

Minutes  
Northampton County Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee  
September 13, 2012

This was a regular meeting of the Northampton County Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC) held on Thursday, September 13, 2012, in the County Administration Complex Main Conference Room located at 16404 Courthouse Road in Eastville, Virginia.

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

Also in attendance were Ava Wise, consultant to the CPAC; Sandra Benson Thornton, Director of Planning & Zoning; Peter Stith, Long Range Planner; and Kay Downing, Administrative Assistant.

The meeting was called to order at 9:10 a.m. and a quorum established. The committee unanimously approved minutes from September 6 as submitted upon motion by Mr. Coady and second by Mr. Drury.

Mr. Drury asked for a point of correction about erroneous information that a planning commissioner had reported during the Sept. 11 joint meeting. He stated that it is not true that 22 teaching positions are unfilled in the public school system. He reported that there are currently 9 non-instructional vacancies and that 50 percent of newly hired teachers have a Masters Degree. Since education is such a high priority in the county the Committee suggested to Mr. Drury that newly hired school personnel be surveyed as to their opinion about county housing options and quality of life issues since these factors can impact whether or not educators want to live here.

The Chair asked for comments concerning the joint work session with the Planning Commission held on Sept. 11. By consensus, members agreed that the meeting was beneficial and that another be scheduled before presenting CPAC recommendations to the Board as a courtesy to the Commission.

The Chair reported that Sandi McNinch will attend the Sept. 24 Board meeting at 5:00 p.m. to do a short power point presentation and lead organizational structure discussion. Mrs. Thornton stated that there is an existing Economic Development Commission (EDC) structure in place that is not functioning at this time. It was decided that Ms. McNinch be provided a copy of the newly posted Director of Development (DOD) job description and information on the existing EDC.

The Committee reviewed and discussed the DOD job description. When asked, Mrs. Thornton stated her belief that the description was developed as a result of consultant interviews with each Board member and was posted by the County Administrator at the direction of the Board. She reiterated that the Administrator must be responsive to Board direction.

The Chair suggested that Neal Barber, a consultant working with the Town of Onancock and former Director of Virginia Housing and Community Development, be considered as an economic consultant. Mr. Payne suggested that the public phone survey information and the CPAC directive from the Board be sent to Mr. Barber. Ms. Wise agreed noting that Mr. Barber could assist with development of an economic framework and a long-term economic development approach given his background and expertise.

More in depth discussion of the DOD job description was held. There were concerns expressed that the job may be more of an internal departmental management position and not exclusively an external "sales" position which are usually two different positions requiring different skill sets.

Motion was made by Mr. Lawrence that the committee recommend that the County Administrator remove the job posting until after the Board meeting on September 24 in order to discuss the economic model that may be needed. Second was made by Mr. Payne.

Discussion followed with the following points made by staff: (1) the new position is to focus primarily on economic development; (2) no elimination of existing county positions is planned; and (3) hiring of county staff is not within the CPAC's charge.

By consensus, members agreed that posting the new job position is one of the first steps needed in order for the county to advance its economic development goals. Also realized was that the county was trying to address internal customer service issues as well.

The Chair called for the vote and the motion failed unanimously.

Motion was then made by Mr. Coady to invite the County Administrator to the next meeting to provide insight about the DOD job description and the organizational and functional concepts behind it so that CPAC questions can be addressed. Second was made by Mr. Payne and carried by a majority vote of 5 with Mr. Lawrence abstaining. Staff was asked to relay this request to Ms. Nunez in order to forward the Committee's concerns that the new position should be more of an economic development "sales" position as opposed to a departmental management position.

It was noted that more clarification is needed on the percentages of phone survey respondents being reflective of the community at large to ensure Board Chairman Oliver Bennett and others that no profiling of ethnic groups has occurred. Mrs. Thornton is to coordinate a time when this can be accomplished between Joe Goode, Chairman Bennett, CPAC Chair Parr and herself.

Discussion was held concerning preparation for the Sept. 24 meeting with the Board. The following items were noted: (1) articulation of the committee's funding recommendation is needed; (2) a phone conference with Ms. McNinch is needed to discuss presentation details; (3) obtain power point presentation from Ms. McNinch and submit this and all Sept. 24 meeting materials to staff no later than Friday, Sept. 21; (4) on Sept. 20 start review of Ms. Wise's framework document as previously discussed; and (5) clarify key messages that will be recommended to the Board.

With the anticipated retirement of Mrs. Thornton as Director, the Committee agreed upon a goal to complete its charge no later than November 1.

By consensus members agreed that their idea of an economic development model would probably include an internal county position plus an external commission with its own staff being funded by the county initially and then able to generate its own operating income in the future.

Prior to adjourning Mrs. Thornton noted that Springsted consultants will be developing the county's departmental reorganization program and not the new DOD staff person.

There being no other business the meeting was adjourned at 10:33 a.m. upon motion by Mr. Bell and second by Mr. Payne.