

Town of Awendaw
Planning Commission Meeting
Agenda

Tuesday, February 18th, 2025
6:00 PM, Town Hall
6971 Doar Road, Awendaw, SC 29429

A. Prayer, Pledge of Allegiance & Civility Pledge

B. Call to Order and Roll Call

C. Approve Minutes as available

D. Report of the Town Planner

E. Public Comments

E. New Business

1. Recommendation for Ordinance 2025-01: An ordinance to amend Chapter 153, Zoning Code, Section 153.010 of the Code of the Town of Awendaw, South Carolina, imposing a temporary moratorium on the issuance of all residential and commercial zone change proposals (rezonings) and subdivisions of residentially zoned land (subdivision plat approvals) comprising more than five parcels of land for the purpose of providing town council with time to adopt the pending comprehensive plan update and to implement any necessary changes to the zoning ordinance, land use regulations, and/or comprehensive plan now under review.

F. Old Business

1. 2023 Comprehensive Plan Review Part I of II - Discuss and provide proposed edits regarding the “Guiding Principles.” Provide a recommendation for the demographics contained in “Appendix A.”

2. 2023 Comprehensive Plan Review Part II – Discuss and review the “Action Plans” to provide proposed edits at the next Planning Commission meeting.

G. Closing Remarks

H. Adjournment

I. Next Meeting – March 17, 2025

IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT, THE PRINT MEDIA WERE DULY NOTIFIED, ALONG WITH A HARD COPY POSTED AT CITY HALL. • SHOULD YOU HAVE QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS, PLEASE CONTACT PLANNING AT (843) 931-8125.

ORDINANCE NO. 2025-01

AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND CHAPTER 153, ZONING CODE, SECTION 153.010 OF THE CODE OF THE TOWN OF AWENDAW, SOUTH CAROLINA, IMPOSING A TEMPORARY MORATORIUM ON THE ISSUANCE OF ALL RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL ZONE CHANGE PROPOSALS (REZONINGS) AND SUBDIVISIONS OF RESIDENTIALLY ZONED LAND (SUBDIVISION PLAT APPROVALS) COMPRISING MORE THAN FIVE PARCELS OF LAND FOR THE PURPOSE OF PROVIDING TOWN COUNCIL WITH TIME TO ADOPT THE PENDING COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE AND TO IMPLEMENT ANY NECESSARY CHANGES TO THE ZONING ORDINANCE, LAND USE REGULATIONS, AND/OR COMPREHENSIVE PLAN NOW UNDER REVIEW.

WHEREAS, this ordinance is adopted to comply with the provisions of South Carolina Code sections 5-7-30 and 6-29-710, *et seq.*, the South Carolina 1975 Home Rule Act and Chapter 153, section 153.010 of the Ordinance Book of the Town of Awendaw, South Carolina; and,

WHEREAS, pursuant to prior appellate case precedents, a moratorium may be upheld where there is a demonstrated need for the moratorium and the moratorium is enacted in good faith, is non-discriminatory, is set for a clearly defined limited duration, and has a clearly defined scope; and,

WHEREAS, on March 7, 2024, the Town Council of the Town of Awendaw enacted, via a positive vote on the second reading, a temporary moratorium on the issuance of approvals for all zoning change proposals and for subdivisions comprising more than five parcels of land subject to the conditions provided herein; and,

WHEREAS, after passage of the moratorium, on March 7, 2024, Council has met regularly and worked diligently to review, discuss, consider, and determine whether there are necessary amendments to the Town zoning ordinance, land use regulations, and/or Comprehensive Plan;

WHEREAS, Council has determined that it needs additional time to review, discuss, consider, and determine whether there are necessary amendments to the Town zoning ordinance, land use regulations, and/or Comprehensive Plan in light of circumstances and events that occurred following the enactment of the 2024 moratorium, which includes the following events: new council members were elected on November 7, 2023 and sworn in on December 7, 2023; Planning Commission members were appointed on September 5, 2024 by Town Council, the 1st Planning Commission Meeting and establishment of roles on October 21, 2024; postponement of the Public Hearing on the Comprehensive Plan

updates on September 11, 2024 until a joint-work session with the newly appointed Planning Commission members could be scheduled; the Board of Zoning Appeals was appointed on December 5, 2024 with the first meeting on January 6, 2025, the hiring of Riccardo Giani as the interim Town Planner on August 5, 2024, and the hiring of Katharine Watkins as the Town Administrator on January 7, 2025.

