

Northumberland County Planning Commission
February 19, 2026
Minutes

The regular monthly meeting of the Northumberland County Planning Commission was held on February 19, 2026 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	Absent
James Michel	Zoom	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 at 7:01 pm, and he led the commission in the invocation, and the Pledge of Allegiance.

RE: AGENDA – February 19, 2026

Mr. O'Brien made a motion to accept the February 19, 2026 agenda, seconded by Mr. Kost. The Commission unanimously voted to accept the meeting agenda.

RE: MINUTES – January 15, 2026

Mr. O'Brien made a motion to accept the January 19, 2026 minutes, seconded by Mr. Kost. The Commission unanimously voted to accept the January meeting minutes.

RE: REMOTE PARTICIPATION

Mr. Michel was attending the meeting via Zoom. Mr. McKenzie asked the Commission if they would like to vote to allow Mr. Michel to participate remotely. Mr. O'Brien made a motion to allow Mr. Michel to participate remotely, which was seconded by Mr. Kost. The Commission unanimously voted to allow Mr. Michel to participate in the Planning Commission meeting remotely, however, his microphone had issues and he could not speak, although he could hear.

RE: COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

There were no commission member comments.

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 Public Hearing scheduled tonight. Mr. McKenzie began by stating the public hearing is a request by Anthony Mangano, owner, for a Conditional Use Permit to construct a 195-foot communications tower on property zoned B-1, Business General. The property is shown as Tax Map Parcel # 8-B(1)-116 and is located on Movie Hall Lane.

Chairman Parker opened the public hearing at 7:06 pm, and asked the applicant to describe the proposed project. Lisa Murphy, who identified herself as counsel to Vertical Bridge and Verizon, stated they are seeking a conditional use permit for a 195 foot tall monopole tower with lightning rod on a 10,000 square foot leased area on a 4.35 ac parcel that is zoned B-1 adjacent to Movie Hall Lane. Ms. Murphy continued to explain that this tower is to address critical voice and data services to citizens and businesses along Richmond Road, and in the village of Callao, where there has been lack of service complaints. Ms. Murphy stated, for background information, that back in 1990's wireless phone service was nice to have, but not critical. To illustrate the point, Ms. Murphy cited the fact that in December 2007, 16% of newly established households had cell phone service only (no landline), while in December of 2024, 79% of adults and 87% of children only had a wireless phone for connectivity. Ms. Murphy added that 80% of E911 emergency calls are made on wireless phones. Ms. Murphy stated that capacity is stretched, as many use their phones for watching videos, ordering online, telehealth appointments and other intensive data uses. Ms. Murphy stated to accommodate that demand, there is need for a more dense network of cell phone towers to serve customers. Ms. Murphy then transitioned to the map showing the neighboring Verizon cell towers to the proposed tower in Callao. Staff brought the Conditional Use Application up on the audio/visual screen so the audience and the commission could see the map she was discussing. Ms. Murphy cited the distances to the Acorn cell tower in Westmoreland County, the Gibeon cell tower, the Lottsburg cell tower, and the Dodlyt cell tower, and stated the Callao cell tower will complement the network and eliminate customer complaints.

Ms. Murphy then began describing the site, stating the parcel is 4.35 acres in size, is zoned B-1, and is improved with industrial buildings. Continuing, she stated that the county zoning ordinance states that any tower over 100 feet have to apply for a conditional use permit, and that is why we are here. Ms. Murphy stated that tower will be 65 feet from Movie Hall Lane, and the leased site will be accessed through a 35 foot right-of-way easement through an existing driveway, along with a 30 foot easement for fiber and utilities. Ms. Murphy stated that the steel monopole tower is built to withstand coastal Virginia weather, however in the event of failure, the tower is engineered to

collapse upon itself within the 50 foot x 50 foot leased area. Ms. Murphy then stated to estimate the visual impact of the tower, they used a red balloon 195 foot above the ground as a marker to generate the photos included in the application to illustrate what the tower would look like from various vantage points along US 360. Ms. Murphy said one of the reasons they chose this site is that the local vegetation does a good job of hiding the tower, without impacting its performance. Ms. Murphy emphasized that once the tower is built, this will be a passive use, no noise, no dust, no fumes, will not generate traffic (other than periodic maintenance), but will benefit the surrounding community. Ms. Murphy stated that tower is being built for Verizon, but likely two other cell phone carriers will lease space on the tower. Ms. Murphy added that Virginia State Code, amended in 2018, states that counties cannot require free space on the tower. However, Ms. Murphy added that Verizon will proffer space for the county below 150 feet, and in addition, space for a 10 foot x 10 foot equipment shed within the leased, fenced area.

