

Northumberland County Planning Commission
January 15, 2025
Minutes

The regular monthly meeting of the Northumberland County Planning Commission was held on January 15, 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	Present	Garfield Parker	Present
John Kost	Present	Heidi Wilkins-Corey	Present
James Michel	Present	Charles Williams	Present
James Brann	Present		

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. Mrs. Wilkins-Corey led the commission in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Re: ELECTION OF OFFICERS
Chairman

Mr. Parker called for nominations from the commission members for Chairman of the Planning Commission. Mr. Kost made a motion to nominate Mr. Parker for the Chairman, Mr. McKinley seconded the motion. There were no other nominations. The commission voted unanimously to re-elect Mr. Parker to the Chair.

Vice Chairman

Mr. Parker called for nominations from the commission members for Vice Chairman of the Planning Commission. Mr. Cralle made a motion to nominate Mr. Kost for Vice Chairman. Mr. McKinley seconded the nomination. There were no other nominations. The commission voted unanimously to re-elect Mr. Kost to Vice Chair.

RE: By-Laws Review

Mr. Parker asked commission members if they had reviewed the By-Laws that staff sent out prior to the meeting. The commission members stated that they had, and Mr. Kost made a motion to accept the By-Laws as currently written. Mr. O'Brien seconded the motion, and the Commission voted unanimously to re-certify the By-Laws for 2026.

RE: Remote Participation Policy Review

Chairman Parker asked staff to detail the remote participation policy review. Mr. McKenzie stated that the Commission can either allow remote participation at meetings by commission members under specific circumstances or not allow remote participation. Mr. McKenzie stated that if the Commission wants to allow remote participation, they have to re-adopt this policy each year. Mr. Kost made a motion to adopt the remote participation policy, seconded by Mr. Williams. The Commission voted unanimously to adopt the remote participation policy for 2026.

RE: AGENDA – January 15, 2025

Mr. O’Brien made a motion to accept the January 15, 2026 agenda, seconded by Mrs. Wilkins-Corey. The Commission unanimously voted to accept the meeting agenda.

RE: MINUTES – December 18, 2025

Mr. O’Brien made a motion to accept the December 18, 2025 minutes, seconded by Mr. Michel. The Commission unanimously voted to accept the December meeting minutes.

RE: REMOTE PARTICIPATION

Mr. Kost was attending the meeting via Zoom. Mr. McKenzie asked the Commission if they would like to vote to allow Mr. Kost to participate remotely. Mr. O’Brien made a motion to allow Mr. Kost to participate remotely, which was seconded by Mr. McKinley. The Commission unanimously voted to allow Mr. Kost to participate in the Planning Commission meeting remotely.

RE: COMMISSIONERS’ COMMENTS

Mr. O’Brien commented that the VDOT review of the revised Comprehensive Plan took longer than the Virginia Code limit of 90 days. Mr. O’Brien stated he thinks we should send the Comprehensive Plan forward without any VDOT requested changes. Mr. O’Brien stated that at the very least, in the future, the county should preface their request for review from state agencies that if the county does not get a response within the 90 day state mandated review period, that the Commission will send the Comprehensive Plan to the Board for adoption as is. Mr. Brann suggested that if there is no response from VDOT at the end of the 90 day review period, then the Planning Commission should send a memo to the Board of Supervisors detailing the delay, so they can decide how to proceed.

RE: STAFF MEMBERS’ COMMENTS

There were no comments.

RE: CITIZENS’ COMMENTS

There were no citizens comments.

RE: PUBLIC HEARINGS

Chairman Parker asked staff about the first public hearing. Mr. McKenzie states the first public hearing scheduled is a request by Benton M. Hayden, owner, and Michael Bryant, applicant, for a Conditional Use Permit to allow light industry on property zoned A-1, Agriculture. The property is shown as Tax Map Parcel # 9-(1)-23 and is located on Northumberland Highway.