WHEREAS, in reaching the decision to impose a moratorium, Council made the following findings of fact:

1. Over the last several years, the Town of Awendaw has experienced a significant increase in the development of large-scale residential developments within its boundaries. The Town is experiencing and anticipates that there will continue to be demand for large-scale residential development growth, particularly with the ongoing growth in Planned Developments and large-scale subdivisions. The Town provides municipal planning and land use services, including, but not limited to land development regulation, zoning permits, and land use planning.
2. Appropriate and effective services of this nature are vital to the public health, safety, welfare, and quality of life in Awendaw.
3. Town Council finds that the increase in the number and size of large-scale residential developments in the Town pose a risk to public health, safety, welfare, and quality of life in Awendaw, via the impact that such development has on Town services, infrastructure, and resources, including, but not limited to, creating increased strain and negative impact on roads, fire, and emergency services, police services, traffic density, pedestrian safety, aesthetics, sensitive habitats, and traditional rural development.
4. The pace of growth and the impact of large-scale residential developments in the Town created the need to review, revise, and update the Town's Comprehensive Plan and associated ordinances and regulations related to land development, zoning, and land use permitting.
5. In sum, Town Council hereby finds that there is a demonstrated and immediate need for a moratorium on the allowance of any new zone change proposals (Rezoning) or subdivisions of residentially zoned land (Subdivision Plat Approvals) comprising more than five parcels of land, as provided herein.

WHEREAS, pursuant to the adopted moratorium ordinance, Council proposes to take the following actions: Review, with the assistance of Planning Commission, the

Town's vision and mission, as well as codes, ordinances, and procedures related to zoning district classifications, housing density and residential lot sizes, and land development and subdivision regulations; and

WHEREAS, the town has acted purposefully towards accomplishing the elements of the required Comprehensive Plan update and the Council's appointed Steering Committee has met regularly and worked diligently toward this end; and

WHEREAS, Town Council deems it necessary and proper to enact the moratorium described herein.

NOW, THEREFORE, be it Ordered and Ordained by the Council of the Town of Awendaw, S. C. and it is ordained by the authority of said Council that Chapter 153, Zoning Code, paragraph (B) of section 153.010 of the Code of the Town of Awendaw, South Carolina, shall be and is hereby amended to specify as follows:

Section 1. Moratorium.

Town Council hereby implements a temporary moratorium on the allowance of any new residential and commercial zoning district changes, including those under the PD, Planned Development zoning district classification, and subdivisions proposing more than five parcels of land in order to provide time for the Town Council to strategically evaluate the Town's capability to serve the increased demands such future developments might place on Town services and infrastructure and to identify suitable locations for any such future developments. The moratorium shall not affect other types of permits, including, but not limited to, demolition permits, construction permits for single-family homes, small subdivisions of five or fewer parcels, business licenses, or business up-fit or new construction permits.

Section 2. Limited Duration

The provisions of this ordinance shall be effective immediately upon enactment, and shall remain in effect for one calendar year thereafter or until Council acts to end this temporary moratorium, whichever occurs first.

Section 3. Council Action Plan

During the moratorium, Council shall act promptly to:

- a. Review, discuss, consider, amend, revise, and/or adopt the Comprehensive Plan and recommendations delivered by the Steering Committee and Planning Commission;

- b. Determine whether there are necessary amendments to the Town zoning ordinance, land use regulations, and/or Comprehensive Plan resulting from the report and recommendations of the Steering Committee and the Planning Commission;
- c. Hold itself, or direct the Planning Commission to hold, such public hearings as Council desires or as may be required by law; and
- d. Propose and set for public hearing any amendments to the Town zoning ordinance, land use regulations, and/or Comprehensive Plan as may be deemed necessary and proper by Council.

Section 4. Inconsistent Ordinances.

All ordinances or parts of ordinances inconsistent with this moratorium ordinance are hereby suspended to the extent of such inconsistency for the pendency of the moratorium.