Ms. Murphy cited Chapter 2 of the Comprehensive Plan, section 2, stating that the county hopes to achieve 100% cell phone coverage as well as 100% internet access for all citizens, and this project will help move the county closer to their goal. Ms. Murphy added that Callao is a village growth and support area, and the new cell tower will definitely support businesses in the area. Ms. Murphy concluded by stating she feels that if the proposed cell phone tower is approved, it will be consistent with the zoning ordinance and the Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Kost asked how deep is the foundation for the cell tower? Ms. Murphy stated she does not have that information, but if approved, the site plan and building plan will contain that information. Mr. Kost remarked that Mrs. Murphy mentioned fiber optic cable, and asked where the fiber optic cable was located. Ms. Murphy's associate, Rua De Silva, with Vertical Bridge (Towers, LLC.), stated that fiber optic cable runs to Movie Hall Lane, likely through overhead lines at the intersection with US 360. Mr. Kost asked if there is any limitation on which sides of the tower the county could place antennas? Ms. Murphy stated no limitations, on any side below 150 feet. Mr. Williams asked about whether antenna strength and reception distance has decreased. Ms. Murphy stated that the FCC regulates antenna power output, and reception distance is mainly a factor of topography and vegetation. Ms. Murphy also stated that more buildings in an area also can reduce reception distance. Ms. Murphy conceded that during the Summer, reception suffers, and that reception is more or less line of sight. Mr. Williams asked a followup question, less than 4 miles? Ms. Murphy stated that the distance to from the proposed cell tower to the Lottsburg cell tower is 1.75 miles and that distance is optimal for network communication. Ms. Murphy further explained that the engineers look at the topography of an area, as well as cell service complaints and try to prioritize a site that would help alleviate (Verizon) customer complaints as well as AT-T and T-Mobile. Mr. Garland stated that there are other areas in the county with no cell service that are more of a priority than the Callao area, why not locate cell towers in the middle and lower end of the county? Mr. de Silva stated that the population in Callao is driving this proposed cell tower. Mr. de Silva stated that the new cell tower in Newman's Neck is getting ready to place the antennas on the tower and begin servicing the county. Mr. Kost asked the applicants if they have seen the suggested conditions. Both Ms. Murphy and Mr. de Silva stated yes, and they are fine with the suggested conditions.

At this time, the owner, Mr. Mangano stated he wanted to speak. He stated that as long as he has been in Callao, he has experienced and heard from people about the bad cell phone service. Mr. Mangano stated the income from the cell tower is not very much, but the benefit is immense to the community.

Mrs. Campbell who resides at 106 Movie Hall Lane, stated that she represents the citizens of Movie Hall Lane. Mrs. Campbell asked the applicant when the tower visualization photos that are in the conditional use application were taken. Ms. Murphy replied in Fall of 2025. Mrs. Campbell then asked Ms. Murphy to confirm that she stated that the tower would fold onto itself if it ever failed. Ms. Murphy stated yes. Mrs. Campbell stated that if mother nature unleashed a tornado, there are two houses across the street that could be impacted by the falling tower. Mr. Campbell stated that if the wind is blowing the right way, it could collapse on houses. Mrs. Campbell asked the Commission to limit the height of the tower to 100 feet. Mrs. Campbell stated that she does not have a problem with cell phone service there, and recently her neighbor called 911 and there was no problem with that emergency cell phone call, as the call was answered. Mrs. Campbell asked the Planning Commission to deny this request, and if not, limit the tower to 100 feet.

Mrs. Murphy explained that part of the building permit process is to submit design drawings, and those drawings will show the construction of the steel monopole cell phone tower to have a weak spot engineered for a specific ice load, hurricane force wind, or other weather phenomena that could damage the tower. Mr. Kost asked Ms. Murphy the distances from the tower to nearby residences. Ms. Murphy stated the closest residence is 115 feet from the tower base. Mr. Garland asked in your experience, has any tower not collapsed according the engineered design? Ms. Murphy stated no, and added that she wishes she would have brought a recent photo of a similar tower that collapsed as designed. Mr. Garland then asked if they could live with a 100 foot tall tower. Ms. Murphy stated that a 100 foot tower is allowed by right in the B-1 zoning district, and if they wanted to build a 100 foot tower, that would not need a conditional use permit. Ms. Murphy stated that a 100 foot tower would not reach the rescue squad, or get over the top of the surrounding trees. Mr. Garland asked if there are any other areas in that vicinity that would meet your requirements? Mr. de Silva said yes, and noted that they had talked with other property owners regarding possible siting of the tower, but that this property was near a commercial area and zoned Business, and those are the reasons for choosing this site. Ms. Murphy stated that, in Virginia, wireless carriers do not have eminent domain, therefore it is necessary for them to find a willing landowner to lease property from.

