

PRESENT: E. Shipplett, Chairman  
S. Bridge, Vice Chairman  
J. Curd  
C. Foschini  
K. Leonard  
K. Shiflett  
R. L. Earhart, Senior Planner and Secretary

ABSENT: T. Cole  
T. Fitzgerald, Director of Community Development

VIRGINIA: At the Regular Meeting of the Augusta County Planning Commission held on Tuesday, April 14, 2015, at 7:00 p.m. in the Board Room, Augusta County Government Center, Verona, Virginia.

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**DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM**

Mr. Shipplett stated as there were six (6) members present, there was a quorum.

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**MINUTES**

Mr. Leonard moved to approve the minutes of the called and regular meeting held on March 10, 2015.

Mr. Curd seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

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**Comprehensive Plan Update**

Mrs. Earhart stated since the time the recommendation was made to the Board of Supervisors to present the Comprehensive Plan at a public hearing, there have been several changes that need to be revisited and acted upon by the Planning Commission. She stated the joint work session with the Board of Supervisors to review all of the changes to the Plan is scheduled for June 22, 2015 and the joint public hearing is scheduled for July 22, 2015 at 7:00 p.m. The earliest the Planning Commission could make a recommendation to the Plan will be at the August 11, 2015 meeting.

Mrs. Earhart stated there have been some changes to the Transportation section of the Comp Plan. There is a new funding process and funding formula for federal and state transportation projects. It is called House Bill 2 (HB2). The General Assembly needs to determine a way to invest the limited tax dollars that would be available for projects that meet the most critical transportation needs in Virginia. The new process is not for projects such as bridge replacements, repaving, safety projects, and enhancement projects. There is a special allotment for these type of projects. The Department of Transportation will evaluate and rank projects for funding. Congestion mitigation in the Tidewater and Northern Virginia areas will be a priority. Economic Development will be one of the highest priority ranking criteria in rural areas. Accessibility, safety, environmental quality, land use and transportation coordination were all spelled out in the State legislation. These state changes will affect the Comprehensive Plan. In order for a project to be eligible for federal or state funding it has to be screened or evaluated and it must address a need that is identified in the Statewide Transportation Plan called VTrans. Funding eligibility requirements are for the project to be on a corridor of statewide significance, be part of a regional network, or be in an Urban Development Area (UDA). Several years ago the State had declared that any high growth locality needs to have a UDA in their Comp Plan. Later, the General Assembly decided it would be up to each locality if they wanted a UDA, but with the introduction of HB2, the State said they want the localities to have UDAs again. The Planning Commission will need to decide if they want to call our growth areas UDAs or if they want to say the County has Urban Service Areas which are designated growth areas in accordance with the State Code.

Mrs. Earhart discussed the differences between an Urban Service Area and an Urban Development Area. In Urban Service Areas water and sewer are available and are areas where the County expects to see 80% of residential growth and most of the business and industrial growth. Growth is expected to be compact, pedestrian oriented, interconnected with a network of streets, sidewalks and trails, a blending of uses, housing types, densities and costs. Future land uses in the Urban Service Areas are medium density residential, single-family attached residential, multi-family residential, planned residential, neighborhood and community mixed use, business and industrial. The Urban Service Areas meet the expectations of the State for traditional neighborhood developments.

By state definition, Urban Development Areas would be appropriate for a density of at least four single-family residences, six townhouses, or 12 apartments, condominium units, or cooperative units per acre and an authorized floor area ratio of at least 0.4 per acre for commercial development, any proportional combination thereof, or any other combination or arrangement that is adopted by the locality and meets the intent of the code. Urban development areas shall incorporate principles of traditional neighborhood design. Urban Development Areas must accommodate at least 10 years and not more than 20 years of growth. The County's USAs currently meet the definition of a UDA with the exception of the floor area ratio and growth potential. The Comp Plan doesn't include floor area ratios and the County's USAs accommodate more than 20 years' worth of our expected growth.

Mr. Foschini asked if that is land covered with buildings.

Mrs. Earhart stated covered with building and the auxiliary uses.

Mrs. Earhart stated most of the requirements in the Urban Development Areas are covered under the Urban Service Areas. The problem is that not all Urban Service Areas are created alike. Some of the Urban Service Areas are clearly meeting the code definition, such as Fishersville, Jolivue/Mint Spring and areas to the south, Rt. 250 west of Staunton, Stuarts Draft, Verona, and Weyers Cave area, which all have public water and sewer, and land designated for high density residential, mixed use and business. Areas that do not meet the definition are Northwood, Harriston, and the Augusta County portion of Wintergreen. The only parcel in the Dooms area that meets the definition would be the speedway for mixed use. There is potential for the part of Greenville south to the interchange and the part of Craigsville outside the Town Limits of Craigsville to be considered an Urban Development Area. Cities are not considered to be Urban Development Areas by definition. Staunton and Waynesboro will have to undergo a similar process to determine what areas they want designated as Urban Development Areas.