Section 5. Exemptions

- a. The provisions of this moratorium ordinance do not apply to property subject to a development agreement as provided in South Carolina Code section 6-31-10, *et seq.*, to the extent that such property is protected by the development agreement from application of the moratorium provisions.
- b. The provisions of this moratorium ordinance do not apply to property protected by vested rights as provided in South Carolina Code section 6-29-1520, *et seq.*, as applicable. The burden of providing sufficient proof of the vested rights claimed as an exemption rests upon the claimant and must be verified in writing by the Town Attorney.

Section 6. Land Subdivision Exceptions

The provisions of this moratorium ordinance do not apply to the subdivision of property into five (5) or less lots, divided from a parent parcel that was a legal lot of record as of the date of enactment of this ordinance, provided all subdivision and land development regulations applicable to such subdivision have been met. No more than five lots may be subdivided from the parent parcel for the duration of this ordinance.

Section 7. Severability.

The provisions of this moratorium ordinance are intended to be severable, and if a court of competent jurisdiction should hold any part of this ordinance invalid, unconstitutional, or otherwise unlawful, such ruling shall not affect the remainder of the ordinance, which shall remain in full force and effect.

Be it further ordained that the Town Council declares its intention that the “Pending Ordinance Doctrine” be effective upon first reading of this ordinance.

THIS ORDINANCE SHALL BE EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY UPON FINAL READING

Miriam C. Green, Mayor
Town of Awendaw

First reading: January 13, 2025

Planning Commission Review and Recommendation: February 18, 2025

Public Hearing: March 6, 2025

Second and Final Reading: _____, 2025

Donna F. Steed, Clerk of Council

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Comprehensive Plan was based on Ten Guiding Principles that will protect and enhance the natural beauty and rural lifestyle of the Town. The Plan's Implementation Strategies, Action Plan and Future Land Use Element directly relates to and supports these principles:



1. COMMUNITY CHARACTER

The Awendaw community is dedicated to preserving, enhancing, and restoring the Town's character as a rural, coastal, and forest community.

2. RURAL LIFESTYLE

The Awendaw community recognizes and supports the fishing, wildlife, and forest lifestyles, including the historic Gullah/Geechee people of the Town, as unique and defining attributes.

3. NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

The Awendaw community seeks to preserve, protect, enhance, and restore the Town's riparian corridors, woodlands, and wetlands to protect its wildlife and natural habitat, and to maintain its scenic bay vistas and tranquil environment.

4. BUILT ENVIRONMENT

The Awendaw community believes that the built environment should be subordinate, sensitive, and complementary to the natural environment, and specific site requirements adopted to minimize disturbance to terrain, conserve visual resources, and protect open space. The Community supports low-country architectural and site design requirements that set forth community expectations and ensure quality.

5. RURAL DENSITY

The Awendaw community strives to avoid the suburbanization of its Town by limiting rural residential density to a maximum of three units per acre in the densest locations at major roadway intersections called "village nodes" and then decreasing densities away from these nodes towards the town peripheries. New Development will incorporate considerable open space and natural areas into their designs and will reflect the density of the underlying land use zoning.

6. CIRCULATION

The Awendaw community promotes safe and convenient circulation for all modes of travel throughout the Town; on roads, trails, and paths.

7. COMMERCIAL SERVICES

The Awendaw community desires to maintain the existing commercial areas that service the needs of residents. A key economic driver for the sustainability of the Town will be eco-tourism and businesses that support this endeavor.

8. SAFETY

Awendaw strives to protect persons and property from unreasonable exposure to natural hazards, such as hurricane activity, fire, unstable terrain, storms, and flood, by continuously improving regulations, policies, and procedures to reflect current best management practices

9. COMMUNITY CULTURE

Awendaw favors a community culture that encourages citizen involvement, individual expression, and diversity, and recognizes the interdependence with neighboring communities and responsibility as good citizens within the region, State, and nation.

10. SUSTAINABILITY

The Awendaw community seeks to be a good steward of the land. The goal is to promote the conservation of resources and utilize sustainable practices that recognize the connection to, and interdependence with, the natural environment.

