



**SPECIAL MEETING OF FLORENCE CITY COUNCIL
TUESDAY, JULY 27, 2021 – 2:00 P.M.
SURFACE WATER TREATMENT PLANT
2598 FLORENCE HARLLEE BOULEVARD
FLORENCE, SOUTH CAROLINA**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mayor Teresa Myers Ervin, Mayor Pro Tempore George Jebaily, Councilwoman Pat Gibson-Hye Moore, Councilwoman Lethonia Barnes, Councilman Chaquez T. McCall, Councilman Bryan A. Braddock and Councilman C. William Schofield.

ALSO PRESENT

Mr. Randall S. Osterman, City Manager; Mrs. Casey Moore, Municipal Clerk; Mr. Scotty Davis, Deputy City Manager; Mr. Clint Moore, Assistant City Manager of Development; Mr. Kevin Yokim, Assistant City Manager of Finance/Administration; Chief Allen Heidler, Florence Police Department; Chief Shannon Tanner, Florence Fire Department; Mr. Jerry Dudley, Director of Planning; Mr. Michael Hemingway, Director of Utilities; Mrs. Jennifer Krawiec, Director of Human Resources; Mrs. Amanda P. Pope, Director of Marketing/Communications and Municipal Services; and Mr. Chuck Pope, Director of Public Works.

MEDIA PRESENT:

Matthew Christian of the Morning News was present for the meeting.

A notice of the meeting was sent to the media and individuals requesting a copy of the agenda, informing them of the date, time and location of this special city council meeting.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Pro Tempore George Jebaily called the July 27, 2021 special meeting of Florence City Council to order at 2:05 p.m.

INVOCATION

Councilwoman Barnes provided the invocation for the meeting. The Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag followed the invocation.

[Mayor Ervin arrived]

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN WORKSESSION

Mr. Jerry Dudley, Planning Director, said the city has been working through the Comprehensive Plan process and the public input meetings were interrupted by COVID-19. The public input meetings have resumed to provide opportunities for residents, business owners and community members to provide input from the Comprehensive Plan. Now that the public input process has ended, Kendig Keast,



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Comprehensive Plan Consultants, in cooperation with APD and CDM Smith, have produced the draft version of the Existing City Report to be discussed at this meeting. Mr. Dudley introduced Mr. Gary Mitchell with Kendig Keast.

Mr. Mitchell said the objectives today are to give an update on the process and timeline, to go over the highlights of the Existing City report and input to date, and to look ahead at the Future City phase.

Timeline:

- Existing City and Plan Direction
 - This process looks at where the city is today
 - This Comprehension Work Session will complete this process.
- Future City
 - Will work with the Advisory Committee
 - Will develop July-October, 2021
- Implementation
 - Draft plan will go before City Council
 - Will occur October-November, 2021
- Adoption of Comprehensive Plan
 - December, 2021

Mr. Mitchell said adjustments had to be made once COVID came along. He said the community meetings switched to virtual meetings in September 2020 and February – April, 2021, and the in-person small group meetings resumed in spring of 2021. The Existing City Report is meant to be open to the public and includes maps, numbers and highlights about the community.

Population:

Mr. Mitchell said COVID also delayed the 2020 census results, so the most recent estimate for the City of Florence in 2020 is 39,034 calculated by ESRI utilizing GIS data. Florence continues to experience steady growth with a 14.9% increase since 2000. Meanwhile, the statewide population grew by just over 30%.

Age:

Florence's median age is up from 36 in 2000 to 39.9. A large share of the population in Florence are 65+ and under 18 years of age. The median age in the US is 38.5 and 39.5 in South Carolina.

Housing:

Florence has a relatively high renter population of 41.5%. The National average is 35.9% and the average in South Carolina is 29.7%. 2/3 of the current housing in the city (of all types) are 30 years or older, creating a challenge to the community. Among renters in Florence, 50.3% are paying more than 30% of their monthly income on housing.

Economy and Jobs:

There are approximately 0.97 jobs per resident in the city, nearly a 1:1 ratio between jobs and residents. 60% of the city's population is in the working age. There has been discussion of mismatch in the community for employment (lack of education or skills necessary), this is important when industry is looking to locate to the area.