Chairman Parker asked if there was anyone else that would like to comment during the public hearing. Hearing none, Mr. Parker asked IT staff if there was anyone online who would like to speak regarding the cell tower conditional use permit. Staff stated there were none, and Mr. Parker closed the public hearing at 7:41 pm.

Mr. Williams asked if the tower collapses, not as designed and damages a neighboring property, who would pay? Mr. O'Brien stated the tower owner's insurance company. Mr. Williams asked Ms. Murphy if that was true and she stated yes.

Mr. O'Brien made a motion to recommend approval of the cell tower conditional use permit to the Board of Supervisors and added 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. McKinley seconded the 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	Absent
James Michel	Zoom	Charles Williams	Aye
James Brann	n/a		

The motion passed. Staff stated that they would advertise another public hearing for the next Board of Supervisors Meeting on March 19, 2026, when the Board will consider the request and take action.

RE: WORK SESSION ITEMS

Mr. Parker asked if the representative of the Friends of Northumberland County Animal Shelter would like to present regarding the newly proposed replacement county animal shelter. Mr. Peter Williams introduced himself and stated that they had made a presentation to the Board of Supervisors a while back and then sent it to the Planning Commission. Mr. Williams stated since that time they have had some time to get some facts and figures for the estimated cost for a 10,000 square foot animal shelter would be from \$3.5 to \$4.5 million. Mr. Williams asked himself two questions when he learned of the cost, 1) Can we raise this much funding? And, 2) Can the county maintain this building once built? Mr. Kost asked for clarification, is that estimate for everything (including the site prep)? Mr. Williams replied in the affirmative. Mr. Williams added that if they decided to rebuild a new animal shelter the same size as the current shelter, the cost would be \$2.1 to \$2.8 million, meeting all of the state of Virginia's veterinary requirements. Mr. Williams stated the existing shelter's biggest need is an exercise area and isolation area for sick animals. Mr. Williams stated that they were not sure that they could afford the 10,000 square foot animal shelter, and now are considering replacing the existing animal shelter with a similar sized shelter. Mr. Williams stated that surely the county could find a place somewhere on the 140 acres of the Poor House Tract.

Mr. Kost stated that there are three county owned parcels under consideration, where the shelter is presently located, the Poor House Tract and the old school board building in Lottsburg. Mr. Williams asked if they need to survey the property past the radio tower at their existing site? Mr. Garland asked Mr. Williams if they could estimate how long it would take them to raise the needed funding? Mr. Williams stated they think it would take them two years to fund \$2.1 to \$2.8 million. Mr. Garland stated that the more we

talk about building at the Horsehead site, the better the Lottsburg site looks. Mr. Williams stated that they will need two septic fields, one for human waste and a second for animal waste. Mr. Williams stated that would likely take up all the space in Lottsburg, and besides that the site is not near the center of the county. Mr. Williams stated that currently, if the shelter is full, they cannot accept new animals, if we had a larger site, then we could possibly expand in the future, if not we will be having this same conversation in another five years. Mr. McKinley if they are considering a steel structure. Mr. Williams stated they considered steel, but they rust and rot eventually, a mortar and steel structure is much more suited to an animal shelter, but that type of construction is very expensive. Mr. Williams stated they have settled on a hybrid structure, mortar and blocks around the kennels and steel elsewhere in the building. Mr. Williams stated that cinderblock lasts, especially when you are hosing it down every few days.