ACTION PLAN

ACTION PLAN

Frequently Used Stakeholder Acronyms:

Planning Commission (PC)

Town Council (TC)

Charleston County (CC)

Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Governments (BCDCOG)

SC Dept. of Transportation (SCDOT)

SC Dept. of Environmental Services (DES)

SC Dept. of Parks, Recreation, & Tourism (SCPRT)

SC Dept. of Natural Resources (SCDNR)

Charleston County School District (CCSD)

US Fish & Wildlife Services (FWS)

US National Forest Service (NFS)

National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

GOALS & STRATEGIES		STAKEHOLDER(S)	TIMEFRAME	GUIDING PRINCIPLE(S) & RELEVANT ELEMENTS
GOAL A	Foster a strong sense of community pride and small-town character by supporting local community events, festivals, organizations, and lifestyles.			Community Character Rural Lifestyle Community Culture
A-1	Support and assist local organizations in coordinating festivals and other events that promote the rural coastal lifestyle of the community.	Town Staff		Population Cultural Resources
A-2	Continue to hold the annual Blue Crab Festival as a character-defining event for the community.	Town Staff		Cultural Resources
A-3	Improve the Town's gateways and wayfinding signage to bolster the community's sense of place as well as bring attention to the various community facilities and resources offered throughout the area.	TC & Town Staff		Community Facilities
A-4	Collaborate with other public and private entities in showcasing the Gullah Geechee heritage through the preservation of Gullah Geechee folklore, arts, crafts, and music.	Various Organizations		Cultural Resources
GOAL B	Broaden the number and range of cultural, historic, educational, natural, recreational, and community facilities and amenities offered throughout the area.			Community Character
B-1	Continue to pursue grants to help fund and develop the Awendaw Town Park and Wappetaw Trail.	Town Staff & SCPRT		Community Facilities
B-2	Maintain a healthy and communicative relationship with Charleston County to continue providing adequate public services (i.e., Police, Fire & Rescue, EMS, Recycling, Stormwater, etc.) to residents.	CC & Town Staff		Community Facilities
B-3	Support private and public investment in the local environmental, historic and cultural resources as a driver for economic development.	TC, Investors & Business Owners		Economic Development Cultural Resources
B-4	Collaborate with other public and private entities in the acquisition and preservation of lands and resources important to the Gullah Geechee culture and heritage.	TC & CCPRC		Natural Resources Cultural Resources
B-5	Evaluate the feasibility of staffing the programming and utilization of parks and recreation facilities.	TC & Town Staff		Community Facilities

B-6	Coordinate with local schools to allow shared access to school sports fields, courts, and related facilities when available (i.e., cooperative use agreement)	TC & CCSD		Community Facilities
B-7	Evaluate the need for outdoor recreation fields/facilities as well as possible location and funding sources.	Town Staff & CCPRC		Community Facilities
B-8	Require any redevelopment of property to preserve or restore any existing cultural or natural resources on site (i.e. riparian buffers, walls or fences, signs, landscaping, etc.)	PC		Natural Resources Cultural Resources
GOAL C	Expand economic services and opportunities offered within the Town by encouraging serviced-based businesses and enhancing workforce development.			Commercial Services
C-1	Work with local businesses in Awendaw and McClellanville to reactivate the local chamber of commerce.	TC		Economic Development
C-2	Identify areas appropriate to accommodate the development of light industrial, warehousing, outdoor storage, and/or construction support service uses compatible with the Town's rural character.	PC		Land Use
C-3	Coordinate with SC Works and READY SC to promote the availability of workforce development services for local businesses and industries, including training of the local labor force.	Town Staff, SC Works, READY SC		Economic Development Population
C-4	Develop a comprehensive list of all commercial and industrial properties to include the property address, tenure, lot size, building size, owner information, etc. for reference as (re)development opportunities.	Town Staff		Economic Development Land Use
C-5	Encourage and incentivize non-residential lot consolidation along arterial roadways, particularly US 17 to minimize and ensure safe distances between access points.	TC & PC		Land Use
C-6	Incentivize local small businesses that provide daily services to residents to locate in three commercial nodes.	TC		Economic Development
C-7	Focus primarily on the recruitment of local retail and service-based commercial businesses that serve residents with a secondary focus on businesses that primarily serve travelers and through traffic.	TC		Economic Development
C-8	Support the development of a pedestrian-oriented Town Center at the US 17-Doar Rd-Seewee Rd intersection.	TC & PC		Economic Development Land Use
GOAL D	Improve the quality and range of multi-modal transportation options to enhance the mobility and inter- and intra-connectivity of the community.			Circulation
D-1	Coordinate with Charleston County and SCDOT on road paving projects and regular maintenance to improve the mobility and quality of the roadways.	TC, CC, SCDOT, & Town Staff		Transportation
D-2	Review the Town's zoning and land development ordinances to require minimum vehicular distances between access points, particularly on US 17, to limit turning movements and improve safety.	TC & PC		Transportation Land Use
D-3	Develop a Trails Master Plan for the community.	Town Staff		Community Facilities Transportation
D-4	Encourage new developments to include multi-modal infrastructure and provide one or more potential connections to adjacent properties via reciprocal access agreements, multi-use paths, or trails.	PC & Town Staff		Transportation

