

Northumberland County Planning Commission
August 28, 2025
Minutes

The regular monthly meeting of the Northumberland County Planning Commission was held on August 28, 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	Absent
Vivian Diggs	Absent	Patrick O'Brien	Present
Allen Garland	Present	Garfield Parker	Present
John Kost	Present	Heidi Wilkins-Corey	Present
Richard Haynie	Zoom	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, and Mr. Kost led the Commission in the Pledge of Allegiance.

RE: AGENDA

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

RE: MINUTES – July 17, 2025

Mr. O'Brien made a motion to accept the July 17, 2025 minutes, and Mrs. Wilkins-Corey seconded the motion. All voted in favor of adopting the minutes from July 17, 2025.

RE: COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

Mr. O'Brien stated that Mr. Marston's father recently passed away. Mr. O'Brien stated that Dr. Sam was one of the all time greats, he was a pillar of the community, and whether you had a dog, cat, sheep or cow, he would take good care of them. Mr. O'Brien stated that he will be sorely missed, and that the visitation for the funeral will be at the Curry Funeral Home, 5-7 pm Friday and the funeral service will be held at St Stephen's Episcopal Church at 11 am Saturday.

RE: STAFF MEMBERS' COMMENTS

Staff stated that next month there will be a Public Hearing for a Conditional Use Permit for a vacation home rental.

RE: CITIZENS' COMMENTS

There were no citizens comments.

RE: PUBLIC HEARINGS

Chairman Parker asked staff to introduce the public hearing. Mr. McKenzie stated that the public hearing tonight was for consideration of the proposed Draft 2025 Comprehensive Plan to be recommended to the Board of Supervisors for approval. Mr. McKenzie retrieved the public comment sign up sheet and Mr. Parker opened the Public Hearing at 7:06 pm.

The first speaker was Daniel Hickey, residing at 989 Smith Point Road, in Reedville. Mr. Hickey stated he owned Smith Point Marina, and stated that the county needs to get the Little Wicomico River dredging on track. Mr. Hickey stated he is losing 5% of his business due to boats not traversing the jetty to obtain services from his marina. Mr. Hickey stated he would like to know the status of the dredging project.

The second speaker was Sandra Maynard, of 83 Riverview Rd, Heathsville. Mrs. Maynard stated that she lives on Ellyson Creek. Mrs. Maynard referenced her public hearing comment email that was sent to Mr. McKenzie on August 24 and that was then forwarded to all Planning Commission members, according to Mr. McKenzie. Mrs. Maynard stated that there is funding for dredging in the federal Community Project Fund, and has been in contact with Representative Rob Wittman about accessing those funds for the Little Wicomico Dredging project in the future. Mrs. Maynard noted that down in the Middle Peninsula, Winter Harbor received \$2 million dollars for a dredging project from the Federal Community Project Fund. Mrs. Maynard stated that the status of the dredging project is that the Northern Neck Planning District (NNPDC) has a grant and is working with a shoreline consulting firm as well as the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS) to obtain dredge sediment characterization to determine if the dredge spoil site can handle the type of material that will be dredged out of the Smith Point Jetty. Mrs. Maynard stated it was her understanding that that study would be completed by October 2025 and would be sent to the Northumberland County Administrator. Mrs. Maynard hopes that soon after that the county will complete and submit a Joint Permit Application for the dredging project to Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC) and the Army Corps of Engineers (ACE) by December 2025. Mrs. Maynard stated that the Community Project Fund will be open for applications in February 2026. Mrs. Maynard stated it was important to have the county's planning documents line up with the goals for dredging the Little Wicomico River. Mrs. Maynard stated that it is possible the county could get Federal and State funding – funding to restore the navigation depth of the channel and hopefully repair the jetty sea walls as well. Mrs. Maynard stated she would like the county to incorporate the dredging project Phase III drawings in the Comprehensive Plan, so citizens can advocate to get the dredging project funded. Mrs. Maynard state that Mathews County has a group of citizens that were very organized that received funding for the \$2 million dollar Winter Harbor dredging project. Mr. Kost

