

Minutes

Northampton County Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee

Joint Work Session

September 11, 2012

This was a recessed meeting of the Northampton County Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC) held on Tuesday, September 11, 2012, at 2:00 p.m. in joint session with the Northampton County Planning Commission. The meeting was conducted in the Social Services training room located at 5265 The Hornes in Eastville, Virginia. The purpose was to conduct a roundtable discussion concerning the comp plan update process and specifically addressing the economic development component.

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

Commissioners present were Chair Martina Coker, Vice-Chair Michael Ward, Sylvia Stanley, Mary Miller, Dixon Leatherbury, Roberta Kellam and Severn Carpenter.

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

The Chair called to order the meeting of the CPAC at 2:02 p.m. and established a quorum present. The Commission meeting was called to order as well and a quorum established.

Introductions were made by all present.

The agenda as presented was accepted unanimously by both the CPAC and Commission upon proper motion and second.

Mrs. Thornton gave a brief background overview of the update review process including a timeline of events that had occurred. She stressed that the Code of Virginia gives the local planning commission the responsibility of recommending the comprehensive plan to the local governing body such as the Board of Supervisors. During the prior update in 2005, the Board of Supervisors appointed a CPAC and Steering Committee that was later disbanded. The current Board appointed a new CPAC which is considered an ad hoc committee of the Board. The work of CPAC is intended to primarily look at existing economic conditions, to review draft materials of the commission, and to make comments. She noted that adoption of local comp plan is mandatory by the Code of Virginia and stipulated reviews of an existing comp plan are mandatory. However, updates and amendments to existing comp plans are not mandatory unless deemed necessary through the review process.

Ms. Coker gave a brief overview of the Commission's work to date. She noted that public workshops were conducted throughout the county and towns in order to obtain information from a broad spectrum of county citizens. Also, information has been obtained from the Plan Review Stakeholders Group

representing various industries, agencies and civic organizations. The Commission is to utilize all of this public information plus gather and review other data in order to make recommendations to the Board. She also stated that the updated comp plan vision statement is now being restructured in order to more accurately reflect its intent.

The Chair asked if any CPAC members wished to ask questions of staff or the Commission at this time. There being none, he gave a brief background on the CPAC and its work process and progress to date listing the many meetings and discussions that have been conducted over the last 11 months. He noted that resource personnel from both state and local agencies have shared their expertise in economic development educating the CPAC about regulations, funding options, legislative processes, etc. He explained that an independent county-wide local level phone survey was conducted related to the general status of the county as a whole and current status of economic development as seen from a public perspective. He noted that the CPAC was focused on the economic development component of the comp plan as opposed to the Commission that is charged with review of the entire plan.

During discussion the following topics, suggestions and concerns were mentioned.

1. Attempt to define “economic vitality” and “economic success”
2. A governance model is needed; a regional economic development approach could provide state funding necessary to move economic development forward and overcome existing codified and cultural barriers;
3. A full-time economic development person and an active economic development commission are needed to focus strictly on business and job growth
4. Once available, where should additional tax revenue be spent to enhance citizens’ lifestyles
5. Economic development should be a sustainable model broad enough in context to accommodate future growth
6. Focus economic development efforts beyond the 3 major existing industries (agriculture, aquaculture and tourism) while trying to expand agriculture through vertical integration efforts
7. Recognize and attempt to address the disenfranchised feeling connected to the economic status of the county
8. Recognize and address the two top concerns related to jobs and public education as revealed by the citizens phone survey
9. Almost 50 percent of phone survey respondents were 64 years old and over who purchase real estate, enjoy the quality of life here and require services
10. Definition of “good job”
11. Encourage “good jobs” that provide year-round family-supportive employment
12. Most “good jobs” in the county are in the education/government sector and health care services
13. Consider the need to develop initiatives to work
14. Consider the need to develop initiatives to encourage and sustain healthy families
15. Definition of “small business” versus that of a “mom and pop” business
16. Tourism has increased but does not yet produce enough county tax revenue, is generally centered around 2 towns, and decreased the last fiscal year in Cape Charles
17. Identify and be proactive in developing job training and services to support the potential of off-shore industries such as wind turbines and drilling

18. Partner with and utilize the community college in new job training efforts as Walla Walla did in Washington
19. Vitaculture is a growing agriculture activity
20. Adopt a business-friendly, customer-oriented atmosphere within county departments
21. Amend county regulations that may be stifling economic growth because they are more restrictive than what the state code requires
22. Market the county in new and positive ways to encourage private investment; develop promotional standards under a unified theme
23. Negative factors such as county obesity, diabetes and cancer rates, along with the lowest high school graduation rate in the state may be deterrents to economic development
24. Consider allowing "by-right", quality accessory living units as rental workforce housing to accommodate new teachers, health care workers, etc.
25. The majority of tax revenue has shifted to a dormant residential tax base that will devalue with the upcoming assessment
26. Tax revenue produced by farming is negated by the county's existing AFD program
27. Tax revenue from aquaculture tax revenue is relatively low due to its wholesale nature and shipment of products "offshore"
28. Promote on-line college courses to encourage young adults to remain, train and fill available education and health care positions
29. Anticipate future devolution and plan for additional costs to maintain all secondary roads and to operate public schools with less state funding being provided
30. Consider adoption of special tax districts to encourage development of certain areas of U.S. 13 in a safe and economical manner
31. Recognize the possibility that development on U.S. 13 may result in more abandoned structures
32. Pre-development meetings with potential business owners should be encouraged and include local and state agencies to prevent development process delays

(Due to another appointment, Mrs. Thornton left the meeting at 3:50 p.m.)

After discussion was concluded, Ms. Coker distributed a revised timeline work calendar for information purposes to be reviewed at a later time.

The Chair gave a brief summary of the CPAC report being presented later tonight at the Board meeting. He noted that the CPAC will meet with the Board again on September 24 at 5:00 p.m.

By consensus of the CPAC and Commission, it was decided that a second joint work session would be established in the future and that today's meeting had proved to be very beneficial.

Recess:

At 4:08 p.m. the CPAC meeting was recessed until 5:00 p.m. in order to report to the Board of Supervisors during its work session.