

## CITY OF ST. AUGUSTINE

### Building Code Task Force for New Construction Meeting February 10, 2021

The Building Code Task Force for New Construction met in formal session Wednesday, February 10, 2021, at 2:00 p.m. in the Alcazar Room at City Hall. The meeting was called to order by John Valdes, Chairperson and the following were present:

**1. Roll Call:** John Valdes, Commissioner-Chair  
Sarah Ryan  
Rob Matthews – arrived 2:06p.m.  
Jon Benoit  
Les Thomas  
Irene Arriola  
John Wooldridge

Absent: Robin Moore, excused

City Staff: David Birchim, Director, Planning & Building Department  
Reuben Franklin, Director, Public Works  
Buddy Schauland, Building Official  
Shelley Clayton, Permits Coordinator  
Denise May, City Attorney  
Candice Seymour, Recording Secretary

---

### **2. General Public hearings for Items Not on the Agenda**

(None)

### **3. Discussion and Recommendation of the Final Report to the City Commission**

Mr. Birchim gave an overview of the draft Final Report, noting suggestions submitted by fellow members for the consideration of the Task Force.

Mr. Valdes expressed a desire to further discuss the future of foundations with Buddy Schauland Building Official.

John Wooldridge elaborated upon the recommendations he submitted for the draft Final Report.<sup>1</sup>

The Task Force discussed member recommendations regarding the following:

- Language ensuring the restoration of natural drainage patterns
- Promoting an education program for residents, home-buyers, and real estate agents regarding methodologies for mitigating stormwater
- Stormwater credit incentive needed further discussion
- Examples of problematic building designs and techniques

Discussion ensued regarding the draft Report with the following topics:

- Altering language to give more weight to enforcement of the lot grading plan, encouragement of off-grade construction, and requiring alternatives if proposed plans failed

---

<sup>1</sup> Attached to original minutes

- Consideration of the use of pumps for drainage
- Best foundation to maintain historical water flow was pier construction with permeable surface underneath
- Long-term planning indicated that slab construction was not sustainable

Buddy Schauland gave an overview of the City's participation in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) Community Rating System (CRS), how the Building Code Task Force recommendations could affect the City's score, and facilitated continued discussion regarding the following:<sup>2</sup>

- Positive score adjustments for prohibiting fill, or allowing fill only in a stem-wall
- Current recommendations may not qualify the City for additional CRS points
- Floodplain management on city, state, and federal levels that residential property owners cannot manage alone
- Historically, pier construction mitigated floodplain issues; however, costs have driven the use of monolithic slab construction instead
- Concern that, if given the option, property owners may not choose the best slab option
- The need to be consistent with FEMA regulations and to stay ahead of or in-line with best practices as the majority of St. Augustine was within the floodplain
- Recommendation to refer to FEMAs language when drafting regulations
- Grading plan requirements and the possibility of requiring pier construction needed to be researched by staff
- The need to utilize some fill for proper drainage of properties

- Incentives would only be triggered if all criteria were met
- How to use pier construction to lift houses over time and ways to encourage property owners to utilize that type of construction
- Impervious surface as an incentive for building on pier foundations
- Concern that public projects, such as Coquina Park, were not meeting FEMA floodplain standards and regulations may receive criticism
- Promoting resilient construction through consideration of the future
- Promoting grading plans to property owners by educating them on how they may prevent liability suits
- The need for a variance procedure with very specific criteria for approval

#### **Public Comment**

The Board heard from the following member of the public:

- Charles Pappas

#### **4. Closing Remarks**

Closing discussion included the following:

- Value of 5% lot coverage incentive
- Importance of expanding education efforts to property owners, local architects and builders, and real estate agents
- Leveraging outreach education to gain more CRS points
- Need to clearly define pervious, semi-pervious, and impervious surface areas
- Concern for investment-property owners that may not be invested in the neighborhood enough to make sustainable changes without financial incentives
- Including the need for further study may be warranted if

---

<sup>2</sup> Presentation attached to original minutes

recommendations did not effect the level of change or protection intended at their adoption, with consideration of more stringent regulations in the future

- The need to pass legislation slowly and determine any unintended consequences
- Desire to mandate crawl-space foundations with little to no fill
- Mr. Birchim: would do the following:
  - Add educational component to final report
  - Make text changes suggested for paragraph 3 of Goal 1 (adding French drains, etc.)
  - Insert language within Goal 3 to define impervious surface ratios
  - Draft final report and send to the Task Force members
  - Schedule a presentation to the City Commission at the March 8, 2021 meeting where John Valdes would present final report
  - If the Commission accepts the report, schedule next hearings before the Planning and Zoning Board and, possibly, the Code Enforcement, Adjustments, and Appeals Board
- Recommendation that the Task Force reconvenes a year from the date that regulations become effective to reevaluate

Commissioner Valdes expressed a desire to maintain the task force to continue discussions regarding the future of City, relevant construction, and drainage issues, as well as city functions in relation to citizen boards and codes.

## **5. Adjournment**

Having no further business, Commissioner Valdes adjourned the meeting at 3:48 P.M.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Transcribed by Candice Seymour