

MINUTES FOR THE WEEKLY MEETING OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE ON MONDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2008 AT 3 PM IN THE COUNTY GOVERNMENT CENTER BOARD ROOM, BUILDING F.

PARTICIPANTS:

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Jack Fraley
James Nickols
Bill Porter
Mary Jones
Vaughn Poller
Rick Krapf
Julie Leverenz
Tom Tingle
Mark Wenger
George Billups
Chris Henderson

STAFF PRESENT:

Tammy Rosario, Planning
Jason Purse, Planning
Jennifer VanDyke, Planning
Allen Murphy, Development Mgmt.
Steve Yavorsky, Economic Development
Keith Taylor, Economic Development
Jose Ribeiro, Planning

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Jack Fraley called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Julie Leverenz motioned adoption of the November 3rd minutes, with a second from Mr. William Porter. In a unanimous voice vote, the minutes were approved.

II. PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Linda Fields of 117 Francis Jessup spoke on the cell tower proposal for Kingsmill. Ms. Jessup stated she first become familiar with the area as a result of being an educator and sharing with her students the historical significance of Williamsburg. Ms. Jessup stated that she was concerned that the student's perception in the historic value of the area may be skewed as a result of the proposed placement of the cell towers. The disruption of the site for the purpose of a cell tower would send the wrong message to students regarding the value that society places on those areas of historic value. Ms. Jessup stated that the integrity of the site is of the utmost importance.

Mr. William Halteman of 189 Randolph's Green spoke in regards to the cell tower proposal in Kingsmill. Mr. Halteman stated that the preservation of archeological and historically significant sites is of great importance. Mr. Halteman stated that in 2005 the same site proposed for the cell tower was deemed eligible for placement in the national registry for its historical significance; this site was labeled 44JC1140. Mr. Halteman stated that a total of 1,240 artifacts have been recovered from this site, including a brick foundation as of January 2006. The Virginia Department of Historic Resources has issued a letter of adverse affect to Verizon which halts any construction on the site until a treatment plan is in place to preserve and protect the site. Mr. Halteman stated that at this time the property owner, Busch Properties, is using the site to place trash.

Mr. Halteman stated the need for cell towers should be reevaluated. Page 91 and 93 in the 2003 Comprehensive Plan discusses formal guidelines and procedures of a revised archeological policy implemented in 1998 which involves consulting with representatives of the County Historical Commission. Mr. Halteman stated he wrote a letter to the Commission and later spoke with the staff representative to the Commission, Jason Purse, after not getting a response to the letter. Mr. Halteman later received an email from Jason Purse stating that the Commission does not have the resources available to be a consultant in this process at this time. Mr. Halteman stated that the Steering Committee should provide the resources to the County Historic Commission so they may further investigate.

Mr. Randy O'Neill of 109 Sheffield Road spoke on the importance of public health. Mr. O'Neill stated that he has seen the resources go into programs for public health without proper follow-up. Mr. O'Neill strongly suggests that the County rethink the allocation of resources to the most underserved segments of society. Mr. O'Neill stated that health disparity is the root cause of many social problems evident within the community. Mr. O'Neill stated that more funds need to be invested in those programs that work proactively to resolve social issues.

Mr. Chris Henderson stated that the members of the Steering Committee had received an email from Ms. Mary Minor that spoke to some of the issues on hand with Population Needs and Economic Development.

Mr. Henderson read the email of Ms. Minor to the audience. Ms. Minor is the Director of Child and Family Connections. Ms. Minor stated that the majority of children under the age of 6 are cared for outside of their homes. The majority of these children are placed in unregulated daycare. Due to cost, many parents place their children in the care of individuals working out of their own homes. The caretaker working out of his or her own home is required to obtain a business license but has no other oversight. The cost of an SUP for a residential-based childcare provider is \$1,000, a significant expense. Ms. Minor recommended reducing the cost of the SUP application exclusively for the owner and have the SUP expire at the transfer of title. By reducing the cost of the SUP more care providers would have an incentive to go through the SUP process and thus, become regulated by the state.

Mr. Fraley asked Mr. Allen Murphy to consider the proposal of Ms. Minor and the relativity of the issues as they pertain to the Planning Commission. Mr. Fraley asked Mr. Murphy to counsel Planning Commission members at the next meeting.

Mr. Fraley asked Mr. Jason Purse to speak on the Population Needs section.

IV. POPULATION NEEDS GOALS, STRATEGIES AND ACTION REVIEWS

Mr. Purse stated he had made the necessary changes to the Technical Report. Mr. Purse stated that he had posted the report with the changes last week.

