

Minutes  
Essex County Planning Commission  
Regular Meeting  
August 2, 2022  
7:00 P.M.

A regular meeting of the Essex County Planning Commission was held on August 3, 2022, at the Essex County School Board Office, Tappahannock, Virginia.

Present:

David Jones - Chairman  
Jean Segar  
Cheryl Evans  
Angelo Stevens  
Trent Taliaferro

Absent:

Dr. G. R. Quarles – Vice Chairman  
Benjamin Scott Mundie

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 7:00 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 July 5, 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.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

None

## **NEW BUSINESS**

Rob Akers, Chairman of the Board of Supervisors spoke about the pre strategic planning meeting. There will be a facilitated meeting in the coming weeks. They reviewed what was done in 2018 to see what had been completed and what initiatives were still wanting to be used. Mr. Akers mentioned that the broadband is still a priority for us.

Chairman Jones asked where we were with broadband. Mr. Akers stated that we were waiting on the official recommendation from Rob Hodges at the board meeting in two weeks. He stated that we were about \$5,000 per pass through line for residents and we did not get the grant. Now we are working with three providers to help lower the cost and are now around \$3,000 per line. The county understands we need to work with this so that we can start to see economic growth.

Mr. Akers also mentioned that we are looking at tourism and recreation. We have applied for a grant through the Department of Transportation for a planning study. We are partnering with the town for that grant.

Chairman Jones asked about the other action items such as the sports complex. Mr. Akers said that it is still being looked into. Essex County is a great hub for a sports complex for things like travel ball. Chairman Jones asked about the keeping the county clean. Mr. Akers stated that trash is still a problem, and that the sheriff has created a program for community service. Chairman Jones suggested signage for keeping the county clean. Chairman Jones finally asked about the YMCA. Mr. Akers said that the YMCA did want to come into the county, it just in the discussion phase due to the fact that the fitness center has closed. Mr. Akers would like to see something moving forward in the next six months.

Commissioner Stevens asked about parks for the kids with playground sets. Mr. Akers said the superintendent of schools is looking at two school system. They are also looking at different ideas to look for parks and playgrounds.

Mr. Akers stated that we want to focus on the type of community we want to be? Younger families with kids or older retirement families. Chairman Jones said we need to have a reason for people to stop besides gas and a sandwich. Chairman Jones wants to revitalize the county to get people off of 17. Commissioner Taliaferro asked about a public/private partnership such as a festival with like Wind Vineyards or something. Mr. Akers stated we would need to do some marketing and promoting the whole area. Mr. Akers stated that if the tourism grant would go through that is the best thing such as like a kayak trails as they are becoming more popular.

Chairman Jones asked Mr. Akers to walk them through the comprehensive plan and the Berkley Group helping with that process. Mr. Akers wanted to get the Strategic plan done so that they can look at the comprehensive plan correctly. It gives the idea of what we need help with and see what the Berkley Group could do on that. Chairman Jones stated that what Mr. Akers is asking is that the Planning Commission look at it and have Rob Hodges get a quote from the Berkley Group as to what it would cost. Mr. Akers has stated that although it is not in the budget that if money needs to be moved from the reserves the Board is willing to do so to get this done.

Chairman Jones would like to get with Mr. Hodges at the next meeting to see what chapters they need to get help with, and Mr. Hodges can get the quote and take to the Board of Supervisors for the request. Commissioner Evans stated that we are oversimplifying. We need to know the goals and objectives of the county are. By acquiring about what the stakeholders are wanting by having an independent consultant come out since we do not have the expertise in that. We are looking at the Land Use to see if we need more parks, more zoning areas so businesses can come in or do we not want to have those things? We need to find out from the community the direction we want to go. Mr. Akers stated that is what the Board of Supervisors providing the strategic plan and vision. Commissioner Evans asked if this was having any public input. Mr. Akers stated that they have constant public input. Commissioner Evans asked if they have focus groups or is this just the Board. Mr. Akers stated that it is the board representing each district in the county.

Mr. Akers read the vision statement from the plan. Commissioner Evans stated that the Board develops the strategic plan and then Planning Commission does the land use plan, but citizens get upset when they start to build commercial businesses in their back yard. Chairman Jones stated that there are things that board puts into the comprehensive plan that they want done but we do need to have public input for that. Mr. Akers stated that if we wanted to put something Commercial in a district it would have to be rezoned for that and that is where we would have public input with a public hearing. Commissioner Evans stated that before that you would have to put it in the land use plan so it is designated which would need to have public input.

Mr. Akers stated that what he would like to see is that the planning commission go through the comprehensive plan as a whole to see what they can do and what they need help with so that we can contact the Berkley Group for assistance. Chairman Jones stated that one thing he know that they need help with is with the information. This would include what the percentage of races that we have. Mr. Akers said we probably have that information through Social Services or EMS. Commissioner Evans stated that then after it is found someone has to present it in a graphic form in a document that can be shown to the board.

Mr. Akers stated that the planning commission needs to come up with the outline of what questions they need answers and then we can work at getting those answers. Commissioner Evans asked who would be drafting the document since it is rather hefty. Mr. Akers stated it

just depends on what all needs to be changed in it. Commissioner Evans believes that they should take the document they have and review it to make note on what needs to be added and give that to the board. Mr. Akers stated that he does not recommend starting from scratch and just start by reviewing what is already in place.

Commissioner Evans asked if they were not considering hiring, if they hadn't already, the Berkley Group to develop a template of what they recommend for the Land Use plan. Mr. Akers said they don't live here it is not their county. They had put stuff in the zoning ordinance that we did not agree with based off their expertise. There is no need to start from scratch.

Chairman Jones stated that state law requires them to review the comprehensive plan every five years not rewrite it. Mr. Akers stated there is some things that get rewritten, but it starts with a review. Commissioner Evans suggested 6 months for it to be done. Mr. Akers stated he doesn't want to force it but would love to see it done in 6 months. Chairman Jones stated they could come up with a schedule.

Commissioner Evans stated that her concern is that the land use plan is the guide for zoning. If it is not done properly than zoning can slip through despite what you want. Mr. Akers asked without looking at the land use map, we can let the Berkley Group look at that, how long would it take to go through the rest of the plan? Commissioner Evans stated that she isn't concerned with the land use map but the land use plan. The Land use narrative directs the housing, transportation and parks and recreation. Mr. Akers asked if she thought that what they have now is inadequate. Commissioner Evans stated yes. Mr. Akers stated then that was where he would like for them to start. Commissioner Evans stated that the data is so old and built on false premises.

Chairman Jones stated they can go through each chapter and highlight things that need updating. Then Mr. Hodges can say what information he can get and what the Berkley Group can help with.

Commissioner Evans stated that they need the Berkley Group to feed them a platform. Chairman Jones disagreed in that they can go through and recognize the things that they need help with. They do not need the Berkley Group to come in and tell them how to do the project.

Commissioner Evans stated that the local Planning District Commission did it the last time. Commissioner Taliaferro stated that there were a lot of staff changes but they went through it paragraph by paragraph. Mr. Akers stated that the PDC may be a good resource to start with. Commissioner Evans asked to put the PDC on the agenda and come to a meeting. Mr. Akers stated that he would prefer the PDC do it as they are local and know the area.

Commissioner Evans is concerned that Rob Hodges does not have the time to draft this plan either. Mr. Akers stated that Mr. Hodges top two priorities are broadband and zoning map. Mr. Akers stated that the zoning ordinance has not been approved yet as they are waiting for the zoning map.

**ADJOURN**

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

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Chairman