

Virginia: At a Town Hall meeting of the Essex County Board of Supervisors held on Tuesday, September 28, 2022, at 7:00 p.m., in the School Board meeting room, 109 Cross Street, Tappahannock, Virginia.

Present: Robert Akers, Chairman  
Ronnie G. Gill, Vice Chairman  
Edwin Smith, Jr., Supervisor  
Sidney Johnson, Supervisor

Present: Michael Lombardo, County Administrator, Clerk  
April Rounds, Assistant County Administrator, Deputy Clerk

Absent: John C. Magruder, Supervisor

### **CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Akers called the meeting of Tuesday, September 28, 2022, to order at 7:00 p.m.

### **ROLL CALL**

The Chairman asked the Assistant County Administrator to call out the roll; a quorum was met.

### **Discussion**

#### **Chairman Akers**

Chairman Akers thanked everyone for coming out to the Town Hall Meeting. It is an opportunity for our constituents to come out and hear a little about what we are doing as a county, what some of the future plans are, and take any questions and dialogue with our constituent base.

#### **County Updates**

County Administrator Lombardo started but was inaudible.

We look to kick that project (Parks and Recreation development) off in the next 9-12 months. Part of that project will be to develop trails at the Poor House Track. We are also focusing on Economic Development. We would like to find someone to contract for new business attraction and retention. What is the value added agriculture industries to come alongside the timber industry that is here and attract firms to start businesses here.

We are about to embark on succession planning to look at the county and how to cultivate and grow key members of the management team.

The observation was brought by April for maybe next years meeting where Department Heads could come in and discuss what is going on in their individual departments or do more of a round table where you can sit down and discuss with the department heads to find out more about what they do; what programs are offered.

Chairman Akers stated that the county was in the process of doing strategic planning. This looks at what we have accomplished and what we would like to see. Key initiatives that we are looking at are championing economic well-being, good governance, community well-being and partnerships, and financial stewardship. One of the big themes was broadband and the other was recreational tourism.

### Broadband Update

Mr. Rob Hodges stated that on August 26<sup>th</sup> we submitted a VATI Grant application that would provide universal fiber for Essex County that was just under 9 Million dollars and to bring it to all of the unserved locations in Essex County. We will hear the result the outcome in Mid to late December. That is competing for the roughly 50 million state dollars that are available. If we are not successful with that there is the potential for the Federal Money to be released and the same application will be able to go for that.

Chairman Akers stated that the partnership that we have proposed is with Breezeline. The total cost for the project is about 28 million dollars and will provide accesses to about 2,700 homes. Breezeline is offering 15 million dollars,

the county is putting in 4 million dollars and the remainder is what is being asked for with the Grant.

Mr. Hodges stated that we are just under \$2,500 per passing with this application which should make us more competitive. Once the work is started it would take about 3 years to complete if we are awarded the Grant.

Vice Chairman Gill asked about the decision for breezeline. There were 3 vendors, one of those dropped out and between the other 2 the price difference was so high that the County would have had to make up a lot of that. Is that correct?

Mr. Hodges stated that the price per passing would have been more than what we had asked for last year.

Vice Chairman Gill also asked if Breezeline was by chance bought out by another company would the contract have an assumption that we wouldn't be left out in the cold if Breezeline no longer existed?

Mr. Hodges stated that is a reasonable assumption that we would insist the purchaser agree to what they agreed to with the county through the Grant.

Vice Chairman Gill asked if we knew what the cost per month as well as the rental of the equipment?

Mr. Hodges said it will be determined by what service you sign up for?

Supervisor Johnson asked how many homes there are in Essex County?

Mr. Hodges stated that there are roughly 5400 houses from the census and right now roughly 40% are served and 60% are not served.

Supervisor Johnson also asked if it mattered how far a resident is from the road.

Mr. Hodges stated that he believes that for people who are thousands of feet away from the main road will not have a problem.

Administrator Lombardo stated that in the initial look there was nothing that showed up where someone would not be served.

Crystal Mitchell? from Hustle stated that she has been trying to get Breezeline would those in the Northern District be able to get Breezeline?

Mr. Hodges stated that yes they would be able to get it.

### Zoning Update and Proposed Map

Mr. Hodges state that over the last several years the County has been trying to update the zoning and subdivision ordinances and the official county zoning map. In September I came to the board to recommend that we move forward and adopt the zoning ordinances. The new document is more concise and easier to read. I feel that the Board could adopt it as early as October and it will be in effect 30 days after the adoption. In addition to that we have been working to refresh the official zoning map.

Chairman Akers stated that the planning commission has worked diligently on the zoning ordinances. We as the Board as well as the planning commission are aware that this is a living document and there will be changes from time to time that need to be made. The planning commission is now tasked with the modifying the comprehensive plan.

Chairman Akers also stated that as this was brought up at our last meeting we wanted the public to have a chance to review it and will likely vote on it at our October meeting making it effective in November.

### Public Comments

Joe Boseman 2575 Butlyo Rd stated that the change from M1 to I1 is identical and wanted to get some clarification on that.

Mr. Hodges the uses are approximately similar, it is not a word for word match but there is no loss in what you are able to do.

Administrator Lombardo are the parcels zoned presently M1 or M2 will that be I1 or I2.

Mr. Hodges stated the only change is in the name. The letters are changing and the numbers are flipping so that the higher use is the higher number.

Joe stated that we paid \$180,000 to change numbers and letters around wouldn't it have been better to keep the same and then change item by item so that it is more transparent?

Joe also asked if this change from M1 to I2 will follow a creek now instead of a property line?

Mr. Hodges asked if that was parcel 45? Joe stated that if that was LaGrange yes. Mr. Hodges stated that it has never encompassed the whole property. There is a section of Parcel 45 it is zoned A2 and never as an M2.

Joe had another question that was inaudible.

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Jeff Howeth, 556 Riverdale Rd, when he first saw the present in April that one of things that was taken out was automobile graveyards. Is that still taken out of the ordinance as a use? Mr. Hodges stated he would have to look but based on the definitions that you are still able to achieve what you do today.

Mr. Howeth has the concern that if it comes out then it is either non-conforming or conditional. Both of which have very legal definitions under zoning. There are a handful of legal automobile graveyards that are permitted under DEQ, DMV and everyone who needs to permit. By the taking out or the modification of the language that we don't step into an area but we have to go through conditional use or non-conforming use then everything someone has invested and they want to do they have to get permission from you to do so.

Mr. Howeth also asked about was Holmes on Lewis Level Rd. Is there any new correspondence from VDOT, traffic counts? Chairman Akers stated that they have gotten correspondence that they have received the new numbers. Vice Chairman Gill stated that it is on the list but we all know how they operate. Administrator Lombardo stated he believes we got an email update recently and he would check

that. Vice Chairman Gill stated that it has moved to the top of the list. He is just trying to see if we can get that road paved.

Supervisor Johnson stated that Lewis Level has been updated and they are waiting for the 6 year plan approval from the Board.

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Lou Spencer, 614 Anne Pitts Road, is there any interest in filling a position of Economic Development? Chairman Akers stated that Administrator Lombardo has been in contact with a colleague to contract for a short term but it is a strategic initiative.

**ADJOURN**

Chairman Akers adjourned the meeting.

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Chairman

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Clerk of the Board