ACTION PLAN

D-5	Coordinate with TriCounty Link to better inform residents on the availability of public transportation, service, and stop locations.	TriCounty Link & Town Staff		Transportation
D-6	Assess the need for rural-oriented traffic calming infrastructure along Seewee and Doar Rd.	TC, CC, & SCDOT		Transportation
D-7	Partner with the US National Forest Service in developing an integrated network of trails, parks, and open spaces to improve connectivity between the different parts of Town.	Town Staff & NFS		Community Facilities
D-8	Coordinate with SCDOT to annually assess the safety concerns and possible mitigation strategies at various intersections along US 17, including at Seewee Road, 15 Mile Landing Road, and Doar Road.	Town Staff & SCDOT		Transportation
D-9	Coordinate with SCDOT and Charleston County in assessing the need for an additional/halfway access point connecting US 17 and Seewee Road.	TC, CC, SCDOT, BCDCOG, & Town Staff		Transportation
GOAL E	Capitalize on the Town's proximity to and abundance of natural resources by promoting eco-tourism-related businesses, uses, and amenities.			Commercial Services Rural Lifestyle Natural Environment
E-1	Modify zoning and land use regulations to allow for small overnight accommodations (i.e., Bed & Breakfast) that would compliment the rural nature of the Town and expand the range of services offered in the community (NOT Short Term Rentals).	TC & PC		Economic Development Land Use
E-2	Use the abundance of natural resources and protected lands as potential connecting corridors to link the various recreational amenities in the area to one another via multi-use paths and trails.	PC, SCPRT, CCPRC, NFS & Town Staff		Community Facilities Natural Resources
E-3	Embark on a community branding campaign that highlights the Town's rural lifestyle and synergy with the natural environment.	TC, SCPRT, & Town Staff		Community Facilities
E-4	Market Awendaw as the "Gateway" to the Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge and Francis Marion National Forest.	TC, SCPRT, NFS, FWS, & Town Staff		Natural Resources
E-5	Pursue grants through the SC Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism (SCPRT) to help market and advertise the Town as a natural outdoor recreation destination.	Town Staff & SCPRT		Community Facilities
E-6	Boost the local aquaculture industry as a character-defining feature for the Town and support related businesses.	TC		Economic Development
E-7	Review current light requirements and regulations on light pollution using the Dark Skies Communities as guidance. Coordinate with Charleston County on adjusting light requirements in the unincorporated areas of the County to be consistent with the Town's.	TC, CC, & Town Staff		Natural Resources Land Use

