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**IN RE:**

Hearing before the Planning Board  
of the City of Palatka,  
taken on July 2, 2013, at  
201 North 2nd Street,  
Palatka, Florida 32177

 **ORIGINAL**

**ATTENDEES:**

**MR. STEWART, CHAIRMAN**  
**MR. T. CROWE, DIRECTOR**  
**MR. E. WALLACE**  
**MR. G. DELOACH**  
**MR. D. PETRUCCI**  
**MR. D. SHEFFIELD**  
**MRS. J. GOODING**  
**DONALD E. HOLMES, Esquire**

**TRANSCRIBED BY: Vicki E. Vaughn-Mast,**  
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## I N D E X

|    |  |          |
|----|--|----------|
| 1  |  |          |
| 2  | <b>Planning Board Meeting for City of Palatka<br/>called to Order for July 2nd, 2013</b> | <b>3</b> |
| 3  |  |          |
| 4  | Case Number 13-26 called before the Board  | 5        |
| 5  | Presentation by Director Crowe   | 5        |
| 6  | Questions by the Board   | 10       |
| 7  | <b>AUDIENCE COMMENTS:</b>  |          |
| 8  | Pastor Chad Perry  | 15       |
| 9  | Charles Rudd   | 75       |
| 10 | Ruth Burk  | 79       |
| 11 | Bob Taylor   | 81       |
| 12 | Alex Altman  | 83       |
| 13 | Dawn Perry   | 90       |
| 14 | Webster Marlow   | 104      |
| 15 | Janet Sikes  | 104      |
| 16 | Wayne Jones  | 107      |
| 17 | Steve Rodrig   | 109      |
| 18 | Jerry Hafner   | 109      |
| 19 | Dave Church  | 115      |
| 20 | Bonnie Buck  | 118      |
| 21 | Adam George  | 120      |
| 22 | Ed Killibrew   | 123      |
| 23 | Robert Lemon   | 125      |
| 24 | Edward Hofstetter  | 127      |
| 25 | Abigail Maxwell  | 128      |
|    | Melissa Botley   | 132      |
|    | Francine Rodrig  | 134      |
|    | Kirby Kennedy  | 135      |
|    | Ruth Burk  | 136      |
|    | Public Hearing Closed and Vote by Board  | 137      |

## 1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 MR. CHAIRMAN: We'll call the City of Palatka  
3 Planning Board Meeting for July 2nd, 2013 to order.

4 Pam, would you do the roll call, please.

5 THE CLERK: Yes.

6 Charles Stewart?

7 MR. STEWART: Here.

8 THE CLERK: Earl Wallace?

9 MR. WALLACE: Here.

10 THE CLERK: George Deloach?

11 MR. DELOACH: Here.

12 THE CLERK: Anthony Harlow?

13 Lavinia Moody?

14 Joe Pickens?

15 Joseph Petrucci?

16 MR. PETRUCCI: Here.

17 THE CLERK: Daniel Sheffield?

18 MR. SHEFFIELD: Here.

19 THE CLERK: And Judith Gooding?

20 MRS. GOODING: Here.

21 MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Pam.

22 Have you heard from our Attorney, if he's going to  
23 be present?

24 THE CLERK: No, sir.

25 MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you.



1           MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. We're going to move into  
2 Case Number 13-26, Conditional Use Request to Locate a  
3 Church Within 300 Feet of an Alcohol-serving  
4 Establishment; Location, 211 St. Johns Avenue; Owner,  
5 Ruth Burk; Applicant, The River Community Church,  
6 Pastor Chad Perry.

7           And I'm assuming our Director will be back  
8 shortly, and he will give us the highlights, and then  
9 we'll open the Public Hearing.

10           I read it into the record, Thad, and we're ready  
11 for you.

12           MR. DIRECTOR: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.  
13 This is a Proposed Conditional Use.

14           The Zoning Code requires that -- for both churches  
15 and alcoholic-beverage establishments that are within  
16 300 feet of each other, that each receive Conditional  
17 Use Approval from the Planning Board.

18           It is a -- churches are a permitted use in the  
19 Downtown Zoning District, but when they are within --  
20 either a church door or an alcohol establishment is  
21 within 300 feet of one another, it does put them into  
22 the Conditional Use Category, which does come with a  
23 certain number of criteria, as you know.

24           This is located in the Downtown area.

25           You can see right here, 211 St. Johns Avenue is on

1 the south side on the 200 block of St. Johns.

2 This is a picture of the building, 211 St. Johns.  
3 It's the old McCrory building.

4 A little bit of history on this.

5 The City's provided a grant to the owner for a  
6 fitness center, and this use did not pan out.

7 After that, the building owner did work with a  
8 church, which is currently meeting in the Quality Inn.  
9 This is a church with around 50 members.

10 Your evaluation criteria, which is in your Staff  
11 Report, looks at vehicular and pedestrian access, which  
12 is sufficient for this. It is Downtown. There is,  
13 obviously, plenty of on-street parking, and some  
14 parking lots.

15 In any case, the Downtown area is parking exempt  
16 for most uses, except for residential uses. So parking  
17 is not an issue.

18 The downtown area is exempt from the landscape  
19 code and buffering requirements. There is utilities  
20 available.

21 There is screening required, but that's a typical  
22 requirement for any use Downtown.

23 The main concern that we have is in regards to the  
24 compatibility criteria. Typically, we look at --  
25 typically, we look at compatibility as it pertains to

1 residential uses, and the impacts of non-residential  
2 uses on them. However, this is a little bit of a  
3 different situation, in that this is the core retail  
4 zone of Downtown.

5 And one of our concerns is that taking this --  
6 basically, a 90 foot wide storefront out of  
7 circulation, and out of potential retail use, will  
8 create a dead -- what's called a dead zone, where you  
9 have less pedestrian life, and retail activity.

10 Our concern is that the lack of foot traffic and  
11 activity that's generated by retail uses, and service  
12 uses, will hamper street life.

13 And the Downtown Zoning District itself is  
14 intended to provide, quote, pedestrian-oriented retail  
15 entertainment that discourages uses that are likely to  
16 create friction with pedestrian movement.

17 In and of itself, there is not any problem with a  
18 church use. However, in the context of Downtown, where  
19 you need both lights and street lights, storefront  
20 windows, activities, both during the day and evening, a  
21 church typically does not promote that kind of  
22 activity, and we believe it's not in keeping with the  
23 intent of that Zoning District.

24 We emphasize churches are an important component  
25 of Downtown (indiscernible), but they do not do well in

1 the retail -- they clash, or they compete, with retail  
2 uses in the vicinity. They don't provide that same  
3 type of retail vitality.

4 You can see the downtown area. We have a number  
5 of established churches by and large in the  
6 periphery -- the St. Johns Avenue core, there is one  
7 small church that's between Eight and Ninth, the Old  
8 Episcopal church, but other churches are in the  
9 periphery of the Downtown area, and as such, they  
10 compliment Downtown.

11 But again, we are concerned with the location of  
12 the church right in the retail core.

13 The building on this little -- this is what makes  
14 Downtown attractive, that -- the narrow store fronts,  
15 the mix of uses, the retail and service uses, again,  
16 that provide people walking up and down the street --  
17 the restaurants, the cafes, the service  
18 establishments.

19 The problem that you have with zoning as to the  
20 McCrory building is it's a long distance, and when you  
21 have a, quote, dead space, and you have a lack of  
22 street life, people going in and out of stores,  
23 storefront window displays -- things like that, that  
24 kind of make a downtown active and lively.

25 We looked at some similar situations in various

1 places around that some people have dealt with, and you  
2 can see this one in a town called Clayton, California;  
3 another feature, an under-performing, low rental rate,  
4 commercial district, and the influx of services,  
5 businesses, offices, non-profit institutions -- like  
6 city halls, churches and libraries, the mixing of these  
7 non-retail -- retail business categories have a  
8 detrimental effect of limiting the browsing factor that  
9 every successful retail business district exhibits.

10 In the Titusville memo, conflicts could arise when  
11 future restaurants, pubs or bars came to occupy a  
12 downtown commercial district due to the established  
13 storefront church. Thus, by allowing a Conditional Use  
14 for the church to locate, the City can inadvertently  
15 prohibit a future permitted use due to the district  
16 requirements in the City's Code.

17 So not only does this church potentially prevent  
18 retail, certain establishments from locating in the  
19 space -- but because of the business requirements, it  
20 potentially prohibits potential restaurants from the  
21 300 foot area when they have to come into the  
22 Conditional Use process.

23 This is not really a good -- it's just more of the  
24 same, which is -- and I'll just point to this one next  
25 -- shoppers walking along the sidewalk, looking in

1 retail storefront windows, and when they come across a  
2 non-retail use, they instinctively interpret that to  
3 mean that they've reached the end of the retail  
4 business.

5 The odds are they'll turn around, which hurts the  
6 retail businesses beyond that. So it does create this  
7 kind of a black hole, dead zone, whatever you want to  
8 call it, where you don't have that kind of retail life  
9 on the downtown street.

10 And it's not churches -- I don't want to pick on  
11 churches in particular, but it's -- the same thing  
12 really happens with offices, it happens with government  
13 uses of buildings, institutional uses. Those kind of  
14 uses don't provide the kind of activity that has a  
15 daytime/nighttime activity that makes a downtown thrive  
16 and profit.

17 Staff does recommend denial of this Conditional  
18 Use Request. And mainly due to the lack of  
19 compatibility with proposed use with the  
20 pedestrian-oriented, retail environment of Downtown.

21 I'd be happy to answer any questions if you have  
22 any, Mr. Chairman.

23 MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Board Members have questions  
24 for Thad?

25 MR. PETRUCCI: Is there any problem with having a

1 church next to the bingo hall?

2 MR. DIRECTOR: Well, this is next to the bingo  
3 hall.

4 MR. PETRUCCI: That's what I'm saying.

5 MR. DIRECTOR: Oh, no. There's no alcohol, so  
6 there's nothing that -- it's not a requirement or  
7 anything that they (indiscernible)

8 I mean we have -- I mean this is not against the  
9 bingo hall, but I think the bingo hall's the place  
10 where people also come as a -- single definition, they  
11 come there for one activity and they leave. They don't  
12 linger, they don't browse and shop.

13 So what you see on that whole block, potentially,  
14 is a block-long dead zone on that particular side of  
15 the street, when you look at both uses.

16 MR. SHEFFIELD: Thad, I think you answered this  
17 question, but I understood you to say that in the  
18 future, with the redevelopment of the waterfront, the  
19 hotel in the 100 block, if a restaurant wanted to  
20 locate in that area and serve alcohol, they would have  
21 to come before the Board, and have to overcome the 300  
22 foot restriction?

23 MR. DIRECTOR: Yes, they would.

24 And what we've found is a lot of people really  
25 avoid the public hearing process, and some people won't

1 even broach that. But yes, they would be required to  
2 do that.

3 MR. SHEFFIELD: Thank you.

4 MRS. GOODING: Thad, with the bingo hall there,  
5 there really isn't -- and I think the church is going  
6 to be open seven days a week -- it's not -- there's not  
7 much parking left. Because I know that bingo hall,  
8 they park on the grass, and everywhere.

9 MR. DIRECTOR: Yeah.

10 MRS. GOODING: So I would be more -- I'd be  
11 concerned, too, about the parking.

12 MR. DIRECTOR: Right. And that's something that  
13 -- actually, you can look at it in the Conditional Use  
14 process. I mean you have -- you can pay special  
15 attention to that, as a potential issue.

16 I mean our conclusion was that because the church  
17 is operating in the off peak hours, Sunday mornings, in  
18 the evenings -- I mean there is opportunities for  
19 parking, if people don't mind walking, and there is  
20 on-street, and some lots. It potentially could be a  
21 problem. We didn't really see that as being that big  
22 of an issue.

23 MR. CHAIRMAN: We're in the Public Hearing  
24 portion. If the -- I assume most people may be in  
25 support of the church. I'm not sure.

1           Is there a spokesperson that would like to come  
2 forward first, and --

3           MR. DIRECTOR: Mr. Chairman, I'd recommend the  
4 Applicant come.

5           MR. CHAIRMAN: The Applicant?

6           MRS. BURK: I'm the Owner. Do I still have to --  
7 I didn't have any idea -- sat here for about a half  
8 hour when you guys were getting all together, and I  
9 didn't know that we were supposed to go through this.

10          MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

11          MRS. BURK: The MainStreet Manager didn't contact  
12 me at any time, and --

13          MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, would you like to come?  
14 We'll let you come forward, if you'd like to, and state  
15 your name and address for the record, please, and then  
16 we'll take the Applicant.

17          MRS. BURK: Ruth Burk, 510 Mulholland Park.

18          When the bingo went in, it was an illegal -- it  
19 was illegal at that time the way the rule's wrote to  
20 put the bingo in, because I was against the bingo.

21          Years later, when I rented to the bingo people  
22 another establishment, I found out that their Attorney  
23 was Donald Holmes. But it was illegal to have a bingo  
24 downtown, in a Downtown District. If you'll look that  
25 up, you'll find out that that's true.

1 I've owned this building since 1996. I tried to  
2 put an antique shop in. Everybody was against that.  
3 They actually -- this guy had a disease, and they  
4 actually brought it out -- it was in remission --  
5 because he had so much trouble when he -- he pulled the  
6 permit for electrical, and Joff came in, and he found  
7 one lightbulb upstairs, where nobody was going to go  
8 upstairs, because I didn't rent him the upstairs, and  
9 he made him go and get another electrical outlet -- I  
10 mean another -- for one electric outlet.

11 I mean he was just harassed.

12 MR. CHAIRMAN: Mrs. Burk --

13 MRS. BURK: One little thing after another.

14 MR. CHAIRMAN: -- let me interrupt you.

15 We're here for a specific --

16 MRS. BURK: The church. Okay.

17 MR. CHAIRMAN: -- case, and we have --

18 MRS. BURK: I'm going to get to the church.

19 MR. CHAIRMAN: And we have a hundred people here.

20 MRS. BURK: Okay. I hope they're all for the  
21 church.

22 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Amen.

23 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Amen.

24 (Audience clapping.)

25 MRS. BURK: Anyways, we got -- they are --

1 MR. CHAIRMAN: If you could be as brief as  
2 possible, and we'll --

3 MRS. BURK: Okay. They are going to have retail  
4 in there. They'll be selling tapes, and books from all  
5 over in there. And we discussed that, too. I  
6 discussed it with the Pastor. And I hope he's here.

7 MR. CHAIRMAN: He's waiting to speak --

8 MRS. BURK: Oh, yes. I didn't see him.

9 MR. CHAIRMAN: -- when you get through.

10 MRS. BURK: Oh, okay. Then I'll be brief. He'll  
11 say it all. I didn't know he was here.

12 But anyways -- and Christians don't mind walking,  
13 so --

14 MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mrs. Burk.

15 Is the Applicant here?

16 Please come forward, sir.

17 State your name and address for the record,  
18 please.

19 MR. PERRY: My name is Pastor Chad Perry. I live  
20 at 2370 Westover Drive in Palatka.

21 I've got some handouts for y'all.

22 BOARD MEMBER: Thank you.

23 MR. DIRECTOR: You have to watch your foot there.

24 MR. PERRY: Thank you for that.

25 We don't want the building to shake; do we?

1 All right. I have a little -- computer needs.  
2 Can my computer gentleman put the DVD in, and see if  
3 it'll work for us?

4 Thank you very much.

5 All right. I think we're ready to begin.

6 A little bit about who we are, The River Community  
7 Church. And the first thing that we want to do is say  
8 thank you.

9 So if you'd hit pause right there.

10 Thank you for your service to the Community.  
11 Thank you very much for that. Thank you for your  
12 desire to make Palatka a better place. Thank you for  
13 that. And all that you do.

14 And then also thank you for your time tonight.  
15 Thank you for your willingness to come and have ears to  
16 listen, and to consider our hearts, and our vision for  
17 the downtown area, and The River Community Church.

18 And so I just wanted to say thank you before we  
19 got started. All right?

20 Now, to tell you a little bit about the church --  
21 you can go ahead, we'll show you a few pictures.

22 We've been meeting at the Quality Inn and Suites  
23 -- and you'll see a little bit of what takes place  
24 there.

25 We rent out all of their ballroom space, and we

1           enjoy the foyer, and we've got coffee and donuts -- so  
2           if anyone is hungry on Sunday, you need to come by, you  
3           can have some coffee and donuts. But I -- it's been  
4           good.

5           You'll notice in your packet that we're a church  
6           plant. We just had our first birthday. We're one year  
7           old as of yesterday. And we were birthed out of Dunn's  
8           Creek Baptist Church in San Mateo. And it's been quite  
9           a journey.

10          And we're the farthestest from a traditional church  
11          that you can be. We're very non-traditional. We're  
12          non-denominational. That doesn't mean that we don't  
13          appreciate traditions, or that we don't appreciate  
14          denominations. We do. It just means that God has  
15          called us to focus our attention on other things.

16          Primarily, we want to bring unconditional love and  
17          service to our Community.

18          And as we talk about several things -- not being  
19          your typical church -- I really think it's important to  
20          realize that we've kind of been functioning without a  
21          home. And we've got small groups that meet throughout  
22          the County.

23          They meet -- some in Welaka. We've got some in  
24          Satsuma. And we've got some that meet here in town.  
25          We've got some that meet out toward Francis. And so

1 it's as if we've been playing with first, second, and  
2 third base, but we haven't had home plate. And that  
3 can be very difficult.

4 But in some ways it's been a blessing, because  
5 it's allowed us to really be out in the Community, and  
6 not behind the four walls of the church.

7 But we've been looking forward to a home.

8 Throughout the year we have hosted conferences.  
9 We've brought people in town from out of town to enjoy  
10 the City, to eat in our establishments, to sleep in our  
11 hotels, et cetera. It's been a real blessing to  
12 develop a relationship with the Quality Inn and Suites,  
13 to develop a relationship with Beef 'O Brady's, to  
14 support those establishments, as well as other  
15 businesses, and be a blessing to them.

16 And our church has spent thousands of dollars in  
17 those places. And it's been a really good fit for us.  
18 But we're starting to outgrow it, and we need a place  
19 to call our own.

20 A couple of scriptures for you.

21 In our desire to make Palatka a better place, I  
22 think it's good to consider a couple of things, and  
23 that is the benefit of the righteous.

24 I don't want to label myself as righteous --  
25 because my goodness, that's a pretty bold statement;

1 isn't it? But we try to walk according to God's Word.

