

**TOWN OF MOUNT PLEASANT, SOUTH CAROLINA
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
Monday, March 5, 2018
Municipal Complex, Committee Meeting Room, 3rd Floor
100 Ann Edwards Lane, Mount Pleasant, SC 29464**

Minutes

Members Present: Bob Brimmer, Chairman, Joe Bustos and Kathy Landing

Absent: Rick Crosby (MPW)

Staff Present: Eric DeMoura, Town Administrator; Amy Livingston, Business and Tourism Manager

Mr. Brimmer called the meeting to order at 11:33 a.m.

1. Approval of Minutes from the January 2, 2018 meeting

Ms. Landing made a motion to approve; seconded by Mr. Bustos. All present voted in favor.

2. Public Comments

Mr. Brimmer stated agenda item #3 had already been vetted through two different council committees. He said that the idea behind this item being on this committee was not necessarily to discuss the environmental value, but from an economic development standpoint and the effect that it will have on our businesses and economic development climate. He said the focus was to ensure the business community had an opportunity to weigh in and for the committee to hear any suggestions that could possibly make this ordinance stronger.

Dale Zimmerman, stated that he works for Solarize Financial and resides in Mount Pleasant. He said plastic bags are definitely a concern, and he is very interested to hear about the economic impact and what can be done

to begin utilizing paper and eliminate plastic bags and how to overcome this economic impact.

Ryan Cockrill, 932 Ashley, stated that he is a waterman here in the Charleston area. He said that he likes to surf, boat, and loves oysters and shrimp. He said you cannot eat an oyster or a shrimp in Charleston without eating plastics because the plastics break down into microplastics and those animals feed on those microplastics. He said that this is not a litter issue, because people do not really litter any longer, but they do consume 8 million tons of plastics a year. He said this is a garbage truck of plastics going into the ocean every minute, which is not litter, but overflow. He said as of 2015, only 9% of plastic waste produced ended up recycled; 12% was incinerated and 79% ended up in landfills and the environment. He said plastics of convenience such as single-use plastic bags, cups, straws and water bottles are plastics gone wrong. We are producing more plastic than we are able to control. He said that 500 million straws are used every day in America alone.

Kelly Thorvalson, South Carolina Aquarium, stated that Council members have heard from those at the South Carolina Aquarium regarding how plastics harm the marine environment and marine animals. She said that she is here to discuss “Good Catch,” the Aquarium’s sustainable seafood initiative. She said it is a program to support sustainable fisheries and has been around for approximately 15 years. She said they partner with restaurants primarily along the eastern seaboard, with most of the partners being here in the tri-county area. She said approximately 6 months ago, they revamped the program because they know the plastics issue is great and created a new level for their restaurant partners to reduce their plastic use. She said a restaurant partner can become a platinum partner if they discontinue utilizing single-use bags, Styrofoam, provide straws and plastic cutlery only upon request, and follow recycling laws. She said the overwhelming majority of their partners have decided to become, on their own, platinum partners, because they are aware of the issues. She said in 6 months, of their 35 partners, three quarters of those partners have opted to go as plastic free

as possible, and they are looking to certify many more in the coming months. She thanked Committee members for considering this issue for the health of the community.

Sarah “Sally” Jacob, 1152 Village Creek Lane, stated that in Maine at Walmart, you are able to purchase paper bags for groceries for 5¢ each. She said this is a state (Maine) that is not a wealthy state; however, they care about their environment. She said if Walmart in Maine is implementing this, then Walmart in Mount Pleasant can do this, too. She said the economics of it work for Walmart in Maine, so why not here.

Colleen Griffin, 840 Pitt Street, said she would like to voice strong support for a ban on single-use plastic bags. She said she would also support the implementation of a small fee for any paper or reusable plastic bags that may be offered as an alternative, which would provide the public with an incentive to bring their own reusable bags. She said the overall goal would be to reduce all waste. She traveled to California last summer and the grocery stores charge 10¢ to purchase a paper or reusable bag for groceries, which would assist merchants with the higher cost of using paper instead of plastic.

