

**Mr. James Mercurio** said he works for Ohio Realty Property Management, the company that owns the property the Walgreens is being built on.

Commissioner Becht asked when does he think the Walgreens will be open?

Mr. Mercurio said depending on the permitting process, in three months, then they would be open about six months after the permit is issued.

Commissioner Becht asked six months from permit to C.O. (Certificate of Occupancy)?

Mr. Mercurio said yes.

Commissioner Becht asked when will the existing building be knocked down?

Mr. Mercurio said at the time the permit is issued that will be the first thing they will do, demolish the building.

Those voting in favor of the motion were: Commissioners Alexander, Becht, Coke, Nelson, and Benton. Those opposed: None.

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The next item on the Agenda was Public Hearing on Application for **Site Plan Review** submitted by MGC Ft. Pierce Corp. to construct the **Fort Pierce Hotel Plaza - Holiday Inn Express and Candlewood Suites at 7151 Okeechobee Road**; said property zoned **C-3, General Commercial Zone**.

Mr. Peter Buchwald, Zoning Administrator, said the applicant is requesting Site Plan approval to construct two hotels on 8.24 acres located on the south side of Okeechobee Road just east of the Florida Turnpike Toll Plaza. A Holiday Inn Express and a Candlewood Suites will be constructed on a parcel which is currently occupied by a Holiday Inn Express that will be demolished. The property is zoned C-3, General Commercial Zone, with a Future Land Use of CG, Commercial General. The properties to the north and east of the subject development are zoned C-3 and consist of gasoline stations and restaurants, the Turnpike is located to the west, and unincorporated vacant land is located to the south. The redevelopment will occur in several phases. The first phase will involve constructing the Holiday Inn Express which will be situated on the western side of the property. This 4-story hotel will contain approximately 13,034 square feet of floor space and 94 hotel rooms. The next phase will consist of demolishing the existing hotel. Then the next phase will involve constructing the Candlewood Suites Hotel, which will be situated on the south side of the property. This 3-story building will contain 13,457 square feet of floor space and consist of 77 hotel rooms. Both hotels will incorporate a fitness center and a shared outdoor pool will be located between both hotels. Following completion of the Candlewood Suites, the westernmost ingress/egress to Okeechobee Road will be closed and the easternmost access point will remain open and be the primary access point. A traffic impact statement conducted by Culpepper & Terpening, Inc. specified that the proposed hotels will generate a total of 957 daily trips with a total of 92 PM peak hour trips.

The project impact on the local roadway network will be de minimus and the concurrency requirements as specified by the City Code have been satisfied. All affected Departments have approved the Site Plan based on it meeting the requirements of the City Code. At the August 14, 2007 Planning Board meeting, the Planning Board voted unanimously to recommend approval of the Site Plan with conditions that have been addressed. As the proposed Site Plan meets the requirements of the City Code, Staff recommends approval.

Commissioner Nelson said for the record, he thinks he should reveal he met with the representative or applicant in this case. He posed the question during the interview relative to the traffic, making a left turn in particular going west off Okeechobee Road into that complex. Right now as it is in close proximity to the intersection at King's Highway and Okeechobee Road, one has to go all the way down virtually to the end of the intersection.

There is not a median to cross and go into that complex. Also as they come off the Turnpike and turn right to go east on Okeechobee Road, they have a very short distance there. When they look at the future and with the addition of the added phases, he can envision more traffic going in there. They say right now it is de minimus type impact from a traffic standpoint. To what extent are they reviewing the future impact where they are building those added phases back there? Do they have in fact some type of linkage with FDOT to allow for a left turn going in there going west on Okeechobee Road?

Mr. Buchwald said the analysis included what the impact would be at build-out. At completion of all the phases, that is what the analysis included. So that was the impact that was determined, when the project was completed, not at any particular time before that. With regards to the second question, if they will take a look at the screen, that is the proposed Okeechobee Road improvements by FDOT that he understands will be constructed in 2011. So any changes they can see there indicated in green is the proposed raised median. Any type of change to that would require the City to make application for a change to their design. But that is the design as it is and as will be constructed in 2011.

Commissioner Nelson asked are they looking at that possibility of a left turn there going west on Okeechobee Road?

Mr. Jack Andrews, City Engineer, said this project is under design right now to take Okeechobee Road in that section to six lanes. That is currently under design with FDOT. The close proximity that this property has to the signalized intersection will not permit a full left-turn access into this. They would have to go up and make the u-turn and come back to it. The distance just does not warrant that.

Commissioner Nelson asked because the signal is there, there would not be a left turn allowed?

Mr. Andrews said right, because that would be interfering with the proposed stacking for the intersection. They would have to utilize the u-turn scenario and come back to it.

Commissioner Nelson said okay, if that is the rule. But he tell them from his own personal experience he has come off that Turnpike and tried to turn in there and he had a heck of a time turning in there. But if that is the rule, that is the rule.

Commissioner Alexander said he did speak with the developers on this. His concern, he heard Mr. Buchwald say something about utilizing only one entrance? In other words, the westernmost entrance will be closed down?

Mr. Buchwald said yes, at the completion of the project. At the last phase, the Candlewood Suites, that western access will be closed and only the eastern access will be shared with the gasoline station that is there. Again, all those accesses are nonconforming, so the distances between them are too small. So this is going to improve traffic flow along Okeechobee Road.

Commissioner Alexander asked what are they going to do for construction? What kind of construction entrance are they going to have?