2 Two of those passages -- one's from Proverbs  
3 Chapter 11. In Proverbs Chapter 11 what a wonderful  
4 statement beginning there in Verse Eight -- it says the  
5 righteous is delivered from trouble, but the wicked  
6 takes his place. With his mouth, the Godless man  
7 destroys his neighbor. But through knowledge, the  
8 righteous man will be delivered.

9 When it goes well with the righteous, the city  
10 rejoices. Amen?

11 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Amen.

12 MR. PERRY: And by the blessing of the upright, a  
13 city is exalted.

14 So I want to focus on those two verses.

15 It says literally when the righteous -- when  
16 things are going well with the righteous -- when  
17 they're doing what they're supposed to do, and they're  
18 spreading the good news, and they're living well, et  
19 cetera, it's a blessing to the city. It says the city  
20 rejoices.

21 And then it also says the blessing of the upright,  
22 the city is actually exalted. It becomes a better  
23 place.

24 Then there is another passage -- you know the  
25 story -- and it's in Genesis 18 and 19, another benefit

1 of the righteous, or the benefit of churches, or the  
2 benefit of people of faith who come to worship, and  
3 want to live and breathe, and stay and play in the City  
4 of Palatka.

5 You probably know the story -- and I'm very  
6 cautious to even bring it up -- but the story of Sodom  
7 and Gomorrah, and that concept when the angels came to  
8 talk to Abraham, and they were telling him he was going  
9 to destroy the city.

10 And Abraham said well, if you had fifty righteous,  
11 will you save the city? And they said yes. Abraham  
12 decided to negotiate a little bit. So he kept bringing  
13 the number down, and down, and down, until he got to  
14 the number ten.

15 And he said now, if y'all find ten righteous,  
16 would you save the city? And they said yes.

17 Now, there were literally millions -- when you  
18 talk about this whole corridor, there were five major  
19 cities in the area -- Sodom was one of them, Gomorrah  
20 was another -- they were the two largest, over a  
21 million people in those two locations. And it still  
22 was expansive. If they had only found ten righteous,  
23 the whole city would have been saved.

24 Unfortunately, they couldn't find ten righteous,  
25 and so the cities were destroyed.

1           There are benefits from having more and more and  
2 more churches and righteous people in, and living and  
3 playing and working, in the City of Palatka.

4           I won't take up any more of your time on that.

5           But I would like to draw your attention to several  
6 letters of support that have been written on our  
7 behalf.

8           One of them specifically talks about the crazy  
9 idea of opening a church in the center of a downtown  
10 area.

11           So it's a -- happens to be a letter from one of my  
12 Advisory Board Members, Jeannie Smith, and I'd like to  
13 take the time just to read it to you right now.

14           Dear Planning Board of the City of Palatka: As an  
15 Advisory Board Member of The River Community Church, I  
16 would like to share my personal testimony of how I  
17 witnessed a church revolutionize a city -- the tiny  
18 little City of New York, in none other than Times  
19 Square.

20           Please include the reading of my letter testimony  
21 in the meeting, as well as entering it into the Minutes  
22 on July 2nd.

23           My thoughts go first to the late Pastor David  
24 Wilkerson. He opened Times Square Church in October of  
25 1987. He moved into Town Hall before moving to its

1 present location at the Mark Hellinger Theater.

2 Poverty and darkness ruled New York, especially  
3 the downtown theater district. At that time Times  
4 Square was mainly populated by prostitutes, drug  
5 addicts, runaways, along with peep shows, and x-rated  
6 movie houses.

7 Pastor David cried out for God to do something to  
8 help the physically destitute, spiritually dead, that  
9 he saw.

10 Pastor David obeyed God to open a church in the  
11 center of all that darkness and oppression.

12 Tremendous opposition and battles ensued against  
13 the idea of placing a church in downtown New York City.

14 No one could believe how a church could help turn  
15 around the city at all -- especially financially, since  
16 the area was becoming less successful.

17 However, Pastor David overcame all opposition.  
18 The downtown area began to progress forward. Tourist  
19 numbers began to soar. It's been well-documented in  
20 many of his books how God used him and the church to  
21 revitalize the city, too.

22 The book the Cross and the Switchblade tells the  
23 great story about Pastor David leading the gang leader,  
24 Nicki Crews, to Jesus.

25 Nicki was not just a gang member. He was the

1 leader of all of the gangs of New York City.

2 While living in New York at that time -- Jeannie  
3 speaking herself -- I fully experienced the benefits  
4 from the church downtown. The darkness that ruled and  
5 reigned in New York was lifted.

6 My sister was set free from being a gang member  
7 for Nicki Crews.

8 The church is still downtown, and the area and  
9 City continues to prosper.

10 I'm a personal witness of the great revival that  
11 took place.

12 Also it's been a great joy to travel alongside  
13 Nicki Crews in over 100 mission trips around the world,  
14 sharing this awesome truth. My heart and mind can not  
15 imagine what New York City would be now if the church  
16 had not been allowed into the downtown area.

17 The odds of my sister being alive today -- much  
18 less living well and in the peace that only comes  
19 through salvation and Jesus Christ -- would be slim.

20 Palatka is blessed to have Pastor Chad Perry and  
21 Dawn Perry, and the church called The River. They,  
22 too, share the vision, just as Pastor David had, that  
23 it was not to open a homeless shelter, or a gang  
24 shelter, but he shared the shelter of the gospel of  
25 Jesus Christ.

1           The gospel changed lives, as well as changing the  
2           dark and dangerous community that I remember living in  
3           before the church made its home in downtown New York.

4           I have known and ministered alongside Pastor Chad  
5           Perry, and Dawn Perry, for over ten years in ministry,  
6           and have watched God use them to faithfully share his  
7           message of redemption, grace, and how obedience to his  
8           Word, The Bible, changes lives and communities.

9           The message of the gospel is the message of The  
10          River Community Church. And because of this ministry  
11          message, there are many testimonies of lives that have  
12          already been changed within this very community.

13          They love the town of Palatka and remain faithful  
14          servants. They have no doubt that God is the greatest  
15          difference maker in people and communities.

16          Welcoming The River Community Church to make its  
17          home in downtown Palatka is not only my strong  
18          recommendation, but an opportunity that this City will  
19          not get everyday.

20          God is alive and well, ready to change hearts,  
21          lives, communities, retail districts, and riverfront  
22          destinations.

23          The Bible says the fear of the Lord is the  
24          beginning of wisdom.

25          I invite you to vote in favor of allowing God's

1 name to be highly revered in downtown Palatka  
2 through the welcoming of The River Community Church to  
3 211 St. Johns Avenue, Palatka, Florida.

4 Thank you for your time and consideration.

5 Sincerely, Jeannie Smith.

6 I also want to just briefly share one of those  
7 instances -- I won't take up your time with every  
8 single instance -- just a little touch of each  
9 different type is what I'm trying to give you a taste  
10 of today.

11 Here is one taste of someone who was new to  
12 Palatka, and what their encounter was with The River  
13 Community Church. It's next in your packet.

14 It says I, Amanda Defendhal, am unable to attend  
15 the hearing, but I would like my testimony entered into  
16 the Minutes.

17 Having The River downtown would be nothing but an  
18 asset, not only to the businesses of Palatka, but to  
19 Palatka itself.

20 My family and I recently moved to Palatka from  
21 Texas. I met a member of The River at a playground in  
22 Palatka, and through her I met a number of other  
23 people, including the Pastor and his Wife from the  
24 church.

25 Their kindness and hospitality overwhelmed me.

1 They offered to throw me a baby shower, because I  
2 didn't know anyone in town.

3 And women that I did not even know showered us  
4 with food, encouragement, and presents.

5 Two members also offered to watch my son when I go  
6 into labor, that my Husband can be with me.

7 Many gave me their phone number, in case I needed  
8 anything.

9 They did this all without expectations of me.  
10 They did not expect me to go to their church, they did  
11 not expect me to return the favor. They did not expect  
12 anything. Their actions were pure love and kindness,  
13 and they made me feel welcome in the City of Palatka.

14 Isn't that what the downtown wants -- welcoming,  
15 friendly helpful faces who show love and kindness, and  
16 expect nothing in return? People who do not judge,  
17 people who want a better Palatka.

18 They don't go door to door preaching. Their love  
19 and kindness are their testimony. And they are what  
20 draws people to them and their church.

21 They want to better the community, and they expect  
22 nothing in return.

23 Next, just a letter -- I spoke of the fact that  
24 we've been at the Quality Inn, and we've also helped  
25 with business coming to Beef 'O Brady's, and so I

1 wanted to give you a couple of examples from that. So  
2 the next one is the Quality Inn and Suites. It's from  
3 the Assistant Manager, Maryann Horner. And I believe  
4 the owner is here, as well, if you needed to speak to  
5 him.

6 It says Dear Sir or Madam, please be advised that  
7 The River, a non-denominational church, has used our  
8 facilities at the Quality Inn for approximately one  
9 year each Sunday.

10 Under the exemplary leadership of Pastor Chad  
11 Perry, they have outgrown our accommodations. They  
12 have fulfilled all the criteria required. They have  
13 also met all obligations without question or  
14 hesitation.

15 We wish them the very best as they continue to  
16 grow. They would be welcome back to our facility at  
17 any time, and we know that their presence in the  
18 downtown area will be a blessing to our community, as  
19 it is to us.

20 If I may be of further service in this matter,  
21 please advise.

22 Respectfully, Maryann Horner.

23 And then you'll see a -- because TJ is so busy,  
24 and been running around like crazy, he just signed off  
25 on one of my generics. And so the generic is there

1 where he has signed his name, and his business.

2 It simply says that -- this: Let me start by  
3 saying thank you for your service and commitment to the  
4 City. In an effort not to require too much of your  
5 time, allow me to keep this as brief as possible.

6 As a business owner in Downtown Palatka, I am  
7 excited about The River Community Church. They have  
8 already been a blessing to my business, and it's my  
9 belief that they will enhance the overall downtown  
10 experience, and bring more potential customers to the  
11 area.

12 I welcome them with open arms, and ask that you  
13 grant their request for a Conditional Use.

14 Now, of course, Beef 'O Brady's also has a bar  
15 located in it, and there was one occurrence when all of  
16 the ballroom space had already been, you know, rented  
17 out, and we were without a space. This was early on,  
18 when we first started.

19 And so I went to TJ, because he had heard about  
20 it, and he said Chad, you know, my bar has to be closed  
21 on Sunday morning. We can't sell a drop of liquor. I  
22 said okay, where are you going with this?

23 He said well, if you don't mind, you could meet in  
24 the bar, because there -- it's dead, there's nothing  
25 happening.

1           And so I was like oh, I don't know if that's okay  
2           or not, but I'm game. We'll have it in a bar. Right?

3           And so one Sunday only the bar was closed, and  
4           there was no ballroom space, and TJ came to the rescue,  
5           because we had been such a blessing.

6           And we're kind of out of the box that way -- we  
7           had church in a bar. It was a great Sunday. Really  
8           was.

9           All right. (Audience applauding.)

10          MR. PERRY: Wanted to give you an idea of also in  
11          the community, there are what are called peri-church  
12          organizations -- they're not churches, but they are  
13          faith-based. And of course, you know about the  
14          Christian radio station here in town, Hope FM, and you  
15          also know about A Women's Resource Center, I hope, that  
16          deals so much, and blesses those who are struggling  
17          with crisis pregnancy. And so you see those in your  
18          packet.

19          This next one is from Hope FM, and it simply says:  
20          To The Palatka Planning Board, and Palatka County  
21          Commissioners, and it says -- it's about this meeting  
22          here today.

23          I think The River would be a great fit for  
24          Palatka. I urge the Planning Board to approve their  
25          request. Not only would it be a positive addition to

1 the downtown businesses, potentially revive some  
2 businesses in the area, and add to the usage of the  
3 riverfront, but also bring life to a big building that  
4 has been vacant for far too long.

5 In the packet with information about this meeting  
6 I see there is a comment likening the approval of a  
7 church to the Frank George Apartments. And I just  
8 strongly disagree.

9 The location of this church would certainly be a  
10 step in the right direction for our beloved downtown.  
11 I know Pastor Chad and his family have a love for this  
12 community, and would make the City of Palatka a better  
13 place by being in this location.

14 Thank you for your time and consideration. Robin  
15 Robinson, General Manager.

16 Women's Resource Center, of course Linda Faw is  
17 the director there, and she simply says this: In  
18 leading a non-profit ministry in Putnam County for the  
19 last 13 years I can honestly vouch for the fact that  
20 our community is one of great need.

21 Because of that God has raised up many ministries,  
22 non-profits, and churches in our area to assist in  
23 providing the needs of His people.

24 I can't imagine any reason a resident of this  
25 county could possibly have for not supporting another

1 opportunity for a group wanting to serve others in our  
2 area.

3 The building leased by The River Community Church  
4 has been vacant for 20-plus years. It seems like we  
5 should all be excited about the positive role of having  
6 an additional church in the downtown area, and  
7 renovation of another building forthcoming.

8 It would certainly seem that businesses, retail  
9 stores, restaurants, et cetera, could all be a part of  
10 a thriving downtown area, as long as they were all  
11 committed to working together for the betterment of our  
12 community.

13 Thank you for your careful and prayerful  
14 consideration when deciding this matter.

15 Sincerely, Linda Faw.

16 Just to take a taste of church members -- there  
17 are about 50 church members, I think, here today. But  
18 there are two that couldn't be here that wanted to  
19 write a little letter. I didn't think everybody should  
20 have to write a letter, so we've limited it to the two  
21 or three that are here in the packet.

22 It says this -- this is from Herbert Smith.

23 Dear Sirs, and Madam, hallelujah, this letter is  
24 in support of allowing The River Community Church to  
25 use the former McCrory's store building in downtown

1 Palatka. I'll be very grateful if the letter could be  
2 read aloud during the meeting, since I will not be able  
3 to attend.

4 In a recent drive across Florida it was sad to see  
5 the multitude of vacant residential and commercial  
6 buildings that exist in every city, including Palatka,  
7 through these difficult economic times.

8 I would like to see these buildings being used  
9 again for constructive purposes. It's my opinion that  
10 vacant buildings impart a sense of economic depression  
11 to residents and visitors, and that these buildings  
12 should be utilized whenever possible.

13 I grew up in Palatka, often shopped in McCrory's  
14 and remember the vibrant nature that existed downtown  
15 before chain stores drew shoppers to the suburbs.

16 Everyone would like to see a return to that level  
17 of downtown use.

18 We believe that The River Community Church will  
19 supplement, not detract, from the energy of downtown  
20 Palatka. The attitude of our church is one of love and  
21 care for everyone, not one of condemnation or judgment.

22 We think The River will draw people to downtown.  
23 We also believe if given the opportunity, the merchants  
24 of downtown Palatka will see us a good neighbor, and as  
25 a valuable asset to downtown, rather than a detraction.

1           We hope that you will vote in favor of allowing  
2           our church to utilize the McCrory building.

3           Thank you very much for your time and  
4           consideration. Herbert Smith.

5           And then Sandra shares these words: I will not be  
6           able to attend the meeting. Please read this letter  
7           into the records.

8           I'm a member of The River Community Church. Our  
9           church has rented a conference room from the Quality  
10          Inn for one year. Alcoholic beverages are served  
11          within the same facility, and there has never been an  
12          issue or problem.

13          The River Community Church would like to rent the  
14          McCrory building. It's been vacant for 15 years.  
15          During part of this time the US economy experienced  
16          very good financial times, with low unemployment. No  
17          one rented this building during the best of financial  
18          times.

19          I'm afraid this building will continue to be  
20          vacant for years to come.

21          It's not conducive to several narrow storefronts,  
22          due to the size, unless it's renovated.

23          I believe the church population would increase  
24          foot traffic to local stores. We currently hold  
25          several Bible studies in the morning and late

1 afternoon.

2 I could envision students afterwards strolling to  
3 the local Guidepost, eating lunch at Viva Italian  
4 Pizzeria, or shopping at the Ladybug Gift Shop.

5 Please help us make a difference to the City of  
6 Palatka. Give us an opportunity to rent this building.

7 I believe it would improve the appearance of the  
8 Downtown District, and improve the welfare of local  
9 shops.

10 Yours truly, Sandra Smith.

11 There is a letter there that you've already read,  
12 but it's there to note, and that's the precious letter  
13 that was written by our landlady. You've had time to  
14 read that for yourself. It's already a part of the  
15 Minutes.

16 And so due to time, I'll pass over that, unless  
17 you would like for me to read it for you.

18 MR. CHAIRMAN: I don't think we need that. Thank  
19 you.

20 MR. PERRY: Okay. Thank you very much.

21 I wanted to give you a taste -- again, a taste of  
22 some of the stores that are in the area. I'm sure we  
23 may hear from others tonight. But specifically right  
24 there close by.

25 It's kind of interesting. I talked about the fact

1           that we're a different church. We're such a different  
2           church that the Bingo Palace is excited to have us.  
3           How about that? That's kind of strange; isn't it?  
4           Praise God. So you see a support letter from them.

5                       (Audience applauding.)

6           MR. PERRY: Ray Woodward, who is the owner and  
7           operator of the Bingo Palace, and he says: Let me  
8           start by saying thank you for your service and  
9           commitment to the City. Again, in an effort to keep  
10          much -- not much of your time, allow me to keep this  
11          brief as possible.

12                     As a business owner in Downtown Palatka, whose  
13          storefront is actually located on the 200 block of St.  
14          Johns Avenue, I am excited about my new neighbor, The  
15          River Community Church.

16                     It's my belief that they will enhance the overall  
17          downtown experience, and bring more potential customers  
18          to the area.

19                     I welcome them with open arms, and ask that you  
20          grant their request for a Conditional Use.

21                     And it's kind of interesting, too, down about --  
22          it's about 242 feet away to Steamboat Willie's, but  
23          notice they have a letter of support, as well. So we  
24          even have a letter of support from the bar.

25                     (Audience applauding.)

1 MR. HOLMES: Mr. Chairman, the applause really  
2 serves nothing to add to the decision.

3 AUDIENCE MEMBER: (indiscernible)

4 MR. HOLMES: If I could speak just for a second.

5 This -- as we have discussed time after time, the  
6 process of deciding land use issues isn't a -- it isn't  
7 a contest of who is in favor, who is against. It's not  
8 one of emotion. It's supposed to be a land use  
9 decision.

