

## Minutes

### Northampton County Planning Commission

#### Work Session

July 16, 2014

Those members present were Dixon Leatherbury, Jacqueline Chatmon, Mark Freeze, Kay Downing, Sylvia Stanley, Michael Ward and Martina Coker.

Also present was Peter Stith, Long Range Planner and Nyoka Hall, Recording Secretary.

The meeting was called to order and a quorum was established.

The agenda was accepted as presented.

#### Unfinished Business

Mr. Stith informed the Commission that he printed memos which highlighted the sections where changes had been discussed. He noted that the Community Facilities section had the least amount of changes and primarily focused on relabeling the maps. The other changes were in the housing section of which the figure of \$82,355 was verified by the Commissioner of Revenue. The building valuations from 2013 will also be added to a table in part two of the data section. The 1,929 vacant lots in the towns will be added to the section of the plan which references the 5,000 vacant parcels in the County.

The commission then continued the review of the Comprehensive Plan review focusing on Part I Section 4 of the Housing Plan as follows:

#### **4.5.2 Affordable Housing**

*The median value of owner-occupied housing in Northampton County is around \$172,700 according to the 2008-2012 ACS. The average local property assessment for improved land is estimated to be \$127,000 and the average sale price of all transactions in 2012 was \$82,355. This may be attributable to is the direct result of more foreclosures, short sales, county tax sales and distress sales in a faltering economy. Based on this data, it may be very difficult for the local worker whose median income is \$31,980 to qualify for financing. While many variables affect one's ability to qualify for a mortgage loan, there appear to be few ownership opportunities available to a household earning the most recent median family income estimate.*

The Commission then discussed item B of Part I Section 5 Environment, Natural Resources and Open Space Plan. Chairman Leatherbury inquired if there were resource persons available in the area to give questions directly to or should questions be drafted and then submitted to a broader base of resource persons. Mr. Stith mentioned two resumes of potential resources; Aaron Mills, a Professor at UVA, who has done research on the Seaside and Joe Batiata, an engineer who has been working with stormwater regulations. It was noted by the Chairman there was no budget to pay individuals to participate in this study and it would be beneficial to pursue methods that would not incur a cost. Commissioner Downing asked that the Commission be as objective as possible during this process as there will be individuals suggesting persons who are already vested. She stated it is best to be transparent and not appear to be taking any particular side in the matter. Chairman Leatherbury suggested the Commissioners pair up

and research the following: other planning commissions along the Atlantic, academic and professional resources and the University of Maryland Eastern Shore. Commissioners Chatmon and Ward agreed to speak with other planning Commissions, Commissioner Ward would also contact the University Maryland Eastern Shore, Commissioner Coker would contact DEQ, and Commissioner Freeze would contact VIMS, ODU and William & Mary.

The commission discussed how to develop questions to determine whether to keep or remove the CBPA from the Seaside. Chairman Leatherbury referenced the side by side chart illustrating the impacts of the institution of the stormwater regulations and its impacts on the CBPA that was provided by Melissa Kellam.

The next item of discussion was Part I Section 2 of the Land Use Plan. Commissioner Ward noted that there was not a part two and asked whether there would be one. Mr. Stith said there would not be a part two. Commissioner Ward then noted that there needs to be an explanation of changes if there will not be a part two. Commissioner Coker noted that data from various other sections could be referenced to solve this issue. After discussion there was consensus that section 2.1 Land Use plan was fine as presented.

A motion to adjourn and reconvene at the regular session on August 5, 2014 was made by Commissioner Ward and seconded by Commissioner Downing. The motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 10pm.