



TOWN OF WARRENTON

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**MINUTES
PLANNING COMMISSION
TOWN OF WARRENTON
August 19, 2014
7:00 PM**

The regular meeting of the Town of Warrenton Planning Commission convened on Tuesday, August 19, 2014 at 7:00 PM in the Municipal Building.

The following members were present: Ms. Elizabeth Scullin, Chair, Dr. John Harre, Vice Chair, Mr. John Kip, Ms. Susan Helander, Ms. Brandie Schaeffer, Mr. Ali Zarabi, Mr. Lowell Nevill, Mr. Yakir Lubowsky, Town Council Ex-Officio member and Ms. Sarah Sitterle, Director of Planning and Community Development.

Approval of Minutes

Ms. Scullin recommended that the last paragraph on page 10 be removed. Mr. John Kip made a motion to approve minutes with the noted change and Ms. Susan Helander seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Worksession

Ms. Sitterle stated she had a couple draft chapters on housing and demographics. Ms. Sitterle stated the staff had not reviewed the housing chapter but she wanted to provide it to the Commission in case they had comments or suggestions. Staff did do a review of the demographics and found some updated estimates from the American Community Survey, the Weldon Cooper Center, and the Fauquier County Comprehensive Plan, Demographic Section that was recently updated in June.

Ms. Sitterle stated staff did not find anything too different from the Census figures that Town had in 2010. There were very similar trends towards a growing older population and estimated growth through 2040 is approximately two percent, which is between the 2.65 percent growth seen during the nineties and the 1.56 percent annual growth that we have seen which is more reflective of current changes.

Ms. Scullin stated she noticed that ages 65 to 69 were referred to as retirees and asked Ms. Sitterle if she thought they were retirees.

Ms. Sitterle stated not all of them would be in that category.

Ms. Scullin stated she thought most were not and she suggested just identifying people ages 65 to 69 and not label them as retirees. She suggested that it would be interesting demographically to see at what age people are retiring and identify retirees separately and that would help the Commission to focus on their needs, which are different from the needs of workers.

Ms. Helander suggested it would be good to also identify those that retired and stay retired and those that go back to work.

Dr. Harre stated that information would be difficult to ascertain because he was not sure where it would be available.

Ms. Scullin asked if the Social Security Administration or Census Bureau would have the information.

Mr. Nevill asked why labeling was necessary.

Ms. Scullin stated she thought retired people have different needs. If a person is working, then that person is still a commuter, whereas if people are retired they will want more in the community.

Ms. Scullin stated she thought it would be a good demographic to have but that if the information were not available it would be okay.

Mr. Nevill stated it could be part of the survey that was discussed last month and that the labels shown for age groups are standard for the census bureau and he did not feel labeling was necessary unless services were being address for certain populations.

Mr. Nevill asked Ms. Sitterle if the bold text was new material.

Ms. Sitterle indicated that the bold was material that had been carried over and the changes were underlined.

Mr. Nevill suggested the wording *recent and within the last decade* in the document is revised to state between 2000 and 2010 and the wording *recent trends* should be revised to state trends of the 2000's reflect. Need to keep it consistent and not use vague wording.

Mr. Zarabi stated he understood there is speculation for residential and population projections, high, low, medium, and based on acres of available land that is currently undeveloped. He asked what kind of model or stipulation was in play when looking at a potential 40% population growth within the next 25 years based on these 165 acres and what other factors were being included in the conversation that would yield a population of 4,000 people and asked where that was happening.

Ms. Sitterle stated she did not understand the question.

Mr. Zarabi stated that some models show that the population could potentially grow to 19,000 or 23,000 people. When the average is 1.5 percent growth, and between 13,000 to 14,000

additional people are expected, that would equate to about a 40% addition to the current population. He wondered where those individuals would be accommodated and asked if it would be on the 165 acres and if so, he indicated that those numbers did not match.

Ms. Sitterle stated that was something that would need to be revisited. However, taking the available land that is currently zoned for residential purposes and not taking into account anything else that may be rezoned or any overlay proposals, there are a limited number of people that could be accommodated depending on the residential density.

Mr. Zarabi asked if there was an assumption that additional land will be available to use for Warrenton Service District.

Ms. Sitterle stated the staff had not taken that assumption and only looked at what is available and residentially zoned at 3.2 persons per dwelling.

Ms. Scullin stated that would yield about 1,300 people at 165 acres.