Mr. Fraley proposed that the committee endorse a preliminary approval system. The committee would approve each section twice, first individually as the section was presented to the Steering Committee, and then again as a part of the draft Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Fraley asked if committee members and staff would support such a proposal. Ms. Mary Jones and Mr. Richard Krapf stated that they would support this measure. Ms. Tammy Rosario stated she would support this proposal.

Mr. Henderson began a discussion on the language used within the Population Needs Goals, Strategies and Action Reviews.

Mr. Henderson asked if there was a way to incorporate some of the needs brought to light by Ms. Minor into Population Needs Goals, Strategies and Action Reviews.

Mr. Purse stated that they did address the needs of safe and affordable daycare within the section and further additions could be made.

Mr. Fraley suggested that changes could be posted on the blog.

Mr. Tom Tingle suggested that broader changes than those made in the Comprehensive Plan will need to be made to address the problems Ms. Minor spoke to.

Mr. Fraley stated that the problem Ms. Minor spoke of may require changes be made through the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors rather than waiting until the end of the Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Porter stated that some of the issues Ms. Minor raises may best be placed in the Land Use section of the Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Murphy stated that changes made to the language within the Comprehensive Plan can be instrumental in guiding staff and the Board of Supervisors. Mr. Murphy stated that the Planning Commission had spoken before on some of the issues raised by Ms. Minor and found that implementing changes may have consequences citizens would not support. Mr. Murphy stated staff could discuss the matter and make suggestions.

Mr. Fraley asked for Mr. Purse to post these suggestions to the blog. Mr. Fraley asked Mr. Murphy to report back once staff has considered the issue.

Mr. George Billups spoke to the liability that the County may incur if changes were implemented regarding daycare. The necessary guidelines to govern these programs are in place on the State and Federal level.

Mr. Billups stated that he is not in support of the notion that approval to the goals, strategies, and actions would be granted through blogging.

Mr. Fraley clarified that approval is not granted until the committee has moved for approval.

Mr. Tingle moved for preliminary approval of Population Needs Section subject to minor changes already discussed.

Mr. Fraley requested that a hard copy of the amended version be brought to the next meeting for each committee member.

In a unanimous voice vote, the Population Needs Section received preliminary approval.

Mr. Fraley discussed the possibility of creating a subcommittee to review the wording of the given sections.

Mr. Tingle stated that spending a great deal of time on wording may be an ineffective use of time.

Mr. Krapf agreed that time spent on each word may be hyper-focusing at this juncture in the process.

Mr. Mark Wenger stated that time spent on the wording of the text is useful.

Ms. Leverenz agreed with Mr. Wenger.

Mr. Porter stated that time spent on wording is useful for staff. Staff may better anticipate the changes the committee wishes to see and, as a result make the process run more smoothly.

Mr. Nichols opposed the idea of a subcommittee.

Mr. Fraley withdrew the suggestion of a subcommittee.

Mr. Porter stated that the discussion taking place for each section is necessary for the transparency of the process.

Mr. Billups reminded the committee that staff may have chosen these words based on knowledge the committee is not fully aware of. Mr. Billups stated that the committee needs to remain cognizant of the importance of the chosen wording while considering revisions.

V. ECONOMIC CLIMATE

Mr. Jim Golden of the Greater Williamsburg Chamber and Tourism Alliance spoke on the importance of the three jurisdictions (York County, City of Williamsburg, and James City County) working together as they have a very integrated economic market.

Mr. Golden stated that the Alliance has created a Task Force to follow the progress of Comprehensive Plan discussions. This Task Force later commissioned a survey to learn about the views of its members concerning the future of James City County and the strategic direction that its Comprehensive Plan should establish. The respondents confirmed that the six issues identified by the Steering Committee: uniqueness of the area, business development, tourism, workforce development, transportation and master planning were all important to the membership. Participants were then asked to indicate how well the County was doing on each issue.

The Task Force gleaned from the survey results as well as from their own discussions several target areas for improvement: 1) The Comprehensive Plan is appropriately focused on the future, but it should consider the change in the economic base from which that future will evolve. 2) The current economic situation underscores the vulnerability of the James City County economy, as the economy is limited to a few sectors and a few large employers. Business development efforts should focus on diversification of the local economy, particularly by attracting and growing knowledge-based businesses that are environmentally friendly and clean with relatively low impact on natural resources. 3) The Comprehensive Plan process has given inadequate attention to tourism. 4) The County needs a balanced economic portfolio that preserves the uniqueness of our historic area and attracts and maintains complementary businesses. 5) The survey underscored the importance of workforce development. The County needs to increase the number and diversity of housing opportunities.