10 You're not here to decide whether a church is a  
11 good thing, whether the church's people are good  
12 people, whether churches do good in the community.  
13 That's not the issue.

14 The issue is a land use issue. And it's -- it's a  
15 process that has to be applied consistently case to  
16 case. Otherwise, you have different rules that apply,  
17 depending upon the use. And that's not -- that's not  
18 the purpose of land use zoning, or land use decisions.

19 So just from that perspective, you know, I'm going  
20 to ask you that you make a decision in this case that's  
21 not based on emotion, or applause, or boos, or cheers,  
22 or anything of the sort, but is based upon the rules  
23 that we apply to every applicant that comes in the  
24 door.

25 And so from that perspective, I think that the

1           applause probably is not doing anything other than  
2           taking up additional time that isn't needed.

3           MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

4           Appreciate that.

5           Yes. Go ahead.

6           MR. PERRY: I'm fine. I'll be glad to be as calm  
7           as I need to be. I don't have to be overly passionate.  
8           I can do that on Sunday mornings.

9           AUDIENCE MEMBER: Amen.

10          AUDIENCE MEMBER: Amen.

11          MR. PERRY: And so this letter from Steamboat  
12          Willie's -- of course, John Lyon, and he says: As a  
13          business owner in downtown Palatka whose storefront is  
14          located on the 300 block of St. Johns I'm excited about  
15          my new neighbor, The River Community Church.

16                 It's my belief they will enhance the overall  
17          downtown experience, and bring more potential customers  
18          to the area.

19                 I welcome them with open arms, and ask you to  
20          grant their request for Conditional Use.

21                 Incidentally, I did get to go visit with our  
22          wonderful Elks Lodge members. They were having a Lodge  
23          meeting last night. And so I went over there and asked  
24          for permission to speak to them. And I got to speak to  
25          their Exalted Ruler. I have to learn all these names.

1 You know what I'm talking about? Some people have  
2 titles. You've got to learn their titles. And so we  
3 had a great discussion.

4 And you know, their motto to me, or their  
5 statement to me, was live and let live. You know,  
6 we're glad that you're here, and we don't expect any  
7 problems from you, and you shouldn't expect any  
8 problems from us. And so there was verbal affirmation,  
9 but they were getting into a business meeting, and said  
10 they would need more time to consider drafting a letter  
11 on our behalf. So thank you for that.

12 Going back into the packet now, I want to really  
13 turn to the issue at hand. And so if you'll look at  
14 the next part of our video, the issue at hand really is  
15 being located within 300 feet.

16 So you're getting a shot where we're panning from  
17 the store, all the way down the street, and eventually  
18 we'll get to Steamboat Willie's -- again, approximately  
19 242 feet away, roughly. We're getting there. And so  
20 it's a good distance down the street from us. And  
21 Steamboat Willie's is positive, as well.

22 This simply says -- pause -- it says really the  
23 only legal issue is being called to address whether  
24 this church can meet within 300 feet of the  
25 establishment that's serving alcoholic beverages.

1           As you know, you know, the zoning for churches,  
2 even in the heart of downtown, has been around since  
3 the mid 1800's. And so there's -- there's precedences  
4 for churches being allowed to come in there and be a  
5 part. So it's not really that part of the zoning  
6 issue. But we're within 300 feet, and so we need to  
7 decide -- is that the issue.

8           And so let's continue with the picture.

9           Here's a shot from Steamboat Willie's -- it's  
10 right there on the right in your picture, and we're  
11 looking down the street to see if we can find the  
12 McCrory building. And so it's kind of a fun little  
13 picture.

14           We're still looking; right?

15           It's down there.

16           And next, there are other church establishments --  
17 there are other churches and establishments that serve  
18 alcohol, within 300 feet of one another, in the  
19 downtown area.

20           And so you can roll a little bit of that footage.  
21 One of them is St. Monica's. So let's see -- here it  
22 is -- St. Monica's coming towards the government  
23 building, tax collector, moving over towards the back  
24 entrance to Steamboat Willie's, which is still open and  
25 available. That's a lot shorter distance from ours.

1           Here is another one, The Holy Word Revival Center,  
2 all the way down to The Blues Club. That's a lot  
3 shorter distance, as well.

4           And then I believe we have one more. You have the  
5 property there, First Presbyterian, over to the Elks  
6 Club. That's also within 300. So there are several  
7 instances there are precedences for us to have churches  
8 and bars in proximity in the downtown area.

9           Incidentally, the concern earlier that was  
10 mentioned, that by putting a church on the 200 block,  
11 that that would somehow impede, you know, hotels or  
12 restaurants that wanted to come in and sell alcohol --  
13 you already have a church, First Presbyterian is right  
14 around the corner, it sits on the 100 block. I'm just  
15 adding to that. I'm not the only church on -- in that  
16 area.

17           So First Presbyterian has already been there.  
18 It's been there for a very long time. And so that  
19 would be something that would need to be considered, as  
20 well.

21           So it's my understanding that the point of this  
22 law, the 300 foot rule, is primarily to keep order.  
23 There is obvious precedence for this in the downtown  
24 area.

25           We have no desire to picket bars. We have no

1           desire to stop the sale or consumption of alcohol. We  
2           have no desire -- that's a waste of our time. We have  
3           other things that we need to be busy doing for the  
4           Kingdom of God to make Palatka a far better place.

5           So let's see. Get back to my notes, make sure I'm  
6           doing all right.

7           Oh, by the way, it says here: Local government  
8           recently lifted those parking restrictions, which we  
9           talked about earlier, concerning churches.

10          In essence, that's saying please come. We've  
11          lifted the restrictions. Come on down, be a part. And  
12          yet now we're saying no, no, no, no, don't, not this  
13          time. And so that doesn't seem right.

14          Let's see. Talked about that already. We talked  
15          about that already.

16          Okay. I guess one of the questions is where does  
17          The River Community Church stand concerning alcohol.  
18          And there's some scriptures there for you.

19          Psalms 60 simply says that God gave it to us.  
20          Praise the Lord. He's the one who has given it to us.  
21          But we're going to see how he wants us to use it.  
22          Because that's very important.

23          In John II it's the famous story of Jesus turning  
24          the water to wine. Does everybody know that story?  
25          What a great story.

1           And as you remember that story, the people who had  
2           been consuming the alcohol, they began to realize  
3           something, and they said what's going on here? You  
4           saved the best wine for last. And usually that's not  
5           what took place. People would start with the good  
6           stuff, and then when people got a little, you know,  
7           tipsy, they took the good stuff away, and brought out  
8           that other stuff. Right?

9           And so here Jesus, what he made, was the good  
10          stuff.

11          All kinds of conversations go on in churches about  
12          well, the wine must have been watered down. Where  
13          really, if you're a student of the Word, and you look  
14          at it, and you understand the harvest, about when the  
15          grapes would have been harvested, I'm sorry, but that  
16          wine was good for a reason. Halleluiah. It was just  
17          what God had intended it to be. It had gone through  
18          the fermentation process. Et cetera.

19          The question is how will you use the wine.  
20          Scripture also speaks to that, as well --

21          MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Perry, you know, I really don't  
22          want to interrupt you.

23          MR. PERRY: Yeah.

24          MR. CHAIRMAN: And it's wonderful, the sermon.

25          MR. PERRY: Amen.

1 MR. CHAIRMAN: I love good sermons and everything.

2 MR. PERRY: Right.

3 MR. CHAIRMAN: But we are looking at the 300 feet  
4 issue, the compatible issue.

5 MR. PERRY: Okay.

6 MR. CHAIRMAN: You've not talked about the  
7 membership, what all you'll have in the building, that  
8 kind of thing.

9 MR. PERRY: I'd be glad to.

10 All right. Would you like for me to skip the  
11 Bible part, or --

12 MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I really -- I hesitate to do  
13 that, because I don't want to hurt feelings.

14 MR. PERRY: Okay.

15 MR. CHAIRMAN: But I --

16 MR. PERRY: How about I will gloss over them. I  
17 just -- I won't even preach them. I'll just tell you  
18 -- reference them.

19 MR. CHAIRMAN: We're not here for a sermon -- as  
20 good as I like a good sermon.

21 MR. PERRY: Okay.

22 MR. CHAIRMAN: We're not here for that.

23 MR. PERRY: Okay. Great.

24 The bottom line, the bottom line of what the Bible  
25 says, is if you're going to drink, drink responsibly,

1 drink with great self-control. That's our stance as a  
2 church.

3 We believe that if you're going to consume  
4 alcohol, you should do that responsibly, and not be  
5 drunk. The Bible stands against drunkenness. So do  
6 we. But we're not going to go out and crack the whip,  
7 and say hey, you're drunk. What are you doing? No,  
8 that's not our job. That's the Holy Spirit's job.

9 Adults, as they consume alcohol, they need to  
10 realize that they're living before God. And so we're  
11 not going to be their own personal Holy Spirit.

12 All right. I'll move on from the sermon, and talk  
13 just briefly -- I was concerned just a little bit -- if  
14 you'll look in your packet, I did receive an email  
15 today -- and it may have been even yesterday. We can  
16 see what the date was.

17 But the City sent me an email, and I want to refer  
18 to it. It's after the support letters in your packet.  
19 All right. There it is.

20 THE CLERK: July 1st, and then again on July 2nd.

21 MR. PERRY: Correct. We'll start with the July  
22 1st reading. The email that was sent to me from Mr.  
23 Crowe's office simply says: Pastor Chad, it has  
24 recently come to our attention that your church is  
25 meeting regularly for worship services in the Quality

1 Inn on the riverfront, as noted in your website.

2 Like any other endeavor, a church is required to  
3 obtain a business license, and register with the City.  
4 Also, this location is in -- is similar to 211 St.  
5 Johns Avenue, in that it's within 300 feet of an  
6 alcohol-serving establishment, Beef 'O Brady's, and  
7 thus, requires Conditional Use approval.

8 In order to continue services at this location, we  
9 will need you to file for a Conditional Use approval,  
10 which will then let you operate on an interim basis at  
11 this location until the time of Planning Board  
12 consideration.

13 Otherwise, you will need to find another location  
14 that does not trigger the 300 foot rule.

15 Respectively, Thad Crowe, AICP.

16 And then the other one simply says: Pastor Chad,  
17 I would suggest that you go ahead, prior to tonight's  
18 meeting, and get with Pam to fill out a Conditional Use  
19 application for the Quality Inn location.

20 Once that's done, we can hold off any Code  
21 Enforcement activities, and report that you are  
22 complying with the Code through this application  
23 process.

24 If you are successful with the 211 St. Johns  
25 Avenue, we can then nullify that application, and

1 refund your fee.

2 If not -- and here's really the part I wanted to  
3 focus on -- if not, you intend to continue at the  
4 Quality Inn location, we can proceed with the  
5 application.

6 By the way, the Staff would approve -- or would  
7 support this, as it is not in the retail core of St.  
8 Johns Avenue.

9 I'll ask Pam to follow up on this email with a  
10 phone call.

11 Best regards, Thad Crowe, AICP.

12 My -- really, the concern here -- I'm not going to  
13 address most of it, but just what pertains to tonight.  
14 And that was when we're talking about being located  
15 within 300 feet of an alcohol-serving establishment,  
16 now I'm seeing that it would be permitted if -- as long  
17 as I just wanted in the core of downtown, that they  
18 would support it, that they would recommend approval.

19 And so it's concerning to me that just because  
20 we're talking about 211 St. Johns Avenue, here I am as  
21 a church, if I'm across the street over here at the  
22 Quality Inn, it looks like it would -- they would, you  
23 know, recommend. But because I'm on 211 St. Johns  
24 Avenue, which is also zoned for churches, it looks like  
25 it would be recommended for denial.

1           So I'm really struggling with that, because it  
2 looks like the issue is really not 300 feet to alcohol,  
3 the issue is something other. And we'll get to that in  
4 just a second. All right?

5           Next in my packet, Point Number Four, a retail  
6 background.

7           I grew up in a retail home -- and this kind of  
8 sets the stage for the fact that I have no intentions  
9 to harm downtown, but to do everything within my power  
10 to help revive it. And it lays that framework.

11          I grew up in a retail home. My Dad was in retail  
12 management for over 40 years. He managed McCrory's  
13 stores throughout Texas and Louisiana. He was known as  
14 a troubleshooter. My Dad was intentionally sent to  
15 failing stores in order to turn them around.

16          After a store became profitable for a year to 18  
17 months, the company would send him on, and the entire  
18 family, to the next one that needed to be turned  
19 around.

20          We enjoyed stops in San Antonio, Austin, Dallas,  
21 Baton Rouge, and more.

22          You could easily say that I grew up in a downtown  
23 McCrory's store, because I did.

24          I can remember the toy department, where you  
25 actually were able to try it before you buy it. The

1 abundance of overstock that seemed to reach all the way  
2 to the ceiling. The candy department, where individual  
3 pieces of hard and soft candy were less than a nickle.  
4 They had every kind of candy bar imaginable, bubble gum  
5 of every shape and size.

6 I remember Mr. Bertran, who ran the soda fountain.  
7 I'm still convinced that he served the best chocolate  
8 milkshakes on the entire planet.

9 I even spent my eighth birthday at the store,  
10 popped open one of those balloons that has a prize  
11 inside, hoping that we might win a banana split, or  
12 maybe a fresh piece of homemade pie.

13 My first real job was at a McCrory's store,  
14 McCrory's Five and Dime in downtown Baton Rouge,  
15 Louisiana -- which funny enough, was located on the  
16 corner of Third Street and Laurel, just three blocks  
17 from the mighty Mississippi River.

18 And so through that my Dad taught me everything  
19 that needed to happen in order to turn a retail store  
20 around, and create an environment that was conducive  
21 for growth.

22 I started as a janitor -- did floors, did windows,  
23 did stock room, did toilets -- you name it -- then  
24 moved up, all the way through, doing everything in the  
25 store possible. It's all written in here. So I would

1           like that to be included. But for the sake of time,  
2           I'm going to push fast forward. Okay?

3           MR. CHAIRMAN: Right. Because you might not be  
4           the Pastor next year, and all this wouldn't have  
5           anything to do with it.

6           MR. PERRY: Yeah.

7           Well, I'll be the Pastor next year.

8           MR. CHAIRMAN: There might be a church there, but  
9           I'm --

10          MR. PERRY: Yeah. Amen.

11          MR. CHAIRMAN: -- just saying, all the personal  
12          things are great.

13          MR. PERRY: Sure. That's another different thing  
14          about our church, too, is that it's -- there is not  
15          going to be a whole lot of turnover, unless I happen to  
16          die.

17          So unless I keel over, I'm going to be here for a  
18          very long time. So -- praise God for that.

19          MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, that's my worry, we're going  
20          to be here for a very long time.

21          MR. PERRY: Okay. Amen.

22          So we're in agreement that -- can I -- can I take  
23          my time, or are we hungry, or something?

24          MR. CHAIRMAN: No. Go ahead.

25          No. No. You go right ahead.

1           MR. PERRY: Okay. I'm just building a case for  
2 the fact that I'm about to get to the topic of dead  
3 zones.

4           MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

5           MR. PERRY: Okay?

6           And this is simply setting the stage for that  
7 area. That's all.

8           MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

9           MR. PERRY: And so in it he explained the  
10 importance of everything that was necessary to turn a  
11 store around.

12           After I learned everything in the store, once he  
13 was confident that I was going to do it his way,  
14 instead of my way, the sky was the limit. He knew he  
15 could trust me, and we were going to turn that store  
16 around together.

17           Here is the important part of the conversation,  
18 that -- one of the things was we parked in a public  
19 parking lot, a large lot, that was seven blocks away  
20 from the store. And as we were walking to the store,  
21 we would often talk about what it was -- would take to  
22 turn it around.

23           He said son, you know why we park way back there?  
24 We park way back there because what would it  
25 communicate to the customers if my car was out in front

1 of the store every day taking up one of their spots  
2 that they could use to get in and out?

3 He explained the important of foot traffic. He  
4 explained the importance of keeping your windows  
5 cleaned, and filled with wonderful displays that would  
6 bring people into the store, and help them to move  
7 through the store easily.

8 And in all of those different things he began to  
9 show me that other people were important, too. It  
10 wasn't just about downtown McCrory's, it was about  
11 Lerner's, it was about the Men's Dress -- the men's  
12 business shop, suit shop. It was about the lady's  
13 dress shop. It was about every store that was down  
14 there, that he was concerned about them, as well, that  
15 they could grow, just like McCrory's could grow.

16 In doing that it was far from, halleluiaah, a dead  
17 space.

18 There is more information that you're free to  
19 read. But with a vast background experience in retail,  
20 and coming up through the ranks of retail, I know all  
21 about a downtown business district, and I have no plans  
22 to kill it.

23 The building's been empty for 20 years. I want to  
24 bring it back to life. That's what I want to do. So  
25 let's get to talking about that.

1 MR. PETRUCCI: Can I ask you a question?

2 MR. PERRY: Yes.

3 MR. PETRUCCI: How will you relate -- that  
4 experience, how will you relate that to your church?

5 MR. PERRY: Amen.

6 MR. PETRUCCI: I think that's -- that's the whole  
7 thing. I think -- it sounds like --

8 MR. PERRY: It's the same --

9 MR. PETRUCCI: Sounds like -- it sounds like  
10 you've got an awesome church.

11 MR. PERRY: Yes.

12 MR. PETRUCCI: Obviously very supportive people.

13 MR. PERRY: Right.

14 MR. PETRUCCI: But to Mr. Holmes' point --

15 MR. PERRY: Sure.

16 MR. PETRUCCI: -- is I'm just -- I'm just trying  
17 to look at this --

18 MR. PERRY: Right.

19 MR. PETRUCCI: -- as okay, I understand what the  
20 -- what his report was, and all this stuff here.

21 MR. PERRY: Uh-huh.

22 MR. PETRUCCI: How will this -- how will that  
23 experience with -- in conjunction with your church,  
24 dissuade some of the concerns?

25 Because see, like for instance, to me the 300 foot

1 distance --

2 MR. PERRY: Uh-huh.

3 MR. PETRUCCI: -- is because churches and bars  
4 don't have -- they're on different wave lengths, as far  
5 as attitudes, and stuff like that.

