

PRESENT: K. Leonard, Vice Chairman
T. Cole
W. Hite
K. Shiflett
E. Shipplett
R.L. Earhart, Senior Planner and Secretary
T. Fitzgerald, Director of Community Development
K. Hull, Associate Planner

ABSENT: James Curd, Chairman

VIRGINIA: At the Worksession Meeting of the Augusta County Planning Commission held on Tuesday, January 8, 2013, at 5:00 p.m. in the South Board Room, Augusta County Government Center, Verona, Virginia.

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The meeting was called to order by Mr. Leonard, Vice Chairman.

Mrs. Hull opened the meeting by outlining the vision statement in the 2007 Comprehensive Plan. She stated that the Vision is key in the overall goals, objectives, and policies of the County. She asked the commissioners to keep the vision in the back of their minds as they complete the review this year, because it will be revisited at the end and decided as to whether the vision is good or needs to be changed. She discussed the history of the Comprehensive Plan explaining that the most recent Plan was originally adopted in 1994 and was last updated in 2007. She stated that the Comp Plan is used as a guide for decision making. Mrs. Hull talked about the desired growth of the County outlined in the existing Plan and stated that the Plan calls for new growth to be mainly in the designated Urban Service Areas.

Mr. Cole referred to the population projections of the 20 year Plan and asked that it be verified that the projection of 25% growth is correct for the Plan. He also asked what the historical growth rate is for the County.

Mrs. Earhart stated that when looking at the historical growth rate of the County, it can become complicated to quantify the growth because of the annexations that have taken place over the years. She stated that because the Plan was not established as a “no growth plan”, population growth hasn’t been as important to the Plan as the location for the growth and areas of development. In past discussions, it was decided that because the County had so much land available for development, it was more straightforward to track where the growth was happening in the County and decide where we wanted it. Therefore, one main principle of the Plan became “targeted growth”.

Mr. Leonard asked if growth was based on job creation. He stated that he doesn't think the population will grow unless jobs are created.

Mrs. Shiflett stated that she feels the quality of life is as important as job availability and that growth will occur regardless of employment.

Mrs. Hull pointed out the existing key elements in the Strategies for Growth section as noted in the Comp Plan. She referred to the Planning Policy Area and Future Land Use maps as supporting maps to the Plan, noting that when creating the maps, several existing factors and constraints were taken into account. If the maps were drawn with no existing features, they would look much different. The maps show a realistic visual of how we want the County to distribute its growth in the future.

Mrs. Hull addressed the future land uses designated for the County in the Urban Service and Community Development areas. She stated that while they are important guides to use as rezonings are evaluated and development decisions are made, they won't be a focus at this point in the review. She reinforced the idea that the categories are not zoning classifications, but act as land use guides to locate compatible uses.

Mrs. Shiflett stated that she doesn't think we are where we want to be yet. While we have the goals in place to designate growth, the costs to do so are not equitable between the County, residents, and developers. She stated there has not been any implementation for infrastructure funding except from the citizens for development or for farming and conservation.

Mr. Shiplett stated that he would be interested in hearing from Dennis Burnett, Economic Development Director for Augusta County, regarding the communication he may be receiving from potential businesses when trying to encourage them to locate in Augusta County.

Mrs. Hull indicated that Mr. Burnett was on the schedule to attend a Worksession.

Mr. Garvey stated that when production plants are considering Augusta County or other localities, they are given incentives to locate. He asked that when encouraging growth and development to occur only in our Urban Service Areas, is the County penalizing developers by asking them to pay for infrastructure and improvements instead of just incentivizing.

Mr. Shiplett indicated that developers do pay a large expense for utility extensions and infrastructure improvements but that development also puts a burden on those utilities and infrastructure and that is a cost to citizens. Mrs. Shiflett asked about fees for well permits and ways to combat development in rural areas by upping permit fees.

Mrs. Earhart stated that the goal is to keep the Urban areas as Urban and the Agriculture areas as Agriculture. The County needs to entice growth in the Rural Conservation Areas and not in the Agriculture Conservation Areas, if there is going to be any residential growth, so that the real agriculture land is reserved for farming purposes. She stated that it needs to be determined how to get the funding so that the

County is able to put money into designating growth and development as the Plan outlines.

Mr. Leonard stated that people desire to live in the Agriculture Conservation Areas because of the beauty of the land and views, however, many times they are unable to economically manage a working farm, therefore, they may be forced to sell to developers or work another business to supplement the farm.

Mr. Garvey stated that housing costs for this area are too high for the average person.

Mr. Shipplett stated that the economy cannot be projected and that the Commission should proceed with the key components set in the Comp Plan in previous years. He also stated that the housing market is not growing as quickly as developers would like, so more apartments and townhouses are being built because that is what is being funded by the banks.

Mr. Cole asked if the number of vacant apartments has changed since last year.

Mrs. Earhart stated that a number for vacant apartments is not easily obtainable.

Mrs. Hull talked about the Rt. 340 corridor between Stuarts Draft and Waynesboro as an example of an area the County would like to see developed. She stated that the Comp Plan calls for the area to develop in conformance with the Neighborhood Mixed Use designation in mind. It is an area with school capacity, a four lane highway, public water and on the outskirts of the City of Waynesboro.

Mr. Garvey asked with all the growth and development in Stuarts Draft and Ladd and with the four lane highway, why sewer services have not been installed.

Mrs. Earhart stated that it was because of the lack of funding.

The Commission had some discussion on whether it would be feasible to wait until the County can pay for water and sewer installation or if land should be developed with septic systems.

Mr. Garvey asked if the County was slow in installing sewer services because they were afraid Waynesboro would annex.

Mrs. Earhart answered that it was more difficult in some areas than others in deciding how to proceed with development. Although this area is one that makes sense to develop, the money to extend the services and the interest to build the development must be there and is not there right now.

Mrs. Shiflett indicated that the growth in the Plan was a 20 year plan and that some things may have to wait. Not everything can be decided on right away and it may take 20 years to put some things in place.

Mr. Shipplett stated that the Stuarts Draft area will continue to grow with residential and business development.

Mr. Leonard indicated that a large piece of the Rt. 340 corridor is privately owned. There would need to be someone willing to sell to developers before the land could be developed.

Mrs. Earhart and Mr. Fitzgerald stated that there is interest from land owners to sell to developers, however, things have slowed down and the developer interest right now is not like it was.

The Commission agreed to continue these discussions in future workesssions, as there are many conflicts and issues to be discussed. Mrs. Hull outlined that the next meeting in February will focus on the Augusta County Service Authority and they will be presenting as guest speakers.

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned.

Chairman

Secretary