Mr. Shipplett stated Northwood and Harriston could not support business activity.

Mrs. Earhart stated that was correct. She stated the Commission can decide if they want to declare all of the Urban Service Areas as Urban Development Areas and see if the State will accept that or they can request Urban Development Area status for those Urban Service Areas that have land set aside for mixed use development. Another option would be to only claim status for those areas that clearly meet the UDA definition. Language will have to be added to the Transportation chapter that says either all of the Urban Service Areas or specific Urban Service Areas are to be considered as Urban Development Areas in accordance with the Code of Virginia §15.2 22-23.1. If the language is not added by October 1 2015, the State will not allow the County to qualify any projects for funding under the UDA criteria.

Mr. Foschini asked if the County would not be eligible for funding just in these areas or not eligible in the entire County.

Mrs. Earhart stated if the projects which are in an undesignated USA are not on roads that are corridors of statewide significant or part of a regional, they will not be eligible.

Mr. Shipplett asked how regional network is defined.

Mrs. Earhart stated the State has not defined that yet. Once she is able to show the Commission a map of the corridors of statewide significance and the regional network, it may help clarify which USAs should be designated UDAs.

Mr. Leonard asked what the neighboring counties are saying about Urban Development Areas.

Mrs. Earhart stated she was unsure. Rockingham County is different because the towns are incorporated in Rockingham County and serve as their growth areas. Staunton is

going to define some specific growth areas. Waynesboro may identify their entire city as a UDA.

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## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **Capital Improvement Plan**

Mrs. Earhart reviewed the changes to the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) that have taken place since the Commission last reviewed the CIP chapter of the Comprehensive Plan. She stated significant changes will be the construction of new Riverheads Elementary and Cassell Elementary schools and an addition being added to Wilson Middle School within the first five years of the CIP. Verona Elementary and Beverley Manor Elementary will be what the School Board refers to as “mothballed”. The schools will be closed, but Augusta County will retain the buildings.

Mr. Shipplett asked what the School Board intends to do with the empty schools.

Mrs. Earhart stated they may be used for other programming.

Mr. Shipplett stated in the event Augusta County Courts move to the Verona area, it would be feasible to use Verona Elementary School as office space.

Mrs. Earhart stated the School Board does not want to give up any options as to what the buildings can be used for.

Mrs. Earhart continued the review of the CIP addressing changes to the detention facility and Middle River Regional Jail.

Mrs. Earhart addressed the Courts section of the CIP. She stated a study is being conducted to determine if the Courts should remain at the current location or relocate to Verona. The Comprehensive Plan has been consistent that the Courts would eventually be moved to Verona.

Mr. Shipplett asked if Augusta County was still negotiating with Staunton City regarding the Courts remaining at the current location.

Mrs. Earhart stated that was correct. Because it is the county seat, it will take a referendum of county voters to have the courts moved. It is not a decision made solely by the Board of Supervisors. Assuming the study shows that it would be more feasible to move the courts to Verona, it will be on the November ballot.

Mr. Leonard asked if it had already been stated that moving the courts will be on the November ballot.

Mrs. Earhart stated the Judge has to approve it to be on the ballot based on the results of the study.

Mr. Bridge asked if it was on the November ballot and the voters approve it, will that mean the courthouse will automatically be moved.

Mrs. Earhart stated if the voters approve the referendum to move the county seat to Verona, it would allow the courthouse to be moved. The Board of Supervisors would still need to approve the money to build a courthouse in Verona.

Mrs. Earhart reviewed the Capital Budget with the Commission. She stated it is important for the Commission to understand what the difference is in what is in the Comprehensive Plan and what is in the Capital Budget document. The Capital Improvements Plan in the Comp Plan is the most visionary and unconstrained financially. The Comp Plan has identified over \$150 million in projects. The Capital Budget shows the projects the county agencies have requested totaling \$23.6 million for the next year, with a five year total over \$80 million. The County Administrator's Capital Budget is identifying \$14.5 million in projects. Currently there is a fund balance of \$1.6 million in the Capital Budget, as well as nearly \$2 million in new funds and \$1.2 in grants and other revenues going into the budget. A \$.02 tax increase is being recommended by the Board of Supervisors at the Public Hearing on April 15. If the tax increase is approved, half of the increase will go to the County for capital projects. In that portion of the budget, there is \$210,000 set aside for funding the courthouse study. If the County goes forward with the courthouse project, a design will be created, bids will be taken and the project will be bonded and become a debt service item. The debt service will have to go into the budget. It is positioning and putting money aside for the services but we will not get to the point of debt service in this budget year. If approved, the total CIP budget will be \$5.6 million.