Mr. Parker asked if the applicants could come up and speak about their proposed project. Ben Hayden and Michael Bryant both rose to address the commission. Mr. Hayden related that he hired Engineering Design Associates to draw up the plans for the proposed facility, and offered a set of the plans for the Commission to view. Mr. Parker asked the applicants to describe their project, Mr. Hayden stated he wants to construct a mulch yard to sell products, some of which he produces, such as wood mulch, crushed concrete and top soil. Mr. McKinley asked if they would sell the products off the property? Mr. Hayden replied yes. Mr. McKinley asked if there would be a sales office, to which Mr. Hayden replied yes. Mr. Kost asked whether the site would have signage, to which the applicant replied in the affirmative. Mr. Williams asked who would be his customers, contractors, builders, homeowners? Mr. Hayden stated yes, everybody. Mr. Kost asked if the site would have any fencing, and the applicant replied yes, a chain link fence will encircle the site. Mr. Garland asked if there will be lighting on the site, and the applicant stated yes, pole mounted. Mr. Kost asked if VDOT would require a turn lane? Mr. Hayden said no, they reduced the four lanes to two and reduced the speed limit to 45 mph recently, and VDOT confirmed I would not need a turn lane for this use. Mr. Garland asked staff to read the suggested proposed conditions for the project. Mr. McKenzie read the suggested proposed conditions: 1) All necessary permits and/or licenses shall be obtained from all regulatory agencies including but not limited to the Virginia Department of Transportation, 2) A sales office shall be located on the same parcel as the gravel, mulch, etc. for all retail transactions as shown on the site plan, 3) This operation shall be kept clean, neat, and organized, 4) Only vehicles or equipment associated with the operation of this business shall be stored on the property, 5) All signage shall comply with the Zoning Ordinance, 6) All lighting shall be non-reflective and directed downward to prevent any glare on Route 360 or adjoining properties, 7) All storage of dry goods shall not be in a cargo container, 8) Non-compliance of any of these conditions shall result in this permit to come back before the Board of Supervisors for possible revocation.

Mr. Kost asked what type of materials will the shed be built? Mr. Hayden stated it will be a pre-built structure shed, something like 12 by 16 feet, or 12 by 20 feet. Mr. Bryant added, likely vinyl siding and metal roof. Mr. Williams asked in addition to mulch what other materials are you going to be selling besides gravel? Mr. Hayden stated mulch, fill dirt, top soil, crushed concrete, and asphalt millings. Mr. Parker asked if the commission members had any more questions, hearing none, he thanked the applicants for their responses. Mr. Williams asked staff if there has been any public comment, to which staff replied there has been no public comments. Mr. Kost asked how many neighbors were notified, and staff responded seven adjoining property owners.

Chairman Parker opened the public hearing at 7:17 pm. Staff stated that no one signed the sign up sheet to speak. Chairman Parker asked if there was anyone online who wanted to comment on the light industry conditional use permit. There were none. Chairman Parker closed the public hearing at 7:18 pm.

Mr. Parker turned the matter over to the Commission. Mr. McKinley made a motion to recommend approval to the Board of Supervisors for the conditional use permit for light industry, 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. Mr. Kost seconded Mr. McKinley’s motion. The vote was as follows:

Chris Cralle	Aye	Roger McKinley	Aye
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
James Brann	n/a		

The motion passed.

Mr. McKenzie addressed the applicants, stating that the Planning Commission recommendation for approval is the first step in the process, next month, the Board of Supervisors will conduct a similar public hearing, with public comments, and the Board will ask about the details of the project at their meeting. Mr. Hayden asked if they would be sent information on the date and time of the Board meeting, and Mr. McKenzie stated yes.

Chairman Parker asked about the second public hearing scheduled tonight. Staff stated the second public hearing is a request by Adam M. and Lauren S. Garber, owners, for a conditional Use Permit to allow a vacation home rental on property zoned R-3, Residential Restricted. The property is shown as Tax Map Parcel #45-B(3)4-20 and 45-B(3)1-9 at 109 Bay Shore Avenue.

The applicant, Mr. Adam Garber stated he is new to the Northern Neck, although he has visited here many times, as his in-laws live here. Mr. Garber stated that his house at 109 Bay Shore Avenue is a secondary residence. Mr. Garber stated he has three children, there will be weekends when they cannot visit due to the children’s schedule, and they would like the option to rent the home when they are not using it. Mr. Garber added that they have their own beach, so the renters will not be using the community beach. Mr. Garber stated that he wrote a letter explaining what he plans to do, and the measures he will have in place to minimize the impact of any renters, and sent the letter to his neighbors. Mrs. Wilkins-Corey asked if he received any comments from his neighbors, and he said none. Mr. O’Brien asked Mr. Garber if he had received a copy of the conditions. Mr. Garber said yes. Mr. O’Brien asked if he had any problems with the conditions as proposed, and Mr. Garber responded that he was amenable to the conditions as stated.

Chairman Parker opened the public hearing at 7:24 pm. Mr. McKenzie stated that there was no one signed up to speak in person, so Mr. Parker asked if there was anyone online who wished to comment on Mr. Garber's vacation home rental conditional use permit. Hearing none, Mr. Parker closed the public hearing at 7:25 pm.