asked Mrs. Maynard if the Comprehensive Plan provided a weblink to the Phase III study, would that work. Mrs. Maynard stated yes. Mrs. Maynard continued that the Little Wicomico River was last dredged in 2014, and it used to be on a seven year dredge interval. Mrs. Maynard noted that it has currently been 11 years since the last dredging of the Little Wicomico River. Mrs. Maynard stated that she was on a phone call with Representative Wittman, Mr. Davis from the NNPDC, the County Administrator and others and during that phone call it was determined there were 2 important criteria that needed to be met, 1) is the Little Wicomico eligible (the answer was yes) and 2) does the ACE have the capacity and funding to accomplish the project. Mrs. Maynard stated that nothing will be accomplished unless the county submits a JPA for the Little Wicomico River dredging project. Mr. O'Brien asked Mrs. Maynard if she has talked to Lake Cowart. Mr. O'Brien stated that Mr. Cowart has done this, and would be a great ally. Mrs. Maynard stated that she had not, and Mr. O'Brien gave her Mr. Cowart's business phone number. Mrs. Maynard stated that as she understands the Phase III project, VIMS would provide the information on the dredge spoil physical attributes, then the County Administrator would negotiate with adjacent landowners to host a dredge spoil receiving site. Mr. O'Brien asked if she had talked to Hillary Pugh Kent (Virginia House of Delegates representative)? Mrs. Maynard stated that she was drafting a letter to her, and that she wanted to invite her on a boat trip on the Little Wicomico River to show her the navigation problem and the site in person. Mr. O'Brien noted that this is an election year, and I am sure she will be glad to assist. Mr. Hickey stated that he has talked to Hillary Pugh Kent and wanted to wait until the dredge material report is completed. Mrs. Wilkins-Corey asked what Mrs. Maynard's citizens and businesses outreach plan is, because she lives on the Little Wicomico River and she was not aware of this project. Mrs. Maynard stated she was working on a website (dredgelwjetty.com), and has created an email address for citizen inquiries.

The next speaker was Mr. Steve Ott, 1443 Sherwood Drive, Reedville. He stated he was the Chairman of the Sherwood Forest Shores Homeowners Association, and they have about 1,000 residents. Mr. Ott stated that people ask about the Little Wicomico River dredging all the time, their boats get stuck, they are worried that Smith Point Sea Rescue (who are based in the Little Wicomico River) can't get out to help them. Mr. Ott stated that many people really don't understand the process, so he stated that he is here to advocate for the dredging project. Mr. Kost asked about the 1,000 residents, how many are full time residents? Mr. Ott stated that about 33% are full time. Mr. Ott stated that the citizens he talks to do not think this is a maintenance dredge project, it is an emergency project that needs to be done now. Mr. Ott added that the residents are concerned for their safety and the safety of boaters travelling the Chesapeake Bay.

The next speaker was Ariane Carpenter, 1117 Sherwood Drive, Reedville. Mrs. Carpenter stated that she has lived on the Little Wicomico River for 10 years. Mrs. Carpenter stated that sailboats traveling the Chesapeake Bay come into the Little Wicomico for safe harbor in case of weather, there are two oyster plants, and two marinas (in the Little Wicomico River). Mrs. Carpenter stated it was a safety issue, sailboats need refuge from storms, Smith Point Sea Rescue needs to get out to assist boaters in an emergency, and it is important to note that the United States Coast Guard has called on Smith Point Sea Rescue for boating emergencies on a regular basis in the past.

Mr. Hickey spoke again, stating that he did a survey of the Chesapeake Shores Community. Mr. Hickey stated that seventeen individuals who own property south of the jetties stated they would love to have additional sand placed on their properties shoreline (possible dredge spoils). Mr. O'Brien asked Mr. Hickey if he had made the County Administrator aware of those citizens who would take dredged sand? Mr. Hickey stated yes, he sent the names and addresses of the seventeen individuals to the County Administrator.

Chairman Parker then asked if there was anyone online that would like to comment on the Draft Comprehensive Plan. IT staff stated that Board of Supervisor Chairman Mr. Haynie was the only person online.

Mr. Kost made a motion to amend Chapter 1, page 65, paragraph 4 of the Draft Comprehensive Plan by adding the following "Specific to Northumberland County, the dredging priority is for all federal channels marked with US Coast Guard aids to navigation be dredged in order to maintain access to the Chesapeake Bay with highest priority given to the Little Wicomico River and the next priority to Cranes Creek." Mr. O'Brien seconded the motion, and the vote was as follows:

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

The motion passed unanimously by the Planning Commission members present.

Mr. Parker closed the Public Hearing at 7:41 pm.

Mrs. Wilkins-Corey asked about the webpage link to the NNPDC's Phase III Dredging Study. Mr. Kost stated that the link is already in the footnote on that page.

