

Northumberland County Planning Commission
November 20, 2025
Minutes

The regular monthly meeting of the Northumberland County Planning Commission was held on November 20, 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	Present	Patrick O'Brien	Present
Allen Garland	Present	Garfield Parker	Present
John Kost	Present	Heidi Wilkins-Corey	Present
James Michel	Present	Charles Williams	Present
Richard Haynie	n/a		

Others in attendance:

Stuart McKenzie (County Planner)

RE: CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Parker, and he led the commission in the invocation, and the Pledge of Allegiance.

RE: AGENDA – October 16, 2025

Mr. O'Brien made a motion to accept the October 16, 2025 agenda, seconded by Mr. Kost. The Commission unanimously voted to accept the October meeting agenda.

RE: AGENDA – November 20, 2025

Mr. O'Brien made a motion to accept the November 20, 2025 agenda, seconded by Mr. Williams. The Commission unanimously voted to accept the November meeting agenda.

RE: MINUTES – September 18, 2025

Mr. Kost made a motion to accept the September 18, 2025 agenda, seconded by Mr. O'Brien. The Commission unanimously voted to accept the September meeting minutes.

RE: MINUTES - October 16, 2025

Mr. Kost made a motion to accept the October 16, 2025 agenda, seconded by Mr. O'Brien. The Commission unanimously voted to accept the October meeting minutes.

RE: COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

Mr. Parker stated that he attended a regional meeting, and someone (perhaps from Essex County) stated they read the Northumberland County Comprehensive Plan and said it was very good. Mr. Parker continued to explain that the person stated they especially liked the citizen survey near the end of the Comprehensive Plan and may adapt it for their county's Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Parker thanked the Planning Commission Members for their hard work on the Comprehensive Plan.

RE: STAFF MEMBERS' COMMENTS

There were no comments.

RE: CITIZENS' COMMENTS

There were no citizens comments.

RE: PUBLIC HEARINGS

Chairman Parker asked the applicant to come up and speak about his proposed project. Mr. John Runkle stated he was the owner/applicant, and introduced Athena Walters as his partner in the kennel project, stating that she used to work at the Franklin County Animal Shelter and has years of experience handling dogs. Mr. Runkle indicated that he has recently moved here, has always been a dog lover and noticed a need for a boarding kennel in the area, stating there is only one dog boarding facility in the county, which is often full, so there is a need in the county. Mr. Runkle explained that he is planning on purchasing a Bruiser brand kennel, which is prebuilt and placing it on the property. Mr. Runkle stated there was a photo of the proposed kennel unit he is planning on purchasing in his Conditional Use Application, however, his unit will be a 10 kennel unit, and the company was excited to build it, as they have not built one that big before. Mr. McKenzie interjected that he had the photo of the proposed kennel on the video screen for the public and commission members to examine. Mr. Runkle continued that the kennel will have heat and air conditioning, as well as an office for an attendant. Mr. Kost asked if the dog boarding operation will be indoor only? Mr. Runkle stated it would be inside and outside, they will have a compound area outside for exercise. Mrs. Wilkins-Corey asked if the kennel unit will be manned 24 hours (a day)? Mr. Runkle replied probably 12 to 14 hrs a day, and he intends to install security cameras for 24 hour monitoring. Mr. Kost asked if you will be able to see the kennel from the road? Mr. Runkle said no, and his only neighbor is the lady who sold him the property, and she has no problem with the kennel operation. Mr. McKenzie noted that he had an aerial photo map showing the property and the proposed location of the kennel on the video screen, noting that there is a hill next to the road that blocks any view of the house or proposed kennel. Mr. Kost stated he has never had a dog, but they do create waste, how do you plan to get rid of the dog waste? Mr. Runkle stated that starting out, they will probably dispose of the waste in the trash, but hope to have a shredder and a septic system, similar to what they had at the animal shelter to dispose of dog waste. Mr. Garland asked Mr. Runkle if he was going to have any other canine services besides boarding, such as training, breeding or grooming? Mr. Runkle stated that he is planning on just boarding and dog day care for people who work long hours at first, but may consider grooming in the future. Mr. Michell stated he thought that baths and nail trimming would be appreciated by the owners of the boarded

dogs. Ms. Walters stated that they could give baths and a nail cutting service, if there is a market for those services. Mr. Parker asked if there will be a large fenced in area, Mr. Runkle stated yes. Mr. Michel asked Mr. Runkle what will be the name of the kennel business. Mr. Runkle stated he is not sure, but will formulate a name in the 6 to 8 weeks it takes the company to build the kennel unit. Mr. Michel asked what is the size of the exercise area? Mr. Runkle stated that the outside fenced area is 100 feet by 55 feet. Mrs. Wilkins-Corey asked if there will be signage on Rt. 360, and Mr. Runkle stated yes, he does want a sign and added that he has not looked at the sign ordinance, but would work with Mr. Marston on that if the project is approved. Mr. Williams stated that this location seems like an ideal area for a kennel.

Mr. Parker opened the public hearing at 7:16 pm. Mr. McKenzie stated that no one had signed up to speak during the public comment period. Mr. Parker asked if there was anyone online who would like to speak on the kennel conditional use permit. Hearing none, Mr. Parker closed the public hearing at 7:18 pm.

