

Minutes

Northampton County Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC)

March 1, 2012

This was a regular meeting of the Northampton County Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee held on Thursday, March 1, 2012, in Conference Room 115 located at 16404 Courthouse Road in Eastville, Virginia.

Those present were Chair Bill Parr, Vice-Chair Bill Payne, Dick Drury and Pat Coady, Charles Bell, Peter Lawrence and Butch Bailey. Absent from the meeting was David Long and Billy Moore.

Also in attendance was Bob Panek PSA Chairman, Peter Stith, Long Range Planner for Northampton County and Sandra Benson, Director of Planning and Zoning.

The meeting was called to order at 9:05 and a quorum was established. Mr. Parr welcomed new member Charles Bell to the committee. There was discussion about receiving the minutes and voting on them the following meeting. Mr. Stith stated he would try and email them out as soon as they were finished. Pat Coady moved to table the minutes until next meeting and Bill Payne seconded the motion.

Mr. Parr stated Mary Rae Carter will attend the March 8th meeting. He also said Lyn Lewis is very interested in meeting with the committee and will possibly be at the March 22nd meeting. Mr. Parr said Mr. Lewis can help the committee with resources and access to those resources. Discussion continued about the committee's trip to Richmond. Mr. Parr asked Ms. Benson if the committee rode together in one vehicle would that violate open meeting requirements. Ms. Benson stated there would not be a problem as long as it was advertised properly.

Peter Lawrence asked about something from the minutes from the prior meeting referring to Rt. 13 as "unique and dangerous". He asked about factual information to back this up. Ms. Benson said it is dangerous because of accidents and the State Police keep track of that information. Mr. Parr said a large percentage of the accidents are unlicensed, illegal drivers and this is a social issue, not a traffic one. Mr. Lawrence stated he has heard so much about the current plan wants businesses in town but there are businesses that would want to locate on Rt. 13. Mr. Parr said it would be good to have direct information from VDOT. Mr. Coady asked how much the County influences VDOT regulations. Ms. Benson stated the County responds to them historically. Mr. Lawrence would get more information on this topic.

Bob Panek, chairman of the PSA began his presentation to the committee. He began with a brief history of the PSA, which was originally bi-county, became dormant in Northampton County and was reactivated 2 years ago with a new charter. The new charter has three objectives (1) expand

wastewater in the northern area of the County around Exmore and Nassawadox (2) expand wastewater in the Cape Charles/Cheriton area and (3) operating the already existing wastewater in the County.

Mr. Panek said the PSA is currently focusing on the Northern Node – Exmore – Nassawadox areas. Mr. Parr asked what his position is on the PSA. Mr. Panek said he is the chairman, Artie Miles is vice chair, 4 positions appointed from the towns and 5 from the county. Other members include Felton Sessoms, Granville Hogg, Carl Harris, John Rider, Hank Heneghan and J.T. Holland. He stated the meetings are posted online and the minutes are on the County website.

Mr. Panek said Exmore currently has a small wastewater system and Nassawadox has a small private system owned by Riverside. Mr. Coady asked if the Nassawadox system is not operating properly. Mr. Panek said that was probably fair to say and it was fair to say Exmore's is not working properly as well but they have made some improvements. He said the Exmore system consists of two low-tech processing plants and the collection system is a patchwork system. Mr. Parr asked if the whole town is hooked up. Mr. Panek said approximately one-third of the town is hooked up and it is all voluntary. There is demand for expansion of the system. Ms. Benson noted it was worth mentioning Shore Plaza and New Roads both have mass drain fields and there are problems with Shore Plaza.

Mr. Panek said the reality with wastewater is density or a lack thereof. He said you need dense areas, density equals friend, distance equals enemy. He went on to discuss the estimated cost of both the Northern Node and Southern Node. He said both areas are roughly 11 million dollar projects, which is really not a lot of money. When you divide it out per customer, it comes out to the cost of putting in an alternative system, or \$18,000 per connection. He said one problem is timing, for example if you have a relatively new system. He said where you put the plant is a highly charged issue. He said there were choices between Nassawadox and Exmore and Nassawadox did not want to participate, but Exmore said yes. The plant will be located just south of Nassawadox. He said this is because of the medical complex as well as available land.