RE: WORK SESSION ITEMS

Chairman Parker asked staff about the work session topic. Mr. McKenzie stated that a marine structure designer asked for a client, who was a citizen of Northumberland County who wanted to construct a sun shelter on their pier. Mr. McKenzie explained that the County Pier Ordinance prohibits those structures on piers. Mr. McKenzie stated that at the last meeting, a commission member asked that staff contact the neighboring counties that allow sun shelters if they allow screening. Mr. McKenzie stated that he contacted King George and Middlesex County zoning administrators and one stated they have not seen a screened sun shelter on a dock in their county and the other stated they follow VMRC guidelines. Mr. McKenzie stated that another question from a commission member from last month's meeting asked staff to contact VMRC and ask if the 400 square foot size for a sun shelter is in addition to 400 square foot size for L or T heads to the dock. Mr. McKenzie stated that he contacted Mr. Jeff Madden at VMRC about the

question and he said no, that the 400 square foot area is for any L head and T head and a sun shelter in total.

Mr. Garland stated that if you have an existing boathouse, then you should not be allowed to have a sun shelter on your dock, in his opinion. Mr. O'Brien stated that he has been to several Board of Supervisors meetings with boathouse public hearings that he attended and they can be very contentious. Mr. O'Brien added that in most cases the boathouse is not the real issue, it is just that the neighbors do not like each other. Mr. Williams stated that there are so many docks on the creeks right now, if you approve this, how many sun shelters are you going to have? How would it look if every dock has a sun shelter? Mr. Williams added that he did not think landowners should block the neighbors view of the water.

Mrs. Wilkins-Corey stated that news travels fast, if we allow sun shelters, it won't be long until the entire county knows. Mrs. Wilkins-Corey stated she hears what Mr. Williams is saying, but the conditional use application process will weed out some of the sun shelter projects. Mrs. Wilkins-Corey stated that if sun shelters are permitted through a conditional use permit, then the approval of sun shelters is on the Board of Supervisors (if they approve them).

Mr. O'Brien asked the Commission if they remember a few months ago the guy who wanted to build apartments? Mr. O'Brien stated that 30 plus people showed up to protest the project.

Mrs. Wilkins-Corey stated that she would be OK with sun shelters on docks if the county permitting process mimics the current Boathouse Ordinance (requiring a conditional use permit if larger than allowed or if a neighbor objects), and that she would support that course of action.

Mr. McKenzie then discussed how the County Ordinance could be modified, stating he did not think we should refer to sun shelters on docks as gazebos as gazebos are normally on land, are eight sided and screened. Mr. McKenzie also stated that he does not think the Commission should discuss specifics on how to modify the county ordinance until the Zoning Administrator is able to attend a Commission meeting, and provide his input and expertise. Chairman Parker agreed with staff.

Mr. Kost asked Mr. Palubinski (the marine structure designer and wetland agent that brought the request to the Planning Commission) if he thought sun shelter on docks would proliferate in the county. Mr. Palubinski stated he has one application for Northumberland County for a sun shelter, but they abandoned the idea, because the area around their dock is silted up and they can't get their boat out, sorry.

Chairman Parker stated the Commission will continue work on this when the Zoning Administrator can attend a Planning Commission meeting.

RE: DISCUSSION ITEMS

Mr. Kost stated that in looking at the Mathews County Comprehensive Plan that Mrs. Maynard sent in her comment email, he stated that our Draft Comprehensive Plan really didn't talk about the future. Mr. Kost stated that around 2028 the Commission needs to think about community engagement, and we need to revise the Comprehensive Plan differently next time. Mr. Kost envisions community forums on the future of the county and more citizen consensus on the direction moving forward, and what to focus on. Mr. Kost conceded that right now the county's financial resources are crippled. Mr. Kost stated the county is very much in need of several things, pickleball, tennis and basketball courts to name a few. Chairman Parker warned that the county wants to initiate new projects, but that they forget about ongoing maintenance of existing infrastructure. Mr. Parker stated we need funds in place to take care of our existing assets, as well any new assets we acquire.

Mrs. Wilkins-Corey stated that this community survey and citizen communication does not have to wait until the next Comprehensive Plan review. Mrs. Wilkins-Corey stated that she wants citizens to know that the Planning Commission wants their input on how they envision the county moving forward into the future.

RE: PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

RE: ADJOURNMENT

Mr. O'Brien made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Mr. Kost and the meeting ended at 8:21 pm. The adjournment vote was as follows:

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