

Minutes  
Essex County Planning Commission  
Regular Meeting  
June 7, 2022  
4:00 P.M.

A regular meeting of the Essex County Planning Commission was held on June 7, 2022, at the Essex County Administration Building, 202 S. Church Lane, Room 202, Tappahannock, Virginia.

Present:

David Jones - Chairman  
Dr. G. R. Quarles – Vice Chairman  
Cheryl Evans  
Angelo Stevens  
Benjamin Scott Mundie

Absent:

Jean Segar  
Trent Taliaferro

Also present:

Kelly McKnight – Planning and Zoning Office Manager

**CALL TO ORDER**

David Jones, Chairman, called the regular meeting of the Planning Commission to order at 4:00 pm.

**ROLL CALL**

Chairman Jones asked Ms. McKnight to call the roll. A quorum was met.

**MEETING AGENDA**

There were no changes to the meeting agenda.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes of the May 3, 2022, Planning Commission meeting. AYES: 5 NAYES: 0 ABSENT: 2

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Chairman Jones opened the Public Comments session and as no one came forward to speak, closed the session.

**PUBLIC HEARING**

None.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

None.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

#### **Discussion for the Revision of the Essex County Comprehensive Plan**

Chairman Jones explained that the Comprehensive Plan represents the general scope and direction of where the County is going. State Code requires that the Comprehensive Plan be reviewed every five years. Commissioner Evans added that it acts as the intent of the Zoning Ordinance and the actual zoning shows what is allowed and where. The Essex County Comprehensive Plan has not been updated for ten years. State Code drives what the County can and cannot do. The Comprehensive Plan should protect the community.

Chairman Jones said the Board of Supervisors uses the Comprehensive Plan in three ways; for what they don't want, for what they do want, and dictating what goes where. Commissioner Evans said the Comprehensive Plan will hold up in a Court of Law and has been used in lawsuits. The Countryside District was set up because it provided the community fewer services. There is a need to keep services near the population. The Comprehensive Plan is a very important document. Development is coming from two fronts; down Route 360 from Richmond and down Route 17 from Fredericksburg as more people are escaping the bigger cities and opting to work from home in a more rural setting. Commissioner Evans pointed out that having enough affordable housing is a big problem in Essex County. Historically, affordable housing in Essex County has taken the form of trailer parks which are not near amenities such as schools, grocery stores, and medical facilities.

Chairman Jones said there is a new Federal Energy Code soon to be enforced requiring homeowners spending 40% or more of the assessed value of the home on renovations, to bring the homes up to the new code standards of energy. The same goes for flood zone houses. Chairman Jones talked with the Board of Supervisors Chairman, Rob Akers, to ask if the Planning Commission could have some money for experts to collect data for the Comprehensive Plan review. He is not sure Rob Hodges, the Planning and Zoning Administrator, could provide everything needed. Chairman Jones suggested the Planning Commission start the review section by section and highlight items that need to be addressed by the Berkley Group. He said the Planning Commission is not here to chase down statistics.

Commissioner Evans said the Berkley Group changed the entire structure and format of the Zoning Ordinance. She suggested the Board of Supervisors relay their vision for the review to the Planning Commission first. Chairman Jones stated that there are ten objectives in the existing Comprehensive Plan. Commissioner Evans added that using the Berkley Group makes sense since they have all the details from revamping the Zoning Ordinance. If it is in the Zoning Ordinance it must be in the Comprehensive Plan.

Vice Chairman Quarles asked if the review is just going through the motions or should it make a positive difference in the community. Some Board of Supervisor members are looking to consolidate the schools, so that data could be used. He does not feel a need to pay the Berkley Group a lot of money for them to just drop the Zoning Ordinance data into a Comprehensive Plan template.

Commissioner Evans pointed out that the Berkley Group increased the density of the A1, A2, R1, and R2 Districts and the reason they said they did so was to increase affordable housing. However, the best place for affordable housing is in the Town of Tappahannock where the services are such as social services, medical facilities, and schools.

Vice Chairman Quarles expressed a need for facilities for children and young adults. Chairman Jones shared that Lancaster County has such a facility, however, the \$20 million to create it was donated by a private citizen.

Commissioner Evans suggested the Planning Commission review the goals of the Comprehensive Plan instead of the objectives, to see if everyone agreed with the goals. She suggested doing one section at a time. The Planning Commission members agreed and promised to reach out to their respective County Supervisor to get their view on the goals. Commissioner Evans reiterated that the reason the Berkley Group's input is needed is because they revamped the Zoning Ordinance.

**ADJOURN**

Having no further discussion, a motion to adjourn was made and seconded. AYES: 5, NAYES: 0, ABSENT: 2

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Chairman