

The Planning Commission held a Public Input Meeting on Thursday, June 7, 2011 at 5:30 PM at the City Administration Building, 161 N. Section Street in the Council Chambers.

Present: Jean Wilson, Chairperson; Bob Clark; George Roberds; Phil Cusa and Bill McLaughlin, Thomas Hospital. Jonathan Smith, Planning and Building Director; Emily Boyett, Secretary

Absent: Dick Charles

Chairperson Jean Wilson opened the meeting at 5:30 PM and announced the meeting is being recorded. Mrs. Wilson thanked everyone for coming and said Jonathan Smith, Planning and Building Director, will give a presentation to explain the district and then anyone that wishes to speak will be allowed to come forward and give their comments.

Mr. Smith gave a PowerPoint presentation and went over the general aspects of the proposed Medical Overlay District. Mr. Smith stated the ordinance will not change the current use of the property's underlying zoning; this overlay will allow additional uses that could be allowed on properties in this district. Mr. Smith also had maps on display which showed the proposed district lines, current zoning and properties within 300' of the proposed district. Mr. Smith stated public meeting notices were mailed to each of the property owners located within the proposed district and within 300' of the district.

Mrs. Wilson wanted to clarify that this ordinance has not been passed or adopted by the Planning Commission or City Council. She said there will be at least two more public hearings for this ordinance; one for the Planning Commission meeting and at least one for the City Council meeting. Mrs. Wilson opened the meeting to public comments.

Jeff Cain – 15520 River Road – Business at 744 Middle Avenue

Mr. Cain stated he has 4 lots zoned for light industrial manufacturing and wanted to know that he would be able to expand his business in his current location. He said he thinks this is good for the City and asked if there is a timetable for hospital expansion.

Mrs. Wilson said any underlying zoning would remain the same and all current operations would be allowed to continue and expand. She stated the ordinance will allow medical uses in addition to the manufacturing uses.

Bill McLaughlin stated Thomas Hospital does not have any expansion plans at this time. He said the Hospital will be focusing on improvements to their current facilities.

Bobby King – 753 Nichols Avenue

Mr. King had concerns with property values, re-building and up-grading requirements, and the ability to continue with current uses. Mr. King also questioned the proposed boundary lines for the district and asked how long this ordinance has been worked on prior to this meeting.

Mr. Smith responded the Committee has been working on this ordinance for approximately a year and there will be at least two more public meetings.

Mrs. Wilson stated all current uses will be allowed to continue, even if the building were to burn down. She said the property in the proposed district is not losing any of the uses it has now; it is only gaining more uses. The uses this ordinance is proposing are in addition to not instead of. The overlay district will eliminate the need for each property to be reviewed individually for these additional uses as long as the property meets the required standards.

Bob Griffin – 203 Fairhope Avenue

Mr. Griffin stated he owns 4 lots that are zoned M-1. He said he has metal buildings and the ordinance does not state that existing buildings would be grandfathered and he would like specific language included in the ordinance to cover it.

Mr. Smith said there can be some language inserted to address the issue, but Article VII Non-Conformities in the Zoning Ordinance would also apply to existing structures.

Mrs. Wilson said the committee will use the comments and concerns to reevaluate the proposed ordinance and make changes to bring back to the Planning Commission and City Council.

Thelma Todd – 111 Destrehan Road

Ms. Todd said she is representing her sisters that live on Middle Street and Ingleside Street. She asked if this is a City development or Mobile Infirmary and what would happen if a property owner doesn't want to move or sell their property. She also asked if this ordinance was based on an existing ordinance that is already in place and being used somewhere.

Chris Chavez – 752 Nichols Avenue

Mr. Chavez said he just built his home and moved into the proposed district lines. He said he has a metal building and understands that he will be able to keep what he has but has concerns regarding the upkeep and setback requirements for properties adjacent to properties with a residential use.

Arthur Word – 17225 Section Street

Mr. Word owns property on Commercial Park Drive and wanted to know what the rush is on passing this ordinance if the hospital is not considering expansion anytime soon and if this will affect property taxes.

Loren Chavez – 752 Nichols Avenue

Mrs. Chavez asked when this committee was formed and what the timeframe of implementing the overlay district. She had concerns with having her residence located within the district and how her property values would be affected. She also asked if the residents would be allowed to vote on this ordinance.

Stan Self – Greeno Road

Mr. Self asked who initiated this ordinance and what the disadvantages are to having this ordinance in place.

Willie Williams – 765 Northrop Avenue

Mr. Williams wanted the advantages and disadvantages made aware to the property owners in the effected area. He thanked the committee for holding this meeting and asked that someone from the neighborhood be included on the committee. He said the hospital needs to be able to expand and this will help them to do so and also allow the current property owners more options with their property.

Don Nelson of Keller Williams Realty– Representing Marie Johnson

Mr. Nelson stated Ms. Johnson owns 3 lots that are zoned R-1 and he asked how potential buyers would be made aware of the overlay district and corresponding allowable uses.

Carol Timmons – 7883 Greeno Lane

Ms. Timmons said it has been rumored that Thomas Hospital wants to buy the entire Northrop Avenue subdivision but no one has approached or talked to the residents.

Having no further business, Gary Moore moved to adjourn and was 2nd by Dick Charles. Motion passed unanimously and the meeting was duly adjourned at 5:20 pm.

Jean Wilson, Chairperson

Emily Boyett, Secretary