Mr. Buchwald said included in their packet was a design protocol by which they phase in the construction phases. At the completion of the Holiday Inn Express, then the easternmost access will be used for construction only and the westernmost access will be used for people using the Holiday Inn Express, so thereby to separate the construction and demolition traffic. At the completion of a project when there is no longer any need for that separation because there is no more construction or demolition traffic, that is when that access will be closed up. So there will be a separation there to eliminate any conflict between guests and workers at the hotel and construction/demolition traffic.

Commissioner Alexander asked does Mr. Buchwald have a layout of the land mass right in that area? So from Point A from Okeechobee Road to the most southern portion of that property, there will be no entrance or exit along the eastern border of that property? Everybody who has to come out of that property has to go east?

Mr. Buchwald asked onto Okeechobee Road? Yes. They can't turn left because there is going to be a median there and FDOT won't allow them to turn left there to go west. They will have to go down to the light and make a u-turn to go west.

Commissioner Alexander asked there is no possibility of them utilizing any of that eastern part, maybe at the rear end of this property? What is adjacent to them?

Mr. Buchwald said right now it is vacant land unincorporated to the south.

Commissioner Alexander asked what is adjacent to that property?

Mr. Buchwald said it is vacant wooded land to the south, that is the unincorporated part of St. Lucie County. Certainly they can look into it. As they can see, there is quite a lot of different development there behind other developments.

Commissioner Alexander said he is just speaking out for public safety, because if that is the only entrance and exit there. He guesses not. He is just looking at the eastern borders. They can't come in through McDonald's or any other entrance and come back into it?

Mr. Buchwald said that is a great idea. They have encouraged applicants to coordinate their access points between them, because they have some redevelopment coming in. Also that gas station they see there that is adjacent to the east is behind the Waffle House which is behind a truck stop next to a gas station. They are trying to coordinate it and come up with a plan and then connect over to the Crossroads Parkway, but they haven't been successful yet.

Commissioner Alexander asked that is in the future?

Mr. Buchwald said yes.

Mayor Benton said for the record, he did meet with Mr. McCarty who is the attorney for the applicant.

Commissioner Alexander said ditto.

Commissioner Coke said for the record, so did she.

Mayor Benton declared a Public Hearing in session and asked if anyone in the audience wished to be heard.

**Mr. Mac McCarty**, Melville, Sowerby, & McCarty, P.L., said first he wants to thank the Planning Department for the efforts they put in working through some of the new design review criteria and getting this project put together and on the Planning Board last month and on the Commission agenda this month. One issue did come up just before this hearing and he spoke briefly to Mr. Margotta about it; and that was, to put a time limit for beginning construction on the Candlewood Suites just to make sure it wouldn't sit there unconstructed for many years. That was a suggestion he had received and they are certainly amenable to five years for beginning construction on the Candlewood Suites, if that is acceptable to the Commission and to the Planning Department.

Commissioner Becht asked that would be five years from C.O. of the Holiday Inn Express?

Mr. McCarty said absolutely, that would be fine.

Commissioner Alexander asked what type of time has this application been sitting on the desk?

Mr. McCarty said he believes the initial application - and he will look to the owner and the team here - was submitted in the spring of this year and then it worked its way through the process.

Mr. Buchwald said yes, it was submitted in April of this year, so it is less than five months to get to this point.

Commissioner Alexander asked do they have an estimated time when they are going to open for business?

**Mr. Michael Cantonis**, Vice-President of MGC Ft. Pierce Corp., said they are hoping to open by the Spring of 2009. Obviously it depends on permitting, construction, hurricanes. But that is their target time frame.

Seeing no one further and hearing no one wishing to be heard, Mayor Benton declared the Public Hearing closed.

Motion was made by Commissioner Coke, seconded by Commissioner Nelson, to approve Site Plan submitted by MGC Ft. Pierce Corp. to construct the Fort Pierce Hotel Plaza - Holiday Inn Express and Candlewood Suites - at 7151 Okeechobee Road, with the condition that Candlewood Suites begin construction within five years from the date of Certificate of Occupancy for the Holiday Inn Express.

Those voting in favor of the motion were: Commissioners Alexander, Becht, Coke, Nelson, and Benton. Those opposed: None.

Mayor Benton said he would like to thank Mr. Cantonis for re-investing in Fort Pierce. He knows it took some time with these new plans. After the hurricanes, he knows they had a tough time out there, so he does appreciate their re-investing here.

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The next item on the Agenda was the Public Hearing on proposed 2007-08 General Fund Budget for the City of Fort Pierce.

City Manager Dennis Beach said this is the first Public Hearing on the proposed General Fund Budget. There was a General Fund Budget proposed to the Commission in the amount of \$41,500,000 some time ago. After a tremendous amount of discussion and debate about how that was to be funded and what sources of revenue to be used, the Commission eventually directed Staff to reduce approximately \$475,000 from that document and return it for the Commission's consideration. The document in front of them this evening reflects that. There is a memo attached to that budget document that describes the specific changes in the document to achieve that reduction and that is what is in front of the Commission this evening for discussion. They continue to receive a lot of challenges on this subject. They may have read, and he thinks he sent some correspondence out, regarding what the Florida Supreme Court has handed them over the last couple of weeks. So all of these things put them in a set of circumstances that they have to continue to change and maneuver and modify what they are doing. His suspicion is that this upcoming year is going to be very interesting. There is a referendum scheduled he believes for January of 2008 that could certainly impact their circumstances as well. This document in front of them this evening is here for a Public Hearing. They have the opportunity to discuss that, modify it, and give some direction back to staff. He is not sure how much of their meetings have been televised recently, but he does want to re-emphasize one thing that the City Commission has been able to achieve over the last few