Mr. Zarabi stated that is a distant reality that the planning body needs to accommodate and look at other factors such as roads, water, utilities, etc.

Ms. Scullin asked if the Town had enough water and sewer to accommodate that many people.

Mr. Nevill stated that was the biggest decision point the body has to consider given the current zoning, trend of growth and the estimates allowed without rezoning. He wondered when the Town would reach capacity for water and sewer.

Ms. Sitterle stated just with current zoning the capacity would be provided, and that is the reason for the demonstrations to show the capacities when rezoning applications are considered.

Mr. Nevill stated this had been addressed before by the Commission when addressing by-right developments to allow increased density. He wondered to what extent does that push the problem elsewhere and would it be putting a burden on infrastructure building. He thought that the Commission would need that number for development to show the number of taps and potential impact on capacity. Mr. Nevill indicated that was critical for the Commission to see the affect.

Ms. Scullin stated down zoning is not allowed and 413 total units is the base that would be allowable. If something higher than that is approved, a higher density for town houses or other type of unit, then the Town can use that base as to the reason it cannot be done. Nevertheless, the Commission would need a number to answer the question, of whether 413 units could be accommodated and where does the Town go from there. Perhaps a Comprehensive Plan Goal should be not to exceed the current water treatment threshold of 95%.

Mr. Nevill stated he thought that with no rezoning and complete build out the Town would be at that threshold.

Ms. Scullin stated there were more methods used for cleaning water efficiently and those

methods are being produced so we may be able to get more capacity but we cannot count on that.

Mr. Kip stated that still would not be beneficial as far as water.

Ms. Schaeffer stated some jurisdictions require recycling of grey water and use of rainwater for toilet water as a way to address needs and allow for greater capacity on the site. In Fairfax rain barrel capture used to help with those communities that are near capacity.

Mr. Nevill asked if they can offer that as a way to mitigate the impact on the infrastructure

Ms. Schaeffer stated yes to meet zoning requirements because they may be told they do not have water, cannot put in the pool, or the school could not be built because for every child they had to calculate how much water that was and then determine how to reuse and capture on site to meet that requirement.

Ms. Scullin stated that Weissberg at one time wanted to build behind County Chevrolet and they discussed green initiatives but it just would not work out for what they wanted to do on that site.

Mr. Nevill asked if the Commission would be able to work with an agreed upon number stated in the Comprehensive Plan that states this is the number in current zoning that keeps us at the threshold, below the threshold or above threshold without incorporating mitigating technology.

Ms. Scullin stated that having a number limits the timelessness of the Comprehensive Plan because technology changes.

Ms. Schaeffer stated she felt the Comprehensive Plan needed to stay more general and to make it more conversational. She thought it should address how the community is changing and what that means in the long run. She indicated that because we see growth, infrastructure options should be examined and things of that nature and not have the document represent a hard line with policies because it is a guide.

Mr. Nevill stated that to be consistent with Town attitude over the past few decades, they should try to minimize expensive build outs.

Ms. Scullin stated that single family detached is the most expensive housing option and they use more water. Large apartment buildings allow for saving grey water, geothermal heating, and many other things, but with single-family detached houses, it is very difficult to do.

Ms. Schaeffer stated there are a lot of technologies that are not being used on the east coast because water has always been readily available. She talked about growing up in West Texas where water is not readily available and the various initiatives that were done such as small flush toilets, watering yards based on last number of home addresses, and other techniques that have yet been implemented here on the east coast. She indicated that the cost of water in West Texas was so much more expensive than here. Until water bills starts reaching \$300 or more, no one will start taking a serious look at conserving.

Mr. Nevill stated that as a Commission, and as it appears to be reflected in Council notes, the

Town wants to stay under 90% capacity.

Ms. Scullin stated that the Comprehensive Plan does not address green initiatives but it should and perhaps this is the time and place to show the Town is about conservation initiatives and building green and give people advantages for doing that.

Mr. Nevill stated that it could be referenced in the utility capacity section to absorb growth in accordance to trends and not down zoning, but to look at maintaining current zoning while staying under the 90% capacity. He thought that the plan could encourage in vague language affordable and environmentally conservative practices in new structures and renovation of old structures.

Ms. Scullin stated that Fauquier County has Green Initiatives.

Mr. Nevill stated goals should be outlined in green initiatives but it should be referred to infrastructure.