Mr. McKenzie asked the Chairman if he would like him to show the site analysis maps for the county owned land where the existing animal shelter is located. Mr. McKenzie displayed on the audio/visual projection screen, maps that he created showing the USGS Topography, LIDAR Elevation, National Wetlands Inventory, Septic Suitability as well as Shrink Swell Soils. Mr. McKenzie explained that there is a gully about 30 feet deep past the wood pile on the site, then there is a relatively flat area of around 9 acres, where a structure could be built. Mr. McKenzie added that there is another, less deep depression after the first building site, and there is another area of relatively flat land of around 15 acres. Mr. McKenzie stated that the cost to built a culvert or bridge over the first drainageway would increase site development costs significantly. Mr. Kost suggested the FNCAS consider asking for an easement from the neighboring property owner for an access road, adding that it would be more likely to be granted if the FNCAS asked versus the county asking. Mr. McKinley asked I there would be any use for the old animal shelter building. Mr. Williams stated, there are plumbing issues and leakage, and the building is mostly worn out. Mr. Kost stated his opinion of the current building is disgusting. Mr. Williams asked how many dogs and cast can you handle? Mr. Williams stated that last year 380 animals passed through the animal shelter. Mr. Williams stated that kitten season is coming up and one cat can have 30 kittens at a time, not to mention any animal control seizures that need housing. Mr. Williams noted that they work with neighboring county animal shelters to take excess animals and then they repay the favor in the future. Mr. Williams clarified that at one time the shelter can house 36 dogs and 13 cats.

Comprehensive Plan

Mr. McKenzie stated that he made the changes to the Comprehensive Plan that were recommended by the Planning Commission at the last meeting. Mr. McKenzie asked if the Commission would like him to go through the sections that were changed. Mr. Kost stated the changes made were simple, and he was comfortable with staff making the changes. Mr. Kost made a motion to adopt the changes to the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Williams seconded the motion. All commission members voted to approve Mr. Kost's motion. Mr. Kost stated that we will need to revise the Table of Contents to reflect the changes that were made to the overall document. Mr. O'Brien made a motion to approve the necessary changes to the Table of Contents to align with the other changes made to

the Plan. Mr. Garland seconded the motion. All commission members voted to approve the changes to the Table of Contents.

Mr. McKenzie stated that he has a draft resolution for the Planning Commission to approve and send to the Board of Supervisors. Mr. Kost stated he read it and thought that the phrase "... the original Comprehensive Plan" should be changed to the "... 2016 Comprehensive Plan". Mr. Kost made a motion to revise the resolution to state the "2016 Comprehensive Plan", and send it to the Board of Supervisors. Mr. O'Brien seconded the motion. All commission members voted unanimously to change that sentence in the resolution and to sign and send the resolution to the Board.

Mr. McKenzie stated that he would go back to the office and send the public notice advertisement to the newspapers for a public hearing at the next Board of Supervisors Meeting in March. Supervisor Brann stated that the Board will need more time than a regularly scheduled meeting to review the Comprehensive Plan, and staff was told to hold off advertising the public hearing at the March Board of Supervisors meeting. Mr. McKenzie agreed, but stated he will only advertise for the cell phone tower on Movie Hall Lane for the upcoming March Board of Supervisor's meeting.

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 voted to deny the revisions to the Pier and Boathouse Ordinances regarding Sun Shelters on private non-commercial piers. Mr. McKenzie stated that a Board member asked Mr. Marston if the maximum size of a sun shelter was 400 square feet. Mr. Marston stated yes. The Board member then asked if a citizen had a five foot wide pier that was 80 foot long, could he put a shelter roof on his entire pier. Mr. Marston stated as the current ordinance is worded, yes. Mr. McKenzie stated this hypothetical situation was problematic for several Board members. Mr. McKenzie added that the shelter roof ordinance change could be revisited in one year, if the county so chooses. Mr. McKenzie stated that the Board approved the Light Industry conditional use permit for Hagen in Lottsburg to build a gravel and mulch sales yard. Mr. McKenzie added that the Board also changed the county's dangerous dog ordinance and replaced it with the state's model dangerous dog ordinance to update the ordinance and make it consistent with state law language. Mr. McKenzie stated the Board emphasized that citizens need to document any vicious dog activity and report it to the Sheriff's office, because the ordinance will only work if there is recorded evidence of a vicious dog, and the evidence does not have to be an attack, threatening dog behavior should be documented as well.

Mr. Kost added that at a special meeting of the Board of Supervisors held earlier today that the Schools now have their own CIP account where unspent money will be housed so the school's system has a place to house funds for their future Capital Improvement Plan projects, such as school bus purchases and the well replacement project. Mr. Kost stated this is a very good development.

RE: ADJOURNMENT

Mr. O'Brien made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Mr. McKinley and the meeting ended at 8:29 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	Absent
James Michel	Zoom	Charles Williams	Aye
Janes Brann	n/a		