Mrs. Earhart stated the State code requires the County to look at the Capital Budget as it relates to the Comprehensive Plan. Most of the money in the Capital Budget is going into the depreciation accounts. The County is trying to get money back into the capital accounts.

Mr. Leonard asked if the \$6 million requested in vehicle expenses included all county agencies.

Mrs. Earhart stated it does include all agencies and includes putting money back into the depreciation account.

Mrs. Earhart explained to the Commissioners that they need to make a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors regarding the Capital Budget and whether to recommend approval and confirm that it supports the Comprehensive Plan or to specify certain areas they would like the Board to consider.

Mr. Foschini stated Rockingham County and Harrisonburg City have a joint court system. He asked if the County has had any discussion with Staunton to determine if a combined system saves money in the long term.

Mrs. Earhart stated she was unsure, but she would have Mr. Coffield call Mr. Foschini regarding that question.

Mr. Foschini stated that \$38 million is a lot of money to move the courts. He asked if the County would consider combining with Waynesboro City as well as Staunton City.

Mrs. Earhart stated that is not currently a consideration that she knows of.

Mr. Leonard stated if the courts are moved, it will not affect the City of Staunton other than from an economic standpoint.

Mr. Shipplett stated there is no price tag on how much the economic downturn for Staunton would be.

Mrs. Earhart stated the economic impact from the move has been debated. The discussion has been if the courts are moved to Verona, other businesses such as law firms may follow.

Mr. Shipplett stated if the courts are moved it will be a boom for Verona but a costly venture for the county. He loves the architecture and history in the City of Staunton and he is sorry the Board and the city cannot work things out. While the move may be advantageous to Verona, it will also be a loss for the county and the city.

Mrs. Earhart stated one main concern of the current location of the courts is accessibility and safety concerns of the structure. If renovated, will these needs still be met? That is the purpose of the study.

Mr. Leonard asked if some of the concerns were grandfathered because of the age of the building.

Mrs. Earhart stated if the County is aware that the building is unsafe, are we willing to put people at risk? The study will determine if the building can be made safe and the voters will make their decisions based on the analysis.

Mr. Leonard asked how the public would be informed.

Mrs. Earhart stated the results of the study will be part of the public information effort in order for a referendum to be done.

Mr. Shipplett stated if the courts are moved, it will impact the taxes of the Augusta County citizens.

Mr. Leonard stated the public will see what is in the papers and the papers print what the Board of Supervisors say.

Mrs. Earhart stated there will need to be information shared with the public.

Mr. Bridge asked for confirmation if the majority vote is to move the county seat, the courts would be allowed to move.

Mrs. Earhart stated that was correct. The Board of Supervisors will have to vote to ultimately award a contract. The referendum has to pass first.

Mr. Bridge stated based on the information Mr. Coffield provided for the Capital Improvement Plan and the Capital Budget, he moved to recommend it be forwarded to the Board of Supervisors for approval.

Mrs. Shiflett seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

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Mrs. Earhart informed the Commissioners that floodplain changes to the Zoning Ordinance will be addressed at the May meeting because of the results of the Back Creek flood study and changes to the floodplain maps. The Commission will not view the Back Creek area unless the Commissioners request to do so.

Mr. Bridge stated he would like a viewing of the Back Creek area, since it impacts the area he represents.

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**STAFF REPORTS**

A. CODE OF VIRGINIA – SECTION 15.2-2310

Mrs. Earhart reviewed with the Commissioners the requests coming before the BZA.

**Jose Ortiz Cruz or Rebecca J. Kidd**

This property is shown on the Comprehensive Plan Planning Policy Area/Future Land Use Map as being in a Rural Conservation Area. Mrs. Shiflett moved to recommend to the BZA that the Planning Commission is concerned about allowing a business with so many trucks and trailers on the small site and the intensity of the use proposed in an area which is expected to see additional rural residential development. Mr. Foschini seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

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There being no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned.

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Chairman

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Secretary