

Minutes

Northampton County Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee

Work Session

September 20, 2012

This was a recessed meeting of the Northampton County Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC) held on Thursday, September 20, 2012, in the main conference room located at 16404 Courthouse Road in Eastville, Virginia.

CPAC members in attendance were Chairman Bill Parr, Vice-Chairman Bill Payne, Pat Coady, Charles Bell, Billy Moore, Peter Lawrence and Richard Drury. Those absent were Butch Bailey and David Long.

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

Due to the late arrival of Mr. Parr, Vice-Chairman Payne called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. and established a quorum.

The first order of business was to review the memo of September 18, 2012, and its attachments from Katie Nunez, County Administrator. Ms. Nunez had been invited to attend the meeting, but could not due to prior business commitments.

The Chairman arrived at 9:17 a.m.

Discussion was held on the Regional Development Initiatives as described in the memo. Ms. Benson noted that the Board of Supervisors is aware of the initiative and the regional grant that the county is seeking in conjunction with Accomack County through the Department of Housing and Community Development.

Concern was expressed that the county has no real structure or collaborator that is specifically responsible in its economic development efforts.

Mr. Drury arrived at 9:35 a.m.

Ms. Wise confirmed that Accomack Supervisor Laura Belle Gordy and Northampton Supervisor Willie Randall co-chair the Regional Economic Development Committee and are aware of current economic efforts and grant submittals. She added that regional efforts are usually the norm since it allows more population to be clustered making federal and state funds more accessible especially for less populated rural areas like the Eastern Shore.

Discussion was also held on the lack of an active local economic development authority to serve the county and the need to hire a full-time economic development director who could focus solely on economic endeavors. Concern was also expressed that if regional efforts are based on prior cooperation experiences or population numbers then Northampton may benefit less than Accomack in acquiring projects.

Discussion was held on the viability and efforts of the Joint Industrial Development Authority of Northampton County and Incorporated Towns and the Northampton County Industrial Development Authority (NCIDA). It was pointed out that these IDAs have a history of basically monitoring and approving bonds, that mission statements have been out of date, and current appointees are not interested in going beyond the status quo.

After further discussion, motion was made by Mr. Payne that the CPAC suggest to the Board creation of a new Northampton County Economic Development Authority and that current Industrial Development Authorities (IDAs) be retired as appropriate. Second was made by Mr. Bell.

Mrs. Thornton stressed that it should not be assumed that past political history and the status quo would remain in place since Accomack is offering strong support based on this new regional application.

Ms. Wise stated that she acts as a technical advisor to the Regional Economic Development Committee which is where new projects are identified. She noted that 90 percent of the current projects listed pertain to Accomack County and that no new project ideas are being presented at this time.

Issues such as funding and staffing of both local and regional economic development entities were briefly discussed.

Mr. Payne's motion was tabled in order to conduct a conference call with Sandi McNinch, General Counsel for the Virginia Economic Development Partnership.

The CPAC and Ms. McNinch reviewed an economic development power point production scheduled for presentation to the Board on Monday, September 24. There was also discussion about how the county could best approach its future economic goals perhaps by having its own Economic Development Authority to interact with that of Accomack County in a regional effort. It was noted that Virginia Beach and other localities have their own Director of Development and an Economic Development Authority. Based on the county's job description, there was some concern that the focus of the future Director of Development may be diverted away from development efforts if that position is responsible for too much interdepartmental management. It was also noted that clarity is needed on what governance model should be adopted and who or what authority is to be empowered to represent Northampton County. Since she had not read the regional grant application, Ms. McNinch could not specifically comment on the document. Based on today's discussion, it was decided that the power point presentation be slightly revised before its presentation to the Board.

Due to time constraints, consideration of the minutes was deferred until the next regular meeting.

Mr. Payne's motion was taken off the table and further discussion ensued. The Chair called for the question and the motion carried unanimously.

It was the consensus of those present that this would be a move forward in the pursuit of creating new economic development by having a local authority in place and organized similarly to that of Accomack County. Also, this new authority would focus exclusively on economic development, while existing IDAs have been focused primarily on bond obligations and monitoring.

Also, motion was made by Mr. Coady that in light of the retirement of the Director of Planning & Zoning and reorganization of certain departments, the CPAC suggest to the Board that serious consideration be given to the need for a full-time economic development position in addition to the Director of Development. Second was made by Mr. Payne and the motion carried unanimously.

At 11:23 a.m., Mr. Coady moved to recess until Monday, September 24, 2012, at 5:00 p.m. Second was made by Mr. Drury and carried unanimously.