Mr. Cralle made a motion to recommend approval of the kennel project to the Board of Supervisors, adding that this motion is made in due consideration of the administrative record before the body, including the planning commission's deliberations and recommendation, the information received via the public hearing, including statements offered by staff, the applicant, and members of the public, the public health and safety, the general welfare of the community, public necessity, convenience, in the exercise of good zoning practices and the body's legislative prerogative, and pursuant to the body's statutory authority. Mrs. Wilkins-Corey seconded the motion, and the vote was as follows:

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

The motion passed unanimously by the Planning Commission members.

Mr. McKenzie then stated that next month, on December 11, 2025 at 7 pm, the Board of Supervisors will hold another public hearing on the Kennel request, and at that public hearing the Board will make a decision to allow or deny their request.

RE: WORK SESSION ITEMS

Mr. Parker asked staff to outline the work session, and Mr. McKenzie stated that he had sent all members the email from DEQ regarding their review of the required Chesapeake Bay Act components of the draft 2025 Comprehensive Plan prior to tonight's meeting. Mr. McKenzie stated that DEQ staff comments were minor, one comment involved an incorrect statement in Chapter 5 regarding forest harvesting and the requirement of best management practices (BMP's). Mr. McKenzie stated that the Comprehensive Plan said that no BMP's were required in silviculture operations in the county, when in fact,

BMP's are required. DEQ staff explained that if the forestry operations follow the BMP recommendations in the fifth edition of the Virginia Forestry Best Management Practices Manual, then no other BMP's are needed. Mr. McKenzie stated that he made the recommended DEQ changes regarding forestry BMP's in chapter five for the Planning Commission to consider. Mr. McKenzie then added that DEQ staff pointed out a section of Virginia Code on locality Comprehensive Plans that stated that in the action items of a Comprehensive Plan, timelines need to be included for each action; either short term (0-5 years), mid-term (5-10 years) and long term (10+ years). Mr. McKenzie explained that he, the Zoning Administrator and the Assistance County Administrator met and formulated the appropriate time frames for the action items. Mr. McKenzie added that there were several action items that were state agency responsibilities, and those action items were deleted, as the county does not have the statutory authority or manpower to accomplish them.

Mr. Kost made a motion to accept the DEQ requested changes to Chapter 5 of the Draft 2025 Comprehensive Plan presented tonight. Mr. O'Brien seconded the motion, and vote was as follows:

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

The motion passed unanimously.

RE: DISCUSSION ITEMS

Mr. Parker reiterated the comments that were given by neighboring counties regarding the 2025 Draft Comprehensive Plan, and added that Richmond, Middlesex and Essex Counties were in attendance at the regional meeting. Mr. Parker stated they were particularly impressed with end of the document survey. Mr. Parker stated he talked with a representative from Richmond County, and he said the county went forward with solar energy facilities because the county needed revenue. Mr. McKenzie commented that the two jails in Richmond County must not provide enough county revenue. Mr. Parker added the individual stated he did not like solar energy facilities, but that the county needed revenue. Mr. Kost stated he rode by the Maon solar energy facility recently and noted that it was huge. Mr. Kost state maybe Northumberland County should be proactive and approach the solar energy company building the Maon solar facility and ask if they would like to install solar on the other side of Rt. 600 (in Northumberland County) because it would only be a short distance to connect to the electric transmission lines in Richmond County in that area of the county. Mr. Parker stated if there was any area in the county where solar might work would be there, as there are no houses nearby.

RE: PUBLIC COMMENTS

Maurice Johnson stated that the shoaling situation in the Little Wicomico River is already impacting watermen trying to harvest their oysters as well as negatively impacting tourism and ecotourism on the river.

RE: BOARD OF SUPERVISORS REPORT

Chairman Parker asked for a Board of Supervisor's meeting report. Mr. McKenzie stated that the Board of Supervisors approved the Conditional Use Permit for Red Oak, LLC for Light Industry use in the Ditchley area. Mr. McKenzie also added, at the request of the Chairman from the last meeting, discussion on the county dog leash ordinance and how it handles dangerous dogs. Mr. McKenzie stated that at the last Board of Supervisor's meeting, the County Attorney told the Board that after reviewing the dog leash ordinance with the Sheriff and the Commonwealth's Attorney that they believe the existing ordinance is sufficient to deal with dangerous dogs. In addition, the county attorney stated that the county current dog leash law is residential subdivision based and if the county wants to impose a leash law in the area of concern (which is not a traditional residential subdivision), then as long as they determine the boundary of the leash law area with well known landmarks for boundaries (easy for the public and law enforcement to know where the boundaries are located), then the Board could institute a leash law under the current ordinance as is. Mr. Cralle asked what happens when a dog is dangerous? Mr. McKenzie stated he thought they must be put down. Mr. Garland corrected Mr. McKenzie stating there are escalating levels of containment the owner must submit to, before the animal has to be euthanized. Mr. Kost added that the Board of Supervisors passed a resolution in support of the dredging of the Little Wicomico River at last month's meeting, as recent storms have exacerbated the shoaling of the mouth of the creek. Mr. Kost added that he attended a regional groundwater meeting and in our area, and learned that there is one large withdrawal company that is using the majority of our groundwater. Chairman Parker responded that we know.

RE: ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Kost made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Mr. O'Brien and the meeting ended at 7:40 pm. The adjournment vote was as follows:

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