6 And -- because you think it's -- because the Bible  
7 says you shouldn't get --

8 MR. PERRY: Drunk.

9 MR. PETRUCCI: -- drunk, but -- I'm sorry, but the  
10 Bible -- I mean the bar -- the whole purpose you go in  
11 there is to get drunk most of the time. And that's why  
12 they have the distance between the churches and the  
13 bars --

14 MR. PERRY: Right.

15 MR. PETRUCCI: -- is because they're two opposing  
16 ideas.

17 MR. PERRY: Right.

18 MR. PETRUCCI: And --

19 MR. PERRY: Can I speak to that just briefly? I  
20 was -- I've been in a lot of bars lately, which has  
21 been very interesting, by the way.

22 By anyway, you know, in my talk with the bar  
23 owners, they literally, we've discovered in many ways,  
24 are on the same page, because they put implements in  
25 place so that hopefully people don't get drunk.

1           They want them to have a good time. They want  
2           them to drink responsibly. And of course, you know,  
3           there has been a massive movement all across America,  
4           drink responsibly. Right?

5           So in that, I was in the bar, there was music  
6           playing, I was enjoying the music. There was quite a  
7           bit of cussing going on. I didn't speak to that.  
8           That's none of my business. I'm there to enjoy the  
9           environment. I was there to speak to the owners. I  
10          was there, you know, to maybe play a little pool. But  
11          I wasn't there to shut the place down.

12          MR. PETRUCCI: But see, my concern is like, for  
13          instance, every Friday -- the -- once a month, they  
14          have the downtown thing.

15          MR. PERRY: Great.

16          MR. PETRUCCI: And they have the bands playing,  
17          and it's loud and stuff.

18          MR. PERRY: Wonderful.

19          MR. PETRUCCI: How is that going to be integrated  
20          with your service?

21          Say you have a service on Friday? How is that --  
22          how are you going to contend with --

23          MR. PERRY: Right.

24          MR. PETRUCCI: And I think that's -- that's the  
25          whole gist, is nobody -- there -- I don't think there

1 is anybody who doesn't like a church.

2 MR. PERRY: Amen.

3 MR. PETRUCCI: Okay? But the thing is that that  
4 environment, how is it -- my -- my Wife, she volunteers  
5 at the bingo hall.

6 MR. PERRY: Uh-huh.

7 MR. PETRUCCI: And I'm picturing if you're having  
8 Wednesday evening, you know, fellowship night --

9 MR. PERRY: Right.

10 MR. PETRUCCI: -- on Wednesday night that whole  
11 area is full of cars.

12 MR. PERRY: I've been there --

13 MR. PETRUCCI: Yeah.

14 MR. PERRY: -- every peak hour.

15 MR. PETRUCCI: So --

16 MR. PERRY: Plenty of parking for everyone. It's  
17 not an issue.

18 MR. PETRUCCI: There isn't.

19 MR. PERRY: Oh, there is.

20 MR. PETRUCCI: I'm telling you, I go there all the  
21 time. And I --

22 MR. PERRY: Well, we can talk about parking, if  
23 you like. I mean the Staff Report's already signed off  
24 that parking is not an issue. But I would be glad to  
25 talk to you about the evaluation of parking, because I

1 have thoroughly evaluated it.

2 MR. CHAIRMAN: Could we let him move on with his  
3 presentation?

4 MR. PETRUCCI: Okay. I didn't -- but I mean I  
5 guess my whole thing is I'm hoping that as you're going  
6 through these --

7 MR. PERRY: Yes.

8 MR. PETRUCCI: -- you will tie them to the --

9 MR. PERRY: I would be glad to.

10 MR. PETRUCCI: -- point, like we're trying to  
11 decide --

12 MR. PERRY: Yes.

13 MR. PETRUCCI: -- is this -- is this -- is this  
14 the right fit --

15 MR. PERRY: Absolutely.

16 MR. PETRUCCI: -- for that area.

17 MR. PERRY: I'll skip ahead, to give you some of  
18 those, and then I'll come back and finish some of this  
19 later.

20 To answer your specific question, the things that  
21 I learned in a retail store I have every intention of  
22 applying to the location here.

23 For instance, window displays -- what we'd do with  
24 those windows, we would love to come in and put some  
25 beautiful pictures of the skyline of Palatka. We would

1 love to make it very attractive, where people are going  
2 to keep walking down the street.

3 We don't want anyone to stop walking and turn back  
4 because of our location. We want a location where  
5 people say, you know, I'm headed to The River Community  
6 Church, and while I'm there, I'm going to discover  
7 everything else that's in Downtown Palatka. That's the  
8 goal. And so we're different in this way, as well.

9 Not only are we going to work on curb appeal, we  
10 have no intentions of only being there on Wednesday and  
11 Sunday. We're going to be open seven days a week. And  
12 we have, you know, hours in the middle of the day, from  
13 10:00 to 3:00. And there may have been a  
14 misunderstanding when I put the word office hours --  
15 maybe there was a misunderstanding about what that  
16 means.

17 10:00 to 3:00 means the building is open, and  
18 everybody is welcome. And so here is how we're  
19 different: When most people think about churches, they  
20 think about a pew, lots of pews, and they think about a  
21 pulpit. And they think that's it, that's a church.  
22 That's not us at all.

23 We're going to be intentional to create multiple  
24 environments within that one large space.

25 For instance, unintentionally, but when you go to

1 church, people split the family -- children, you go  
2 over here, youth over here, senior adults over there --  
3 singles, oh, you're weird, you got to be over here.  
4 You know? All those different strange things that go  
5 on in church life. That's not us. We want to keep the  
6 family together.

7 So here is some of the environments that we want  
8 to intentionally produce, that's also going to add to  
9 people coming off the street to enjoy this  
10 establishment -- for instance, we have all of these  
11 ideas that we want to further development -- we talk  
12 about in the packet it may take us, you know, 12 months  
13 to get going -- it's not going to happen tomorrow. So  
14 it's a process.

15 Things like developing a livingroom environment,  
16 and you can enjoy livingroom; a coffee house  
17 environment, and you can enjoy that environment; a  
18 kitchen environment, where you have islands that you  
19 can sit around on barstools; indoor playground for  
20 children, where they can enjoy the playground in air  
21 conditioning space; an area for ping pong tables for  
22 the youth to enjoy with some -- maybe some booths and  
23 some high tops, that they can hang out in, and drink  
24 coke, and do whatever it is that they do with their  
25 thumbs all the time. Right?

1           And then big -- big round tables, where people can  
2           come in, and if they want to study, or they want to sit  
3           and relax, they can open their Bible, or read a book,  
4           or whatever it is that they read. They can come in off  
5           the street, they can enjoy the AC, they can get some  
6           cold water. We're going to have a wonderful,  
7           worshipful environment in there, but if they want any  
8           type of help, they can ask for it. We'll be glad to  
9           help them.

10           If they don't, they can still enjoy the  
11           environment. We're going to have Bible studies going  
12           on all different times of the day.

13           What's interesting about us is we're going to  
14           worship in that same manner. People can choose  
15           whatever environment they want to sit in during the  
16           worship service, during the Bible study. We're not  
17           doing any segmentation to say you have to be here, you  
18           have to be there. So it's a very different place.  
19           Lots of media, lots of technology. Again, far from  
20           traditional.

21           In that there's a big resource area, where we'll  
22           have, you know, books and tapes and CD's, and other  
23           things that are available. Those are all ideas that  
24           have to be further developed. Because I want to work  
25           with the City, I don't want to just go off and do my

1 own thing over there at 211.

2 So I realize that some of these things -- if I  
3 open up another area, I may have to open up another  
4 business. And that's okay. We would go through that  
5 process of having what was needed in the area, so we  
6 could produce a thriving, downtown, you know,  
7 atmosphere.

8 We're doing nothing to kill it. We want to revive  
9 it. We want to use all the curb appeal, all the foot  
10 traffic, the parking.

11 I don't know who you're going to find -- we've  
12 already had a parking issue over here at the Quality  
13 Inn. We've told our people -- we've promoted it on the  
14 website -- be respectful of the Quality Inn, be  
15 respectful of Beef 'O Brady's, you park and you walk.  
16 And it's been working wonderfully. And we desire to do  
17 the same thing.

18 I've already been communicating to the folks, if  
19 you're coming for a ten minute stay, you can use the  
20 spots that are right in front of our building. Don't  
21 take up everybody else's spots in their building. But  
22 if you're coming for an hour or more, park and walk.  
23 You'll be here for an hour. You can walk back to your  
24 car.

25 So I don't know who's going to do that better than

1 a church.

2 If there was some retail store coming in, I think  
3 it would be first come, first serve. You know? I'm  
4 going to park wherever I want to park. So that's to  
5 answer some of your questions.

6 I'll answer more of those in just a minute, but  
7 that gives you a -- hopefully, a little taste.

8 And so this next issue is Point Number Five, in  
9 the creation of dead space.

10 The old McCrory building located at 211 St. Johns  
11 Avenue has been vacant for over 20 years. It  
12 effectively closed in 1992. You can refer to the  
13 archive information that I've put in your packet from  
14 the Public Library that talks a little bit about that,  
15 if you would like to. It's there for your perusal, but  
16 I'm not going to read it for you.

17 Is everybody okay with that? All right.

18 Next it says can we really grasp the value and  
19 length of 20 years?

20 I don't know about you, but for some of us older  
21 people, myself included, I can think about 20 years  
22 ago, ain't no big thing. But I think for some of us,  
23 20 years, we really need to think about it for a bit.

24 I happen to have a son who is 20 years old. He  
25 was born in 1992, the same time that McCrory closed.

1           In that amount of time, got out of diapers,  
2           learned to walk, learned to talk, went to school,  
3           graduated from Kindergarten, Eighth Grade, high school,  
4           he's working four different jobs. He's been promoted  
5           to an Assistant Managership. He's now even concerned  
6           about what the future holds. Imagine that. A son  
7           that's concerned about what the future might hold, and  
8           providing for a family in the future. And he's doing  
9           his part to work full-time, and go to college  
10          part-time.

11           He's -- you know, 20 years, that's a long time.  
12          That kind of gives you an idea.

13           The store's been closed for 20 years. We've lost  
14          a whole generation. There's a generation that's never  
15          seen the McCrory building alive at all. All they know  
16          about the McCrory building is there's nothing in it.  
17          And we want to change that. We want to bring it back  
18          to life.

19           So interests and concerns from the City, they made  
20          mention of some of it. Number One, it says in the  
21          Staff Report, which has already been alluded to, that  
22          somehow, some way, we might be responsible for a  
23          pedestrian dead zone.

24           We have no intentions of a pedestrian dead zone.  
25          That's the farthestest from our ideas or scope.

1           Another one from Mr. Rudd's letter that he wrote,  
2 he uses the phrase that somehow, some way, we might  
3 create a permanent, very large vacancy on the 200  
4 block.

5           Again, that's the farthestest from the truth. We  
6 have no intentions of that whatsoever.

7           The building's been dead for over 20 years. We  
8 want to change it. We want to better it. We want to  
9 bring it back to life with foot traffic, curb appeal,  
10 and much, much more.

11           I don't think we can kill it. I think it was  
12 probably already dead.

13           Other current happenings concerning potential dead  
14 space. Again, just for your information, just last  
15 week our local government purchased more property on  
16 the 300 block for additional -- they call it office  
17 space. I believe that's classified as dead space. And  
18 so there is some of that, the barber shop.

19           And then also the consideration of the Capital  
20 City Bank building, right across the street from us.  
21 That, too, being considered for additional office  
22 space. I believe that's dead space that's in the  
23 downtown area. We're not creating dead space. We're  
24 creating a live space where people can come, and they  
25 can shop, and they can eat, and they can have a great

1 time.

2 That they can come to all the festivals, and have  
3 a pleasant place to experience at 211 St. Johns Avenue  
4 -- be a part of the Blue Crab, the Azalea, the 4th of  
5 July -- my goodness, the street parties -- everything  
6 that's involved, that we -- it would be a thriving and  
7 happening place, where we could partner with the City.

8 Another just brief story for you, that has to do  
9 with recovery, and coming back.

10 One of the reasons why our church is the way it  
11 is, is that I went through Hurricane Katrina -- I'm  
12 going to go real fast, I'm not going to go slow -- that  
13 experience -- I'm not even going to show you a bunch of  
14 slides of devastation. Aren't you glad and thankful?  
15 Praise God; right?

16 That experience showed me that church isn't about  
17 being inside a building, it's about being out in the  
18 community. It's about making a difference in the  
19 community. It's about creating an environment where  
20 everybody can enjoy it, have a great time, and if they  
21 need help spiritually, they can get it.

22 If they don't want help spiritually -- and you  
23 can't force them -- I promise, I've tried that a long  
24 time ago. It doesn't work. All right?

25 So through that my sister-in-law was a part of the

1 recovery team for the State of Louisiana. It really  
2 caused me to search out this word recovery, and really  
3 gain, maybe, a new perspective on it, to turn around an  
4 area, and recover an area.

5 That word recovery, again, I'm not going to get  
6 into a Bible lesson, but in II Timothy, Chapter Two,  
7 recovery is simple -- you somehow, some way, are  
8 currently covered by the wrong thing, and you need to  
9 be recovered by the right thing.

10 And in our opinion, that is Jesus Christ, the Son  
11 of a Living God. And once he is your covering, life  
12 changes for the better.

13 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Amen.

14 MR. PERRY: And areas begin to thrive. And so we  
15 want to recover Downtown Palatka, and do great things  
16 there.

17 Also, we don't take this lightly. We've done an  
18 extensive evaluation. Being a year old, and you're  
19 planting a church in a certain place, you don't want to  
20 reinvent the wheel.

21 I've done extensive study with every service  
22 organization in the area -- I know there's been some  
23 concern, where people have said are you going to start  
24 feeding the homeless at 211 St. Johns Avenue?

25 Let me just say for the record, no, we have no

1 intentions of serving the homeless meals at 211 St.  
2 Johns Avenue. We're well aware -- we serve at all  
3 these different organizations. We know where they're  
4 located. Will we assist them at their location? You  
5 better believe it. We're going to go and assist them,  
6 and help them at their location. But we -- we would  
7 never dream of doing that to our neighbors in downtown.  
8 We would never dream of hurting businesses downtown.  
9 We're not going to have functions that would detract  
10 from business. We're going to have functions that are  
11 a blessing to business.

12 And so hopefully, that's answered some of your  
13 concerns.

14 In that evaluation, we also began to look for  
15 buildings.

16 For the last ten months we've looked for  
17 buildings. I think I've been inside every empty space  
18 in Palatka. And let me tell you, there's a lot of  
19 them. There's a lot of them.

20 If there's a concern -- earlier it was mentioned  
21 that the best size storefront is about a 25 foot  
22 storefront, that that's one that will thrive. Got lots  
23 of them right over there, 25 foot store fronts.  
24 They'll do a great job.

25 A building of our size requires a unique tenant.

1           And we believe that we're that unique tenant that can  
2           really do something with that building, and produce an  
3           amazing place for the City, and for our church at the  
4           same time.

5                     In that evaluation we fell in love with the  
6           McCrorry building. A little nostalgic for me, because I  
7           was raised in one -- but the size of it is perfect.  
8           The aspect of its one large space, where we can create  
9           those environments, that's perfect. The fact that it  
10          already passes so many of those things that were  
11          mentioned in Mr. Crowe's report, that's awesome, that's  
12          less that we have to do concerning utilities, and other  
13          things.

14                    And so we're excited that there's already sewer,  
15          there's already all those different things. It's great  
16          for us. There's already parking. There are things  
17          that are such a blessing to us. It looks like the  
18          perfect fit for The River.

19                    You know, as we've fallen in love with that  
20          location, we've also fallen in love with our -- with  
21          our owner. I feel like her Pastor already. And it's  
22          been good to get to know her. We've sent letters to  
23          her, and she's been a blessing back to us. So we've  
24          already begun to establish a good relation with our  
25          landlady. And we're blessed.

1           We're not here to be a detraction, we're here to  
2           be a blessing.

3           And so as I begin to kind of turn the corner, and  
4           wrap this up, just the fact that we've already had the  
5           building to do cleaning, and painting, and we've turned  
6           the power on, people have already begun to walk by and  
7           ask questions.

8           They've already begun to peak in, and say what's  
9           going on? And we leave the door unlocked when we're  
10          doing those things, and they come in the building, and  
11          as they stick their head in, they say can we come in?  
12          And we say sure, come on it.

13          You know what they say? The lights are on in  
14          here. The air's on in here. What's going on in this  
15          place?

16          We start to tell them about the church, and what  
17          our vision is, and they're excited about that -- at  
18          least the ones that have come to stick their head in  
19          the door -- and they begin to say we wish you the best  
20          of luck. It is so nice to see people coming into the  
21          downtown area, and helping to bring it back to life.

22          You know what else they say? We'll be back. We  
23          want to try your church out. It seems different.

24          Lots of people have tried to steer me to other  
25          locations. They've said you know, we've got empty

1 church buildings. Why don't you pick one of those?  
2 You know, it seems like it'd be a lot less, you know,  
3 effort. Just pick one of those buildings that's  
4 already open.

5 I said look, do you know how many people have been  
6 hurt by a church, and they'll never come back to the  
7 doors of a church again? If it looks like a church, if  
8 it smells like a church, they're not going to come  
9 anywhere near it. But if I have the McCrory building,  
10 guess what, they'll have an experience like they've  
11 never experienced before, and the love of God, and the  
12 word of God, and the spirit of God will be able to  
13 change their life.

14 We want to be a good neighbor. We want to  
15 participate in all the downtown activities.

16 What you mentioned before, every downtown has an  
17 ebb and flow. There is no doubt. So when you  
18 mentioned activities that are happening, we don't have  
19 to compete with an activity, we can participate with  
20 it.

21 If they've got something big going on on Friday  
22 night, and we don't want to go participate with them,  
23 we don't have to compete with it, that's not what it's  
24 about, we want to be a blessing. So for that reason,  
25 our Friday activities we've already scheduled for in

1 the morningtime.

2 We already know sometimes there's Friday night  
3 stuff. We want to make sure our schedule is open so we  
4 can either participate, or we're out of the way so they  
5 can have the space. So we've scheduled our Friday  
6 mornings for the Bible Study, instead of Friday nights,  
7 to do that intentionally.

8 Some of those Friday mornings have already  
9 happened at another location downtown, and those  
10 ladies, after Bible Study, they go shopping, they go  
11 eating -- it's not a one stop destination.

12 I don't know about you, but after I go to church,  
13 I find someplace to eat. And our people do, as well.  
14 Same thing, is they come to Bible studies during the  
15 daytime.