Henry Bryant, Coastal Expeditions, 514 Mill Street on Shem Creek, said that Olivia Wilson, their Director of Outreach and their CFO are also in attendance. He said they rely on the beauty of their natural environment to draw people into the waterways. He said this attracts people from all over to come to Mount Pleasant and many end up becoming residents. He said at Coastal Expeditions, they have always been a group of naturalists dedicated to coastal conservation environmental stewardship. He added that they spend most of the year out on the water and see first-hand the effects of the trash. He said the creeks appear to bear the brunt of the trash. He said they organize creek sweeps to clean up the waterway, but the amount is too much to combat on their own, and the impact of plastic bags on the environment is evident and getting worse. It presents a very serious hazard for local wildlife and puts the State’s reptile, the loggerhead sea turtle, in danger. He added that plastic bags resemble jelly fish, which the sea turtles consume, and they are not able

to tell the difference. He said we should all be concerned about the economic threat that environmental degradation poses. He said their business depends on the quality of our natural environment and the beauty of our local landscape. He said that we need to change the thought process around plastic bag usage and all plastic usage. He said the last thing they want is for their clientele to see other cleaner areas because we allowed ours to suffer. He said the quality of the waterways impacts the entire area and applauds the efforts of Council to make the change and Coastal Expeditions supports this ban.

Caroline Bradner, 328 East Bay Street, said she works as the Land, Water and Wildlife Project Manager for the Coastal Conservation League. She said that the Coastal Conservation League wholeheartedly supports this ordinance and thinks it is a great step to address harmful plastic pollution in the area. She said in reference to an economic burden being put on businesses, they found when speaking to many local businesses, that many of them have already taken these steps because they care about the environment and it is important to their business. She said that this does not change consumer behavior if one business does not offer plastic bags but changes the mindset if all the businesses do not offer plastics. She said that the throw-away culture is a big thing targeted by these types of ordinances and makes us think about what we are using. She stated that the intent is to encourage reusable bags as often as possible and paper bags when needed. She said the idea is to reduce the amount of plastic altogether. She said that a big concern with plastics is how long they stay in the environment, which is 500 to 1,000 years, whether as a plastic bag or a piece of microplastic, which is just an estimate. She said any economic cost is worth addressing the problem at its source.

Andrew Wunderly, Charleston Waterkeeper, said he would like to thank the Town for its continued leadership on this issue. He said he is present to speak in favor of the environmentally friendly packaging ordinance. He said businesses can and do comply with these ordinances. He said businesses on Folly Beach, such as Harris Teeter, Subway, Lost Dog Café, Snapper Jacks, Rita's Seaside Grill, Bert's Market and Taco Boy, as well as

businesses on the Isle of Palms--Harris Teeter, Windjammer, Simmons Seafood and Domino's Pizza--have complied, continue to comply and continue to do business in our communities. He said the City of Folly Beach and Isle of Palms are proud of their roles as a leader on this issue. He said plastic pollution has a cost to our community beyond the cost of businesses. He said in 2017, Charleston Waterkeeper mobilized 1,506 volunteers and the work they completed provided approximately \$100,000 in community service value to the community. He said this does not take into account the time it takes to organize, scout the sites and properly dispose of the collected material afterwards. He said ordinances like these really work because they cut to the heart of the issue. He urges the Committee to vote in favor of this ordinance.

David Halsey, 917 Tall Pine Road, stated that he attempts to be responsible about recycling. He said that you are not able to put plastic films in your recycling bin, and there is no viable way to dispose of them and no one wants them. He said he does not know why we want to perpetuate the toxic ugly. He said this is a very necessary step, and the real cost of business should be figured in and it has not been with things like the cost of plastic. He stated that he hopes the Committee will be for this ordinance.

Pat Sullivan, 1002 Plantation Court, stated that this issue needs to be addressed at the source, as well as the public. She said telling the public is not going to stop this proliferation. She said we are a horribly throw-away culture and economically, she believes the public will respect businesses that decide to become environmentally responsible. She said that it would be positive for businesses and people will seek them out if they know they are being environmentally responsible.

