for a down payment. The cost of an entry-level house has generally skyrocketed. A two-by-four costs no more in Hanahan than it did in the City of Charleston. A significant factor was the cost of land, along with various processes they needed to navigate. However, if they could develop a plan for infill that the private sector could engage with, as well as some City-owned land, they could implement some of the same strategies. Their approach couldn't solely rely on the government building affordable housing. They needed to find a way to kickstart the private sector, encouraging investment to create offerings that were either entry-level or smaller units for senior citizens looking to downsize. There were not many units around 1,000 square feet being constructed in the City of Charleston.

Mayor Cogswell said this was an interesting point, and he appreciated that he brought this to their attention. He had no opposition to moving this to the Council agenda for discussion.

Chair Appel said that this was the appropriate conversation to have, as it could become technical and detailed once they delved into the specifics. The first step in the process was to present this idea and have the staff examine it more closely, along with having the Planning Commission review it to implement a much-needed reform, enabling them to find a way to make affordable market housing a reality. They recognized the market innovations in other sectors of the economy

that had reduced costs and fostered new developments, which had not occurred in housing for a considerable time due to regulations compelling a higher-value product into the market.

With there being no further business, the Committee adjourned the meeting at 3:35 p.m.

Donna Constance

Clerk of Council's Office