Ms. Scullin spoke about mini houses and people living in smaller spaces. She noted that people are going back to 900 square foot houses, but people live in the community, which is different from past years. Work force housing is needed and she was not sure that the Zoning Ordinance allowed work force housing. Fairfax County does allow for workforce housing, but Prince William County does not. She was not sure if the Town wanted to encourage mini houses within the community or workforce houses.

Mr. Ali Zarabi asked if it would be a function of density bonuses and other advantages and get away in turn for an ADU increase of 2% as long as certain percentages are given up for moderate priced homes. He indicated he was not sure if density bonus was allowed by Virginia legislature.

Mr. Lubowsky stated increased density bonuses for affordable housing have been on the books for 20 years and during that period, developers in Fauquier County have not used it.

Ms. Schaeffer stated that the TDR ordinance does not exist and asked if it was possible to have a density bonus without a TDR ordinance.

Ms. Scullin stated that about 20 years ago, the Commission received a request for an apartment complex but funding was not available.

Mr. Ali Zarabi asked Ms Schaeffer if she meant that the County's MPD and density was tied into TDR.

Ms. Schaeffer stated yes so it could be distinguished elsewhere.

Mr. Zarabi stated that was a separate plan and bonus is built into the code and it is guaranteed.

Ms. Schaeffer stated she would look into that.

Ms. Helander stated she managed a community in Fairfax that had a large affordable housing

complex that the county themselves managed. The problem was that when the property was sold the county became responsible for the association expenses until they resold the property and as result, the county was spending thousands of dollars every month.

Ms. Scullin asked how it was managed at Vint Hill.

Ms. Helander stated it was the county.

Mr. Nevill mentioned the older homes in Town that have been turned into apartments maintain the character of the community but the problem is parking on older streets because of smaller driveways and the lack of capacity to accommodate three households of parking as opposed to one. However, it appears there should be a way to balance that and he asked about older neighborhoods having an HOA that states only a certain number of homes can have basement apartments or detached garage apartments.

Ms. Scullin stated there was an MPR report about small houses and it states that most ordinances prevent people from using garages or carriage houses as apartments but it should be encouraged because it allows for a mixture in the neighborhood.

Mr. Nevill stated that the Highland community is a great asset and indicated that it has been well established that the concentration of lower social economic groups is not advantageous for them or the community and it can end up with a ghetto and it is not good.

Mr. Nevill stated that Manassas was sued over their overcrowding ordinance because there were multiple families in single-family townhouses or single-family detached houses and that was going against planning as far as sewage and water usage etc., and as a result, they had to rescind that ordinance. However, the one that does stand is the one where only one non-family member can be subletting. There are other building codes issues that go into that such if it is used as a bedroom there has to be a window that is large enough for fire equipment and basement stairs cannot have deadbolts that make it separate. Residents that live on second floor on Main Street have to move their cars constantly, whereas people that live in Old Town Manassas qualify for a blue permit parking, which they have to pay for but it gives them right to park within a public parking lot. As a result, parking needs need to be addressed in the Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Nevill asked if the Commission had addressed turning older homes into apartments and whether that was allowed in certain areas.

Ms. Schaeffer stated she brought that up because she thought it would be an easy way to accommodate not just senior citizens who move in with their children but also children that return home after finishing college because of the economy. She indicated other areas have seen this happen already and communities have developed overlay districts and it allows those that are retired to offset their income and with it already happening, it would make sense to put something in place.

Ms. Schaeffer indicated that FEMA will not insure anything in flood zone.

Mr. Nevill asked if that was something that could be a sunset clause or allowable through a

special use permit.

Ms. Schaeffer stated she thought it should be placed in the Comprehensive Plan and that the ordinance or Special Use Permit requirements should be changed.

Ms. Scullin indicated there had been people living on Culpeper Street that had come forward with a request for a special exception to put an apartment in an out building.

Ms. Schaeffer indicated that Culpeper Street had enough land for two houses to face each other and allow for an overlay district.

Mr. Nevill stated this had been discussed before in terms of preserving the historic corridor and the expansion of the historic district. Currently, the way Culpeper Street is zoned all the one acre lots located there could be subdivided into four separate lots.

Ms. Schaeffer indicated that frontage would be an issue on Culpeper Street.

Ms. Scullin stated that at one time, it was discussed to have all lots on Culpeper Street to be one acre and most are.

Mr. Nevill stated that to preserve maintenance of older structures that add character and value to the town, and make them economically viable, income from a tenant is needed.

