



The Lowcountry's Hometown

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STAFF REPORT

TO: Board of Zoning Appeals

FROM: Justin Westbrook, Community Development Director

SUBJECT: Special Exception (SE-24-03) – Berkeley County – Coroner's Office Expansion

DATE: December 3, 2024

Background: The applicant, Berkeley County, has applied for a **Special Exception** (SE-24-03) to expand a “governmental facility” within the General Commercial (C-2) district, operated by the Coroner’s Office (TMS # 142-07-02-048). The applicant currently operates the County’s Coroner office. Per the County Coroner, his office is operating a maximum capacity, and as the County continues to grow, so to does the need for expansion of this vital service. As with any “governmental facility” within the Town of Moncks Corner, an expansion of a governmental facility requires a Special Exception, as prescribed in the Zoning Ordinance (Section 6-9).

Existing Zoning: The subject parcel is currently in the **C-2 – General Commercial** zoning district. Per the Town’s Zoning Ordinance, the Office & Institutional zoning district is intended to:

“...accommodate a variety of general commercial and nonresidential uses characterized primarily by retail, office, and service establishments and oriented primarily to major traffic arteries or extensive areas of predominately commercial usage and characteristics. Certain related structures and uses are permitted outright or are permissible as special exceptions subject to the restrictions and requirements intended to best fulfill the intent of this ordinance.”

Adjacent Zoning		Adjacent Land Use
North	C-2	Offices
South	C-2	Parking (Berkeley County)
East	C-2	Governmental Facility (BCSD)
West	C-2	Bank (Farmers & Merchants Bank)
		Offices (Berkeley County)

Existing Site Conditions: The subject parcel comprises approximately 0.2 acres, which is currently occupied by the Berkeley County Coroner’s Office; a government facility. The parcel is currently accessible by Gulledge Street, with approximately 111-feet of frontage. The parcels to the South and East are also government facilities, owned and operated by Berkeley County and Berkeley County School Board, respectively.

Proposed Request: The applicant has requested a **Special Exception** for the property for an approximate 3,000 ft² expansion of the existing “governmental facility”. The applicant has provided a Concept Plan showing the approximate area of the expansion, as well as a Narrative with background information, the applicant’s justification of the Special Exception, as well as potential architectural renderings of the expansion.

All other additional elements as required by the Zoning Ordinance must be met by the County.

Environmental: Per the National Wetlands Inventory, the parcels do not appear to be subject to any wetlands.

Procedural Issues: As part of any Special Exception, the Board of Zoning Appeals shall hold a Public Hearing and may impose additional terms and conditions. Prior to granting the Special Exception, the Board of Zoning Appeals must determine the following standards were clearly demonstrated.

1. The proposed use is consistent with the purpose and intent of the Town’s Comprehensive Plan as well as the character and intent of the underlying zoning district;
2. The proposed use is compatible with existing uses in the vicinity and will not adversely affect the general welfare or character of the immediate community;
3. Adequate provision is made for such items as setbacks, buffering (including fences and/or landscaping) to protect adjacent properties from the possible adverse influence of the proposed use, such as noise, vibration, dust, glare, odor, traffic congestion, and similar factors;
4. Where applicable, the proposed use will be developed in a way that will preserve and incorporate and important natural features;
5. The proposed use shall not destroy, create a loss, or cause damage to natural, scenic, or historic features of significant importance;
6. Vehicular traffic and pedestrian movement on adjacent roads shall not be hindered or endangered;
7. The proposed use complies with all applicable regulations and development standards of the Town.

Consistency with Plans: As part of the new 2024 Comprehensive Plan, the Future Land Use Map identifies the subject parcel as “Downtown Commercial”. This is described as,

“Intended to protect and promote the historic and economic interests of the downtown. Similar to the Neighborhood Mixed Use, higher intensity commercial-residential mixed uses are encouraged. Unique, walkable and family-oriented businesses should be the focus of this designation.”

Additionally, the parcel appears to be within the “Mixed Use Overlay” future land use designation. This is described as,

“A 250 ft mixed-use buffer (500 ft in total width) along select roadways is intended to allow for a mixture of higher density residential and low intensity service-based commercial land uses. This overlay provides flexibility for the Town to expand economic opportunities beyond the traditional downtown or strip mall type commercial corridors. Common commercial uses could include professional or medical offices, salons, corner stores, and other uses that provide daily services to local residents.”

The current zoning designation does appear to be in line with the designated future land use.

Staff Analysis: The applicant has met with Staff to go over their space needs assessment, along with their current facilities spread across the Town, their need for additional space, as well as their needs to upgrade their capabilities to maintain professionalism and personability in their mission.

1. The proposed use is consistent with the purpose and intent of the Town's Comprehensive Plan as well as the character and intent of the underlying zoning district;
*Staff feels the proposed expansion of an existing use **is consistent** with the purpose and intent of both the "Downtown Commerical" and "Mixed Use Overlay" future land use designations.*
2. The proposed use is compatible with existing uses in the vicinity and will not adversely affect the general welfare or character of the immediate community;
*Staff feels that the proposed expansion of an existing use **is compatible** with the existing uses in the vicinity, such as the County's Public Defender's Office and Berkeley County School Board offices.*
3. Adequate provision is made for such items as setbacks, buffering (including fences and/or landscaping) to protect adjacent properties from the possible adverse influence of the proposed use, such as noise, vibration, dust, glare, odor, traffic congestion, and similar factors;
*Staff feels, outside zoning regulations which are required to be met by the property owner, additional **adequate provisions** for setbacks and buffering are provided for.*
4. Where applicable, the proposed use will be developed in a way that will preserve and incorporate and important natural features;
*Staff believes that the submitted Concept Plan will **generally preserve and incorporate important natural features**. The existing property is a parking lot, and the applicant has indicated their desire for any addition to match the architecture of the existing office.*
5. The proposed use shall not destroy, create a loss, or cause damage to natural, scenic, or historic features of significant importance;
6. *Staff believes that the proposed expansion of an existing use **will not destroy**, create a loss or cause damage to natural, scenic, or historic features of significant importance, namely the streetscape of Downtown.*
7. Vehicular traffic and pedestrian movement on adjacent roads shall not be hindered or endangered.
*Staff believes, the proposed expansion of the existing use, will **not hinder** vehicular traffic or pedestrian movement on adjacent roads, however required parking for the use may be a challenge, and could be overcome by combining properties under the County's ownership, along with a potential shared parking solution between multiple governmental agencies.*
8. The proposed use complies with all applicable regulations and development standards of the Town.
*During a preliminary review of the provided Concept Plan, it appears all applicable regulations and zoning standards **have been complied with**. During the official review and approval, Staff will ensure **the required Site Plan complies** with all applicable regulations and development standards.*

Staff Recommendation: Staff recommends the Board of Zoning Appeal consider the impacts of the proposal to grant a Special Exception for an addition to the existing Coroner's Office on adjacent commercial parcels and the overall streetscape of our Downtown within the Corner Renaissance Overlay District.

Attachments: SIGNED - Application (Alison Simmons, County Representative)(20241028)
Concept Plan (20241119)
Narrative & Concepts (20241119)