16 If they know what's downtown, if they know that  
17 there's two different hair shops on the 200 block, if  
18 they know that There's a Touch of Heaven Lady's  
19 Boutique, if they know that there's a dog grooming  
20 store, if they know that there's an architect place, if  
21 they know that there's a fitness center, if they know  
22 -- and the list goes on and on and on.

23 Once they come to The River Community Church, and  
24 they see what's downtown, not only are they going to  
25 shop there, they're going to come back and bring some

1 friends with them.

2 We've already brought people in for conferences.  
3 We're going to keep doing it, we're not going to change  
4 now.

5 We want to do special events once a quarter.  
6 Here's some things that maybe you haven't ever heard  
7 about: Have you ever heard about Don't Go To Church  
8 Sunday? Anybody ever heard about that? Here is what  
9 Don't Go To Church Sunday is all about: Instead of  
10 going to church, and sitting through another message,  
11 and another worship service, everybody shows up, and  
12 you do something for the community. That's what I'm  
13 talking about. We want to make a difference.

14 So whether we're doing something for the  
15 community, or we're scheduling a conference, or a  
16 special event -- we would love to host people to come  
17 in to do special worship nights, special entertainment  
18 ideas. It would be great.

19 Again, it would have to progress -- this is just  
20 an idea. We'd have to develop it, we'd have to work  
21 with the City. It'd be great one day to pull off a  
22 diner theater -- you know, do some special stuff.

23 We're building, I believe, the best stage in the  
24 downtown area. I don't think there's any other stage  
25 that's going to be like it. And it can be used not

1 just for us, that it'll be a facility with the proper  
2 lighting, with the proper technology, that it might  
3 even be a blessing for others to use. But we want to  
4 be a blessing to the community.

5 Let me check and see if there is anything in my  
6 notes.

7 All right. Let's push that button. Yep, I know,  
8 I left you. We've been in a meeting over here, so I  
9 apologize for that.

10 Some other footage, church and community, which  
11 we've been talking a lot about. We are The River  
12 Community Church, and we want to be a part.

13 Here is some of those work project days, where  
14 it's Don't Go To Church Day, that I was telling you  
15 about, where you go and help.

16 Here is a shot of some businesses we've already  
17 supported. We've spent thousands of dollars at the  
18 Quality Inn. We've spent thousands of dollars at Beef  
19 'O Brady's. We've helped Subway tremendously. And we  
20 do our business at the Goodyear place here, The Super  
21 Service Center. We do business with Staples all the  
22 time. Every week I'm in Staples. We do business at  
23 the Home Depot. We do business at Dunkin Donuts. Can  
24 you believe that? We bring donuts to church. It's a  
25 good time.

1 All right. You know I could stay up here and talk  
2 for probably a whole lot longer.

3 Do you have any questions for me?

4 MR. CHAIRMAN: Probably not. We will -- we may  
5 have questions later.

6 MR. PERRY: Okay.

7 MR. CHAIRMAN: We're going to give somebody else a  
8 chance to --

9 MR. PERRY: That would be great. If you have  
10 questions, I'm staying.

11 MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm sure we'll --

12 MR. PERRY: Ask me whatever you want.

13 MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm sure we'll have you back.

14 MR. PERRY: Thank you so much for your time.

15 MR. CHAIRMAN: Is there those here that would  
16 be -- that would like to speak in support of -- in  
17 opposition to. I'm sorry. And I'll have you back.

18 MRS. BURK: Can I say one more thing?

19 I -- that's --

20 MR. CHAIRMAN: You'll have to come forward,  
21 please.

22 MRS. BURK: That building will not -- just because  
23 it's a church -- be taken off the tax rolls.

24 MR. PERRY: Right.

25 MRS. BURK: Because it's not a non-profit. It is

1 in their organization. But I'm allowing --

2 MR. PERRY: I'm leasing it, not buying it.

3 MRS. BURK: Yes.

4 MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, ma'am.

5 MR. PERRY: It stays on the tax roll.

6 MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

7 MRS. BURK: I just wanted to tell you that. And  
8 I've been the one that's been paying all the taxes on  
9 those vacant buildings.

10 And there was first -- when I first moved here in  
11 '03, there was a -- a parking ordinance, that they held  
12 my fee, too.

13 MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

14 MRS. BURK: They let little places go in, but  
15 nothing for the big places.

16 MR. PERRY: And all those taxes are up to date;  
17 correct?

18 MRS. BURK: Yes. I've never been late on  
19 anything. And I -- I hope you give them a chance,  
20 really.

21 MR. CHAIRMAN: We're going to hear from some other  
22 folks, and we'll make a decision in a bit.

23 MRS. BURK: Okay.

24 MR. PERRY: Thank you, Mrs. Burk.

25 MR. CHAIRMAN: Is there opposition?

1           Please come forward.

2           Your name and address for the record, please.

3           MR. RUDD: My name is Charles Rudd. I'm the  
4 Palatka MainStreet Manager, 205 North Second Street.

5           And first I wanted to let you know I'm here on  
6 behalf of my Board of Directors, but also speaking in  
7 my -- as a professional. I've been a Main Street  
8 Manager, Downtown Revitalization Professional, for 16  
9 years.

10           Palatka is the fourth community I've had the  
11 pleasure of serving in. And I love my work. I love  
12 studying downtowns. And I network with probably at  
13 least 1,500 other MainStreet professionals across the  
14 country. We gather every year nationally for  
15 conferences. We gather at the State level. And we  
16 talk about issues of downtown.

17           And I want to talk to you about some of the things  
18 that I look at in revitalizing a downtown, and one of  
19 the reasons this issue -- we request that you deny the  
20 variance.

21           When we're trying to build a retail corridor --  
22 and I've only been here al- -- approaching two years --  
23 but there have been a lot of people working very hard  
24 for a lot of years -- the MainStreet program, alone,  
25 has been here since 1989 -- to revive the retail

1 corridor, St. Johns Avenue.

2 And so one of the things we look at -- that I've  
3 looked at -- is critical mass.

4 Downtown Palatka, currently there are  
5 approximately a hundred, what I would call spaces, on  
6 St. Johns Avenue. And I say about a hundred, because  
7 there are more spaces, but some businesses occupy more  
8 than one space. So there is about a hundred. And I'd  
9 say right now we're about 25 percent vacant on St.  
10 Johns Avenue.

11 Of the other spaces that are occupied, 50 percent  
12 of those are non-retail businesses. They're  
13 businesses, and they're occupied, but it's non-retail.  
14 That leaves about 25 percent retail in our retail  
15 corridor.

16 And one of the things I know in particular that  
17 developers look at when considering a new project,  
18 there is actually a critical mass that's required for a  
19 project to be viable -- before they'll build a plaza,  
20 let's say. They need -- and I don't remember -- it's  
21 been a while -- the number's either just below 200,000  
22 square feet, or -- just below. But there's a critical  
23 mass. But if they can't establish that -- and that  
24 critical mass allows them to attract an audience, and  
25 hold it for at least four hours -- a shopping -- that

1 people can browse from shop to shop.

2 So over the years in doing this work -- and I  
3 always go for that critical mass.

4 The last community I served in was -- had a very  
5 low vacancy rate, but it was almost predominantly  
6 service and professional. And so the retail struggled.  
7 Retail needs critical mass. It needs clustering. It  
8 needs to feed off each other. For shops, when they  
9 come down, they browse, they walk in. And our  
10 Downtown, if you think about it, is really shaped like  
11 a barb-bell, the middle is literally predominantly, the  
12 400, 500, parts of the 600 block, are all service and  
13 office professional.

14 So our retail nodes are on each end. And those  
15 nodes need to be strengthened, and work towards each  
16 other.

17 So over the years, as we begin to progress, how do  
18 we fill the vacancies -- if we were to fill all 25  
19 percent, including this space, with retail, we would  
20 still only be 50 percent retail. We're still not  
21 there. We need at least 75 percent of our downtown to  
22 be a mix of retail/restaurant/entertainment.

23 So it's very important -- every space is  
24 important, to create -- not only to get the retail, but  
25 to cluster them, to create an environment. And Staff

1 spoke to the retail/pedestrian-oriented environment.  
2 That's very important for those shops in the 200 block  
3 to have that ability of those shops next-door around  
4 them to create a cluster for people to come and shop.

5 So that's a very important issue.

6 And so to me every space is important. Every  
7 space is needed for retail. And then eventually, we'll  
8 move into converting what's currently not in retail  
9 that's in use will convert to professional -- or to  
10 retail. I'm sorry.

11 One of our indicators in downtown -- that a  
12 downtown is in distress and troubled is what we call  
13 storefront church. Storefront church comes in because  
14 rents are lower. It's an indication where rents are  
15 low enough where it's viable for a church to go in  
16 there, close off the windows, and use the space -- the  
17 space is in use. Just like an office.

18 In offices, the spaces are in use, there are  
19 people working there. They do go to lunch. There's  
20 good lunch traffic. But it doesn't contribute to the  
21 retail corridor.

22 And downtown -- the Central Business District is  
23 very large, there's lots of space. We have already ten  
24 churches downtown. There's lots of room for churches,  
25 office use, professional use. It's all good. It's all

1 important to the mix. We have a mixed use downtown,  
2 with residential, as well. But we need to have a  
3 retail core.

4 In my professional opinion, it's very important to  
5 have that retail corridor. It's not Reid Street. It's  
6 going to be St. Johns Avenue. It's a walkable, retail  
7 corridor -- restaurant and retail. But then builds and  
8 supports the surrounding, where the offices -- if  
9 someone came to me today and said I want to put in an  
10 office, or a call center, or service -- I'd say oh, let  
11 me show you around.

12 I would show them everywhere downtown, except St.  
13 Johns Avenue, unless it was upstairs. Upstairs is a  
14 great location for an office, let's say, downtown.

15 So that's our concern.

16 And my concern is trying to preserve retail, the  
17 environment, the pedestrian, the walkability for  
18 downtown. It's not about the church's particular use.  
19 It's that location in our retail core.

20 Thank you.

21 MR. CHAIRMAN: Any questions before we -- if not,  
22 I'm sure we'll have you come back.

23 MRS. BURK: I have a comment to make about that --  
24 about him.

25 MR. CHAIRMAN: Please come forward.

1           MRS. BURK: I own all those -- all those rest of  
2 those vacant buildings that are large. I have spent a  
3 fortune advertising -- in St. Augustine, in  
4 Jacksonville, all over here. And they don't want to  
5 pay the rent that they could put in a -- I've had so  
6 many no's. They love the building, but -- and they  
7 won't come -- it's a dead downtown, and that's why they  
8 won't come and rent the bigger stores. It's easy to  
9 get little stores, and so forth.

10           But I've been here -- well, I moved here in 2003,  
11 and there's been other MainStreet Managers, but not one  
12 of them has ever got in touch with me -- and I live  
13 five houses down from the -- used to be the Holiday  
14 Inn, now it's the Quality Inn, and nobody has called  
15 me. And I don't work, I'm retired. And nobody has  
16 called me in to talk to me -- including Charles Rudd.

17           And I wanted him to come, and went down with Sam  
18 Deputy, had dinner with him -- I paid for his dinner  
19 twice -- to try to get him to apply in Palatka. And he  
20 acts like he don't know me. He acts like this hasn't  
21 happened.

22           MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, ma'am.

23           MRS. BURK: But I just hope that I can rent this  
24 building, and give it a chance, for goodness sakes.

25           If the doom and gloom is that they're not going to

1 get out -- they all eat, and they all shop for  
2 presents, and so forth -- so --

3 MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

4 MRS. BURK: -- I hope that you give them a chance.

5 MR. CHAIRMAN: If others would like to come  
6 forward, please.

7 You know to state your name and address; don't  
8 you?

9 MR. TAYLOR: Yes, sir.

10 Bob Taylor, 710 St. Johns Avenue. Palatka,  
11 Florida.

12 Good afternoon, Ladies and Gentlemen.

13 Mr. Crowe noted that the concentration of churches  
14 in Downtown is higher than in the peripheral area. He  
15 said that there were about nine.

16 He noted that church attendance and use will --  
17 will basically be off peak, and the storefront will be  
18 vacant when retail is active.

19 The expanse of this apparently vacant storefront  
20 can be an impediment to the retail foot traffic. A 300  
21 foot separation required by zoning will eventually --  
22 or will essentially, rather, prevent development of  
23 restaurants or alcohol-serving establishments on St.  
24 Johns Avenue within a 300 foot radius.

25 It's not compatible with the development in retail

1 in downtown, and it would be essentially a dead zone at  
2 that location.

3 The McCrory building was retail, and should be  
4 returned to retail. It could be subdivided. That  
5 would enhance its opportunity for retail.

6 Zoning was established late in Palatka and Putnam  
7 County, and certainly there are some inconsistencies.  
8 But it has been established to protect all entities,  
9 and a Conditional Use, or a Variance, seeks to alter  
10 that.

11 If the issue were reversed, and an alcohol-serving  
12 establishment wanted a Variance, how would that be  
13 received?

14 The location is important. Mr. Rudd pointed out  
15 that a concerted effort has been made by the City of  
16 Palatka and the Palatka MainStreet to establish a  
17 viable retail core, where retail and pedestrians can  
18 walk up and down the street, and visit the retail  
19 shops.

20 I think I heard him say just a second ago how  
21 important it is to have a pedestrian corridor with a  
22 lot of retail businesses which would enhance the  
23 development of this core.

24 I'm not against churches. I'm a Christian. And  
25 I love God, and I serve God. And I think that all of

1 us have a place in our heart for Jesus.

2 So in that respect, I -- you know, I applaud their  
3 efforts to establish a church, and I think it's a  
4 creative idea. But I just think the location is not  
5 the right location, and I would recommend that you  
6 reject this request for a Conditional Use or a  
7 Variance.

8 Thank you.

9 MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

10 Who -- someone else?

11 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Be kind.

12 AUDIENCE MEMBER: I will.

13 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Thank you.

14 MR. ALTMAN: My name is Alex Altman. I live at  
15 5256 Silver Lake Drive, Palatka, Florida.

16 As Mr. Holmes so uniquely put, and accurately,  
17 this is about being in proximity to a bar. It's about,  
18 and as you so uniquely put, the potential for distress  
19 and disorder.

20 There is no potential for distress and disorder.

21 He has personally gone and spoken to the  
22 institutions that are being addressed. They have no  
23 problem. That is the issue. That is the issue,  
24 period.

25 The only reason why we're discussing any of this

1 other stuff is because the Director over here has  
2 brought into account that because this is a specific  
3 variance because of a particular loophole, that we need  
4 to bureaucratically go through point by point and  
5 establish why this has viability.

6 And he has gone point by point, and established  
7 why this has viability.

8 And the other two people, MainStreet -- and I'm  
9 sorry, I forgot your name --

10 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Taylor.

11 MR. ALTMAN: Yes, Mr. Taylor.

12 He did not apparently listen.

13 I hope that you guys have been listening.

14 Because he did not even take into account the  
15 differentials between what he was saying, and what they  
16 assume was going to happen. They have not done their  
17 due diligence. They have not paid attention to what  
18 this church is, as opposed to what typical churches  
19 are.

20 They talk about typical churches. They talk about  
21 studies from different regions.

22 This is a unique case. And the purpose of a Board  
23 is to look at each, individual, unique case.

24 That is why he spoke for the length that he did.

25 That he why he brought out the points that he did. And

1           that is why this is different than the standard,  
2           typical use.

3           The points that have been brought forward are  
4           based on history, based on different circumstances, and  
5           they have no application here -- especially since the  
6           only thing that should be considered is proximity to a  
7           bar, for which there is no issue, because it has been  
8           addressed and signed off on.

9           That's all I have to say.

10          MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

11          MR. HOLMES: Mr. Chairman?

12          MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes?

13          MR. HOLMES: Just a note.

14          I never mentioned the word bar in my comments.  
15          And maybe it could be of help, maybe not. But the only  
16          -- the issue is not just proximity to bar. The issues  
17          are basically two-fold -- one is proximity to bars --  
18          that's the 300 foot issue that's been spoken of. But  
19          the other issue is compatibility with surrounding land  
20          uses, which is not necessarily just an issue with  
21          regard to whether or not there are bars in the area.

22          So my comments were, and will continue to be, that  
23          this is a land use decision to be made, not a -- not a  
24          question of whether people are in favor or or against  
25          the applicant -- whatever the applicant might be. That

1 was the whole point I was attempting to get across.

2 And as I have said many times in the past, this --  
3 this Board isn't set up to judge the good or bad of the  
4 applicant, or express an opinion about whether you like  
5 or dislike whatever activity it is that's being  
6 proposed. It's, under our system, designed -- our  
7 system is designed to try to guarantee that the same  
8 factors are applied to consideration of each use, so  
9 that each person knows when they come before the Board  
10 that the same criteria will be used in evaluating their  
11 request, and that emotions won't play a role in it --  
12 and that someone's particular likes or dislikes won't  
13 play a role in it -- but instead, that you'll look to  
14 the issues that the Code establishes as those that you  
15 should consider in deciding in favor of or against a  
16 request.

17 So just for that correction --

18 MR. DIRECTOR: Thank you, Mr. Don.

19 MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, sir.

20 MR. DIRECTOR: I'd like to follow up with what Mr.  
21 Holmes said.

22 I want to make sure that I'm clear on the distance  
23 issue.

24 The distance -- the 300 foot distance is what puts  
25 this use into the Conditional Use category.

1           Once it's in the Conditional Use category, you  
2           have to look at it very specifically, in light of the  
3           criteria that you have that are in the Code --  
4           including compatibility -- including parking, and  
5           everything else.

6           So the distance of the bar is just a mechanism  
7           that turns this into a Conditional Use. And I think  
8           that's an important point here.

9           MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

10          MR. HOLMES: And it does get a little stilted  
11          sometimes. But that's a very good point that -- that  
12          Thad made, and maybe bears a little bit more  
13          discussion.

14          So as not to overstate it, the 300 foot issue is  
15          what brought them here. It's what required them to  
16          come in front of the Board to get a Conditional Use,  
17          the fact that they were going to locate within 300 foot  
18          of a ba- -- 300 feet of a bar.

19          But once they are required to get a Conditional  
20          Use, the only issue then isn't whether or not they're  
21          compatible with the bar.

22          Then once you have to apply for a Conditional Use,  
23          regardless of why you have to apply for it -- if your  
24          use is only permitted by Conditional Use -- you know,  
25          some uses are not permissible by right. They are

1           permissible only by Conditional Use. So you may be  
2           zoned properly, but the particular use you want to make  
3           of your property is only available if you are able to  
4           obtain a Conditional Use, in addition to having the  
5           correct zoning.

