

PRESENT: T. Cole, Chairman
E. Shipplett, Vice Chairman
J. Curd
C. Foschini
K. Shiflett
T. Fitzgerald, Director of Community Development
R. L. Earhart, Senior Planner and Secretary

ABSENT: W. Garvey
K. Leonard

VIRGINIA: At the Regular Meeting of the Augusta County Planning Commission held on Tuesday, February 11 2014, at 4:30 p.m. in the Board Room, Augusta County Government Center, Verona, Virginia.

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RESOLUTION OF WAYNE HITE

Mr. Cole read and presented the Resolution passed in January to Mr. Hite and thanked him for his many years of service to the Planning Commission.

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MINUTES

Mr. Shipplett moved to approve the minutes of the worksession and regular meetings held on January 14, 2014.

Mr. Foschini seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

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Comprehensive Plan – Education

Mrs. Earhart began the review of the Educational Section of the Comp Plan. She stated the Comp Plan only serves as a guide for decision making by the Board of Supervisors. Final decisions affecting the school system are made by the School Board.

Mr. George Earhart, Assistant Superintendent for Augusta County Schools, reviewed the School Board’s Strategic Plan as presented on PowerPoint. He stated the Strategic

Plan is reviewed every two years and there are five main goals within the Plan. The school system strives to improve academic achievement for all students by preparing them for the 21st century by educating them in and through various technological components. The school system works in partnership with parents and community stakeholders such as Blue Ridge Community College and Valley Vocational Technical Center, as well as the mentorship program and other local agencies, in supporting student achievement. The School Board continually reviews the budget for the school system and determines how it can be more efficient. It is important to the School Board to have educational and employment opportunities available in the community for students so they will stay in the area after graduation. The School Board is required to submit data to the State in order to show how schools are meeting State mandated requirements.

Mr. Earhart discussed school clusters and how the elementary schools feed into the middle and high schools. School clustering is important as developments are created within the County.

Mr. Earhart reviewed school enrollment for each school in the County and indicated the schools that are over enrollment capacity and the schools that are below capacity. He stated the School Board needs to know where housing units are being developed in order to determine what schools may be affected by a development in terms of enrollment. A spreadsheet has been created and is regularly updated in order to keep track of current and future developments. This assists the School Board as they review boundary line revisions and where additional schools may be needed.

Mrs. Earhart reviewed the goals, objectives, and policies of the Educational section of the Comp Plan.

Mr. Shipplett referred to Mr. Earhart's comments regarding the importance of knowing where new developments would take place. He asked if there is a way to project the number of children that will come from a development.

Mrs. Earhart stated currently the school-aged population is not growing. New developments do not necessarily guarantee an increase in student population, therefore, it proves difficult to make projections.

Mr. Earhart stated that the School Board had previously used a Generation Factor when projecting school enrollment. They found it to be unsuccessful because the population in subdivisions and multi-family housing is constantly changing.

Mr. Shipplett asked Mr. Earhart why the Strategic Plan did not specifically address student safety.

Mr. Earhart explained school safety falls under number five of the Strategic Plan: Complete Required S.O.Q. Operational Mandates. Schools are required to perform a certain number of fire drills and tornado drills within the year. Safety plans are put into place and safety inspections are done at each school throughout the year.

Mrs. Earhart continued the review of the Comp Plan. She stated the Safe Routes to School Program name has been changed to Transportation Alternatives in order to correspond with VDOT.

Mr. Curd asked if that program was for middle schools and elementary schools only.

Mrs. Earhart said it was concentrated on sidewalks to elementary schools. We are using the grant funding at the Stuarts Draft complex and staff would like to see sidewalks added to other areas near schools. There is potential to add sidewalks to connect the Riverheads schools with the new development in that area.

Mr. Curd asked if the program was based on housing units within a certain radius.

Mrs. Earhart stated that because the program is grant funded, it is highly competitive. Funds are more likely to be granted in areas that have a higher number of housing units close to the schools.

Mrs. Earhart continued the review of the Comp Plan.

Mr. Shipplett asked how the County determines the percentage of students that continue their education after graduation.

Mr. Earhart stated the School Board has to supply a report to the State that accounts for the number of students that graduated and the number that did not. The counseling office at each school provides to the School Board the number of graduates that are continuing their education either through a two year or four year program. This information is then sent to the State. Once the student leaves the school, there is no way to track if the student actually completes the two or four year program.

Mr. Shipplett asked if the counselors talk with each student regarding continuation of education.

Mr. Earhart stated that each student has a career plan in place, which starts in middle school and continues through high school. Each high school also has a career coach that assists students with their career path.

Mrs. Earhart stated from an economic development standpoint, some of these same points are made in the economic development plan, we need to be sure to provide the counselors in the schools with the information they need to help the students be aware of all the opportunities available to them in terms of jobs and training.

Mr. Shipplett asked what programs were available for students with limited resources to attend college.

