

Minutes

Northampton County Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee

May 3, 2012

This was a regular meeting of the Northampton County Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC) held on Thursday, May 3 2012, in the Main Conference Room located at 16404 Courthouse Road in Eastville, Virginia. Those present were Chairman Bill Parr, Vice-Chairman Bill Payne, David Long, Pat Coady, Peter Lawrence, Billy Moore, Charles Bell, and Dick Drury. Absent from the meeting was Butch Bailey.

Also in attendance was Peter Stith, Northampton County Long Range Planner, Sandra Benson, Director of Planning and Zoning, Chris Isdell Residency Administrator, Dennis Heuer, VDOT Hampton Roads District Administrator, and Chuck Cooley, local engineer.

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. and a quorum was established. The minutes from April 26, 2012 were deferred until later in the meeting. Mr. Parr introduced Mr. Dennis Heuer from VDOT as the committee's guest speaker. Mr. Heuer began by talking about the crash history of Rt. 13 and the overall safety of the highway. He stated Rt. 13 is in line with state averages as far as crashes are concerned. He stated Rt. 13 is higher in terms of fatalities. He indicated infrastructure is not a problem and most likely driver behavior is the problem. He said Rt. 13 is as safe as they can make it.

Discussion continued about the Access Management Study and one of the main things in the plan calls for reducing crossovers or median cuts. Mr. Heuer stated the County should have a master plan as far as development and where it should be located. He indicated several options for funding improvements such as special tax districts, proffers, or County seed money in order to alleviate development costs for businesses. There was discussion about the cost of traffic lights and whose responsibility it is to pay for one, if necessary. Currently the last one on the corner holds that responsibility. There was discussion about ways to spread out the costs or share the cost of such an improvement.

There was discussion about receiving planning guidance from VDOT. Mr. Heuer stated there are Access Management Rules in the State Code and suggested the committee read those. He stated VDOT can provide some assistance but not planning. Mr. Heuer recommended aligning the county zoning with the master plan and start developing infrastructure with County seed money. Mr. Parr said the County needs small businesses that create 8, 10 or 20 living wage jobs with benefits and this would be a big win for the County.

Discussion continued about the County's Highway Overlay District and the setback from Rt. 13 of 100 feet. Mr. Parr asked what would be a good setback for VDOT and Mr. Heuer said stay off the Right of Way. He stated he has no jurisdiction outside of the right of way. There was discussion about the width of the right of way and future widening of the right of way. Mr. Coady asked what VDOT would like to see set aside for the potential right of way expansion. Mr. Heuer stated since there is no identified project currently, which puts a lot of liability on the State. Mr. Parr said the committee should identify commercial corridors and ask VDOT if the right of way is adequate.

Ms. Benson stated the Access Management Plan is 10 years old and asked if the study should be revisited. Mr. Heuer asked what has changed in order to trigger a review.

Discussion began about two projects in Northampton County that did not go through because of VDOT requirements. Mr. Heuer said they have to follow the state code and the General Assembly is looking at regulations from a statewide view, rural, urban and in between and it is all based on safety.

Mr. Coady asked about the goals in the Access Management Plan and why they were not implementing them as they repaved areas. He said it is because of money set aside for maintenance as opposed to new construction. Mr. Heuer said VDOT has not had a raise since 1986 and they cannot move money around that has been allocated for something else.

Mr. Lawrence asked if there was an exception clause to get around certain regulations. Mr. Heuer said not if it is State code. Ms. Benson said there is a variance process but it can be costly. Mr. Heuer said the main purpose is public safety. Mr. Coady stated if it is for public safety then the public should help pay for it and not just the property owner.

Mr. Parr asked if a project comes to the county and there is a conflict with VDOT regulations, is there a way to come to VDOT. Mr. Heuer said start with Chris Isdell; he is the first point of contact. Mr. Lawrence said it would be a good idea to use the two examples in Northampton County as case studies and to get a better understanding of the real issues involved with both projects.

The committee thanked Mr. Heuer and Mr. Isdell for meeting with them. Mr. Heuer and Mr. Isdell left at 10:45 am. Mr. Parr brought up the recent news article about money in the County budget for an economic development position. The committee reviewed the minutes from April 26th. Mr. Coady made a motion to approve and with a 2nd from MR. Payne they passed unanimously.

The committee discussed their next meeting and inviting Barbara Schwenk from A-NPDC. They also discussed identifying recommendations for the Board. Mr. Parr and Mr. Payne said they would draft a first round of recommendations for the Board. Mr. Payne and Mr. Lawrence provided a list of recommendations to the committee. There was discussion about process and if the committee wanted to comment on the Draft Vision, those comments are due May 11th. Bill Payne moved to adjourn and with a second from Dick Drury the meeting was adjourned at 11:37 am.