Ms. Scullin stated that Hunt's house used to be a boarding house with five different apartments and it still has five kitchens but today he would not be allowed to run a boarding house.

Mr. Nevill stated he thought an overlay district was the way to go because of the proximity to the historic area, parking availability, and nature of the area.

Mr. Zarabi recommended taking a people count because some neighborhoods are better equipped to handle cars, activities, etc. Projections tell a story based on those numbers where we have to decide whether a transfer of people to rural area will take place and make accommodations. He wondered if we should build from the ground up or look back.

Mr. Lubowsky stated the best practices are dictating a greater density and more mixed use with restaurants, open shops, etc., but he does not feel enthusiasm for this.

Ms. Scullin stated she felt Warrenton was too small for urbanization and when she thinks of urbanization, people are walking to restaurants and are close to everything similar to Adams Morgan in the District. However, we can treat Warrenton as a community but we do not have public transportation and if we had a taxi service, it would not be expensive to take.

Mr. Nevill stated that the Commission needed to consider overlay districts, and evaluate what our long-term strategic plan involves, such as keeping the County government in the center of Town, and look at work force housing within a reasonable walking distance of services.

Ms. Scullin stated she has learned that hospitals are building multifamily housing for workers at

reduced prices as workforce housing and workforce day care for workers that work in the day and in the evening. Whether we have the population to support all the ideas is debatable but we should identify what we would like to do for our vision for Warrenton. The vision today is different than it was 20 years ago.

Mr. Nevill stated that it sounded like there are several mutually supported visions

1. Maintaining a vital downtown
 - a. Repurpose and keep the properties as they are and prevent them from becoming decayed or misused.
 - b. Older buildings have the best possibility if it is deemed valuable that it stays vital and has options.
 - c. Historic Preservation has to be economically viable.
2. Workforce housing
3. Small Town Urbanization for increased walkability for services

The Commission should also look at the 90% infrastructure capacity.

Mr. Nevill stated that infill development appears to be all mini mansions and he asked how the Town could get away from that and encourage use of TDR and multifamily housing units. He thought there could be a push back for that and wondered how is that to be addressed especially if it gets over the 90% sewer capacity level. The average rate for an apartment in Northern Virginia is over a thousand dollars which is above the housing income levels. Warrenton is between Northern Virginia real estate property and piedmont wages.

Mr. Kip asked if that would provide tax relief and if exercises fall on deaf ears, he wondered what difference would it make. He noted that it appeared there were a good number of vacant parcels on Main Street because they are priced out of existence.

Mr. Nevill asked how did apartments in houses on Waterloo Street evolve and on Chestnut Street.

Mr. Zarabi stated that we needed to be mindful to have language that is specific and clear for our lawyer friends and that can be defended. Planning for the future must have a foundation that can be defended and is clear so we do not go through agonizing issues that we have dealt with in the past.

Ms. Schaeffer stated that on the demographic section she would like to have it focus on what is or is not needed and pare down information and asked if there were things in there that was not needed or could be put into a pie chart and state what the chart is reflecting. She recommended that it be (1) easier to read (2) friendly for residents to read and understand, (3) make it on-line accessible and (4) pare down the verbiage. We need to look at the Comprehensive Plan and determine what is or is not adding value and then focus on the key factors or findings. She stated that Comprehensive Plans have less and less weight each year in Virginia. She indicated that the city of Charlottesville Comprehensive Plan is only available online and individuals can print it accordingly. She recommended that the Commission focus on the facts, identify what our goals are, what are the trends, and the rest is in the ordinances.

Mr. Zarabi asked Ms. Sitterle if the Town had upgraded the website.

Ms. Sitterle stated she knew upgrade was coming but she did not know when.

Mr. Lubowsky stated that the upgrade of the website was a high priority for the new Council and goal is to make it more user friendly and more intuitive.

Ms. Schaeffer spoke about Fauquier County had encouraged Vint Hill to use new software called Mind Mixer, which is used by jurisdictions to engage citizens, but Fauquier County was not interested in making an investment at this time. However, Vint Hill decided to move forward using Mind Mixer and she encouraged the Commission members to go onto it and monitor it because it is a tool for local government that she thinks the Town may want to consider using in the future. She stated it would be available online by the 26th. She indicated that Front Royal was using it as a way to reach out to their citizens and Winchester is also using it. She stated it was a unique way to reach out to all citizens regardless of age and currently have apps that can be used on phone in order for citizens to have access.

