

Northumberland County Planning Commission
April 21, 2022
Minutes

The regular monthly meeting of the Northumberland County Planning Commission was held on April 21, 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	Present	Charles Williams	Absent
Richard Haynie	Present	Patrick O'Brien	Absent

Others in attendance:
Stuart McKenzie (County Planner)

RE: CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Fisher.

RE: AGENDA

Mr. King 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 - March 17, 2022

Ms. Wilkins-Corey motioned to accept the minutes which was seconded by Ms. Diggs. All voted in favor of accepting the revised minutes from March 17, 2022.

RE: COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

There were no Commission member comments.

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

There were no work session items scheduled.

RE: DISCUSSION ITEMS

Chairman Fisher thanked Vice Chairman Mr. Parker for running the March Planning Commission meeting, since he was out of the country last month.

Mr. Fisher asked Mr. McKenzie if he wanted to set the date for the upcoming special meeting of the Planning Commission to hold a public hearing on the 2023 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). Mr. McKenzie replied in the affirmative, explained that the Capital Improvement Committee met three times, and finalized the CIP, and that he had to advertise the public hearing in the local newspapers for one week before the special meeting of the Planning Commission. Mr. McKenzie stated the earliest day we could have the special meeting was two weeks from today, which would be Thursday, May 5, 2022 at 5:30 pm, or if the commission prefers, Monday, May 9, 2022 at 5:30 pm. The majority of commission members stated that May 5 is the best date for the special meeting, and the meeting date was set for Thursday, May 5, 2022 at 5:30 pm at the new courthouse.

Mr. McKenzie, at the request of the Chairman, gave a brief recap of what was discussed during the review of Chapter 4 of the Comprehensive Plan at the March and February PC meeting. Mr. McKenzie stated he had received a link from the NNPDC for VDOT traffic counts GIS data, noting that if the data is from 2020, then it may be artificially depressed due to the pandemic. Mr. Fisher noted that a lot of people left the cities to go to their vacation house, and the population of Northumberland County likely rose during the pandemic, as urban citizens temporarily moved to their river house. Mr. McKenzie stated that he believed that was true, so if the traffic counts are from 2020, they may be more accurate than perceived.

Mr. McKenzie stated that at the last two meetings, the commission discussed water access, and he recalled that when the Commission was revising the Comp Plan in 2016, they were discussing improvements to four public water access sites. Those sites are included in Chapter 4 (on pages 4-14 to 4-15), as the commission was hoping for funding from the Jessie Ball Dupont Foundation grant program. The county did not receive the grant from the Foundation, and at the last meeting, commission members wondered that if we are not going to make the outlined improvements, then we should remove them from the Comp Plan. Mr. McKenzie stated it was kind of a Catch 22, as if we seek funding for a project, the grantor wants to be sure that it is in a county Plan, which ensures that the county supervisors are aware of the project and have tacitly approved of the project since it is in the Plan. If we take these projects out of the plan, then it is very likely any grant agency would fund a “standalone” project, with no documentation. Mr. McKenzie further explained that the improvements to Coopers Landing were denied by VDGIF, because the site does not have enough parking area, and since they own the lease, what they say is the law, so it is very unlikely the county would be able to put a fishing pier at Coopers Landing. Mr. McKenzie then stated that Rowes Landing, Hampton Hall Landing, and the Great Wicomico Fishing Pier are all owned by the

county, so there should be no constraints to what we can do there. Mr. McKenzie made note of the last sentence of the Great Wicomico Fishing Pier Canoe/Kayak launch project summary that states a courtesy pier will be built for launching canoes and kayaks, and since that time the county has learned that that is not feasible, as VDOT does not want any marine structures nearby that might damage the bridge pilings. Mr. McKenzie stated that at the last meeting, members wanted to hear Mr. Fisher's thoughts on the matter. Mr. Fisher stated that the problem (not having adequate water access sites for citizens, especially those that live inland) is likely only going to get worse. Mr. Fisher said that he understands that at this point in time, we can't do any of these projects, but perhaps things will change in the future, and it would be advantageous to have public water access sites cited in plans to show the county is still striving to provide more access to its citizens. Mrs. Wilkins-Corey stated that leaving a project in the Comp Plan that has no chance of success is not helpful to the integrity of the report. Mr. McKinley stated he feels it is important to have these in the report, so people know they exist, and commented that Lancaster County just spent \$500,000 for an old oyster house on Carter Creek to provide public water access in their county. Mr. Parker asked about a waterfront park. Mr. Fisher said a combined park and water access would be ideal.