Mr. Panek began discussion about the Southern Node stating the project area would include Cheriton and the surrounding community to Fairview. The system would be piped to the new Cape Charles facility. The Fairview community did not want to participate, so the project area was revised to just Cheriton. Mr. Panek stated everybody wants something for nothing, nobody wants to pay, and instead they want services for free. So they struggled to figure out how to get it for free. He said structuring a project with zero connection costs is tricky. The only agency with grant money is the USDA Rural Development and money is dwindling. He said the minimum rate is 1.5% of the median household income for the County, which comes out to \$43 per month. Mr. Panek said this is for wastewater only, and for water it would be an additional 1.5%. He said the minimum for USDA requirements will become the maximum for the PSA. To achieve this, you have to have a high grant to loan ratio. He indicated the State doesn't have any money. He mentioned two funding sources available at the State level, the Water Quality Improvement Fund and the Clean water Revolving Loan Fund.

Discussion continued about who signs the notes and Mr. Panek said it depends on whose system it is. He indicated the PSA only has \$3,000 in the bank; they own nothing and have no revenue streams so it

would require some governmental entity to back up the borrowing. Mr. Payne asked if the PSA had some taxing authority and Mr. Panek responded no, not in Virginia. Mr. Coady asked who can require a mandatory hookup. Mr. Panek responded saying the locality or municipality can require a mandatory hookup. He said the PSA has to work hand in hand with the locality. He said this is very important and you can't have 70% of the people on the system.

Mr. Panek indicated their next meeting on the 14th with USDA, DEQ and DHCD to see if they can find a way to get everyone to commit to funding the Northern Node. He said this is also dependent on Riverside contributing their share of 1 million dollars.

Discussion continued about the potential to scale back the project and concentrate on smaller starter areas that would only serve commercial areas initially and eventually expand to residential areas. There was also discussion about different funding options and sources, such as private partnerships. Mr. Payne asked what the cost would be for a minimum system. Mr. Panek indicated for the Southern Node, it would be approximately \$1.5 million and would only serve commercial areas. He also mentioned no plant would need to be constructed. Mr. Panek proceeded to distribute some handouts for the committee members. Discussion continued about creating tax districts and financing. There was also discussion about where the Health Department stood in all of this. Mr. Panek stated the Health Department has submitted a letter of endorsement.

Discussion continued about water discharge and the quality of the water once it comes out of the plant. Mr. Panek stated the Cape Charles plant exceeds the standards and is very clean. Mr. Coady stated that nurseries could take the outflow. Mr. Panek said for the Northern Node there is a nursery that wants the water for irrigation. Mr. Lawrence stated this would solve the water issue. He said you can get growth, protect water and the Bay and create jobs.

Discussion continued about focusing on a commercial system and ways to incentivize businesses to hook up. Mr. Parr indicated developers expect to pay for sewage disposal, they just don't want to own it, but they do expect to have that cost. Mr. Parr stated this was the most exciting information and there would be immediate economic impacts from this. He also stated it would not take long to have capital impacts. Mr. Panek indicated this was something the PSA Board has not discussed and the process must be respected. Mr. Panek went through the recent presentation with the Board of Supervisors and stated they were very supportive of everything the PSA presented. Mr. Coady asked if Exmore is willing to have a mandatory hookup. Mr. Panek indicated they would. He also stated the Board of Supervisors would go along with a mandatory ordinance.

Mr. Coady asked if Cape Charles had water capacity. Mr. Panek explained the current capacity and usage and indicated it has sufficient capacity for expansion. Mr. Panek gave his comments on the current Comp Plan he stated it was very defensive. He stated the tone needs to change a lot with respect to wastewater. He said the science has improved so much and the water coming out of the plant is amazing. Mr. Coady said we should legislate the goal and not the solution. He said the goal should be clean water and the solution should be left for when it is worked on.

Mr. Parr thanked Mr. Panek for a great summary. He stated the CPAC can support the PSA in their report to the Board. Mr. Parr stated that Mr. Panek should be on the CPAC's mailing list and kept informed of their business.

Mr. Lawrence and Ms. Benson asked about the progress of the survey. Mr. Parr stated since the Committee will be receiving input from "free" resources from the state and elsewhere, the survey is on hold for now. Meeting was adjourned at 11:05 am.