Ms. Scullin asked how people access Mind Mixer.

Ms. Schaeffer stated it would have to be on the Town website. She indicated it is being used in large cities as a way for citizens to report road conditions such as large potholes, sidewalks etc. When people go on the site they have to identify themselves and their address, and at end of the week, local jurisdictions can run a report to show what has been reported by who and it allows interaction with residents.

Mr. Nevill asked how it was verified that the reporting person is a resident.

Ms. Schaeffer stated that the system does that automatically.

Ms. Schaeffer stated that the system cost per year is \$3,500 and it allows people to see trends, citizen's concerns and it prints out daily reports.

Mr. Nevill stated he did not think graphics and tables were needed. Maps and overlays and perhaps a couple shots of the Town annexation growth by decade with an aerial photograph will help tie it in. But the overlays when talking about build out have a zoning map overlay showing where they are located. If doing commercial versus residential without breaking it up so much. When talking about workforce housing and walk ability and have a way to get a sense of those things similar to what was envision for Napoleon's Restaurant 300 feet to a municipal parking lot. Need to get a sense of things like that, similar to Google maps that show schools, restaurants that and walk ability.

Ms. Schaeffer stated that walkability is used by realtors as a score for selling houses. She suggested a need to set walk score for Warrenton, put that in an overlay, and see what it looks like. We would set the walk score.

Ms. Schaeffer suggested taking out charts and focusing on new trends.

Ms. Scullin stated that supporting data could be an appendix on line.

Ms. Schaeffer stated that the Charlottesville Comprehensive Plan is available on line.

Mr. Nevill stated it is important to think how we do this, if we identify work force housing and what are some tools. He wondered if the Commission was asking Council to come up with incentives or goals, and what was the Commission asking for?

Ms. Scullin stated that after the Council works through the goals of the Comprehensive Plan then perhaps the Council will develop a common theme or vision that will help us implement what we want to do but we need to go through the whole document and then develop the design guidelines to support the goals and ordinances.

Ms. Scullin indicated there needed to be a way to measure our goals.

Mr. Lubowsky stated the plan is to protect us and that the Commission needed to make sure it is going in the right direction.

Ms. Scullin stated that the Council thought they were doing the right thing for Winchester Street but it turned out it was not.

Dr. Harre asked if the court ruling had changed and was that the reason. His impression was that the court is ruling more in favor of the individual.

Ms. Scullin stated she did not know but that courts have not enforced the Comprehensive Plan as much as the Council wanted it to and with by-right development the Comprehensive Plan does not play a part of that because he had a right to do what he wanted. Rezoning was not required and as result, the Comprehensive Plan did not play a part of it.

Mr. Nevill stated that when addressing goals that the Commission should include caveats stating do not want to expand growth or exceed the capacity infrastructure at the 90% threshold.

Ms. Scullin stated that the Commission needed to be mindful as to how the Comprehensive Plan will be used. If we did not learn anything from Winchester Street, she indicated that goals needed to be specific, smart, and measureable.

Ms. Scullin asked Sarah to look at other towns Comprehensive Plans and see how they do it and send the Commission links.

Ms. Scullin asked if there was a goal of protecting trees and encouraging the planting of trees, then specific policy needs to back that up and she wondered how that could be accomplished.

Ms. Schaeffer stated you go into that **subdivision DSM** and you start making those changes and come back in five years

Mr. Nevill stated that the Commission needed to have a measurement of performance and measurement of effectiveness.

He indicated that identifying the progress made and what was being done is the measurement of performance. Evaluating whether the right thing is being done and if it is working is a measurement of effectiveness.

Mr. Nevill indicated that if the plan is going to talk about the past they needed to know what worked, what failed, and what may work now.

Mr. Zarabi stated some communities use vague language that allows for latitude and room for interpretation that has worked. If we start attacking the Zoning Ordinance after 30 years of status quo, then the Planning Commission starts working around it. Things have changed, but he thinks implementing vague language and leaving room for interpretation has benefitted some but the Town is in different place now and people want language they can understand that does not contradict itself.

Mr. Nevill stated that GMU has good material on demographics and over reliance of government in the DC area. There are a lot of documents on that site and data that we could reference.

Ms. Scullin asked what else was happening next month.

Ms. Sitterle stated have SUP for an accessory dwelling and an overlay rezoning proposal that staff is still reviewing.

Meeting Adjourned 8:35 p.m.

Minutes Submitted by Dee Highnote