Mr. Fraley spoke of the joint effort in comprehensive planning with all three jurisdictions as a top priority. Mr. Fraley stated that a regional effort will take place during the next Comprehensive Plan in 2012.

Mr. Fraley invited Mr. Mark Rinaldi of the James City County Economic Development Authority to speak.

Mr. Rinaldi stated that the EDA's objectives are to speak in broad terms about those things that can make a significant difference to the business community's sense of James City County as a place to invest and offer selected comments on the draft technical report prepared by staff.

The Comprehensive Plan is a powerful marketing tool for promoting business in our community. The County should use it to invite those businesses we wish to attract and tell the real story of the County's business-friendly community. The County should move with the Comprehensive Plan to greater specificity, clarity and description to minimize interpretation so predictability is enhanced. The County should use physical or cultural features to establish boundaries between land uses, or in instances where that approach is not used, explain the basis for and details of the boundary determination.

Lack of consistency between Comprehensive Plan and zoning creates confusion and uncertainty, for both citizens and businesses. The County should reduce the list of Special Use Permit uses and strengthen performance standards that become clear expectations for uses in particular circumstances. The County should enhance long-term capital planning through greater certainty in land use. The County should reduce time required to get from project conception to completion by streamlining the development process for targeted business and industry.

The Comprehensive Plan revision is the County's opportunity to ensure that we have an adequate supply of land for both business and residential uses projected over the planning cycle and beyond. The County can look to Henrico County for an example of a well done demand and capacity analysis of what is needed and where can it be accommodated. Continuing concerns of residential over-development afford an opportunity to re-designate certain lands for future economic development uses now. We should recognize and define key redevelopment opportunities.

The County should make tough but important land use decisions now. The County should target prime development areas and identify important conservation areas now. The County should consider Enterprise Zone modifications that build on past successes and create future opportunities. The County should identify desirable location(s) for Research and Technology Zone(s) and create the framework for the nature and degree of incentives that will be offered therein. The County should deploy transfer of development rights to preserve identified conservation lands (sending zones) and redirect growth to targeted development areas (receiving zones).

Workforce housing is one of the most important components of economic development. In the current economic climate fewer members of the workforce needed to maintain James City County as a viable business location can afford to live in the County. Adequate workforce housing can significantly reduce commuting, congestion and automobile emissions that contribute to air quality problems. New Land Use categories for high density residential and mixed use are needed that would work to meet the needs of workforce housing.

EDA is also pursuing alternatives to the conversion of rural lands for suburban development.

Mr. Krapf stated he has concerns regarding the time devoted to Economic Climate and Land Use, specifically due to topics overlapping each other. One session to discuss Economic Climate may not be enough.

Ms. Rosario stated that staff highlighted those areas where goals, strategies, and actions may overlap. By highlighting those areas, staff will recognize that the topic may require being revisited.

Ms. Jones asked that staff keep a list of any recommendations for Zoning Ordinance modifications.

Ms. Rosario stated that in anticipation of the overlapping issues pertaining to Land Use, the first meeting for Land Use is scheduled in the first half of the Steering Committee meetings rather than waiting until the end of the process.

Mr. Krapf stated he noted a new meeting on Land Use for December 10th.

Ms. Jones stated that there may be a need for a new definition of Mixed Use.

Mr. Vaughn Poller asked if the EDA was interested in new industrial sites and/or Research and Technology Zones.

Mr. Rinaldi stated the EDA is interested in both. The EDA is looking at a number of different ways to incentivize significant economic development. The EDA has advanced some recommendations for vacant parcels as well as those parcels ideal for redevelopment.

Mr. Fraley stated that the County does have a Research and Technology zoning district.

Mr. Rinaldi stated he is interested in creating a Research and Technology Zone similar to the Enterprise Zone. With a Research and Technology Zone the County could provide incentives to draw desired businesses to the County. It is different than the Research and Technology zoning district.

Mr. Henderson stated he would like to highlight the significant number of individuals in the Lower Peninsula with a higher level of education and a higher skill set. The County has a significant stock of higher value homes that may best serve those individuals. Capitalizing on bringing the two together would serve the County well rather than providing higher density housing at a lower cost for workforce housing. Focusing on transportation for employees within the County may be of interest.

Mr. Rinaldi stated that serving both segments of society is important. Providing a wide range of housing is in the interest of the County.