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Traffic:

Traffic count data estimates some Florence corridors carrying 20,000 – 30,000 vehicles per day. Much of the public discussion was on traffic issues in Florence.

Results: Survey of Florence’s Future:

A survey was shared with the community to seek input on the Future of Florence in July 2020. 553 responses were received with 93% of the responses coming from city residents.

Survey participants were asked to identify their top 3 priorities from a list of 15 items. Infrastructure condition and capacity (street, water, wastewater, drainage, etc.), recreation amenities (parks, trails, sports, fitness) and public safety (police/fire/ambulance services) were identified as the top 3 priorities.

Priorities

1. Infrastructure condition and capacity	%	59.5
2. Recreation amenities		35.2
3. Public safety		28.9
4. Ongoing downtown enhancement and improvement		27.3
5. Economic development for employment and tax base needs		23.8
6. Revitalizing older neighborhoods		23.1
7. Traffic congestion and safety		22.0
8. Workforce development		20.7
9. Community appearance and beautification, especially at entries into the city		15.4
10. Managing growth and development, especially just outside the city’s jurisdiction		13.2
11. Better “connectivity” across a spread-out city		11.7
12. Protection of the area’s natural resources and landscapes		10.8
13. Equity in providing public services and making public investments		9.0
14. Florence’s image and identity		8.1
15. More land area for growth and economic development		4.6

Participants were asked to identify key issues related to land use and development. Participants identified development inequity as the top key issue related to land use and development.

Land Use and Development
Key Issues

Development Inequity	%	30.4
Public Facilities & Services		29.2
Redevelopment & Revitalization		16.1
Economic Development		13.7
Vacant Buildings		10.7

Participants were asked to identify key issues related to streets and infrastructure. Participants identified stormwater and drainage issues as the top key issue related to streets and infrastructure.



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Streets and Infrastructure
Key Issues

Stormwater & Drainage Issues	%	31.0
Poor General Infrastructure		23.1
Deteriorating Streets		21.8
Walkability and Connectivity		15.7
Long Construction Times		7.0

Participants were asked to identify key issues related to local economy and jobs. Participants identified education as the top key issue related to local economy and jobs.

Local Economy and Jobs
Key Issues

Education	%	32.9
Economic Diversification		30.2
Employment Opportunities		18.8
Wages and Pay		6.7
Tax Distribution		5.4
Regional Equity		4.7

Participants were asked to identify key issues related to housing and neighborhoods. Participants identified affordable housing as the top key issue related to housing and neighborhoods.

Housing and Neighborhoods
Key Issues

Affordable Housing	%	28.0
City Oversight and Regulations		16.6
Poor Living Conditions		16.6
Redevelopment and Revitalization		16.0
Housing Availability		12.0
Inequity		9.7

Participants were asked to identify key issues related to transportation. Participants identified walkability and connectivity as the top key issue related to transportation.

Transportation
Key Issues

Walkability and Connectivity	%	28.9
Public Transportation System		19.3
Biking Infrastructure		17.1
Vehicular Traffic		12.8
Public Projects		11.8
Airport Issues		4.8

Participants were asked to identify key issues related to recreation and amenities. Participants identified parks and recreation as the top key issue related to recreation and amenities.



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Recreation and Amenities
Key Issues

Parks and Recreation	%	38.1
Arts and Culture Facilities		23.2
Aquatics Center		18.7
Walking and Biking Trails		12.9
Sports & Entertainment Complexes		11.8

Participants were asked what the city can do to address housing needs in Florence. Participants identified smaller size home for “down-sizing” and/or affordability as the top housing need.

Housing Needs

• Smaller size homes for “down-sizing” and/or affordability	%	40.1
• “Move-up” mid-level housing beyond “starter” homes		37.8
• More large-lot housing for people who want to live in the city, but with more space and separation from neighbors		35.2
• More rental options (beyond developments targeted to seniors and others)		34.6
• Downtown residential (such as upper floor units above street-level commercial space)		32.9
• Homes within “master-planned developments” that include a mix of housing types plus more amenities for residents		30.0
• More housing options to enable retirees and seniors to stay in Florence		29.4
• A separate living area within a home (for elderly parents, young adult children, or others), or in a separate building on the same property		25.7
• “Live/work units” in appropriate locations for those who can live where they also operate a business		20.8
• More attached housing types other than apartments (such as patio homes, townhomes, etc.)		20.5
• Others		10.1

Participants were asked what upgrades downtown they would like to see. Things that appeal to kids and families was identified as the top upgrade for downtown.

