

Minutes
Essex County Planning Commission
Regular Meeting
September 6, 2022
7:00 P.M.

A regular meeting of the Essex County Planning Commission was held on September 6, 2022, at the Essex County School Board Office, Tappahannock, Virginia.

Present:

David Jones – Chairman
Dr. G. R. Quarles – Vice Chairman
Jean Segar
Cheryl Evans
Angelo Stevens
Trent Taliaferro
Benjamin Scott Mundie

Absent:

Also present:

Kelly McKnight – Planning and Zoning Office Manager
Rob Hodges – Planning and Zoning Administrator

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 August 2, 2022, Planning Commission meeting. AYES: 7 NAYES: 0 ABSENT: 0

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

Chairman Jones introduced Louis Lawrence from the Middle Peninsula Planning Commission to answer questions as well as to give us information on how the Middle Peninsula Planning Commission can help us update our comprehensive plan.

Mr. Lawrence has been with the PDC since 1994. He has worked with Planning Commissions to help with their Comprehensive plans. When communities begin the process of updating the question is asked what are you planning to accomplish. It can run from getting community input for every facet which is a major overhaul and could take 6-8 months. Other communities think the body of work suffices and only need minor updating which is a desktop review. This looks at if there are things that are outdated. A desktop review can be as inexpensive as \$15,000-\$20,000 a full update can cost up to \$100,000 or more.

Commissioner Evans stated she is on board with using the PDC. She asked if Mr. Lawrence knew who was the one who helped Essex County with the last plan which she believes was a desktop review. Mr. Lawrence stated if it was a desktop review it was probably himself or one of the other planners. Some communities will have the PDC do some of the plan and outsource other parts of the plan. Commissioner Evans stated that with a desktop review you are focusing on the demographics. Is that people, land value and all of the numbers? Mr. Lawrence stated whatever the minimum compliant data is. You can highlight in the plan what you want to update or just look at everything to bring it current. Commissioner Evans stated since we are working with data but since we don't need all the data what about Census data. Mr. Lawrence stated it would be very prudent to update it since the new census data is available.

Commissioner Evans asked if code requires the census data to be updated since it is available? Mr. Lawrence said it does not require you don't do the citizens any good by not updating. Mr. Lawrence stated that he can get a list of the statutory requirements to be in compliance with the code.

Commissioner Evans asked if the statutory perspective is different than the desktop review? Mr. Lawrence stated that once we get an idea of what they want to accomplish and what the board will pay for the update we can look at what the statute requires and then see what is labor intensive. Commissioner Evans asked since the state code has changed on several things that we do not have addressed in our land use plan. If you were to update all the state codes is

that part of the desktop review as well? Mr. Lawrence stated it can be depending on whether you are looking for us to identify the deficiency or identify the deficiency and make the technical correction at the same time. Once we establish what you all are looking for, I can come up with a cost structure as to what it would be cost wise to do. Commissioner Evans asked if it would be done at a work session or at a Planning Commission meeting. Mr. Lawrence said it could be done at either or both depending on what the committee wanted to do.

Commissioner Evans stated we have a CIP that is separate from the plan as well as a transportation plan that is presented by VDOT and we use the demographics of the transportation in our Land Use plan. She also stated that Parks and Recreation is working with the board to form a plan that would go into the land use plan.

Commissioner Taliaferro is wanting to know if we need to get more specifics from the board of supervisors to know what they are wanting. Chairman Jones talked about the new strategic plan that the Board of Supervisors is wanting to implement. Mr. Lawrence stated if you haven't heard from the board than historically the presumption is you are good and on the right trajectory. Commissioner Evans stated that they had a meeting with Chairman Akers from the Board of Supervisors, and he had indicated they are in the same place. He wanted to have local planning input and not bring a consulting group from out of town. He also did not want to spend a lot of money on the project. H seemed more interested in something like the desktop review.

Chairman Jones stated that as a group what we would do is take the comprehensive plan would look at and highlight the things that we would want to correct. If we took the strategic plan from the board and highlight what needs to be corrected in the comprehensive plan and what we would like to see changed and gave that to the PDC to look at you could take that and see what it would cost.

Commissioner Evans stated that they discussed that but did not agree to that. She recommended that instead of going that route we should look at the PDC and get their insight into the direction we should go. Chairman Jones said that we know that we need to do the bare minimum and then on top of this here is what else we would like to do. Commissioner Evans stated that we should not go through the plan but have the PDC do it. Chairman Jones said that we should go through the plan so that everyone knows what is in there and we don't have it changed where two years from now someone looks and didn't know something was in there.