Robert Spencer, 506 Old Court, said that he is a business owner and some of the businesses he owns are restaurants. He said he is not being put at a disadvantage by banning plastic. He asked the Committee to support the plastics ban. He said that he voted for the Council members in this room and is very proud.

Dell Fisher, 1216 Winwood Court, said that she feels compelled to voice her concern about the plastic problem in our Town and all over the country. She said economically, she cannot see this hurting the Town by promoting a clean environment, which brings people from all over who love the beaches, the ocean and the wildlife. She said seeing plastic bags in our waterways would be a deterrent from having people come here. She said the plastic companies could have made bio-degradable bags that turned to corn starch, dissolved and would not have harmed anything. She asked the Committee to implement this ban.

3. Consideration of an Ordinance for Environmentally Acceptable Packaging and Products

Mr. DeMoura stated that this was placed on Committee from Council. He stated that it was heard in the Police, Legal & Judicial (PJJ) Committee earlier.

Mr. Bustos stated that this morning, PJJ Committee recommended approval of the ordinance to full Council. He stated that he believes that the input of this Committee is that they found no objection.

Mr. Brimmer stated that he did offer invitation to both the Charleston Chamber of Commerce and the Mount Pleasant Chamber of Commerce to come and provide their thoughts and represent the thoughts of their members on this proposed ordinance.

Chris Staubes, President of the Mount Pleasant Chamber of Commerce, stated that they are a non-political organization and attempt not to cross that line. He said that this issue is very important to the citizens, residents and businesses of the Town of Mount Pleasant and East Cooper and the State of South Carolina. He said the Chamber sent out an invitation to their members to attend and comment one way or another. He said their invitation was sent out to several thousand people.

Erica Wright, Regional Advocacy Director with the Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce, stated that they also put the invitation out to all their members, and the response they had is that they will follow suit. She said that the Chamber itself does not have a position, but their members understand the sensitivity of this issue and will comply with whatever the Town puts forward.

Mr. Brimmer stated that between the two agencies, there are thousands of businesses in the area and any ordinance that may be passed by this Council is a stronger, better ordinance when we have the cooperation of our businesses, environmental community and the residents.

Ms. Landing stated that she uses a tumbler and said you cannot talk about reducing plastic unless you are doing it yourself. She said even when she does purchase bags, she purchases the earth-friendly plastic bags for the kitchen trash and the way it is made, breaks down within one to five years. She said she is also a sailboat owner and has been on the water her entire life. She said that she is extremely sensitive to this; however, she asked if either of the Chambers have read the ordinance, because it is not about plastic bags. She said it is about plastic utensils, clam shells of any kind, straws, etc. She asked what a drycleaner sends clothes in if they have no ability to use plastic bags. She heard that our Congresswoman, Katie Arrington, voted against Home Rule, which she does not agree with, because we should have the right to dictate our own laws in the Town that are relative to the Town.

Congresswoman Katie Arrington did ask how it would be enforced. Ms. Landing stated that this ordinance would be to place a fine on businesses after a period of time after they had worked their inventory off. She said we have a platinum partners program that worked, and it was about incentivizing businesses to want to do good for the community and

promoting those companies that have made the decision to help the environment. She suggested starting with a very strong incentivized program with a private-public partnership between the Town of Mount Pleasant and all the Town's businesses, allowing the businesses to step up and make a decision to do the right thing. She said we are all adults, and there is considerable information and data nationwide that show areas, including communities, making decisions to become a "nanny" state, to tell everyone you must do it their way or be fined. She has an issue with this. She said this takes hard work as a community. She said there could be promotions on social media and other positive reasons to make the right choice. She said we must allow people to make a choice, and the way to do this, is to give a positive message and an incentive. She also suggested a referendum on the ballot first and to try the platinum partners program from April going forward, in order to get businesses signed up and making good choices. She said if the people of Mount Pleasant vote that this is what they want, then we should have it. She is just not sure that an ordinance to punish people up front is the right answer. She said that if this ordinance passes, we will be telling businesses to use all products that can breakdown. She remembers when there was an outcry from people that we were killing too many trees by using too many paper products.