Mr. McKinley asked Mr. Marston if he received any comments regarding this vacation home rental, and Mr. Marston said no.

Mr. Garland made a motion to recommend approval of the vacation home rental conditional use permit 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. Mr. O'Brien seconded Mr. Garland's motion. The vote was as follows:

Chris Cralle	Aye	Roger McKinley	Aye
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
James Brann	n/a		

The motion passed.

Mr. Garland informed the applicant that the same procedure as described earlier, that the Board will consider your request at next month's Board Meeting, where you will present your vacation home rental proposal again, and the Board will either approve or deny your request for a conditional use permit.

RE: WORK SESSION ITEMS

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Chairman Garland asked staff to update the Commission on the status of the Comprehensive Plan. Staff stated that he sent out the VDOT review and identified revisions email to commission members before the meeting, and hoped that everyone had a chance to look them over. Mr. McKenzie stated that there was an error pointed out with the wrong route number in a passage about short cuts, and staff stated he would correct that error. Staff said that the VDOT review pointed out that there are no recommendations for bicycle or sidewalk improvements. Staff stated that at this time, the county lacks funding to pay for any bicycle or sidewalk improvements. Staff further explained that VDOT has implemented a new system of scoring road projects that is skewed toward urban localities where congestion exists. The result of this, staff stated, was that there was little chance for VDOT funding of rural road projects, unless it was to

address regular maintenance or a safety issue. Staff stated he was fine with adding a section to the plan describing the Commonwealth's VTRANS Plan and the Smart Scale scoring system. Mr. McKenzie added that VDOT flagged the county's request to have US 360 expanded to four lanes from Heathsville to Reedville, stating it is unrealistic. Staff stated during previous revisions of the Comprehensive Plan that the Supervisors were adamant about leaving the four laning of US 360 in the Comprehensive Plan. Staff stated that he agreed with VDOT's assessment that it is unlikely, but that if four laning of US360 is not in the Comprehensive Plan, it is guaranteed to never get built. Staff stated he wanted the Planning Commission to give their opinion on whether to leave it in, or take it out as VDOT suggests. Mr. Kost stated that he agrees with the VDOT review that there are little to no transportation recommendations for bicycle or sidewalk improvements. Mr. Kost stated his view was that the county has a lot of issues, but transportation is not one of them. Mr. Kost stated that at several Board of Supervisor meetings, Supervisor Long has complained that the traffic is terrible at the intersection of Academic Lane and US 360 when the school day begins, and when the school day ends. Mr. Kost stated the data doesn't support that. Mr. Kost stated, other than that issue, he stated he doesn't feel that any changes to the transportation section of the Comprehensive Plan are needed. Mr. Parker stated that in that case another county gets our road funding. Mr. McKenzie stated that the county would have to have a known accident problem area, documented by VDOT and a detailed proposal on how to remedy the deficiency in order to submit a county road project to the Smart Scale grant program

Mr. Kost asked staff how he would like to move forward. Mr. McKenzie stated he would like to add a section acknowledging the Commonwealth's VTRANS Plan, outlining the County's Six-Year Plan and describing the VDOT Smart Scale scoring process, if the commission is OK with doing that. Mrs. Wilkins Corey asked for clarification, that the decision was to leave the four laning of US360 in the plan, to which the commission replied yes. Mr. Garland spoke about the problems directing traffic (in his capacity as a Sheriff's Deputy) in the morning at the intersection of Academic Lane and US 360. Mr. Garland stated it is just a matter of time before there is a head-on collision, albeit at low speed. Mr. Garland continued, with the sun low on horizon in the morning in the winter, you just can't see. Mr. Garland stated that if the deputies were not directing traffic at that intersection in the morning or afternoon, it would take an hour for all the traffic to clear. Mr. Kost stated that the Board of Supervisors has asked for a stoplight at that intersection four times, and VDOT each time stated that the traffic counts do not support the need for a traffic light. VDOT offered a roundabout as a solution, but that would cost the county approximately 1 million dollars in local money, about the same as a traffic light. Mr. Garland cited several instances of being brushed by cars side view mirrors as they drive past him, as a result of the blinding sun angle in the eyes of the eastbound drivers. Mr. Garland stated his solution would be similar to the King William firehouse on US 360, on twice a day, and off the rest of the time. Mr. Garland stated that is a lot of money for a roundabout or light. Mrs. Wilkins-Corey stated this is something we should put in the plan. Mr. Kost volunteered to add a section to the transportation chapter regarding the Academic Lane school traffic problem.

