

Northumberland County Planning Commission
April 17, 2025
Minutes

The regular monthly meeting of the Northumberland County Planning Commission was held on April 17, 2025 at 7:00 p.m. in person at the Northumberland Courts Building and using Zoom (telephonic meeting), with the following attendance:

Chris Cralle	Present	Roger McKinley	Present
Vivian Diggs	Present	Patrick O'Brien	Present
Allen Garland	Absent	Garfield Parker	Present
John Kost	Present	Heidi Wilkins-Corey	Absent
Richard Haynie	Absent	Charles Williams	Present

Others in attendance:
Stuart McKenzie (County Planner)

RE: CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Parker.

Mr. Parker led the commission in the invocation, as well as the Pledge of Allegiance.

RE: AGENDA

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

RE: MINUTES – March 20, 2025

Mr. O'Brien made a motion to accept the March 20, 2025 minutes, and Mr. Kost seconded the motion. All voted in favor of adopting the minutes from March 20, 2025.

RE: COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

Mr. McKinley thanked Mr. Kost for undertaking the stylistic revisions to the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. O'Brien seconded Mr. McKinley's recognition of Mr. Kost volunteer activities.

RE: STAFF MEMBERS' COMMENTS

Mr. McKenzie stated that at the current time, there are no applications that require a public hearing at the next Planning Commission meeting.

RE: CITIZENS' COMMENTS

There were no citizen comments.

RE: PUBLIC HEARINGS

Mr. Parker asked Mr. McKenzie to read the notice for the public hearing. Mr. McKenzie stated that the public hearing tonight is the consideration of the Northumberland County Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for the period FY 2026-2030. Mr. McKenzie displayed the spreadsheet that summarizes the FY 26-30 CIP funding requests on the screen for the Commissioners to see and follow along. At the request of Mr. Kost, Mr. McKenzie left the School requests to be discussed last, and summarized the requests by the Sheriff, Emergency Management Services, Sanitation, IT and County Administration Departments. Mr. Kost made motion to recommend to the Board of Supervisors adoption for all items in the Draft FY25-30 CIP, except for the school system requests, which Mr. Kost stated we will discuss later in the meeting. Mr. O'Brien seconded the motion, and the vote was as follows:

Chris Cralle	Aye	Roger McKinley	Aye
Vivian Diggs	Aye	Patrick O'Brien	Aye
Allen Garland	Absent	Garfield Parker	Aye
John Kost	Aye	Heidi Wilkins-Corey	Absent
Richard Haynie	n/a	Charles Williams	Aye

The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Kost stated that the School Board has known that the well at the middle/high school needs to be replaced for at least five years, since VDEQ issued a notice of violation that states the well needs to be replaced before March of 2026. Mr. Kost stated that at the end of last year, the County drafted an Memorandum of Understanding between the School Board and the County that allows the School Board to hire the on-call county engineer to examine the water system, but that the School Board would be responsible for the payment to the engineer. Mr. Kost stated that that MOU stayed in the Superintendent's Office for months with no action. Due to the short timeframe the CIP Subcommittee told school staff that the (MOU) needs to be signed as soon as possible. Mr. Kost stated that if the MOU was not completed soon, it would show a lack of urgency on the School Board's part. Mr. Kost informed the Commission that the School Board signed the MOU last week. Mr. Kost further explained that the engineering work will tell the county how much the well replacement project will cost. Mr. Kost stated he would like to approve the project in the CIP, but not the money. Mr. O'Brien made that a motion and Mr. Kost seconded the motion.

Chairman Parker stated that the Planning Commission does not have the power of the budget, as that is the responsibility of the Board of Supervisors. Mr. McKinley stated that he wants to leave the Draft CIP as the CIP Subcommittee presented it. Mr. Parker agreed. Chairman Parker stated that he does not want the Planning Commission to get in the middle between the Board of Supervisors and the School Board. Mr. Parker stated that

the school children need potable water, or the schools will close, which is not an option. Mr. Parker stated that the Planning Commission is supposed to approve the CIP projects, but not the money, as that is under the Board of Supervisor's discretion

Mr. O'Brien stated if that is the wish of the Commission, he will withdraw his motion and Mr. Kost would withdraw his second of the motion, which they both did.

Mr. Kost stated that the Elementary School playground funding was approved last year by the Board of Supervisors and the Board of Supervisors were under the impression that the school had accomplished that project, but that the funding was used for other projects. Mr. Kost reiterated the fact that the School Board said the playground was their number 1 priority project, and here we are a year later, and that project has not been started, and now the School Board is asking for more money to fund it. Mr. Kost stated that the credibility of the School Board is suspect. Mr. Kost stated the playground had already been approved last year by the Board, are we going to approve the playground again? Mr. McKenzie stated that last year the Board approved the 2 new school buses in the CIP, but did not fund them, and the 2 school buses are in this years CIP to fund again, so it is not without precedent. Mr. Williams stated that he thinks the funding of the CIP projects should be up to the Board of Supervisors. Mr. Kost stated that he did not have a playground where he grew up, they just had a bare field in which to play. Mr. Parker stated we need to approve the CIP, and it is up to the Board of Supervisors to tell the School Board to cut back. The school system put themselves in a bind, and wants the county to bail them out. Mr. Parker continued, send it (the CIP) to the Board of Supervisors and let them fix this. Mr. O'Brien stated that his recollection of events was that there was grant money available for the playground, and that didn't happen, then the Board of Supervisors approved \$300,000 for the playground and the School Board spent that money on something else. Mr. O'Brien concluded there is a lot of disagreement between the two Boards.