Commissioner Taliaferro stated we know that the data needs to be updated. As we are going through it, we are not updating it but marking it that it needs to be updated. Then we as a group need to look at the policies and say this needs to be changed. Chairman Jones stated that some of that would be from the strategic plan adopted by the Board. Commissioner Evans stated that another way of handling that would be there is a member of the board that sits on the Planning Commission as a liaison. We should call a joint meeting between the board and the planning commission to tell them where we think the policy is and let them tell us yes or no.

Chairman Jones stated he thinks that the strategic plan will do that. Commissioner Evans feels that affordable housing should be in that strategic plan. Chairman Jones stated that the one thing that the Board did not want was for the Commission to hand over the Comprehensive plan and have someone else write it. He wanted it to be done as much in house as possible. We can do it chapter by chapter and

we can highlight the things that we feel need to be addressed and then the PDC can catch things that need to be updated to be compliant.

Commissioner Evans would like a list of the things that we need to be compliant with and start there as opposed to going page by page. Chairman Jones asked if we send the current comprehensive plan for you to start looking at where we need to be compliant. Mr. Lawrence stated that yes it would be helpful to look at. He also said that there are three different avenues that you all are talking about. There are some that want to know the minimum requirements, do you want a list of the things that need to be compliant for you all to look at and review or have the PDC make those changes concurrently with that.

Chairman Jones asked if they had the current comprehensive plan could they look and then give us a price to do the bare minimum. Mr. Lawrence said once they have the plan then if we are just interested in the starting point to be minimally compliant here would be the cost. A straight desktop review with no public engagement. You would get a document back with the changes to look at. You could then decide if that's what you want, or we also want to see these changes. He said that we could get an estimate without a bill. Commissioner Evans stated that Mr. Akers was only interested in the bare minimum he did not want to reinvent the wheel.

Commissioner Taliaferro stated that it sounds like it is a three-step process. 1) We give you the comprehensive plan and you give us the estimate on the things that have to be changed. 2) If it has to be changed here is the list and we just do the bare minimum. 3) We should also review the plan in general we need to look over everything. He stated he is all about spending the least amount of money but also wants to see a completed product.

Mr. Lawrence stated the one thing that has not been addressed is the community involvement. Commissioner Evans stated that Mr. Akers has already expressed that we have had enough community engagement. Chairman Jones feels we should at least get a cost for what it would be to include for community engagement.

Commissioner Taliaferro wanted to make sure that what he understood is that we would be given a free estimate of how much it would cost to do this. Mr. Lawrence stated that is correct, it is his job to help them make the best decision with taxpayers' money.

Vice Chairman Quarles stated we need to understand the strategic plan as it will give us guidance to how to look at the comprehensive plan. He is not sure that a desktop review does not look at it from a 10–15-year plan. He would like to see a benchmark, a comparative document that is focused on growth to see their comprehensive plan. He would like to see what is in an aggressive, progressive comprehensive plan that is not just looking at the minimum to get by but looking at everything. Mr. Lawrence said he could find something, but it would be that county's vision not the vision of Essex County. Vice Chairman Quarles said he would like it as a guide.

Chairman Jones would like to know about timing. If they were sent a copy of the comprehensive plan and they looked at it how long would it take to get it back to us with a preliminary cost. Mr. Lawrence stated they could get something back in about a week or two. Commissioner Evans asked if he would be at the next meeting to discuss as he is an integral part to this process. Mr. Lawrence stated that as the director his time can get expensive. Commissioner Evans clarified that his approach which should be his

staff approach. Mr. Lawrence stated that he only has 3 full-time employees. He uses cooperative procurement. It allows a PDC to attach to other entities that have planning experience. He will make sure that the people he brings us will be the right team for the job.

Vice Chairman Quarles would like some samples of success stories which Mr. Lawrence said he could get. Vice Chairman Quarles feels that the comprehensive plan and strategic plan needs to be attractive to invite businesses, tourists, and people.

Chairman Jones stated that 1) we need to send a copy of the Comprehensive Plan to Mr. Lawrence. 2) Send out the strategic plan to all members of the commission as well as Mr. Lawrence. 3) Get 1-2 comprehensive plans from Mr. Lawrence to get a feel for what they did. 4) Get an estimate of cost as to where we are.

Mr. Lawrence stated that those who take their time come out with a better product. The state code states that every 5 years the comprehensive plan needs to be updated.

ADJOURN

Having no further discussion, a motion to adjourn was made and seconded. AYES: 7, NAYES: 0, ABSENT: 0

Chairman