Downtown Upgrades

• Things that appeal to kids and families	%	54.3
• Places just to “hang-out” (public green space, plaza with seating, etc.)		52.1
• Special events that bring the community together		51.8
• Evening activities		47.9
• Things to draw visitors and tourism		47.1



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- Local stores and shopping versus eating establishments 46.3
- Upgrades for pedestrian and bicyclist safety within Downtown 41.1
- “Fast casual” places to eat 35.0
- Sit-down restaurants 31.1
- Ways to get to Downtown other than by driving 26.5
- Options to live Downtown 21.5
- High-quality office space 13.2
- Others 11.0

Participants were asked on ways Florence can improve their physical appearance and image. Community entertainment and events was identified as the top way Florence can improve.

Improving Florence’s Physical Appearance and Image

- Community Entertainment and Events % 19.0
- Bury Power Lines 15.0
- Redevelopment and Revitalization 15.0
- Clean City 12.0
- City Oversight and Regulations 10.0
- Landscaping and Scenery 8.0
- Road Maintenance 8.0
- Equity and Accessibility 5.0
- Entryways 3.0
- Green Living 3.0
- Positivity 3.0
- Better Quality Schools 0

Participants were asked to identify the most important public service the city provides in improving their “quality of life”. Infrastructure was identified as the most important public service the city provides in improving “quality of life”.

Services and Quality of Life

- Infrastructure (water, sewer, drainage, streets, sidewalks) % 69.0
- Parks/recreation/trails 64.0
- Beautification and maintenance activities 52.0
- Public safety (police/fire/emergency medical services) 45.0
- Neighborhood revitalization and improvements 44.0
- Health and wellness initiatives 41.0
- Youth sports and activities 39.0
- Downtown redevelopment and improvements 37.0
- Public facilities (community centers, Florence Center, etc.) 32.0
- Trash collection and recycling 31.0
- Code enforcement 23.0
- Traffic enforcement (speeding) 20.0
- Senior citizen programs and activities 19.0



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- Development regulations (subdivisions, zoning, design guidelines, etc.) 19.0
- Communications 17.0
- Transportation services 12.0
- Others 7.0

Mr. Mitchell opened questions following the survey results. Councilman Schofield asked Mr. Mitchell how many municipalities he has seen with interconnecting trail systems. He replied it takes time and resources but the municipalities that do have them have been working towards them for decades.

Mr. Mitchell presented various population projections for the city which are based on past trends or assumptions based off past growth.

City Population Estimates

	1990	2000	2010	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040
Historical Data	29,913	30,248	37,056	38,467				
Trending County Step Down (Increasing Share)				38,467	39,444	40,939	42,859	
Steady Numeric Growth (1,411 per decade)				38,467	39,166	39,878	40,577	41,289
Steady Growth Rate (3.8% per decade)				38,467	39,193	39,932	40,685	41,452
Assumed Annual Growth Rate (0.8%)				38,467	40,106	41,816	43,598	45,456
MIDPOINT				38,467	39,318	40,435	41,772	42,732

The Trending County Step Down calculation is based on the county’s population. The State Data Center projects that the Florence County population will decrease through 2035. As the state is projecting a lower population for Florence County, the city’s share of the population will continue to grow. The State only projects population through 2035.

The Steady Numeric Growth continues to add 1,411 people per decade. The problem with this projection is that the population continues to grow, but the same number of people are added decade after decade.

The Steady Growth Rate is similar to compound growth with an assumption of 3.8% growth per decade.

Mr. Mitchell said the previously mentioned growth projections are all based on past trends. The Assumed Annual Growth Rate assumes the city will grow 0.8% per year.

The midpoint is the average of all the projections. The midpoint projection adds approximately 4,200 residents over the next 20 years, meaning the city would need to add 1,700 housing units, at 2.5 people per household, over the next 20 years. Mr. Mitchell said part of what you have to look at with the comprehensive plan and the future land use map is where these people/subdivisions will go.