6           Regardless of why you have to apply for a  
7           Conditional Use, once you apply, your Conditional Use  
8           request is to be guided by, judged by, the same factors  
9           in the Code.

10          And again, that -- the same factors being generic  
11          factors, including -- I shouldn't say generic -- but  
12          factors including compatibility with surrounding land  
13          uses, which is one of the things that a lot of the  
14          discussion tonight has been about.

15          So I guess it's fair to look at it as saying that  
16          the 300 foot issue was the triggering mechanism that  
17          forced them to apply for a Conditional Use.

18          Once they apply for a Conditional Use, the Code  
19          says okay, a Conditional Use is to be granted only if  
20          the Board finds in writing, as I recall -- the writing  
21          would be in the form of your report, though, after your  
22          vote -- that certain factors have been met. And the  
23          factors that have been met include the compatibility  
24          with surrounding land uses.

25          So that's -- that's sort of the point. I'm not

1 expressing an opinion in favor of, or against the  
2 church, or this use, I'm simply saying that the  
3 question is one of whether or not they meet the  
4 criteria that the Code establishes for granting a  
5 Conditional Use.

6 And to that extent, like it or not, you're sort of  
7 to be blinded, in terms of the use that's being  
8 proposed, except in deciding whether or not it's  
9 compatible with adjoining uses.

10 But I mean it's not a question of this is a good  
11 use, it's a good thing -- churches are good things, in  
12 general. People who go to churches generally do good.  
13 It's not a question of that. It's a question of not  
14 whether churches are good, but whether a church in this  
15 location is a good thing. And that's why I say land  
16 use.

17 By that I mean, you know, the -- the use of this  
18 land as a church, is that a good thing -- not whether  
19 uses of land in general are good -- that wouldn't be  
20 something that I'd be debating.

21 But the question is whether a church here is a  
22 good thing, based upon the criteria that are in our  
23 Code. And you know, those criteria, hopefully, assure  
24 consistency as we judge each application that comes  
25 along, so that applications don't get either approved

1 or denied based upon a person's personal preferences  
2 about different types of uses.

3 I don't mean to -- well, I won't bring it up. But  
4 I think the point's made.

5 I was going to give you a different example, but I  
6 don't think it would do anything to add to the -- to  
7 the discussion, so I'll just leave it at what I've  
8 said.

9 MR. CHAIRMAN: Good.

10 Would you like to speak?

11 MRS. PERRY: I want to thank you for the  
12 opportunity to --

13 MR. CHAIRMAN: Your name?

14 MRS. PERRY: I'm Dawn Perry, and I live at 2370  
15 Westover Drive, Palatka, Florida.

16 I want to thank you for the opportunity to be able  
17 to share our heart, and to proclaim and promote  
18 Downtown, and our love for it, and our hope to be able  
19 to be a part of the revitalization.

20 Mr. Holmes, you just said that it's not  
21 necessarily by right. And according to the --  
22 according to the City of Palatka -- let's see -- where  
23 is the beginning of it -- Staff Report from the  
24 Planning Board, and on the sign outside, it says for --  
25 the reason for the meeting is for Conditional Use for a

1 Church Within 300 Feet of an Establishment Serving  
2 Alcoholic Beverages.

3 And on Page Three --

4 MR. HOLMES: Page Three of --

5 MRS. PERRY: Of his Staff Report.

6 It says while churches are allowable use by right  
7 in downtown zoning districts, they are subject to  
8 distance requirements set forth in Chapter 10,  
9 Alcoholic Beverages of the Municipal Code. And then it  
10 goes on to define what that Conditional Use is.

11 And it says a Conditional -- quoting from the  
12 Staff Report -- a Conditional Use is defined as use  
13 that would not be appropriate generally.

14 And it -- from what we have looked at, it has been  
15 zoned for a church to be able to be in that area since  
16 the mid 1800's, because churches are generally  
17 appropriate.

18 Also it says use that would not be appropriate,  
19 generally, or without restriction through a zoning  
20 district, it is zoned for churches -- this area is  
21 zoned for churches -- but which if controlled as to  
22 number, area, location, or relation to the neighborhood  
23 -- I would like to speak to that for just a minute --  
24 because it says if controlled as to number.

25 I'm not sure that it's -- that it's legal to limit

1 the number of churches within things that are stated  
2 within our government.

3 And also, in order to talk about the number of  
4 churches in the area, we have to leave Downtown River  
5 District -- or the riverfront area, the area that we  
6 are trying to help revitalize, and move to the Central  
7 Business District, all the way back to the railroad  
8 tracks.

9 After that it says -- in relation to neighborhood  
10 -- and that it would promote public health, which our  
11 church does; safety, which our church does; welfare,  
12 which our church does; morals, which our church does;  
13 order, which our church does; comfort, which our church  
14 does; convenience, which our church does. In fact,  
15 we're so convenient, it's stated in our website that we  
16 -- our hours are 24/7. There is not another business  
17 down there that has 24/7 -- I mean that we are  
18 available 24/7. It's been on our website for over a  
19 year, that that is -- that is our calling to this area,  
20 to this City.

21 Our office hours, and the hours that we will have  
22 people in downtown, outnumber the hours of some of the  
23 retail businesses, or service businesses, that are in  
24 the very 200, 300 block, that we're -- that we're  
25 speaking of.

1           The other thing it says, convenience, appearance,  
2 prosperity, or general welfare.

3           And to my mind, I can not imagine why a church  
4 that we have so -- that my Husband -- I'm so proud of  
5 you, thank you for doing such a good job, of not just  
6 -- not just presenting the information, but the heart  
7 of our church, and the heart of our family, and the  
8 heart of our ministry, and the heart of our calling to  
9 Downtown Palatka.

10           The other thing that was mentioned by one of the  
11 speakers is would it be received -- how would it be  
12 received if a bar was coming into an area near a  
13 church. And we've had that in Palatka. And in every  
14 instance, except for one, it has been granted, and has  
15 -- the only time it hasn't been granted is because  
16 there was a school meeting in the basement, holding  
17 classes on the property of the church.

18           And so there has not been a case when it has  
19 been -- you know, the idea of the voting entities that  
20 there is a problem with a church being in the proximity  
21 -- near proximity to an establishment that serves  
22 alcohol. And so how would it be received?

23           And you also talked about how we shouldn't come in  
24 and expect that sometime different is going to happen  
25 because of emotion, or because there is a lot of people

1 here today, but that we should seek consistency in the  
2 voting, and represented in our government.

3 And so I just wanted to make a note of that.

4 It says that -- in the report on Page Four, it  
5 says uses by churches lack the activity and longer  
6 hours of operation that sustain street life.

7 We will be the most open place on the block.

8 It says churches are single-point destinations,  
9 and that typically the only reason people go to them is  
10 to worship. And I think that we've presented that that  
11 isn't just why we're there. We love people. We love  
12 Palatka. And we want to see -- we want to see  
13 revitalize downtown. And we want to be a part of it.

14 It says -- just at the beginning of that Staff  
15 comment, it says included in this packet is a letter  
16 from a nearby business owner, and the City's MainStreet  
17 Manager. And then it says these letters set forth the  
18 argument that the church is -- that this church use is  
19 not compatible.

20 Personal service uses lack foot traffic to  
21 storefront window displays that promote vibrant  
22 downtown pedestrian involvement that pulls pedestrians  
23 downtown.

24 I think that that's exactly what our church is  
25 going to do.

1 I think that we are the most compatible person in  
2 line to rent the McCrory store. But when I turn around  
3 and look behind me at the line, there is no one.

4 And I just think that it's interesting that -- it  
5 says property's wide frontage, and removal from retail  
6 service use would exacerbate the dead zone effect.

7 We are service use. We serve this City, and the  
8 people that are in it, because we love them. And we  
9 are not going to exacerbate a dead zone effect.

10 In fact, the one that we serve dealt the most  
11 appropriately with a dead space. He came out of the  
12 tomb. And that's how he deals with dead spaces.

13 Our church is not a dead space. We don't serve  
14 somebody who even recognizes dead spaces.

15 Thank you.

16 MR. HOLMES: Let me respond, okay, before you  
17 leave -- since you quoted me --

18 MRS. PERRY: Okay.

19 MR. HOLMES: -- and made points -- or attributed  
20 points to me.

21 First of all, there is no one who has stated, nor  
22 did the Staff state, that there is a quota on churches,  
23 as you sort of implied in your comments.

24 As I explained a minute ago --

25 MRS. PERRY: I said questioned.

1           MR. HOLMES: As I explained a minute ago, the  
2 Conditional Use requirement was triggered by the fact  
3 that you sought to locate within 300 feet of a bar.

4           MRS. PERRY: I understand.

5           MR. HOLMES: That's what our Code says.

6           If a church or a bar seeks to locate within 300  
7 feet of the other, an already existing use, then it  
8 isn't allowed unless a Conditional Use is applied for  
9 and granted.

10          MRS. PERRY: Right.

11          MR. HOLMES: And it applies to both bars and  
12 churches because -- I don't know whether I should say  
13 because, but I didn't draft the Code -- but I would  
14 assume it's because of the general assumption that  
15 there's a -- a kind of an inherent incompatibility  
16 between churches and bars.

17          Whether that's true or not, again, I didn't draft  
18 the Code. But I assume that was the basis for them  
19 saying that if one is going to locate within 300 feet  
20 of the other, then you have to apply for a Conditional  
21 Use.

22          MRS. PERRY: Right.

23          MR. HOLMES: Then you go to the Conditional Use  
24 provisions of the Code. And the language you quoted  
25 from, it's just sort of the general -- the first part

1       you quoted from -- is the general description of what a  
2       Conditional Use is. And that's pretty much the same  
3       language you'll find in virtually every Code that I've  
4       looked at, where there is a Conditional Use, or a  
5       non-conforming use, or special exception -- they use  
6       different words in different jurisdictions.

7               And like you said, it says a Conditional Use is a  
8       use that would not be appropriately generally or  
9       without restriction throughout a zoning district, but  
10      which if controlled as to the number, area, location,  
11      or relation of the neighborhood, would promote the  
12      public health, safety, welfare, et cetera. And that's  
13      all fine, generic language. And I think it's just  
14      meant to say that look, it wouldn't generally be good  
15      to have a bunch of this use -- these uses within close  
16      proximity of each other -- churches and bars.

17              But the key thing for me -- and the thing that --  
18      you know, our system is designed -- when I say  
19      consistency -- it's designed to keep people from being  
20      judged by different standards when they come before a  
21      body like this.

22              So Codes are generally frowned upon unless they  
23      put some criteria in the Code that says okay, if  
24      somebody comes to you, and they want a Conditional Use  
25      -- let's say in our case -- these are the findings that

1           you're supposed to make. Okay?

2           MRS. PERRY: Okay.

3           MR. HOLMES: And in our Code that's found at  
4           Section 94 -- and the Code's available -- you can use  
5           this one, if you'd like -- but under Subparagraph IV,  
6           this is the thing that I look to when I'm looking at an  
7           application.

8           This specific language says before any Conditional  
9           Use shall be approved, the Planning Board shall make a  
10          written finding that the granting of the Conditional  
11          Use will not adversely affect the public interest, and  
12          certifying that the specific requirements governing the  
13          individual Conditional Use, if any, have been met by  
14          the Petitioner, and that further satisfactory provision  
15          and arrangement has been made concerning the following  
16          matters where applicable. And then it goes down, A  
17          through K.

18          And in that I is general compatibility with  
19          adjacent properties, and other property in the  
20          district.

21          So when Staff looks at something, they -- in  
22          deciding whether to recommend approval -- and there's a  
23          recommendation -- they're supposed to look at those  
24          criteria and say okay, how does this criteria fit with  
25          the circumstances that we have at hand.

1           And so that's what I mean by consistency.

2           It's -- if there is some reason for or against  
3 approving an application, I tell the Board, you need to  
4 look to these findings that are --

5           MRS. PERRY: Right. Exactly.

6           MR. HOLMES: -- or these criteria that are in the  
7 Code, so that we aren't dragging things out of the  
8 air --

9           MRS. PERRY: Right.

10          MR. HOLMES: -- either in support of or against.  
11 I don't like the color of it. I don't like -- you know  
12 what I'm saying?

13          MRS. PERRY: Right. Exactly.

14          MR. HOLMES: And that way, when someone comes, at  
15 least they have the right to know that if I come up  
16 here with an application for a Conditional Use, my  
17 Conditional Use ought to be judged by these, A through  
18 K, factors.

19          And you can --

20          MRS. PERRY: Right.

21          MR. HOLMES: You can legitimately disagree, and  
22 have different opinions about a thing -- you know,  
23 about an issue, such as compatibility. I totally  
24 respect your right to disagree with mine, or Staff's  
25 opinion, regarding compatibility. But at least we

1           ought to be talking about, you know, one of those  
2           factors.

3           MRS. PERRY: Right.

4           MR. HOLMES: We can disagree about it, because  
5           your opinion can certainly be different. And that's  
6           great.

7           MRS. PERRY: Right.

8           MR. HOLMES: And that's what it's all about. But  
9           we ought to at least be talking about those subjects.  
10          And that's what I meant.

11          MRS. PERRY: Well, I appreciate that.

12          And at the beginning I heard you say a gen- --  
13          that there is a general assumption that a church and a  
14          bar are going to be in conflict with one another. And  
15          I think we've stated that that's not the case.

16          And then on Page Five in the Conclusion it says  
17          with a -- this is the finding of the Staff Report --  
18          with a finding of general compatibility, and lack of  
19          substantive negative impacts from the proposed use, the  
20          Board could approve the application based on -- on the  
21          basis of general conformance with review criteria.

22          And so it looks like they are even saying that  
23          we're generally compatible.

24          MR. HOLMES: I think what they're saying is it  
25          isn't for Staff to make the decision, any more than it

1 is for me to make the decision.

2 In other words, Staff offers their insight, and  
3 they say Board, this is our insight on these issues.

4 But as I said a minute ago, some of these issues  
5 are not -- they aren't mathematical. You know? It  
6 isn't two and two equals four.

7 MRS. PERRY: That's right.

8 MR. HOLMES: There is room for differences of  
9 opinion. You know? And I respect your opinion, and  
10 the fact that you see things a certain way, and -- as  
11 Staff respects the fact that the Board could see things  
12 differently from them.

13 And on the issue of compatibility, again, I -- I  
14 understand what you're saying. I'll just tell you that  
15 having sat up here for a long time, I -- I -- I can't  
16 tell you the specific case -- but there have been times  
17 when this room has been packed with church-goers who  
18 said I don't want to walk out of my church at 6:00  
19 after Sunday night services and see a guy staggering  
20 out of the bar 150 feet away with a beer, or a drink in  
21 his hand.

22 MRS. PERRY: Right.

23 MR. HOLMES: That's what I meant by I think that  
24 the general assumption has been in the past that there  
25 might be a conflict in those two uses.

1           Because in the past I can tell you, there have  
2           been times when this room has been filled with a lot of  
3           people who said we don't want a bar close to our  
4           church, we don't want them drinking when we're coming  
5           out from noon, or when we're having our Bible study, or  
6           when we're having --

7           MRS. PERRY: Right.

8           MR. HOLMES: You know, we don't want -- we don't  
9           want to be exposed to that. We don't want to be --  
10          have our kids being picked up from Bible School with  
11          people going to and from the bar --

12          MRS. PERRY: Right.

13          MR. HOLMES: -- driving cars.

14          Now, again --

15          MRS. PERRY: But has it ever been granted on --  
16          because of that?

17          MR. HOLMES: What?

18          MRS. PERRY: The only one that I'm aware of that  
19          has not been granted -- even though there have been  
20          rooms filled with people -- is because a -- and that it  
21          was very clearly communicated that it was because of  
22          the school, not the church.

23          MR. HOLMES: I don't -- I can't tell you all the  
24          different applications that have been made.

25          MRS. PERRY: Okay.

1 MR. HOLMES: And I wouldn't even want to try to  
2 guess an opinion, and then be wrong.

3 MRS. PERRY: Okay. But consistency --  
4 consistently there has not been a problem of granting  
5 churches and alcoholic establishments being in the same  
6 area.

7 MR. HOLMES: I don't -- I can't -- I can't tell --  
8 it hasn't -- I don't think it's come up that super  
9 often -- at least -- and I'm just dealing from  
10 recollection. And I'm probably forgetting a number of  
11 cases. I haven't gone back and researched the records.

12 MRS. PERRY: Okay. Well, the other thing that I  
13 am --

14 MR. HOLMES: But let me just say, I respect -- I  
15 respect the fact that you have a point of view, and I'm  
16 not in any way trying to say that you aren't entitled  
17 to that point of view, I'm just -- I just wanted to say  
18 that these are the factors that we're trying to look  
19 at.

20 MRS. PERRY: Right. And I appreciate that. I  
21 just don't think that it would be fair to selectively  
22 enforce it, is all I'm saying.

23 Thank you.

24 MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone else?

25 I believe -- yes, sir?

1           Keep it as brief as you can, folks. If we're  
2 going to allow everybody who wants to, if you'll just  
3 be as brief as possible, and we appreciate that.

4           MR. MARLOW: My name is Webster Marlow. I live at  
5 120 Kirkland Street.

6           I do go to church out in Carraway, so Pastor  
7 Chad's not my Pastor.

8           However, this morning I have walked between the  
9 bridge and 13th Street. I have looked at the vacant  
10 spaces that are on St. Johns Avenue. And I inspected  
11 fire extinguishers at McCrory's -- now, that's a long  
12 time ago. It's vacant. It's been vacant for a long  
13 time. It's time to have somebody there to do something  
14 with it.

15           Thank you.

16           MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

17           Yes?

18           AUDIENCE MEMBER: You said be brief.

19           MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, sir.

20           AUDIENCE MEMBER: Do you promise to be?

21           MRS. SIKES: I promise.

22           AUDIENCE MEMBER: Okay.

23           MRS. SIKES: I just wanted to address Mr. Rudd.

24           MR. CHAIRMAN: Name and address, please.

25           MRS. SIKES: Oh, I'm sorry.

1 Janet Sikes.

2 MR. HOLMES: And Mr. Chair, again, to avoid  
3 personal conflict, she should address the Chair, and  
4 not anybody in the audience.

5 MRS. SIKES: Let -- my name is Janet Sikes. I  
6 live at 113 Greene Drive in Palatka. I am the former  
7 owner of Special Occasions Bridal Shop in Palatka.