Mr. Bustos stated that he was on the PJI Committee this morning that recommended approval to full Council. He asked if this Committee reports that there has been no objection from the business community or does this Committee make a motion to recommend approval to full Council.

Mr. DeMoura stated that the Committee may do either. He stated that this Committee has addressed the potential impact it could have on the business community. He said the Committee can take no action or a formal motion can be made

to send to full Council.

Mr. Bustos made a motion to recommend to Town Council to approve the ordinance; seconded by Mr. Brimmer.

Ms. Landing stated that she is for the environment and is very pro to hearing people's feelings. She said we are hearing the feelings of people that believe that a law or ordinance that costs people money if they do not comply with the way the ordinance is written, is the right way to do this. She is not saying it isn't right to do something, but passing an ordinance that immediately says, "Mount Pleasant is now going to fine you if you provide any plastic products," she believes is a very strong step in a direction that is very negative for punishing, rather than something positive. She said if she votes against this, it is not because she is against the environment, but because she believes the Town needs more input from more of the community. She believes we should encourage better behavior.

Mr. Brimmer said that he has received approximately 60 emails from residents who are in favor of this ordinance. He met only one that was against. He said there is widespread support. He said that he likes the ordinance; however, he will propose some minor changes prior to final reading. He said there are some aspects of the ordinance that he is not comfortable with, one being to strongly encourage businesses to do certain things. He said it is great advice but does not feel it should be part of the ordinance. He said there is also a portion that discusses the cost of bags and these are business decisions that business owners should make on their own. He said if they want to charge a cost, they certainly are entitled to do so; however, if they do not want to charge, it is up to the business owner. Government should not be telling businesses how to charge for items. He does like the idea of the ordinance and supports it and he will vote to move it forward.

Ms. Landing asked if there is any possibility that this Committee can say as their recommendation that we start with a smaller step, which is simply to ban plastic bags being used at businesses and not everything all at once. This way we will have some time to see the impact and for businesses to get used to the idea.

Mr. Bustos feels that these changes can be suggested between first and second reading, so his motion stands as it is.

Mr. Bustos and Mr. Brimmer were in favor. Ms. Landing was opposed. Motion passes 2-1.

4. Update on the Utility Management Conference

Ms. Livingston thanked Mayor and Council, as well as Mr. Duffie at Mount Pleasant Waterworks for the opportunity to attend the Utility Management Conference for the third year in a row. She said in addition to the conference, they had the opportunity to meet with the City of San Antonio and their Chamber of Commerce, which is the oldest in the region. She said that San Antonio has 1.7 million people and is the seventh largest city in the US. However, despite this, each community they have visited is facing some of the same challenges, regardless of size. These are the same challenges that this Council faces quite often. She said they discovered that they have a Mayor's Affordable Housing Taskforce and have been focused on attracting millennial workforce, which we do quite often through the Town's capital investment projects. She said she finds this to be one of the most comforting things when meeting with areas that are so successful. She stated that San Antonio's target industries include healthcare and bio science as their largest industry, and they have a legacy industry of aerospace and aviation and do the MRO side of things, working on engines. She said they also have a Boeing. She said when she looks at San Antonio, it is like a region. She said she did not know they were #2 in the country for cyber security, after Maryland. She said there is a great deal of finance and banks and added that hospitality and tourism would likely only rank around #6 for them in terms of their industry, even though they are the leader in that