Mr. Kost stated that the School Board's request for two new school buses and mold mitigation seems like reasonable requests. Mr. Parker stated that the Board of Supervisors said that even though the School Board is responsible for the fiscal management of their funds, the Board of Supervisors is keeping up with the school finances. Mr. McKenzie added that the Board of Supervisors stated that they are going to reconcile the school board budget every month. Mr. Parker stated that the school administration staff turnover is phenomenal, and that may be part of the problem. Mr. Williams stated he hopes the financials get corrected so everybody can look and see what is happening with the money allocated. Mr. Parker stated that Northumberland County is always the last county to issue contracts, and because of that we have lost a lot of teachers since they have no assurance for a job. Mr. Parker asked for a motion to recommend approval of the remaining items in the CIP to be sent to the Board for their approval. Mr. Cralle made the motion, which was seconded by Mr. McKinley. The vote was as follows:

Chris Cralle	Aye	Roger McKinley	Aye
Vivian Diggs	Aye	Patrick O'Brien	Nay
Allen Garland	Absent	Garfield Parker	Aye
John Kost	Nay	Heidi Wilkins-Corey	Absent
Richard Haynie	n/a	Charles Williams	Aye

The motion passed (5 votes for and 2 votes against).

RE: WORK SESSION ITEMS

Mr. Kost referenced the Comprehensive Plan Revision Agenda that he had sent out to the Commissioner's before the meeting. That agenda is shown below:

1. Describe the big picture
 - a. change in chapter order
 - b. more compelling opening (new preamble)
2. Purpose of phase 1:
 - a. Do basic editing that had to be done anyway
 - i. Make acronyms consistent throughout
 - ii. Consistent use of "Northumberland County" and "the County"
 - b. Create a clean version of each chapter to make it easier to add PROPOSED improvements in the next version
3. Tonight: Seek approval of all MINOR edits in –
 - a. Preamble & Introduction
 - b. Glossary of Acronyms
 - c. Table of Contents and List of Key Graphics
 - d. Chapters 1-4
4. Review new paragraph in Preamble
5. Intended next steps after tonight
 - a. Create a new format to call out RECOMMENDATIONS
 - b. Draft some proposed RECOMMENDATIONS for discussion that reflect where the document says the County "should" do something
 - i. Bring all proposed RECOMMENDATIONS back to PC for discussion
 - c. Update the Goals and Objectives Chapter to reflect recommendations

Mr. Kost stated that the current Comprehensive Plan is an inventory, and is well short of a Plan. Mr. Kost stated that the Comprehensive Plan has good content, but not much direction. Mr. Kost stated he is adding two new things, a list of acronyms and a list of maps. Mr. Kost stated that the first part of the Appendix will go into a Preamble and Introduction, while Chapter 2, goals and strategies are moving to the Appendix. Mr. McKenzie stated that, in his opinion, non-essential but good to know information is put in the Appendix, not the strategies you use to accomplish your goals. Mr. Kost stated that if we change the items to action items, then Chapter 2 doesn't fit in its current location. Mr.

Kost stated that we could make it Chapter 5, instead of the Appendix. Mr. O'Brien stated that the Chapter 2 reads to me like a collection of conclusions, and should be placed at the end of the plan.

Mr. Kost made a motion to revise the Comprehensive Plan as shown in the agenda above, subject to approval by the Planning Commission. Mr. O'Brien seconded the motion. The vote was as follows:

Chris Cralle	Aye	Roger McKinley	Aye
Vivian Diggs	Aye	Patrick O'Brien	Aye
Allen Garland	Absent	Garfield Parker	Aye
John Kost	Aye	Heidi Wilkins-Corey	Absent
Richard Haynie	n/a	Charles Williams	Aye

The vote was unanimous, and the motion passed.

Mr. O'Brien stated that at the end of the day, the Planning Commission is going to have to vote on the final copy of the Comprehensive Plan, and from Mr. Kost's presentation, he doesn't see anything that has really changed. Mr. Parker stated that Mr. Kost took out "Northumberland County" and replaced it with "The County". Mr. Parker stated it was his personal opinion that the county is always called Northumberland and that should be in the plan, but he would defer to the rest of the Commission. Mr. Williams commented, the other change is the order of the chapters.

Mr. Kost explained that the revisions he is going to make are going to be in phases, and in Phase I, he is planning on cleaning up state agency acronyms, and changed all references to Northumberland County to the County. Mr. Kost clarified that the only time that Northumberland is mentioned is when you are comparing to other counties.