Staff then transitioned to the Virginia Department of Forestry statistics that they graciously provided to the county. Staff stated the statistics cover the years 2015 to 2024, roughly the time period since the last Plan update, so the information is particularly

relevant. Staff indicated the information details on total forest acreage, type of forest, age of forest, forest harvested and information on the top five species. Mr. McKenzie stated he thinks the forest data is important, as it reveals trends and he feels it should be in the Comprehensive Plan. Staff stated the only question is where in the Plan to place this information. Mr. Kost suggested adding an entire forest statistics page at the end of Chapter 1, and the Commission agreed.

ANIMAL SHELTER

Mr. Kost then brought up the search for a new site for the replacement animal shelter. Mr. Kost stated that Peter Williams with the Friends of Northumberland County Animal Shelter (FNCAS) is on board. Mr. Kost discussed with Mr. Williams the need for clarification of the desired building footprint, overall land space needed, and hopefully building plans from another jurisdiction's animal shelter building. Mr. Kost emphasized that the site development cost could cost more than the building, and Mr. Williams was very receptive to Mr. Kost's ideas. Mr. Parker asked if Mr. Williams was OK staying on the same site. Mr. Kost replied yes, but that the topography of the site was problematic. Mr. Kost stated that Supervisor Fisher had suggested a land swap with the neighboring property owner, but that Mr. Kost did not think a landowner would trade flat agricultural land for hilly forested land. Mr. O'Brien asked if the FNCAS wants a fence. Mr. Kost stated yes, they want at least 10 acres fenced in, but added that may not be realistic. Mr. Michel asked how many total acres are needed for the animal shelter. Mr. Kost replied 15 acres is their request. Mr. Michel suggested that the county needs to find a use for the old animal shelter, once it is vacated.

Mr. Kost stated the Economic Development Commission (EDC) would like the county to sell some surplus property to generate funds to apply for grants. Maurice Johnson, liaison for the EDC stated from the audience that he would suggest cutting up the Poor House Tract, and the west side of the property does not have any historical resources, as the Poor House was located on the eastern side. On part of that land they can build an animal shelter, and the county could create an environment for light industrial development. Mr. Kost asked if we have a developer in mind to partner with? Mr. Brann stated that the county could work with realtors or an appraiser, but it would have to go to the Board of Supervisors to be approved. Mr. Kost stated it might be worthwhile to get an idea from state agencies on how best to utilize the Poor House Tract.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN SUBCOMMITTEE

Chairman Parker asked the Commission if any members would like to volunteer to serve on the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) Subcommittee. Staff stated that the CIP Subcommittee is comprised of the Chairman, two Planning Commission members and the Board Liaison. Mrs. Wilkins-Corey volunteered as did Mr. Kost. Mr. McKenzie stated that Mrs. Wilkins-Corey and Mr. Kost has participated in previous CIP reviews, and by having them continue, there will be consistency in the decision making process.

RE: DISCUSSION ITEMS

There were no discussion items.

RE: PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

RE: BOARD OF SUPERVISORS REPORT

Chairman Parker asked for a Board of Supervisor’s meeting report. Mr. McKenzie stated that the Board of Supervisors tabled the ordinance change regarding allowing shelter roofs on private, non-commercial docks, and will revisit the revision at the next Board Meeting.

RE: COMMISSIONERS COMMENTS

Mr. Parker asked if any commission members had any comments. Mr. Brann asked Mr. McKenzie to give the County Administrator with list of county owned parcels the Planning Commission recommended to sell and bring it to the February Board of Supervisors Meeting. Mr. Brann stated the Board needs to know the value of the properties the could sell in the future if they so decide. Mr. Brann referenced the idea of harvesting timber off some of the county owned property that was mentioned earlier. Mr. Brann asked the question, how do we know that we are not losing money? How do we know if the stand of timber is past its prime harvest date, and the trees are old and decaying? Mr. Brann stated that timber needs to be harvested at regular intervals, or the forest becomes less valuable. Mr. Brann asked if the Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF) has a program to help localities? Staff stated he did not think that VDOF had such a program. Mr. O’Brien stated you can hire someone to do a timber survey. Mr. Brann stated he thinks we need to have a forest management plan, look at the future for the next harvest interval, if not, the county could be losing money. Mr. Parker volunteered the fact that the Mid-County Rescue squad forested 15 acres recently, because the trees were mature.

RE: ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Garland made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Mr. O’Brien and the meeting ended at 8:35 pm. The adjournment vote was as follows:

Chris Cralle	Aye	Roger McKinley	Aye
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
James Brann	n/a		