8 I went out of business a couple of years ago.

9 May I address the Board about a statement Mr. Rudd  
10 has talked about, about making this a retail corridor?

11 MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes.

12 MRS. SIKES: I have several friends who have gone  
13 out of business in your retail corridor.

14 I went out of business because all of the  
15 businesses, the retail businesses here, shopped  
16 elsewhere. They go to the mall. They don't hang  
17 around Palatka.

18 I had exactly the same prices as David's Bridal.  
19 I came downtown to try and -- figure, well, I'll leave  
20 the mall, because I'm not getting any business there.  
21 That was a dead zone. I'll come to Palatka, downtown.

22 I could not afford the rents down here. I  
23 couldn't afford to redo the buildings, because they  
24 were all in such bad shape.

25 I talked to people who had retail businesses here.

1 They couldn't afford their rents anymore. This is a  
2 bad economy. You're not going to get any retail here  
3 that's going to stay here and prosper. It all fell  
4 apart.

5 MR. CHAIRMAN: If you will, address the Board.

6 MRS. SIKES: I'm sorry.

7 It fell apart.

8 THE CLERK: Excuse me, ma'am.

9 Can I get your name again, please?

10 MRS. SIKES: Janet Sikes, S-i-k-e-s, first name  
11 Janet, 113 Greene Drive.

12 THE CLERK: Got that. Thank you.

13 MRS. SIKES: I lost my shirt trying to stay in  
14 Palatka retail, downtown.

15 My -- the former owner of my shop -- you want to  
16 know why she moved out of St. Johns Street? She had  
17 her shop downtown, too. She was afraid to stay in her  
18 building after 6:00. People were coming banging on the  
19 doors -- drunks, homeless people. You know how long  
20 that store's been empty? For years.

21 The City Planners talk about revitalizing Palatka.

22 I've been here 13 years. I have seen very little  
23 revitalization of the retail in Palatka.

24 I wonder now -- McCrory's has been empty for 21  
25 years -- are we going to wait another 21 years? What

1 are you guys going to do with that building? What are  
2 you going to allow to go in that building? Nobody can  
3 afford to put a retail shop in that building, unless  
4 they're really big. And they're not staying in town.  
5 They're all going into the malls.

6 I'm sorry. I lost a lot downtown. I really am  
7 sorry. It took me under. And there's a lot of other  
8 friends that it took under.

9 So when I hear them say that revitalization -- it  
10 breaks my heart. Are we going to wait another 20  
11 years?

12 MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, ma'am.

13 MR. JONES: Good evening. My name is Wayne Jones.  
14 I live at 206 Belmont Drive.

15 I've resided in Palatka, Putnam County now, since  
16 1986. I came here when I came -- when I was employed  
17 by the Sheriff's Office. I've been there ever since.

18 But since I've been here, I have not seen the  
19 reality of this revitalization of any -- I haven't seen  
20 this area, downtown, grow, but I've seen since the  
21 sheriff's office left -- when I started with Pellicer  
22 -- become a park. I haven't seen any businesses, any  
23 kind of things that would generate an income grow. I  
24 haven't seen any kind -- like these banks and stuff  
25 now, I understand they're possibly going to become

1 office space for the School Board, not another bank,  
2 not another business, or vitalization, anything that's  
3 going to make anything generate tax dollars for the  
4 City.

5 The reality of it is is that there's nothing  
6 there. And here is something that wants to be there.  
7 It's life of some kind. It's life of a blessing kind.

8 I just -- I just really hope that the reality of  
9 this perception that there's going to be some kind of  
10 compatible land use, or use of this space, the reality  
11 is there is no use. There is nothing there that's  
12 going to be there. There hasn't been anything since  
13 '87, '88. And a lot of these areas, and this  
14 particular place, I think they said since '92.

15 What -- what's the -- what's the compatible land  
16 use? What's it going to be? I don't know. But I -- I  
17 see an opportunity here for life to be interjected in  
18 there. And you understand what they're wanting to put  
19 there.

20 And I don't know what your beliefs, or your faith,  
21 are. But I do believe in Deuteronomy 28, I believe  
22 that if you do the right things, there's blessings, and  
23 if you do the wrong thing, there's curses. And we  
24 choose what we want. God doesn't do that to us, he  
25 doesn't curse us or bless us, we choose by the things

1 that we do what happens.

2 I ask you please, make a blessing out of this.

3 Bless you.

4 MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, sir.

5 MR. JONES: Thank you.

6 MR. RODRIG: My name is Steve Rodrig. I live at  
7 305 Moseley Avenue.

8 I only have one question.

9 They made quotes about -- not quotes, but idea  
10 about breaking down the McCrory building into smaller  
11 buildings, storefronts. Who is going to pay for all  
12 that? Who is going to split the units? Who is going  
13 to split the air conditioning? Who is going to split  
14 the electrical? Who is going to pay for all of that to  
15 be done? And we don't have anybody else in mind  
16 besides The River that wants to move there.

17 MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

18 Yes, sir?

19 MR. HAFNER: I'm going to introduce myself twice  
20 tonight, because first I'm going to speak as a member  
21 of the MainStreet Board, and after that I'm going to  
22 speak as Jerry Hafner, individual.

23 First of all, my name is Jerry Hafner. I live at  
24 122 Hilty Lane in East Palatka. And I'm going to try  
25 to be extremely careful with what I say tonight.

1           First, though, I do have a letter that Mr. Rudd  
2 did not get to read into the record that we wanted to  
3 read into the record.

4           This is from Downtown Palatka, Inc. Downtown  
5 Palatka, Inc., representing a majority of the  
6 businesses in Downtown Palatka.

7           Dear Board Members, Downtown Palatka, Inc., by  
8 unanimous consent, endorses the Palatka MainStreet  
9 Board of Director's letter to you, the City of Palatka  
10 Planning Board, dated June 21, 2013, and supports the  
11 community vision for a revived retail corridor on St.  
12 Johns Avenue, and supports denial of this request.

13           And that was executed by Downtown Palatka, Inc.,  
14 the Executive Board of Directors.

15           I've served on the MainStreet Board and program  
16 now for I think three or four years. I can't remember  
17 exactly how long.

18           But I've been involved in trying to help Downtown  
19 Palatka become something better for the last 28 years,  
20 since I moved back to Palatka. My Wife was born and  
21 raised in Palatka.

22           I can tell you all of the activities I've been to  
23 -- including visits to this Planning Commission, visits  
24 to the Putnam County Board of Commissioners, visits to  
25 the Palatka City Commission -- I don't remember seeing

1 all of these folks there until tonight, when they bring  
2 before you a proposal to move a church down there.

3 I've got a problem with that from the prospective  
4 that people just become involved when the need arises  
5 to become involved.

6 I've been involved because I want Palatka to be a  
7 better place.

8 Now, I want to drop away from MainStreet again.

9 My name is Jerry Hafner, 122 Hilty Lane, East  
10 Palatka, Florida.

11 I don't really know how to say this, but I want to  
12 tell you, personally I was insulted tonight.

13 I'm a Christian. I came to this as a Board of the  
14 City of Palatka. I did not come to listen to a sermon.  
15 And I'm going to tell you, that's what I got.

16 I was extremely disappointed, frankly, that all of  
17 you had to sit here through it.

18 I know that -- I know what I'm saying is not  
19 politically correct, but I'm going to tell you, it's  
20 the wrong way to treat this kind of a presentation. It  
21 has nothing to do with the agenda -- the item that's on  
22 the agenda for your consideration.

23 So let me just end that part of it. But I truly  
24 was insulted. I think it was wrong. It's the wrong  
25 approach.

1           I think the approach demonstrated, frankly,  
2 exactly why I don't think this church will fit  
3 Downtown. Because on numerous occasions here tonight  
4 there were comments made by this Board that any normal  
5 speaker would have picked up on, to let's cut this  
6 presentation short, and stop everything that doesn't  
7 really matter. That was ignored. Totally ignored.

8           Frankly, I think that's the wrong thing again.  
9 When you come before a Commission like this, you're  
10 speaking to an issue. You're not professing your  
11 beliefs, and everything else, and how you're going to  
12 treat the rest of the world.

13           Now, as an individual again on the City of  
14 Palatka. My Wife was born and raised in this town. My  
15 Mother-in-law was moved to this town when she was five  
16 years old. My Father-in-law moved to this town I think  
17 when he was six or seven years old. He's deceased now.

18           My Wife's Grandparents came here in 1933 and  
19 bought the piece of property on the river that I now  
20 live on over in East Palatka -- personal information,  
21 which I shouldn't be passing along. But I'm taking  
22 advantage of that.

23           Those folks, the two Grandparents, had viable  
24 businesses on St. Johns Avenue. They were in a florist  
25 shop and a photography shop for years. They owned the

1 building where they had those shops. They had  
2 residences above -- in fact, lived there for some time.  
3 And then my Father-in-law and Mother-in-law lived there  
4 for some time.

5 My Father-in-law worked at a couple of the  
6 businesses downtown, delivered Palatka -- papers for  
7 the Palatka Daily News for years.

8 What it all boils down to is the way you help a  
9 city is by being involved in a city, not to reach an  
10 objective that you have for yourself, but to help a  
11 city reach an objective.

12 And frankly, what Downtown Palatka needs is what  
13 they had here in the '60's. I know a few of you were  
14 around in the '60's, and saw what this town was like.  
15 I think I've stated that here before. Very viable,  
16 vibrant downtown area. All types of businesses.

17 The problem that we have in downtown now is that  
18 the -- there is an attitude in Palatka that downtown  
19 Palatka has nothing to offer.

20 Downtown Palatka has the most beautiful site on  
21 the St. Johns River of any city in Florida.

22 There are a number of other cities who have come  
23 here that would give anything to have this waterfront,  
24 and the ability to help develop it.

25 What we need here are positive contributions to

1 this City not to resolve the desires of individuals, or  
2 small groups of individuals, but to resolve the issues  
3 of Downtown Palatka for all of the citizens of Palatka  
4 and Putnam County.

5 My personal belief is this church will be an  
6 obstacle to future development downtown, when folks  
7 know that they have to come in again in front of this  
8 Planning Board and the City Commission, and go -- apply  
9 for a Variance if they want to open a restaurant or a  
10 bar. It's going to detour those folks from coming  
11 here, to begin with. Because they know they're going  
12 to have a battle to fight.

13 And I can assure you, when one does, this same  
14 congregation will be right here. Rest assured.

15 Once the camel has his head in the tent, the rest  
16 of the body will follow.

17 AUDIENCE MEMBER: No, sir.

18 MR. HAFNER: With that, I'm going to end.

19 I respected your chatter. I'm going to leave it  
20 there.

21 I, again, though, hope you will make the right  
22 decision.

23 Downtown Palatka needs to be a retail district,  
24 and this use will not contribute to that.

25 Thank you.

1 MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, sir.

2 MR. CHURCH: Good evening.

3 My name is Dave Church. I'm at 103 South Seventh  
4 Street. I'm a local business owner, and I own several  
5 buildings down here.

6 I've heard a lot about nothing happening downtown,  
7 and that kind of affects me, because I've been on the  
8 Design Committee for about 12 years now, and I think  
9 I've done quite a bit to try to help. And there's a  
10 lot of folks in this room that are really trying to  
11 help.

12 We can't blame Charles for things that haven't  
13 happened. He's just come here. He's trying to do it.

14 I don't think the church is going to help anything  
15 down here. We are trying to make a corridor where we  
16 do have retail business.

17 The reasons the business are empty, in my own  
18 opinion, is the fact that we have building owners that  
19 have neglected the buildings, have sat on the  
20 buildings, and done nothing with them, and are  
21 expecting you, the City, and the taxpayers, to pay to  
22 renovate these buildings.

23 That building was given \$60,000.00 -- I could be  
24 wrong on the amount -- last year to put a gym in there.  
25 On a one month project -- here we are a year later, and

1 now we're trying to move a church in there.

2 Not opposed to the church at all. I just see that  
3 as you go down the street, it's no different to me than  
4 having a dollar store on every corner. Now we have a  
5 church on every corner down here. We have -- we have  
6 two parole offices, we have drug court, we have child  
7 ad litem, we have the whole section between 4th Street  
8 and on down that's nothing but government buildings.  
9 So we do have a dead spot right there.

10 I don't see a lot of them people using our  
11 facilities down there -- going to the new shops. We do  
12 have new businesses in town. We have quite a few new  
13 businesses. We have a new restaurant down here that's  
14 doing good. We have a new little store on the corner  
15 of 7th and St. Johns that's doing good.

16 And I do think that if the building owners would  
17 take care of their buildings, and upgrade them on their  
18 own, and not look towards grants and the City to do it  
19 -- these buildings aren't able to be rented. That's  
20 10,000 square feet that we're going to take off the  
21 retail space that could be subdivided, could put in a  
22 little mini-mall or something, where people could  
23 afford to be in there. But it's hard to rent 10,000  
24 square feet.

25 I've been successful down here. So when people

1 say there's no success, there is success down here. I  
2 think I'm one of them. I came here with zero, and I am  
3 a successful person, I think. And I have been able to  
4 rent my buildings.

5 I own a building on the corner of 7th and St.  
6 Johns. I think it looks nice. It was a rundown  
7 building when I got it. I did get a grant from the  
8 City for \$10,000.00 to help us renovate on that  
9 building, but I probably put 150,000 of my own money in  
10 it.

11 We bought another building to help the Guidepost,  
12 who was struggling, who was going to move out. So it's  
13 a Christian bookstore. We helped them by purchasing  
14 part of their building so they could stay here, and  
15 stay open. And then we renovated that building, and  
16 successfully have it rented.

17 So if you fix these buildings, and you rent  
18 them -- you can rent them. It's just you can't do  
19 anything when they sit there neglected year after year  
20 after year, and just keep complaining about taxes, and  
21 whatnot.

22 If it was up to me, I'd tax the vacant building  
23 owners as high as you could tax them until they are  
24 forced into either selling them, or doing something.

25 If you'll look at the whole end of town down here,

1 it's owned by a couple people, and they're not  
2 interested in really helping.

3 I mean how long do these buildings have to sit  
4 empty? It's up to them to do it. It's not up to the  
5 Board or the City of Palatka to do it. It's up to the  
6 building owners to fix the buildings, and to want to be  
7 part of what's going on down here, and to make  
8 something out of them.

9 And I want to applaud Charles for doing a great  
10 job here, and the rest of the folks -- Bob Taylor is  
11 another guy that has just really put his heart into  
12 trying to help. And to say nothing's going on down  
13 here is quite unfair to them.

14 Thank you.

15 MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

16 If that's all -- no one else wants to speak, we'll  
17 -- yes, ma'am?

18 AUDIENCE MEMBER: (indiscernible)

19 MRS. BUCK: My name is Bonnie Buck. I like  
20 Palatka so well, and I have positive things to say this  
21 afternoon --

22 MR. CHAIRMAN: Your address is? Your address?

23 MRS. BUCK: My home address is 208 South Ninth  
24 Street. I moved here to Palatka in April.

25 I leased an office at 320 St. Johns Avenue

1 effective February 1st. When I got my licenses and  
2 everything, I was ready to open up and do business  
3 around the middle of March.

4 I have to tell you that the business, since I  
5 first opened up the store, has just -- increasing and  
6 increasing. And every month I'm doing better, and I'm  
7 doing better. And it's thanks to MainStreet, and the  
8 people that care there, the activities that they're  
9 doing, the advertising, just helping my store. And I  
10 am almost across the street from Steamboat Willie's.

11 And I want more retail space around my office. I  
12 mean I do. But I have to have -- it's like they said  
13 -- and I didn't plan on coming up here and talking, so  
14 I apologize -- I didn't plan when I originally opened  
15 my store, but now I need retail spaces, people beside  
16 of me to help bring in more business for me.

17 And I think the retail is where it needs to be.  
18 Because I need somebody, like Charlie said, to go  
19 shopping, and shop for four hours.

20 And my store is antique, thrift store, consignment  
21 shop. All of our -- us antique people tell each other  
22 where the other shops are. You know, we even tell each  
23 other where places are on 17. We try to promote the  
24 businesses for everybody here in town.

25 How many of you here have been to the Gypsy

1 Palace?

2 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Nice store.

3 MR. CHAIRMAN: Let's don't do a survey.

4 MRS. BURK: Oh, I'm sorry.

5 Well, I just wanted to see how many customers I  
6 was going to lose because I'm against the church. It  
7 wasn't a lot; was it?

8 Anyway, I just want to say that I need the retail  
9 for my store. My store needs to have more people  
10 shopping on a constant basis. And the other antique  
11 stores and stores on St. Johns Avenue in the 700 block,  
12 and the antique mall, we all send people to different  
13 locations. So -- and MainStreet's doing a great job.

14 MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, ma'am.

15 Anyone else?

16 MR. GEORGE: Adam George, 232 West River Road here  
17 in Palatka, Florida.

18 I just want to -- first off, direct my comments  
19 first to Mr. Petrucci. You talked about the parking  
20 issues with the Bingo Palace downtown.

21 From January of 2010 until July of 2012 I was the  
22 Minister of Music at First Presbyterian Church at 123  
23 South Second Street.

24 Our Wednesday evening services and our Sunday  
25 evening services never once encountered an issue with

1 parking, and the Bingo Palace was always open while we  
2 were having our evening services, and our facilities  
3 were behind the Bingo Palace. We never once had an  
4 issue with parking.

5 The only time we ever had parking issues was with  
6 Blue Crab Festival, not a local business next to the  
7 church while I was on staff there.

8 Second, I'm part of the generation that Chad Perry  
9 talked about earlier, that 20 year generation. I  
10 remember the day that -- the last day McCrory's was  
11 open. My Mom took me downtown to McCrory's, and bought  
12 me a soda from their fountain. Okay? I remember when  
13 it was open. I'm part of the generation that grew up  
14 mainly -- my growing up years, there was nothing for  
15 us.

16 I'm part of the generation that grew up saying the  
17 greatest thing about Palatka, we're 45 minutes from  
18 Jacksonville, Gainesville, St. Augustine, and an hour  
19 and 45 minutes from Orlando. Because there was nothing  
20 for our generation to keep us Downtown Palatka.

21 He's offering something that nobody else seems to  
22 have been offering my generation when I went here.

23 And thirdly, my last point is, I take offense at  
24 somebody saying -- even though I'm not a member of his  
25 congregation -- I take offense at somebody saying I

1 don't see these other people here. Because these  
2 meetings are not always held when everybody can attend,  
3 because some of us have to work.