Mr. Parker stated that everybody calls the county Northumberland. Mr. Parker stated that when folks are reading it, you need to remind them of the county and you need to spell it out, and want to be sure we are talking about Northumberland. Mr. Kost asked if Mr. Parker wanted him to go back and change "the county" back to "Northumberland County"? Mr. Parker stated that he was simply saying that he preferred Northumberland County over The County.

Mr. Parker then stated that he wants to make sure that we are showing all of the changes made, and that he wants the Board of Supervisors to see the changes as well. Mr. Kost stated that Mr. McKenzie has all of the previous versions of the revisions. Mr. Kost relayed that in asking the Chairman of the Board of Supervisors if he wanted to see the changes, he said he wanted to see the big changes shown. Mr. Kost stated he can't imagine if I was on the Board of Supervisors that I would want to see all of the changes. Mr. Parker stated he did not want to see the changes lost.

Mr. McKinley ask if changing Northumberland County to the County is going to confuse people. Mr. O'Brien replied after the first reference that states Northumberland County, he couldn't see how people couldn't understand that.

Mr. Kost stated that he had sent out the revised chapters to all Planning Commission members prior to tonight's meeting for the members to review the minor revisions he had mentioned. Mr. Kost made a motion to accept all those revisions. Mr. O'Brien seconded the motion to accept the revisions of the Comprehensive Plan chapters, as well as the introduction and preamble. The vote was as follows:

Chris Cralle	Aye	Roger McKinley	Aye
Vivian Diggs	Aye	Patrick O'Brien	Aye
Allen Garland	Absent	Garfield Parker	Nay
John Kost	Aye	Heidi Wilkins-Corey	Absent
Richard Haynie	n/a	Charles Williams	Aye

The vote was 6 for and 1 against, the motion passed.

Mr. Kost continued on the revisions he had planned for the Comprehensive Plan, stating that there is a frequent occurrence of the words "may wish" or "should", and he sees that as a recommendation. To highlight the recommendations, Mr. Kost proposed a text box of a different color to bring attention to the recommendation ("so it "jumps" off the page"). Mr. Kost asked the commission members if they thought that was a good idea. Mr. Williams stated highlighting the recommendation where applicable would be fine. Mr. Williams stated that he would like to see the changes before he decides and wants the changes to show up and if need be we can go back to what we have. Mr. Kost agreed. Mr. O'Brien stated that there are probably only three or four recommendations per chapter. Mr. Kost stated that in Chapter 1 there were 3 recommendations in 28 pages. Mr. Kost asked the Commission if they were ok with how we are proceeding. Several members stated that the revision plan seemed good. Mr. Kost continued, saying he wanted to bring in the Economic Development Commission (EDC) to work on the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. McKenzie stated that according to State Code, the Planning Commission is the only body that has the authority to revise the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. O'Brien stated that the members of the Economic Development Commission are citizens of the county. Mr. O'Brien continued that he doesn't care where the idea comes from, as long as it's a good idea. Mr. Kost revised his statement, saying that he wanted to bring individual members of the EDC, not the Economic Development Commission itself. Mr. Kost explained that one of the members of the EDC, Mr. Dan Corder, knows Callao very well, and may have great ideas for that area of the county.

Mr. O'Brien stated that the Lancaster County Comprehensive Plan has a focus of 20 years out, with an economic development tone. Mr. O'Brien added that perhaps if we had a better statement of goals they might attract more businesses and employers to come to the county.

Mr. Kost stated that to develop further ideas related to the Comprehensive Plan content, where it says the county should do something in particular, I move that the editing team be allowed to work with members of the Economic Development Commission and bring back more specific recommendation for further consideration by the Planning Commission. Mr. O'Brien stated so moved, and Mr. Kost seconded the motion. The vote was as follows:

Chris Cralle	Aye	Roger McKinley	Aye
Vivian Diggs	Aye	Patrick O'Brien	Aye
Allen Garland	Absent	Garfield Parker	Aye
John Kost	Aye	Heidi Wilkins-Corey	Absent
Richard Haynie	n/a	Charles Williams	Aye

The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Kost explained to the Commission that he is unavailable for the next scheduled meeting of the Planning Commission, so he asked the Commission if they could change the May meeting date from May 15th to either Tuesday, May 13th, or to Tuesday, May 20th, 2025. Ms. Diggs asked if we could just wait until the June meeting. Mr. Kost replied he will be out of the county for the July and August Planning Commission meeting dates. Several Commission members stated that Tuesday, May 13th would work best for them. Mr. McKenzie stated he would check to make sure the room is available, and let everyone know if it is not in case we need to reschedule.

RE: DISCUSSION ITEMS

There were no discussion items scheduled.

RE: PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

RE: ADJOURNMENT

Mr. McKinley made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Mr. O'Brien and the meeting ended at 8:45 pm. The adjournment vote was as follows:

Chris Cralle	Aye	Roger McKinley	Aye
Vivian Diggs	Aye	Patrick O'Brien	Aye
Allen Garland	Absent	Garfield Parker	Aye
John Kost	Aye	Heidi Wilkins-Corey	Absent
Richard Haynie	n/a	Charles Williams	Aye