Looking at where the city is today, input from Florence leadership and the community, and population outlook, some priorities and themes were developed for the Comprehensive Plan: Economic



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diversification, quality expectations, a connected and equitable community, amenity rich place, fiscal and physical resilience and the next big thing.

Mr. Mitchell asked Council for their opinions and thoughts on these priorities and if something is missing.

Councilman Braddock inquired on the airport and having package planes flying in instead of only commercial. He further said the city already is positioned well with the interstate and the rails and asked if investment in the airport to cater UPS, FedEx, Amazon, etc. would be economically beneficial in serving the rural community. Mr. Mitchell agreed.

Councilwoman Barnes asked Mr. Mitchell if he is finding that more young people have no interest in homeownership. Mr. Mitchell said he is, and they recommend that their communities look at a mixture of home types in developments: patio homes, townhomes, et cetera. These types of homes have little maintenance and are appealing to the younger and older generations.

Councilman McCall spoke on South Carolina annexation laws and asked Mr. Mitchell if he knew of any cities that took an aggressive annexation approach to increase their population size and what were the benefits. Mr. Mitchell said annexation is challenging, cities cannot just grow by annexing residential properties because that is just adding to their services. Cities need to think about areas that can accommodate commercial properties, along with residential, so there is some tax base. Mr. Mitchell said sometimes states essentially shut down annexations because of some cities' aggressive annexation tactics and state legislatures do not understand why cities need to grow. Councilman McCall said most of the corridors going into the city are in the county and they are an eye sore because there is no zoning in place. He asked how the city can annex to the corridors in order to enhance the aesthetics to people traveling to Florence. Mr. Mitchell responded annexing corridors is tough. In most situations, counties are not willing to give up these strips of land due to tax base reasons or jurisdiction, and counties are not able to provide the regulation cities can. It will ultimately take a city-county partnership. Mr. Mitchell said the 2010 Comprehensive Plan mentioned the airport corridor. The 76 Corridor Study was adopted by Council several years ago and addresses some of the zoning issues along that corridor. Mr. Mitchell mentioned that Kendig Keast will also be preparing the Comprehensive Plan for the county and their focus is on economic development.

Councilman Braddock said the county is about to lose the \$35.00 road maintenance fee which will impact their budget and will likely cause them to cut some services. He asked if this would be a good time to push annexing the corridors with the county since the cost of providing services there could potentially be burdensome. Mr. Mitchell replied yes, a change in funding could be enough of a catalyst for the county to consider it.

Councilwoman Barnes said the county should want the corridors to be aesthetically pleasing if their focus is on economic development. She said businesses are invited into the city and the county, and improved corridors would benefit everyone.

Councilman McCall asked Mr. Mitchell if he has ever seen a city incorporate an annexation plan that has a focus on smart growth. Mr. Mitchell said before annexations were shut down in various states, the Comprehensive Plans included a section on a 10-year annexation strategy that gauged annexation growth areas and how cities could take them on from a financial standpoint and service capacity, but that planning is not done anymore because states shut down that method of annexation. There was further discussion on annexation among Council. Mr. Jerry Dudley, Planning Director, said the number one reason cited when residents request annexation is for garbage collection.



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Mayor Ervin spoke on the formation of a Community Development Corporation (CDC). She said APD Urban Planners designed the city's Comprehensive Community Development Plan several years ago. This plan included the formation of a CDC and the city provided substantial financial support in the formation of the CDC and the training involved. She asked the Mr. Mitchell look at this information when moving forward with the Comprehensive Plan so they are not spending money twice on the same study.

Councilman Schofield spoke on connecting trails and asked Mr. Mitchell if he had ever encountered a city that utilized bridges with green space to connect trails. Mr. Mitchell said he has seen concepts of this utilizing old rails or infrastructure but has never seen it done as new construction.

Being no further discussion, Mayor Ervin thanked Mr. Mitchell for the presentation.

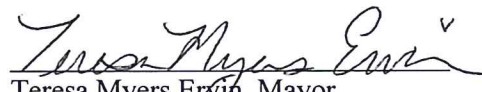
ADJOURN

Without objection, the special meeting of Florence City Council was adjourned at 3:14 p.m.

Dated this 13th day of September, 2021.



Casey C. Moore, Municipal Clerk



Teresa Myers Ervin, Mayor