region with Sea World, the Riverwalk and are known for that hospitality. She said they have more military bases than anyone else in the country which is important when looking at those legacy industries and where they are so strong. She said that healthcare has been huge for San Antonio. She said they have incredible burn units and are leading the charge on amputations. They conduct a great deal of research and forward-thinking type treatments. She said they have faced a BRAC and have closed two bases. She said they are using those assets; one is an inland port like what was done in South Carolina and the other is a major medical facility. She said they had just finished up the equivalent of their comprehensive plan. They went through a decade of putting much of their focus on the downtown area, and they are now moving past and looking at their community as a whole. She said one thing she found interesting, and what we have discussed previously, are “nodes” and the ability to create work, live, play locations throughout. She said they have their own road challenges because their roads were created initially to drive cattle, so it is not a typical grid pattern. She said they have several organizations and a San Antonio Economic Development Futures, which is similar to our CRDA (Charleston Regional Development Alliance). They have a bio med group and much has been created out of work in collaboration with their Chamber. She said another item she noted that was similar to the Town is that some years back, San Antonio completed a Brookings Institute foreign direct investment study and created a plan and they stayed in this particular program. She said the Charleston region also did this as a community last year. She said this will be the first year that we are moving towards implementation. She said they have seen a great deal of successes with this program and are doing trade missions. She said the region’s plan looks at being more globally competitive and understanding that when foreign investments come here, you typically end up having higher salaries and there is a great deal of a ripple effect. She said one of their benchmark cities they compare themselves to is San Diego. She said the same group that went on this trip, had the opportunity to meet with San Diego two years ago.

Mr. Brimmer said that Mr. Bustos has invited someone next month to discuss the regional plan and as a region, the Town has a lot to learn from our competitors.

Ms. Landing asked if they discussed strategic ideas for recruiting businesses that they do not already have, like the Town would like to do here. Also, did they express anything in terms of having the issues the Town does, where we have places in the community where we end up with residential properties due to zoning or other changes, and the Town ends up with properties they would rather not have, such as apartments. She asked if they had anything proactive.

Ms. Livingston stated that San Antonio has a great deal more land mass than the Town does and has much more opportunity for infill. She said up until last year, they had the ability to annex at will, which can be a huge tool. She said when they discuss residential, she is aware that they partnered with a developer at their Hemisphere Park to build Class B. She stated that they were getting a great deal of class A, for the same reasons the Town is, and they felt they needed to have the opportunity to have some Class B because they wanted to have a mix in their community and had some affordable housing mixed in, utilizing the city's amenities instead of building that into the cost. She said they are not having the same land challenges as the Town. She said regarding the first portion of Ms. Landing's question as it relates to recruiting. She said they do rely heavily on the economic development futures non-profit that does much of the recruiting on their behalf. She said they do have, as part of their FDI strategy, offices in Japan and Mexico, which was extremely unique; however, their city is more than double the size of our whole region.

Ms. Landing stated that being able to annex at will, which we are not able to do in the State of South Carolina, people begin to worry when it affects settlement communities, historic communities or overlay districts. However, there is a bill before Congress at this time HB3158 called the Enclave Bill and is still in Committee where the Council members would be able to annex in any donut holes that have been surrounded by the Town for at least five years and are 25,000 acres or less in size. She said

she brings this up, because it is something that is important to economic development. She said there are a number of places along Highway 17 that are frontage that are small parcels of land, as well as Bessemer, which is the cut-through from Dunes West and Park West to Highway 41, and many places in Mount Pleasant that are putting up storage units on frontage properties. She discovered that banks have a desire to lend for this type of business because it is an easy business to gain revenue, and additionally, because many of the properties are in the County, they do not need the Town's services, because they only require one male and one female bathroom, so they install a septic system. She believes that Mount Pleasant needs to look at this more closely in order to move forward on this subject to bring in businesses that frontage property is valuable for, as opposed to a storage unit, and have services that the community is really looking for.

5. Executive session to receive legal advice on any issue related to consideration of Settlement Proposal from Long Point Cooper

Mr. Bustos made a motion to adjourn into executive session to receive legal advice in reference to this settlement; seconded by Ms. Landing. All present voted in favor.

Committee members adjourned into executive session at 12:12 p.m. and reconvened at 12:33 p.m.

Mr. Brimmer declared that no action or votes were taken during executive session.

6. Post Executive Session

Committee may take action on any item listed on an executive session agenda or discussed in an executive session during a properly noticed meeting.

Mr. Bustos made a motion that we proceed as discussed in executive session with a recommendation to full Council; seconded by Ms. Landing.

Ms. Landing and Mr. Bustos were in favor. Mr. Brimmer was opposed.

Motion for approval carries 2-1.

7. Adjourn

There being no further business, meeting adjourned at 12:34 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Ashe

March 5, 2017