

Northampton County Planning Commission

Work Session

October 15, 2014

Those present were Chairman Dixon Leatherbury, Vice-Chair Jacqueline Chatmon, Michael Ward, Kay Downing, and Mark Freeze. Commissioner Stanley was absent.

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

A quorum was established.

The Commission continued their Comprehensive Plan Review, Part II Section 2 The Land Use Plan.

Section 2.1 Land Use & Community Design – Last sentence of paragraph “Further, text provisions in this plan are intended to take precedence control over map provisions, if there are inconsistencies.”

Commissioner Ward noted that the Land Use & Community Design should be longer due to other matters that need to be referenced and considered. Commissioner Ward volunteered to prepare an introduction as well as Mr. Stith to review at the next meeting.

2.1.1 Land Use Planning Goals – Amended paragraph 2, Maintain the County’s predominantly rural character by promoting agriculture, aquaculture, ~~sustainable~~ tourism, and other ~~compatible~~ commercial enterprises as economic industries in the County and as preferred land uses in the majority of the County.

2.1.2 Community Design Goals – Strike ~~Promote compact development forms that both preserve open space in rural areas and maintain distinct town and village edges in settlement areas.~~

2.1.3 Land Use and Community Design Guidelines

Land-use policies and decisions should be based on rural and development uses distinct settlement types for rural areas and development areas as follows.

Amend – The Future-Land-Use map identified the boundaries and locations that are appropriate for each settlement pattern except for Planned Unit Developments.

2.2 Land Use Areas ~~Rural Settlement Types~~

2.2.1 Conservation Areas

These are areas with significant environmental sensitivity, and/or those areas that are currently protected from development. They are established to minimize flooding impacts, maximize groundwater recharge capacity, and ~~to~~ protect key natural resources, such as migratory bird habitats and coastal waters. Examples include tidal wetlands, freshwater wetlands, salt marsh and similar sensitive lands. These areas include but are not limited to state lands, private preserves such as the Barrier Islands and other lands subject to ~~private~~ conservation easements, and riparian areas. This planning area is the least densely developed of all of the planning areas. ~~and includes largely~~

undeveloped areas of the County. The Conservation area makes up approximately 34% of the unincorporated land in the County.

2.2.1.1 Conservation Area Land Uses

a. Appropriate land uses for Conservation Areas include: permitted uses such as preserves, low impact outdoor recreational uses, low impact and agricultural uses, seafood harvesting and other similar natural resource based uses. ~~and accessory uses directly related to the support of these preferred land uses.~~

b. ~~Very low density residential development may be appropriate but is not encouraged, as a secondary use in Conservation areas.~~

c. ~~Private and public land conservation efforts, farmland retention programs such as agricultural and forestall districts, and programs related to retention of seafood production should be focused in Conservation areas.~~

d. Non-residential uses, except those incidental to and supportive of conservation, agriculture, seafood harvesting or outdoor recreational or other preferred land uses, will be discouraged.

e. ~~Rezoning to allow higher intensity and higher density uses in the Conservation Areas would not be appropriate and is not supported by this Plan.~~

f. The County may permit conservation related institutional ~~or low impact institutional uses that are complementary to conservation related uses provided the uses are compatible in scale and intensity with agricultural and conservation land uses, poses no threat to public health, safety and welfare and if the use that~~ helps preserve ecologically sensitive areas, farmland, seafood, harvesting, open space or historic or scenic resources.

2.2.1.2 Conservation Area Community Design

a. Development densities in the Conservation Area should not exceed 1 dwelling per 50 acres.

b. New residential development proposed in Conservation Areas should be clustered to maintain very low development densities, or exhibit other conservation design principles to preserve on-site ecological, environmental, natural, cultural, historic, scenic and open-space resources. Proposals for compatible non-residential uses should also exhibit conservation design principles, employ conservation easements to limit development to specific areas and to ensure that the use proposes minimal degradation to the natural environment.

2.2.1.3 Conservation Area Community Facilities and Utilities

a. Public sewer and water service generally will not be extended to Conservation Areas except that. ~~The County may consider the extension of public utilities to resolve public health threats. existing at the time of adoption of this Plan.~~

b. With the exception of public parks, preserves and outdoor recreation facilities, community facilities should not be located in Conservation Areas.

c. Transportation access and improvements in Conservation Areas should be limited to the minimum necessary to serve uses in the Conservation areas.

2.2.2 Rural/Agricultural Areas

Rural/Agricultural Areas are those areas of the County that are predominantly in agricultural and forestall uses and are not served by public utilities. These areas generally include the County's prime agricultural soils and viable farm and forestry operations and account for approximately 54% of the unincorporated area in the County. Rural/Agricultural areas typify the historic, managed open landscape of Northampton County that includes farm fields, pasture, wood lots and rural homesteads. These areas include active agricultural operations, related forest uses and some scattered low density rural residential uses.

2.2.2.1 Rural/Agricultural Area Land Uses

a. Land uses for Rural/Agricultural Areas include traditional and innovative agricultural uses, and rural uses that complement and support farming. ~~Uses directly related to the support of the principal. Uses directly related to the support of the principal land uses may also be appropriate as accessory uses.~~ The County seeks to maintain the existing rural character of these areas.

b. Low-density rural residential development should be permitted as a secondary use in Rural/Agricultural Areas. ~~Any such D~~development should be buffered from adjacent agricultural uses. Rural residential development should be discouraged on prime agricultural soils.

c. The county will continue to promote farmland retention programs in Rural/Agricultural areas and ~~The county will vigorously support "Right to Farm" policies in Rural/Agricultural areas to protect existing farms and farmers from nuisance complaints from neighboring rural residents.~~

d. New primary non-agriculturally based industrial and commercial uses are discouraged in Rural/Agricultural areas.

e. ~~Non-agricultural~~ Low impact uses that are complementary to agriculture and open space preservation or ~~complementary to low impact uses~~ nature and agriculture and heritage based tourism uses may be allowed. ~~Such uses should be permitted only if the use is compatible in scale and intensity with agricultural activities and poses no threat to public health, safety and welfare.~~

2.2.2.2 Rural/Agricultural Area Community Design

a. Development densities in the Rural/Agricultural Area should generally not exceed 1 dwelling per 20 acres.

b. New residential development proposed in Rural/Agricultural areas should be clustered to maintain very low development densities and ~~to~~ preserve open space. To protect farmers from nuisance complaints from neighboring ~~rural~~ residents, plats for new residential lots located within the Rural/Agricultural area should disclose that the preferred land use in the immediate vicinity of the new lot is agriculture and ~~identify adjacent agriculture/farm uses.~~

c. Proposals for compatible non-residential uses should exhibit conservation design principles, ~~employ conservation easements~~ to ensure development of specific areas that will minimize conflicts between farming and non-farming uses.

2.2.2.3 Rural/Agricultural Area Community Facilities and Utilities

- a. The county will generally not provide public sewer and water service to rural/agricultural areas.
- b. For new development, off-site sewage disposal will be discouraged. ~~Waste water shall be dealt with on the new development site.~~
- c. With the exception of public parks and recreation facilities, the siting of the community facilities shall be minimized in Rural/Agricultural Areas.
- d. Transportation access and improvements in Rural/Agricultural areas should be limited to the minimum necessary to serve uses in the Rural/Agricultural Areas.

With no further items to discuss on the agenda, the meeting was adjourned.

Chairman

Secretary