GOAL F	Strengthen current architectural design guidelines to ensure new development complements adjacent structures and the overall rural nature of the community.			Built Environment
F-1	Build on the Town’s distinct community identity and sense of place by requiring streetscaping, signage, and building design for all new developments to be complimentary to the Town’s existing rural character.	TC & PC		Land Use
F-2	Consider architectural design standards/guidelines for new development along US 17 to avoid franchise architectural practices.	TC & PC		Land Use
F-3	Modify current Zoning and Land Development regulations to require additional vehicular access points if a development meets a determined density threshold.	TC & PC		Land Use
GOAL G	Adjust zoning, density, and land development regulations to limit the ecological disturbance from development.			Natural Environment Sustainability
G-1	Implement a maximum impervious surface requirement on properties with large or high quality areas of natural resources.	PC & Town Staff		Land Use Natural Resources
G-2	Consider the establishment of a Conservation Residential district with low density regulations.	TC & PC		Land Use
G-3	Modify the Town’s Tree Ordinance to include provisions focused on the conservation and restoration of the Town’s diverse tree canopy.			Natural Resources Land Use
G-4	Modify zoning and land development definitions so that wetlands and manufactured stormwater ponds are not included in open space calculations.	TC & PC		Land Use Natural Resources
G-5	Consider increasing the amount/percent of open space required for new developments to maintain a healthy, convenient, and sustainable live, work, and play lifestyle.	TC & PC		Land Use Community Facilities
G-6	Promote the use of NexGen Community Septic Systems instead of traditional septic systems in new developments.	TC, PC, & DES		Land Use Natural Resources
GOAL H	Monitor and mitigate the adverse effects that existing and new developments could have on the environment, particularly on Bulls Bay and surrounding waterbodies and ecosystems.			Natural Environment Built Environment Sustainability
H-1	Partner with DES to educate residents on the importance of and methods for septic system maintenance.	Town Staff & DES		Resiliency Natural Resources
H-2	Adopt a Low-Impact Development Ordinance to minimize stormwater runoff.	TC & PC		Resiliency
H-3	Monitor the water quality within Bulls Bay, the ICW, and Awendaw Creek while partnering with Charleston County and DES in mitigating the possible environmental impacts.	NOAA, DES, CC & Town Staff		Resiliency Natural Resources
H-4	Review existing land development regulations to ensure that all new major developments are required to conduct an assessment of cumulative impacts on the natural environment.	PC		Land Use

ACTION PLAN

GOAL I	Enhance the resiliency of the Town by continuously updating building and development regulations that reflect current best management practices.			Safety
I-1	Develop an easy-to-understand hurricane guide for residents and distribute annually at the beginning of Hurricane Season (June 1st).	Town Staff		Resiliency
I-2	Update land development guidelines to require all new development be constructed using resilient infrastructure and best management practices.	CC & Town Staff		Resiliency
I-3	Utilize low-interest loans from the Resilience Revolving Fund to perform restoration activities and/or voluntary floodplain or coastal inundation buyouts of eligible or high priority properties.	TC & CC		Resiliency
GOAL J	Encourage the preservation and restoration of riparian buffers, wetlands, and forested areas while coordinating with private developers and state & national agencies on conservation efforts.			Natural Environment Sustainability
J-1	Work with Charleston County on preserving the community's natural scenic vistas by limiting the deforestation of unincorporated properties adjacent to residential areas.	CC & Town Staff		Natural Resources
J-2	Implement the strategies and recommendations from the 2022 Tree Canopy Assessment of Awendaw.	TC & PC		Natural Resources
J-3	Continue the acquisition of land or easements to protect environmentally sensitive areas and prime open spaces.	TC		Natural Resources
J-4	Develop a 10-Year Annexation Plan that identifies potential properties that the Town could annex in the future.	TC, PC, & Town Staff		Land Use
J-5	Work with the US National Forest Service to protect and maintain the tree canopy along US 17 and in other areas within the Francis Marion National Forest.	TC & PC		Natural Resources
J-6	Renew discussions with the US National Forest Service in annexing the protected forest lands along US 17 to preserve the rural character and scenic integrity of that corridor.	TC, NFS, & Town Staff		Natural Resources
J-7	Coordinate with public and private agencies on preserving and restoring important ecological habitats and the protection of rare, endangered, and threatened species.	Town Staff, SCDNR, & Various Organizations		Natural Resources
GOAL K	Modify density and land use regulations to ensure adjacent land uses compliment one another, the natural environment, and the rural character of the community.			Community Character Built Environment
K-1	Adjust land use regulations to limit highway-oriented businesses to certain areas along US 17 while focusing local retail and service-based businesses and uses in one of the three Village mixed use node areas of Town.	PC		Economic Development Land Use
K-2	Modify density regulations in each district to preserve the rural density of the Town while limiting higher-density development to areas connected to the Town's public water system.	PC		Land Use
K-3	Coordinate with Charleston County to ensure land use regulations in unincorporated areas of the County are compatible with the rural nature of the community.	TC & CC		Land Use