4 But I, for one, go on-line, and I read the minutes  
5 when they are posted and available, to know what's  
6 going on not just in my City, but in my County. I take  
7 offense at it being said, I don't see these same people  
8 here.

9 Thank you.

10 MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, sir.

11 MR. HOLMES: Mr. Chairman?

12 MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, sir?

13 MR. HOLMES: I understand that one of the members  
14 is going to have to leave pretty quickly, and he's sat  
15 through the entire meeting, so my question is if the  
16 Chair could just ask if there are people who have  
17 anything new to bring to the table, then perhaps you  
18 could hear those people. But if it's just basically a  
19 restatement of some of the positions that have already  
20 been stated, perhaps we could bring it to a close so  
21 that we could have a vote before one of the members has  
22 to leave.

23 I'm not trying to limit anybody's discussion. I'm  
24 just saying that if there is some new factor to be  
25 considered, then certainly need to hear from them.

1           And if it's nothing -- you know, if it's just a  
2 case of they're in support or against, maybe they could  
3 just say that briefly -- I'm in favor of or against --  
4 and we could move forward.

5           MR. CHAIRMAN: Can you abide by that?

6           MR. KILLIBREW: I can try my best.

7           MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

8           MR. KILLIBREW: I'm Ed Killibrew. I'm the Owner  
9 of ServPro, Putnam County, at 608 Main Street. I had  
10 no intentions of coming up here and speaking tonight.  
11 I tell you that right now. Okay?

12           Pastor Chad had come to talk to me about  
13 supporting him. And my idea was -- I looked at him  
14 square in the eyes, and I told him, I said I'm neither  
15 in favor or against. It's not my vision of what I see  
16 Downtown Palatka. Okay?

17           I don't -- I was born -- excuse me for sharing --  
18 I was born and raised here. I'm a fifth generation  
19 Putnam County. Okay? I've been very involved in my  
20 community.

21           My Mother and Father taught me through the years  
22 that you only get out of your community what you put  
23 back into it. And that's what I try to do.

24           I have been -- I was -- I was here when the old  
25 building came down on the 100 block. I took the -- I

1           helped take the mortar off the bricks at a penny a  
2           brick to get the bricks taken away from the 100 block.  
3           I remember the old J. C. Penney building, just like  
4           many of y'all sitting here do. I remember all that.

5                     And our idea is just like Mr. Holmes said earlier,  
6           is the Conditional Use of this building. Everything  
7           else has been just wanting to have it, and not wanting  
8           to have it, and everything like that.

9                     I see -- when you say consistency, when you look  
10          in that one block there, there is somewhat consistency,  
11          but then you have the Alcohol Training -- the Driver's  
12          License thing in there. You know? You have those  
13          things in that block.

14                    Down the block you have many empty buildings, and  
15          I would love to see the restaurants and things come  
16          back.

17                    Not long ago I believe -- I may be talking just  
18          strictly off -- you know, not knowing what I'm talking  
19          about, but I believe there was something put in motion,  
20          or tried to get in motion, where the College might move  
21          its Arts College -- Arts down into Downtown Palatka for  
22          foot traffic.

23                    I believe -- now that I'm hearing everything, and  
24          I'm talking, and I'm putting it all back together -- I  
25          believe that this church would bring foot traffic to

1           Downtown Palatka. I believe that it would -- that the  
2           people that are here -- and I'm not a member of this  
3           church. Okay? I'm not. I'm -- I'm not a member of  
4           the church. You know? But I do believe that they  
5           would bring the foot traffic to Downtown Palatka that  
6           they're looking for.

7           Because again, like I said, that's what they were  
8           looking for with the school, when they were going to  
9           bring the school in. You know, just things like that.  
10          You're looking for foot traffic. You're looking for  
11          things to come in, so retail business would move here.

12          So thank you for hearing me.

13          MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

14          Is there anyone else that could be very brief?

15          If you don't -- if you don't feel like you could  
16          be brief, then we might have to adjourn to another  
17          time.

18          MR. LEMON: My name is Robert Lemon. I live at  
19          111 Easement Lane in Welaka.

20          I've noticed that it seems like one of the biggest  
21          issues is compatibility.

22          Compatibility, that's how I -- it just depends on  
23          which eyes you're looking through. I --

24          MR. CHAIRMAN: Hold on just a -- I hate to  
25          interrupt you. Hold on just a minute.

1 Are you going to have to leave at some time?

2 MR. PETRUCCI: Yes.

3 MR. CHAIRMAN: And what time is that?

4 MR. PETRUCCI: Ten minutes ago.

5 MR. CHAIRMAN: Do we have a quorum after he  
6 leaves?

7 THE CLERK: Yes, sir.

8 MR. CHAIRMAN: We will have a quorum?

9 THE CLERK: You will.

10 MR. CHAIRMAN: I don't see any other way.

11 MR. PETRUCCI: I apologize.

12 MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, sir.

13 MR. LEMON: What I'm getting is that compatibility  
14 seems to be the biggest hurdle -- seems to be the  
15 biggest issue, whether it's the correct place for it,  
16 for a church, in a retail area, the downtown area.

17 I've also noticed that the downtown area has been  
18 separated into several districts -- one being the  
19 Downtown River District, which encompasses maybe four  
20 or five City blocks -- maybe not -- maybe not quite  
21 that much.

22 I've also noticed in the schedule of District  
23 Regulations, which includes the 200 block of St. Johns  
24 Avenue, that compatibility has already been approved,  
25 that places of worship are number four in the Downtown

1 River District, it's already been approved as  
2 compatible with other shops in that area.

3 There has been remarks that there's nine churches  
4 in the downtown area. But when you get down to the  
5 Riverfront District there are not nine churches.

6 So I just want to point out that -- that the root  
7 -- or the Board that put together the schedule of  
8 District Regulations for the Downtown Riverfront  
9 District has already approved that. Otherwise, it  
10 would not be on this list.

11 Thank you so much.

12 MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

13 MR. LEMON: Thank you for your consideration.

14 MR. HOFFSTETTER: My name is Edward Hoffstetter.  
15 I live at 101 Winchester Avenue in Interlachen.

16 I am not a member of this congregation, but I do  
17 -- have visited before.

18 I just wanted to point out something that was very  
19 obvious.

20 Everything here -- we're talking about  
21 compatibility -- that's what it seems the Attorney  
22 seemed to say the focus is on, compatibility with the  
23 businesses in the area that it's going into.

24 It's all speculation, what we think will happen.

25 But there are two businesses that have already

1 experienced an entire year with this congregation. And  
2 they have said that their experience is positive. They  
3 are businesses. The bottom dollar is what matters to  
4 them. And both Beef 'O Brady's and the Quality Inn  
5 have both said that their experience is positive.  
6 That's not speculation.

7 That, to me, is evidence -- convicting evidence --  
8 of what this Pastor and this group is going to do for  
9 the rest of the downtown.

10 And I don't think the rest of the downtown  
11 businesses that are worried about this have taken the  
12 time to possibly go talk to those businesses to find  
13 out what the real facts of the situation are.

14 Thank you.

15 MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

16 MS. MAXWELL: Hello.

17 My name is Abigail Maxwell. I live at 7437 Crill  
18 Avenue in Palatka.

19 This is the first time I've ever been to a City  
20 meeting like this, and at times I've been wondering, as  
21 I'm listening, are we here to discuss the greater good  
22 of Palatka, or only the money flow of Palatka? That's  
23 just something I'm pondering, so --

24 I've been involved with The River ministry since  
25 its' start. I have been very closely acquainted with

1 the Perry family since they first moved to Palatka in  
2 2005.

3 By the way, this will only take two and a half  
4 minutes. I already timed it.

5 Dawn and I have served this community together  
6 through Awana and Childrens' Church ministries, Womens'  
7 conferences and Bible studies, youth events of all  
8 sorts. We have shared compassion and served widows.  
9 We have served with food drives, such as Hope for the  
10 Hungry, and for (indiscernible)

11 Together we have counseled, encouraged, and helped  
12 struggling women and teens who have had all sorts of  
13 troublesome circumstances.

14 My family has witnessed the care and commitment  
15 that both Chad and Dawn express to this County, and it  
16 truly has impacted the community in a huge way.

17 The whole Perry family gives great devotion to  
18 serving anyone in need.

19 I've seen them change their plans, and delay their  
20 arrangements, to go help, or pray with someone more  
21 times than I can count.

22 They often share their hearts about how our  
23 congregation can better serve Putnam County.

24 They have such passion for people, and it is  
25 inspiring and contagious.

1           So many of us are excited about such opportunity.  
2           We deeply desire for people to experience peace and  
3           blessing, and we're willing to help. That's what our  
4           church is about. We are here for the long haul, and  
5           very committed to loving people, and seeing this  
6           community change.

7           We live here, we shop here, we work here, and we  
8           are rooted in Palatka.

9           I testify to the goodness of God, and using The  
10          River congregation to strengthen struggling marriages,  
11          to share in kindness and hope in many homeless people  
12          -- to many homeless people near downtown Palatka.

13          Jan mentioned earlier about the business owner who  
14          was afraid to come out after 6:00. I've seen violence  
15          downtown Palatka, I've seen people wondering the  
16          streets. They pace up and down Palatka.

17          The River congregation has been committed to  
18          sharing truth to many individuals struggling to come  
19          out of prostitution, and varying addictions; to helping  
20          widows and orphans who are lonely, in need, and  
21          hurting; to men, who have needed courage and direction  
22          in leading their families; to women, who have needed  
23          truth and friendship; to young Moms, that have needed  
24          support and guidance, and help with their children. We  
25          serve because we love to serve. To teens, who are

1 receiving unconditional love, and much needed help as  
2 they find strength to better handle their issues. For  
3 newcomers to this County who needed a warm welcoming,  
4 and a place to connect -- as well as giving help to  
5 business owners in overcoming their pressures and  
6 struggles of everyday life.

7 Several of us at The River have encountered people  
8 downtown who are homeless and struggling.

9 I met a prostitute right near Subway who wore  
10 tattered clothes, and had a backpack. She told me that  
11 she lives in an abandoned home a few miles away. She  
12 gets meals at the Soup Kitchen quite often. Struggling  
13 people pace the downtown area, and need to find hope  
14 and loving ministries that sincerely care.

15 So many people need our kindness, and just won't  
16 go to a traditional church.

17 The River is a ministry that does make a  
18 difference.

19 Downtown Palatka needs what we have to offer, and  
20 we believe that we can not ignore the fact that  
21 downtown Palatka has need to concern itself with the  
22 people, and this County will be changed, and our  
23 congregation will help revive the businesses downtown,  
24 while also helping residents of this County find  
25 revival, and change the direction and focus of peoples'

1 lives.

2 MRS. BOTLEY: My name is Melissa Botley. I live  
3 at 841 Bardin Road in Palatka, Florida.

4 THE CLERK: I'm sorry. 841?

5 MRS. BOTLEY: Yes.

6 THE CLERK: Thank you.

7 MRS. BOTLEY: My name is Melissa Botley, and I am  
8 the Wife of Reverend Eric Botley, the Pastor of  
9 Providence Baptist Church, which is in the historic  
10 community of Harlem.

11 I started this just talking about freedom, and  
12 what today is about.

13 These people, they want a place to be able to  
14 worship, and to change lives. And I believe that  
15 that's what restoration is really about. Restoration  
16 is about bringing life back into something. And that's  
17 what we're seeking to do in downtown Palatka.

18 I just want to just share that -- I'm going to  
19 share a scripture with you from Habakkuk, Chapter Two.  
20 And it just says behold the proud, his soul is not  
21 upright in him, but the just shall live by his faith.  
22 By scheming to destroy many peoples you have brought  
23 shame to your house and forfeited your Wife, for the  
24 very stones will cry out from the wall, and a beam in  
25 the framework will answer them. Woe to him who builds

1 a city with blood, and founds a town on injustice, so  
2 that people toil for what would be burned up, and  
3 nations exhaust themselves to no purpose.

4 And I'm going to just stop there, and just say  
5 that I pray that we will not be a people whose shame  
6 will exceed their glory, but that Palatka is in  
7 desperate need of restoration.

8 We can not continue to toil for what would be  
9 burned up. We need to invest in things that are longer  
10 than just this life.

11 The River Community Church is seeking to toil for  
12 what will not be burned up, but for what is eternal.

13 They are a community of believers who seek to  
14 bring peace and wholeness back into this place where  
15 darkness has been allowed to prevail for far too long.

16 Let's not seek to stop restoration from coming to  
17 Palatka.

18 God is almighty, and he will accomplish his plans.  
19 This is a positive, life-giving plan, for our  
20 community.

21 Allowing this church to open its doors serves to  
22 breathe fresh life to a dying place.

23 Please be a part of this awesome victory. Sound  
24 the battle cry with us to take back our community from  
25 the powers of darkness.

1 Thank you.

2 MR. PERRY: Can I ask a question?

3 MR. CHAIRMAN: Sure.

4 MR. PERRY: I was given a letter to read that is  
5 similar information.

6 Can I just have it recorded in the Minutes without  
7 reading it? Is that possible?

8 MR. CHAIRMAN: Sure.

9 MR. PERRY: Who do I hand it to?

10 Thank you.

11 MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, ma'am?

12 MRS. RODRIG: Hi, my name is Francine, and I'm --  
13 I live in 305 Moseley Avenue in Palatka. Francine  
14 Rodrig.

15 What I want to say is I've been to the little  
16 antique boutique, and the arts store that is next to  
17 the area where we'd like to rent, and I've been there  
18 twice, and on both times had an exciting purchasing  
19 time, enjoyed it, and it was during festivals.

20 So I've not really driven down, purposefully, to  
21 say I'm going to go to these little stores and check  
22 them out.

23 So it was only by happenstance, happened to be  
24 wondering in that area.

25 And I can only say that for me, the shopping spree

1 might be quite a few times a week rather than a couple  
2 times a year, and that would be a great benefit to the  
3 businesses in the area, and others.

4 And also, that I hope that -- I don't want to  
5 apologize, or say it was offensive for our Pastor to  
6 speak his words of God.

7 Because as he gives his example and his life, we  
8 also choose to be able to live out the sermon, as well,  
9 in our lives, and not just be words.

10 Thank you.

11 MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

12 I've got one more, and then you'll be next.

13 Yes, sir?

14 MR. KENNEDY: Kirby Kennedy, 106 Lisa Lane,  
15 Palatka.

16 We've heard a lot tonight about the nine downtown  
17 Baptist -- or nine downtown churches.

18 As the Pastor of First Baptist Church, I would  
19 fully support River Community Church being right  
20 downtown. It's a different church, very different than  
21 ours, but I believe that their ministry would be good.

22 And I just wanted to speak at least for our  
23 downtown church, or for me, that they would be welcome.

24 MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

25 Yes?

1 MRS. BURK: Ruth Burk.

2 MR. PERRY: Will you be nice?

3 MRS. BURK: Yes.

4 MR. PERRY: Okay.

5 MRS. BURK: I hope you make this an exception. I  
6 really -- there is an exception to every rule.

7 I wish I could turn back the clock to the '60's,  
8 or even the '50's. In the '50's I was in my 20's, so  
9 -- I was born in 1940, so you can do the math.

10 Anyways, I really hope you make this an exception,  
11 and let them --

12 MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

13 MRS. BURK: -- come down.

14 I don't think it can hurt anything. And there's a  
15 reason they're empty, because you can't find anybody  
16 for the big buildings, because they're all looking at  
17 the same thing (indiscernible)

18 MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, ma'am.

19 MRS. BURK: And WalMart -- when WalMart went in,  
20 it closed down a lot of these little -- I, too, took  
21 courses, and they -- got certified by the State, the  
22 MainStreet. I wanted to do it for free. And they  
23 hired a MainStreet Manager. But that was okay, too.

24 But when I first came I offered my services, and  
25 of course, they turned me down. But that's why the

1 downtown -- the little downtowns in every state got  
2 wiped out by people like WalMart -- and yes, I shop at  
3 WalMart, I'm not saying anything bad about them.  
4 They're just a fact of moving forward.

5 MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

6 Thank you.

7 If there's no one else, we'll close the Public  
8 Hearing portion, and go into our regular meeting, where  
9 the Board will make a decision, the Board Members.

10 It is our duty to make a decision, and the way we  
11 think it ought to be -- whatever is right. It's kind  
12 of a tough one. We have a building that's empty, and  
13 been empty for years, and we have MainStreet, who would  
14 like to have -- who is doing a great job in Palatka  
15 right now.

16 MR. SHEFFIELD: Mr. Chairman, I'm prepared to make  
17 a motion.

18 MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

19 MR. SHEFFIELD: This Board is chartered by the  
20 City to deal with land use issues. And based on that,  
21 I do not believe that this use of this space is  
22 compatible with the downtown retail area. So  
23 therefore, I move that we accept Staff's recommendation  
24 and deny this application.

25 MR. CHAIRMAN: We have a motion.

1 Do I have a second?

2 MR. WALLACE: I'll second.

3 MR. CHAIRMAN: Motion and a second.

4 Is there discussion?

5 (No response.)

6 MR. CHAIRMAN: There is no discussion.

7 All in favor of the motion, signify by saying aye.

8 MR. STEWART: Aye.

9 MR. WALLACE: Aye.

10 MR. SHEFFIELD: Aye.

11 MRS. GOODING: Aye.

12 MR. DELOACH: Aye.

13 MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed, like sign.

14 (No response.)

15 MR. CHAIRMAN: Motion carries.

16 All right, folks.

17 Thank you for your time.

18 MR. PERRY: Thank you very much.

19 (End of proceedings pertaining to Case 13-26.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

STATE OF FLORIDA )

COUNTY OF PUTNAM )

I, Vicki E. Vaughn-Mast, RPR, Stenographic Court Reporter, do hereby certify that I was authorized to and did transcribe the foregoing proceedings before the Planning Board of the City of Palatka, that a review of the transcript was not requested; and that the foregoing pages, numbered 1 through 139, inclusive, constitute a true and correct record of the testimony given by said witness, to the best of my ability.

I FURTHER CERTIFY that I am not a relative or employee or attorney or counsel of any of the parties hereto, nor a relative or employee of such attorney or counsel, nor am I financially interested in the action.

WITNESS MY HAND AND OFFICIAL SEAL this 22nd day of July, 2013, at Palatka, Putnam County, Florida.

*Vicki E. Mast*

VICKI E. VAUGHN-MAST, RPR