Mr. McKenzie asked for clarification on the Coopers Landing improvement regarding a fishing pier and asked if we should change the verb from "planned" to "proposed", with a majority saying proposed would be a better term to use regarding the fishing pier. Mr. McKenzie asked for further clarification on the Great Wicomico Canoe/Kayak launch section, stating that the commission would like to strike the last sentence so there is no mention of a canoe/kayak launch courtesy pier. Mr. McKenzie stated that he would update the marina chart with VDH information, and he knows that Lewisetta Marina added some slips, and that there may be changes at other marinas. Mr. McKenzie stated that at the last meeting Mrs. Wilkins-Corey stated that the KOA in Reedville has gone out of business. Mr. Fisher asked, the marina or the campground? To which Mrs. Wilkins-Corey stated both.

Mr. McKenzie stated that at the last meeting, Mr. O'Brien was commenting on the lack of basketball courts, and ball fields in the county, and Mr. Williams stated that there is a backstop at Shell Landing, and is a county owned ballfield, so Mr. McKenzie stated he would add that to the appropriate section in Chapter 4.

Mr. McKenzie stated that the Public Facility Map, the school board offices need to be moved from Lottsburg to Heathsville, and he needs to move the VMRC office to Wicomico Church to update the map.

Mr. McKenzie stated that potable water supply section of Chapter 4 was not discussed at the last meeting, so he suggested that commission discuss that now. Mr. McKenzie prefaced the discussion by saying that the cost of a reservoir is astronomical and is not possible with county funding alone. Mr. McKenzie stated that getting the permits to build the reservoir could take years and hundreds of thousands of dollars, but then you have to build the reservoir itself, build a water treatment plant to purify the water, then get hundreds of easements throughout the county from private land owners and lay the pipes to distribute the water. This likely could lead to millions of dollars being spent, and would not cover the entire county. Mr. McKenzie asked the commission members if he

should tone down the potential reservoir section to make it seem less likely, or remove it completely. Mr. Parker asked if there were anymore places around that could be used for a reservoir site? Mr. McKenzie stated that the Army Corps of Engineers, who permits reservoirs wants them to be built upland (not on an existing stream channel) and in a small watershed of 5-10 acres. That way, if we have a tropical storm that dumps 12 inches of rain in 24 hours, with such a small watershed, the dam would not get blown out, because of the small size of the catchment basin. Mr. Fisher stated that the more you look at reservoirs the worse it gets. Mr. Fisher stated why would we do this, because of lack of groundwater? Mr. Fisher stated that the experts state that Northumberland County gets enough rain to keep surface wells full of water, so there is always that water source. Mr. McKenzie stated that the aquifers are thinner near the fall line, so the counties in Virginia along I-95 are going to be in trouble before Northumberland County since our aquifers are deeper and have more volume. Mr. McKenzie did state that saltwater intrusion has been a problem. Mr. McKenzie stated that the commission had previously discussed the Hampton Roads Sanitation District's project to inject cleaned waste water into the aquifer near Virginia Beach to help combat saltwater intrusion down there. Mr. McKenzie stated that the last version of the Comp Plan had all eight reservoirs were shown and in the 2016 version we pared it down to the three reservoirs now shown. Mr. McKenzie stated it doesn't cost us anything to leave the reservoir section in, but that he could add a sentence regarding the rainfall rate and ability to use surface wells if that is the commission's desire. Mr. Cralle asked, does the county have anything against shallow wells? Mr. Cralle stated the health department wanted them to get an artesian well, even though they had a shallow well that worked fine. Mr. McKenzie stated that the Department of Health has been trying to get everyone on artesian wells, because there is less chance of drinking water contamination from a deep well. Mr. McKenzie summarized the comments by stating that he would leave the reservoir section as is. Mr. Fisher wanted to note how far technology has come in the past decades, that the cruise ship he was recently on produced more fresh drinking water that the ship could use, and actually sold fresh water to port communities, all with a desalinization plant on the ship. Mr. Fisher stated perhaps, in the future, we will have a desalinization plant in Reedville to supply water to the county.

Mr. McKenzie stated he has to update the emergency services section of Chapter 4 to state that the county now employs two EMS crews 24/7 to provide emergency services to citizens of the county. Mr. McKenzie stated that when we revised the Comp Plan last time, the county was still relying on volunteer rescue squads. Mr. McKenzie stated that the Northumberland Rescue Squad satellite office in Reedville is no more, and transferred all the equipment to the Burgess Northumberland Rescue Squad, so we will update the map to reflect those changes. Mr. McKenzie stated he needs to talk to the county administrator regarding the current services of social services as well as the disability services board and Bay Aging and update those sections accordingly. Mr. McKenzie stated that as he updates the Comp Plan chapters, he will send the marked up copy of the chapter with the newly made revisions in red, for the commission to review and possibly make more changes or change the wording if need be of the revisions requested. Mr. McKenzie stated that if any commission members has any questions, finds something that needs addressing or any other modifications that might be needed to improve the accuracy of the Comp Plan to call, or email him for consideration.

