

**Northumberland County Planning Commission**  
**February 17, 2022**  
**Minutes**

The regular monthly meeting of the Northumberland County Planning Commission was held on February 17, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. in person at the Northumberland Courts Building and using Zoom (telephonic meeting) with the following attendance:

Chris Cralle	Present	Garfield Parker	Present
Vivian Diggs	Present	Roger McKinley	Present
Alfred Fisher	Present	Heidi Wilkins-Corey	Present
Ed King	Absent	Charles Williams	Present
Richard Haynie	Absent	Patrick O'Brien	Present

Others in attendance:  
Stuart McKenzie (County Planner)

**RE: CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Fisher.

Mr. Fisher led the commission in the Pledge of Allegiance, while Mr. Parker gave the invocation.

**RE: ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

Mr. McKenzie asked the commission members present for nominations for Chairman of the Planning Commission. Mr. O'Brien nominated Mr. Fisher. Mr. Fisher stated he would accept the nomination, only if no one else on the commission wanted to run for the position of Chairman. There were no volunteers, so Ms. Wilkins-Corey seconded the motion to nominate Mr. Fisher. Charles Williams made a motion to close the nominations. Mr. O'Brien seconded the motion. Mr. McKenzie took a vote, and all present voted to make Mr. Fisher the Chairman of the Commission for 2022.

Mr. Fisher took over the election duties, and asked for nominations for the Vice Chairmanship. Mr. Cralle nominated Garfield Parker. Mr. O'Brien nominated Mr. Cralle. Mr. Cralle stated he was very busy and would not have the time to be Vice Chairman, so Mr. O'Brien withdrew his motion. Mr. McKinley seconded the motion to nominate Mr. Parker. Mr. Williams made a motion to close nominations for Vice Chair. Mr. O'Brien seconded the motion. Mr. Fisher took a vote and all present voted to make Mr. Parker the Vice Chairman.

**RE: AGENDA**

Mr. O'Brien made a motion to accept the agenda as is, and Mr. Cralle seconded the motion. All voted in favor of accepting the agenda.

**RE: MINUTES- November 18, 2020**

Mr. O'Brien made a motion to accept the November 18, 2020 minutes, and Mr. Cralle seconded the motion. All voted in favor of accepting the minutes from November 18, 2020.

**RE: COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS**

Mr. O'Brien proposed that the county create a resolution honoring Mr. Shirley for his many years of service on the Planning Commission, since he recently resigned from the Commission. Mr. Fisher asked Mr. McKenzie if that would be possible, and Mr. McKenzie stated yes. Mr. Fisher stated that perhaps we can invite Mr. Shirley to a subsequent meeting and present it, or if he would prefer, Mr. Fisher and Mr. McKenzie could travel to his new home in Lancaster County and present it in person. Mr. McKenzie agreed.

**RE: STAFF MEMBERS' COMMENTS**

Staff did not have any comments.

**RE: CITIZENS' COMMENTS**

There were no citizens comments.

**RE: PUBLIC HEARINGS**

There were no public hearing scheduled.

**RE: WORK SESSION ITEMS**

Chairman Fisher asked Mr. McKenzie to outline the 2021 End of the Year Report. Mr. McKenzie summarized the Commission's work in 2021 to include creation of a county no-wake ordinance to establish criteria in which an individual or an organization can request a no wake zone or the removal of a no wake zone in the territorial waters of Northumberland County. The Planning Commission also added a definition for livestock in the Northumberland County Zoning Ordinance, Chapter 148-3, as well as allowing administrative zoning approval of chickens and/or livestock within the Waterfront Residential, (R-2) Zoning District, provided they meet certain conditions. Applications that do not meet the conditions will go to the Board of Supervisors for consideration of a conditional use permit.

The Planning Commission also amended the Solar ordinance to add a 200 foot setback along state maintained highways, added a requirement for an Emergency Operations Plan (EOP), EMS/Fire/Sheriff training on site, operational notification to the county, installing a Knoxbox for access to the site, and depicting on the site plan areas of land disturbance as well as the Chesapeake Bay Resource Protection Area. The Planning Commission recommended to the Board of Supervisors that the 200 foot setback to a state maintained road could be reduced by the Board of Supervisors if the applicant installs mitigation measures to

prevent vehicles from entering the solar energy site from a traffic accident. The amendment with this recommendation was unanimously passed by the Planning Commission to be sent to the Board of Supervisors to for their consideration.

Mr. McKenzie stated that in 2021, the total estimated cost of construction was \$54,840,042.15 compared to \$28,973,211.61 for 2020. The total estimated cost of construction showed an increase of approximately 89.3% from 2020 to 2021. Mr. McKenzie also noted that there were 51 single family dwellings built, 17 modular homes, 4 double wides, 1 mobile home and 5 commercial buildings constructed in 2021.

When Mr. McKenzie was finished, Mr. Fisher stated that the county needs two planning commission members to sit on the Capital Improvement Committee. Mr. O'Brien volunteered, as did Mr. Parker. The Chairman of the Commission, Mr. Fisher, Mr. O'Brien and Mr. Parker, along with the County Administrator, Mr. Tadlock, Assistant County Administrator, Mr. Basye and County Planner, Mr. McKenzie round out the Capital Improvement Committee members for 2022.