Mr. Poller asked if the EDA is looking throughout the Hampton Roads region and determining the interplay of the County within the wider scope.

Mr. Rinaldi stated the EDA is looking at the County within the context of the region. Specifically, the EDA is interested in the business sector, land consumption and local tax revenue.

Mr. Tingle asked if the EDA would return to discuss particular parcels noted for economic development interest.

Mr. Rinaldi stated they would. The EDA has many suggestions to present to the committee.

Mr. Fraley stated that more meetings will be required to fully discuss the subject matter at hand.

Mr. Fraley stated that there has been an ongoing discussion on the Special Use Permit process. Mr. Fraley stated that there are two kinds of triggers for SUP's. A zoned area may require an SUP for specific uses. The Board of Supervisors recently revisited those uses that require SUP's within Limited Business and General Business zoned areas. Both are surrounded by residential areas and were not seen as ideal for changes due to the proximity. Other performance based conditions can also trigger an SUP regardless of the zoning district.

Mr. Murphy stated that after the Comprehensive Plan there would be a comprehensive zoning ordinance amendment process to incorporate changes.

Mr. Fraley stated that to initiate some of the changes recommended by the EDA would require political will. Mr. Fraley stated that the current Board of Supervisors could make changes without the directive from the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Fraley stated that he has an interest in having zoning designations that comply with the comprehensive land use designation.

Mr. Rinaldi stated that consistency zoning can be applied exclusively to those areas of economic development interest. Mr. Rinaldi stated that the EDA is most interested in those areas of interest for economic development. Mr. Rinaldi stated that the cost associated with the rezoning process has and will create a climate that turns the business community away. Mr. Rinaldi stated that the EDA would like to replace the SUP with performance standards. With consistency zoning the citizenry of the County would gain greater predictability.

Mr. Fraley stated that predictability is key. Mr. Fraley stated that the County should move to a model that suggests what is desired in various areas rather than what cannot be done.

Mr. Rinaldi stated that performance based zoning is preferable for this reason.

Ms. Jones stated that the committee has a responsibility to remain cognizant in how a proposed land use will impact an area.

Mr. Fraley stated that the Business Climate Taskforce was accepted not adopted by the Board of Supervisors.

Mr. Chuck Buell of the James City Citizen Coalition (J4C) presented to the committee. Mr. Buell presented the views of the J4C's on Economic Development within the County. Mr. Buell used the Virginia Tech study to speak on the opinions of the County citizenry as well as the information collected at the Community Conversations, Listening Stations, and other sources for community input. Mr. Buell stated that this survey brought to light the perception of how the County relies upon tourism and retail too heavily. The citizens of the County also stated that housing is of concern. Mr. Buell stated that the County does not fully use the resources available through the educated and skilled populations available within the local institutions as well as the abundant retiree population. Mr. Buell stated that there is a desire to slow down development. Mr. Buell stated that the implementation of the initiatives created from the Comprehensive Plan need to be measured and predictable within bounds.

Ms. Rosario stated that Mr. Buell's presentation will be made available on the website.

Mr. Fraley stated that the committee has endorsed the input from the J4C's. Mr. Fraley stated that the committee will periodically be reporting the progress being made thru public hearings to inform citizens.

Mr. Henderson asked for clarification regarding the diversification of the economic climate within the County.

Mr. Buell stated that the census of the J4C's as well as the citizen's response is that the County needs to further diversify the economy.

Mr. Fraley stated that Mr. Golden had highlighted the interest in preserving the tourist industry, yet diversity is needed.

Mr. Tingle stated that tourism does have a great influence in the local economy, and greater diversity is needed.

Mr. Henderson quoted Mr. Golden's report to highlight the interests of the Alliance to elevate the tourist industry.

Mr. Tingle stated that the County looks to the Alliance to direct the tourist industry.

Mr. Fraley asked how we could better coordinate the efforts of the Economic Development Department of the State with those of the County.

Mr. Rinaldi stated that there is a perception within the community that James City County is not business friendly.

Ms. Rosario stated that the committee may need to address the need of greater time being allotted to the subject by lengthening this meeting or adding an additional meeting in order for the committee to stay on schedule.

Mr. Jose Ribeiro spoke on the Technical Report prepared for the Economic Climate. The purpose of the report is to provide a snapshot of the economic climate within the County and possible directions for the County. Mr. Ribeiro stated that within the report labor is viewed as an economic resource and income as wealth generation.