Mr. Earhart stated there are scholarships the student can apply for to provide financial assistance. The career coaches help students find programs that assist with funding for college. Also, the school system assists students that cannot afford to pay costs associated with required college testing, such as the SATs.

Comprehensive Plan – Land Use

Design Principals

Mrs. Earhart reviewed the Design Principals handout which was prepared in 2005 with the Commissioners and asked for input from them.

Mr. Cole stated it seems the goal is to have a program that envisions an overall increase in the quality of development in Augusta County. He is in favor of anything that can encourage the overall improvement of the quality of life in Augusta County.

Mr. Foschini stated he thinks there are a lot of great ideas in the Principals; however, he feels there needs to be a balance between the County and developers to make sure the County isn't discouraging growth by attaching large fees to developer's costs. He stated signage is an area that needs to continue to be addressed.

Mrs. Shiflett stated she feels the County's vision hasn't changed as far as the desired look for the County. The examples in the Design Principals are something to work towards, although it may not happen quickly. Steps need to be taken so Augusta County doesn't look like every other community in the State.

Mr. Shipplett said the ideas and concepts within the Design Principals are fine. He stated there needs to be a partnership between Staff and developers to look at how properties can be used; for example, not all sites are compatible with having green space, and some sites would work well with more density. If the County is going to be able to continue with the services it has, growth needs to continue. Growth may be halted if localities continue to enforce extensive costs upon developers, who in turn pass the costs on to the potential home buyer resulting in property becoming too expensive to purchase.

Mr. Foschini stated extensive costs for business property development will discourage businesses from locating to the area as well.

Mrs. Earhart stated that she will not make significant changes to design recommendations contained in the Land Use section of the Comp Plan.

STAFF REPORTS

A. CODE OF VIRGINIA – SECTION 15.2-2310

Mrs. Earhart reviewed with the Commissioners the requests coming before the BZA.

Mr. Cole asked if there were any comments regarding the upcoming items on the BZA agenda.

14-10 Dwayne R. or Michelle W. Sprouse

The Planning Commission is concerned about the compatibility of an automotive repair business with the residential character of the neighborhood. This property is located in close proximity to property zoned business. The Planning Commission would encourage the business to be located in one of those areas rather than establishing a business use in the middle of a residential neighborhood. Mrs. Shiflett made the motion to pass along those concerns to the Board of Zoning Appeals. Mr. Curd seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

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The meeting was moved to the Board of Supervisor's Conference Room, where Land Use maps were reviewed.

The Old White Bridge Road area of the County was discussed for potential development. The Comp Plan currently shows this area as part of the Rural Conservation Area. Mr. Fitzgerald stated this area can have Service Authority water extended to it and public sewer can be extended from the City of Waynesboro. A property owner has requested this area be studied for a change to Urban Service Area where the development would be on public water and sewer. The question posed to the Commission was should be planning for these areas be based on where the Service Authority can provide services or assume that services can be provided by Staunton or Waynesboro through an agreement. Mr. Foschini suggested that it be planned assuming services will be extended; but on a case by case basis if an agreement cannot be made with the City, then require the property owner to request a change to the Comp Plan. Mrs. Earhart stated this was a tough area. The surrounding area along Old White Bridge Road is larger lot residential, but the development adjacent to this property to the rear in Waynesboro is small lot residential. The options are: to keep it as is- a Rural Conservation area, where the development would be 2 acre residential tracts with no public water or sewer services and public streets; to make it a Community Development Area and allow public water to be extended by the Service Authority to the railroad tracks and put in 1-2 acre residential tracts on public water, private sewage, and public streets; or to change the Comprehensive Plan to Urban Service Area and allow both public water and sewer and allow the property to be developed residentially at 3-4 units per acre. The consensus of the Commission was to leave this area as Rural Conservation.

The Rt. 340 corridor was discussed. The area is currently planned for development on public water and sewer, but there is limited sewer and in some cases water in these areas. Mrs. Earhart suggested a plan to use the remaining capacity of the public utilities and once it is used up, decreasing the density expected in this area. The plan would not support large capital improvements to increase the capacities of these systems. The Commission agreed with this approach and saw no need to change land use in this area.

The Rt. 262 loop was discussed. The Commissioner's felt there was no need to expand water services any farther then where it currently is, as this area is not compatible for more intensive development.

There was discussion on where Urban Service Areas could be shrunk, based on the location of existing utilities.

Conservation easements were discussed. It was noted that when a conservation easement is put into place, it should be considered if there is potential for rural development. There should not be developments in areas with conservation easements. Mrs. Earhart will modify the Land Use maps accordingly.

The Planning Commission agreed it would be beneficial to have several sessions to review and discuss the Land Use maps. Staff will provide Commissioners with copies of the water, sewer, and zoning map, as well as the conservation easement and farm soils map for their use in considering additional changes to the Planning Policy Area and Future Land Use maps.

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There being no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned.

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Chairman

Secretary