## **RE: DISCUSSION ITEMS**

Review of Chapter 4, Public Facilities and Services, of the Comprehensive Plan began, with Mr. O'Brien pointing out that the traffic volume table (Table 4.1) dated from 2014, and that surely the traffic volumes had increased since that time. In addition, Mr. O'Brien noted that Figure 4.1, a map showing Annual Average Daily Traffic volume was also dated 2014. Mr. O'Brien asked if both the table and the map could be updated with more recent counts. Mr. McKenzie stated he would inquire to the PDC to see if he could get updated VDOT information. Mr. O'Brien asked if there was an analysis of public versus private highways to see how much the county spends on road maintenance. Mr. Fisher informed Mr. O'Brien that the county does not maintain any roads, and that private road owners must pay to maintain their private road, which is often done by home owner's associations. Mr. McKinley noted in Chapter 4 that the Plan stated the county would like to have US 360 4 laned its entire length in Northumberland County, and asked if the BOS ever mentions this project. Mr. Haynie stated that they have not discussed it recently, but that VDOT creates a six year plan that is reviewed by the BOS, and most years VDOT accepts a few private roads into the State highway system, if they meet VDOT standards. Mr. McKenzie noted that VDOT changed the way it funds road improvements and uses Smart Scale standards that grades projects on their overall usefulness for the Commonwealth. Mr. McKenzie stated that this grading system means that congested areas (metropolitan, urban areas) receive the largest amount of money for road improvements, which leaves rural localities at a disadvantage.

Mr. O'Brien mentioned on page 4:21 about school population projections, specifically that the school population was declining until 2030 and in 2040, the school population increased. Mr. O'Brien wondered how they knew the school age population would increase in 20 years. Mr. O'Brien stated that as the school population goes down the number of employees of the school system goes up, and he does not understand that. Mr. McKenzie stated he did not know why there was a predicted increase in school aged children in 2040, when in all previous years, enrollment declined.

Mr. McKinley stated that you have to invest in your future (schooling the youth), and need to invest in human capital to have your young people to stay in the county and grow businesses, instead of moving away for better opportunities. Mr. Haynie stated the main problem with funding the school is Virginia's Composite Index Score that reduces state funding for our schools. Mr. Haynie continued, the reason our Composite Index Score is bad is because we have expensive waterfront land, with rich out of town persons building mansions that cost millions of dollars. The real estate portion of the Composite Index Score is what makes Northumberland County lose out on state school funding, as well as making the county not be eligible for grant funding for sewer systems. Mr. Haynie stated that because of the Composite Index Score, the Northumberland County budget is almost wholly dependent on real estate taxes for the majority of its funding. Mr. Haynie noted that without sewer, most businesses will not locate here, that, and the fact that the county is located at the end of a dead end road does not help in recruiting new businesses.

Mr. Fisher stated that real estate taxes are high, so much so that the people that have lived on the water their whole life, may not, in the future, be able to afford the taxes on their waterfront land. Mr. Fisher stated they built a subdivision next to him, and the lots are selling for \$250,000 each, and because of the proximity, his land is worth a comparable amount. He stated he is not sure he can pay taxes on his waterfront property throughout the rest of his life.

Mrs. Wilkins-Corey stated that there are ways to add to the county revenue. She stated that she knows of quite a few rental houses near her, and that the county should tax these short term rentals to generate revenue. Mrs. Wilkins-Corey stated that we do have tourism in the county and we need ways to monetize those tourist dollars.

Mr. McKenzie noted that Figure 4.5, a map showing Schools and Other Public Buildings, that the map should be updated to reflect the new location of the School Board. Mr. O'Brien stated that the School Board has not given the old school board building and land back to the County. Mr. O'Brien stated that the School Board has enough money squirrelled away to pay to fix the old EVB bank buildings roof. Mr. O'Brien stated that if the county has to pay to fix the old EVB bank building roof, it will hurt Northumberland County taxpayers.

Mr. Parker asked if the county owns the former School Board building in Lottsburg. Mr. McKenzie stated that no, the county does not own it, the School Board does. Mr. Williams asked who owns the High School? Mr. Haynie stated that the School Board owns some property, with the county owning other pieces of property in the compound. Mr. Haynie reiterated that the old EVB bank building was county property, but that the School Board is allowed to have its office in the building. Mr. Haynie continued stating that the county is looking to fix the roof for relocation of county offices in the future, along with renovation of the interior of the building. Mr. McKenzie asked if the county could charge the School Board rent? Mr. Haynie stated that in theory, yes the county could charge the School Board rent. Mr. Haynie stated that the old EVB bank building roof will cost \$400,000, mainly because they are going to do away with the flat roof and put trusses up to create a pitched roof to shed rainwater, which is more resilient in the long run, compared to a flat roof.

Mr. O'Brien asked how the county can encourage building of baseball fields and basketball court, as mentioned on page 4:19. Mr. McKenzie stated that the county does not have a Parks and Recreation department, so it is difficult. Mr. McKenzie stated that the county funds the YMCA, and perhaps they could brainstorm on how to encourage investment in baseball fields and basketball courts. Mr. McKenzie stated that VDOT has a locality grant program that provides up to 80% of the cost of a road into a county owned recreational park, if the county decides to create one in the future.

**RE: PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There were no public comments.

**RE: ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. Fisher stated that it was getting late, and that the Commission could stop here and pick up the review of the Comprehensive Plan Chapter 4 at the next meeting. Mr. O'Brien made a motion to adjourn at 8:38 pm. The adjournment vote was as follows:

Chris Cralle	Aye	Garfield Parker	Aye
Vivian Diggs	Aye	Roger McKinley	Aye
Alfred Fisher	Aye	Wellington Shirley, Jr.	Aye
Ed King	Absent	Heidi Wilkins	Aye
Patrick O'Brien	Aye	Charles Williams	Aye
Richard Haynie	n/a		