Mr. Ribeiro stated that the information for the public input portion of the report was taken from the Virginia Tech Survey conducted in 2007 and other sources. This survey as well as the information gathered from community participation efforts reflect a concern in the rate of growth seen within the County. The economic development of the County is also seen as a topic of great importance. Citizens see a need for greater diversification of the business community. Many participants see a need for greater job opportunities. Mr. Ribeiro noted that James City County is one of the fastest growing communities within the Hampton Roads Region. Mr. Ribeiro noted the high percentage of the population that has attained a higher education degree. Mr. Ribeiro stated that this will impact the employment needs of the population as well as the economic development of the community.

Mr. Tingle asked Mr. Ribeiro to clarify some information on the percentage of the County's civilian labor force working within and out of the County.

Mr. Ribeiro stated that the County has one of the lowest unemployment rates in the area. Mr. Ribeiro reviewed the statistics reflecting the commuting patterns. Mr. Ribeiro stated that commuting patterns are important as a means to show an economic linkage within a region. Mr. Ribeiro highlighted the ten largest employers within the County.

Mr. Tingle asked for clarification on the information provided on the ten largest employers within the County.

Ms. Jones and Mr. Henderson also requested clarification on the data.

Mr. Ribeiro responded that the information was provided by the Office of Economic Development, and he would work with them to answer their questions.

Mr. Ribeiro provided data on the Per Capita Income in James City County. This data shows that James City County has a higher than average P.C.I. than other localities within the region and within the state, though the rate of this growth has slowed down.

Mr. Henderson asked if Mr. Ribeiro had an idea as to why this pattern has occurred.

Mr. Krapf postulated that a possibly for the slower rate of growth in income could be connected to the higher number of retirees within the County.

Mr. Ribeiro stated it may be due to the number of students in the area. Mr. Ribeiro stated he would return to this data and attempt to draw further conclusions to explain the trend.

Mr. Tingle asked for clarification on the P.C.I. data.

Mr. Ribeiro stated that household income data is drawn from income taxes filed with the state.

Mr. Fraley stated more time will be required for this topic.

Mr. Tingle stated that more information is needed to proceed.

Mr. Poller asked for more information on the workers commuting into the County for employment.

Mr. Krapf stated that the County may want to focus on retaining the educated workforce being generated from local educational institutions.

Ms. Leverenz stated that the Demographics section of the Comprehensive Plan has some data that may be useful to apply to the Economic Climate section. Ms. Leverenz stated that it is important to look at the entire business sector rather than focusing on the top ten employers.

Mr. Henderson stated that he would like to see further analysis provided on the number of jobs by employment sector. Mr. Henderson stated he would like to have information on the type of employees that are leaving the County for employment.

Ms. Jones stated there is an interest in finding an appropriate balance to the economic base.

Ms. Rosario stated that staff will look into providing greater information at a later date.

Mr. Tingle recommended everyone read the Business Climate Task Force report.

Mr. Fraley stated the data needs to be further interpreted. Mr. Fraley stated that the introduction to the report on globalization may need to be revisited as well as a portion of T-3-15.

Mr. Krapf stated he see the appropriateness of the language used in the report.

Mr. Henderson stated that it is in the interest of the County to maintain the high number of residents with a higher income.

Mr. Tingle stated that fiscal sustainability will need to be addressed in many different ways. Mr. Tingle discussed the global effects seen in the local economy.

Mr. Poller stated that the committee needs to keep in mind that the Comprehensive Plan must address the economy within James City County within the context of the global economy.

Mr. Fraley asked the committee if it would be useful to create a subcommittee to speak directly with the members of the Business Climate Task Force to hear their suggestions.

Ms. Rosario stated that staff would welcome the possibility of working with the Business Climate Task Force.

Mr. Tingle stated that through the work of the Business Climate Task Force it has become evident that it is imperative for the County to act now before build out.

Mr. Tingle stated that the Business Climate Task Force has evaluated and established five desirable attributes for those businesses wanted within the County. They are: quality jobs, community values, fiscal contribution, environmentally friendliness, and stability.

Ms. Rosario stated that the Environment Section will be discussed next week. It is to be determined if Economic Climate will be discussed during the next meeting.

Mr. Billups stated that he thought that it was significant that there were no perceived conflicts between the report issued by the J4C's and the EDA.

Mr. Billups stated it is in the interest of the committee to identify what type of jobs they want to create within the County.

Mr. Henderson stated that gaining access to capital is a significant driver for economic development.

VI. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Billups made a motion to adjourn, with a second from Mr. Tingle.

There being no objections, the meeting was adjourned at 6:17 p.m.

Jack Fraley, Chairman