Mr. Fisher asked Mr. McKenzie to transition to the Capital Improvement Program summary. Mr. McKenzie stated that Capital Improvement Committee met three times, after the first meeting, the committee members had questions, so the second meeting they requested the Sheriff to attend to answer questions about his projects, the Sanitary District staff regarding their projects and the School Board regarding their CIP projects. At the third meeting, the committee members present recommended approval of six projects. The Sheriff's Office wanted to replace six vehicles at a fully equipped cost of \$50K each, the committee recommended approval of five vehicles at a total of \$250,000. The School Board requested \$440,000 for a new well at the elementary school, and the committee recommended setting aside \$110,000 this year (as well as next year) to give the School ½ of the funding needed, anticipating a Virginia Department of Environmental Quality grant that would cover the other ½ of the cost of replacing the well. Mr. McKenzie then stated the School Board wanted two 77 passenger buses and one SPED bus at \$100K each. The committee allocated \$200,000 for two buses, it left up to the School Board whether to buy two 77 passenger buses or one 77 passenger bus and one SPED bus. Mr. McKenzie then stated that the School Board requested \$88,500 to replace the roof in the School Bus Maintenance Garage, and the committee recommended allotting them \$100,000 for the roof, in anticipation of the increase cost of building material and labor. County Administration had requested \$150,000 for building maintenance which was approved by the committee. Mr. McKenzie stated that the Sanitary District requested \$96,500 for a new generator at the Reedville pump station and pump upgrades to the Post Office pump station. Mr. McKenzie stated the committee recommended approval of the project at \$96,500. Mr. McKenzie explained that the cost of the Sheriff's replacement vehicles did not come out of the Capital Improvement Budget, rather it came out of the General Fund as pass through money, so the total allocation of Capital Improvement Program funds would be \$656,500.

Mr. Cralle asked if there was still capacity in the Callao and Reedville Sewer systems. Mr. Fisher asked Mr. Haynie if that was the case. Mr. Haynie stated both have capacity, but was unsure how much. Ms. Wilkins-Corey asked if the sanitary district could apply for grant funds, and Mr. McKenzie said yes, in fact the county just got a 5.1 million dollar grant to meet a DEQ consent order to enhance the treatment of our waste water.

Mr. Fisher stated if any commission member has any questions about the Capital Improvement Plan to contact him, or he is going to assume everyone is OK with it, and hopes for a quick public hearing and approval on May 5 at 5:30 pm.

Mr. McKenzie then briefed the commission on the status of the proposed Canoe/Kayak Launch site, stating that Mr. Fisher requested him to ask VDOT if they could send a prison work crew to clear the brush under the Rt. 200 bridge. VDOT obliged and the site has been cleared. Mr. McKenzie stated that there needs to be some work on the road heading to the turnaround to fill in the gullies, create an eight foot wide gravel foot path, 4 inches deep from the turnaround to mean high water. The county proposes to open the rip rap wide enough for the path, and wrap the rip rap around to protect the pilings. Finally, the county proposes to put two large boulders to reduce the chance of someone trying to back a boat trailer down the path. Mr. McKenzie stated he will get the VDOT land use application ready to submit, and the county BOS has already passed a resolution to cover the bond required to repair any improvement made back to VDOT standards, if

the project is not maintained or if VDOT needs to do bridge maintenance. Mr. McKinley asked about how much it was going to cost. Mr. McKenzie stated they got a quote that was much higher than we anticipated, above \$10,000. Likely the county will be soliciting more bids, or perhaps pare down some of the materials. Mr. McKenzie noted that over half the cost was labor, and suggested we plan a work day down there and everyone bring a shovel to help spread the gravel after the truck dumps it, and save \$7,000. Mrs. Wilkins-Corey suggested citizens or high school students that need community service hours, perhaps they could be used for some of the labor. Mr. Fisher stated that we will be working on this in the upcoming months. Mr. Cralle stated that the fishing pier has hours of operation, but the canoe/kayak launch would not? Mr. Fisher stated that was not true, the canoe/kayak launch would have the same hours as the fishing pier, sun up to sun down, and that the launch would only be a drop off, any vehicle will be parked in the fishing pier parking lot or along the entrance road.

RE: BOARD OF SUPERVISORS REPORT

There was no report given.

RE: PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

RE: ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Parker made a motion to adjourn that was seconded by Mr. McKinley and the meeting was adjourned at 8:13 pm. The adjournment vote was as follows:

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