

Spotsylvania County Planning Commission

DRAFT

Holbert Building Board Room, 9104 Courthouse Road, Spotsylvania VA 22553

MINUTES: March 7, 2018

Call to Order: Mr. Newhouse called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Members Present:

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| Gregg Newhouse | Chancellor |
| Richard Thompson | Courtland |
| Michael Medina | Salem |
| Howard Smith | Livingston |
| Mary Lee Carter | Lee Hill |
| Jennifer Maddox | Berkeley |

Members Absent: C. Travis Bullock Battlefield

Staff Present:

Wanda Parrish, AICP, Director of Planning
Paulette Mann, Planning Commission Secretary
Patrick White, Planner III
Alexandra Spaulding, Senior Assistant County Attorney
Gail Crooks, Director of Social Services

Announcements: Ms. Parrish informed the Commission that staff had expected to have two public hearings scheduled for the next Commission meeting. She advised that the St. Patrick's public hearing will now be moved to the first meeting in April.

Ms. Parrish stated that Ms. Carter had inquired about where the county is on the growth rate. She advised that the county is currently at about 1.7% annual growth rate. She stated that once we receive the census data, this would be updated.

Ms. Carter inquired if the 2% growth rate is still the goal.

Ms. Parrish advised that the 2% growth rate was removed from the Comprehensive Plan during the last update.

Ms. Carter inquired about the 70/30 mix and what exactly that means.

Ms. Parrish explained that the mix is a goal of a 70% residential, and 30% non-residential tax base. Last year, we were at 81% residential, 19% non-residential. The land record book is updated in April each year and we will update these figures then. In 2010, the county was at 77/22 split which was the closest to the 70/30 goal. She informed the Commission that as we go through the Comprehensive Plan update, we will review this again.

Mr. Thompson asked for clarification about the 2% growth rate.

Ms. Parrish stated that the goal was removed during the last update, that there was a feeling that this no longer be a goal to aim for.

Review & Approval of minutes:

Motion and vote: Mr. Thompson made a motion, seconded by Ms. Carter to approve the revised minutes of February 21, 2018. The motion passed 6-0.

Unfinished Business: None

CPA17-0003 Spotsylvania County Planning Commission

Ms. Parrish reminded the Planning Commission that a public hearing was held on February 7, 2018 on the draft Comprehensive Plan amendments and the public hearing was closed. The Commission continued the vote to allow staff to review the proposed amendments to determine whether they address the types of concerns raised during public comment related to solar energy facilities. Staff has concluded that the amendments as proposed do address those concerns since the Comprehensive Plan is general in nature. The Comprehensive Plan provides policy direction and general guidance. Specific requirements are laid out in the County Code.

This amendment adds language to two elements of the Comprehensive Plan:

- Within Chapter 1, Introduction and Vision, to add a policy supportive of renewable energy generation, data centers, and high-tech industries, also
- Within Chapter 1, to add a policy supportive of agritourism, agribusiness, and renewable energy generation in agricultural and rural areas; and
- Within Chapter 2, Land Use, to add a policy applicable to all land uses noting renewable energy facilities should be designed to minimize impacts on neighboring properties, uses, and roadways.

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission recommend approval of CPA17-0003 to the Board of Supervisors.

Mr. Newhouse stated that he supports staff's recommendation. The special use process will give the Commission the opportunity to review each application.

Ms. Carter inquired if there is a maximum project limit?

Ms. Parrish stated that there is no cap size on the size of the application and is unsure whether that would be legal.

Ms. Spaulding stated that there is nothing that comes to mind that would allow a cap on size but could further research if necessary.

Motion and vote:

At a meeting of the Spotsylvania County Planning Commission held on March 7, 2018 on a motion by Mr. Newhouse, seconded by Mr. Smith and passed 6-0, the Planning Commission adopted the following resolution:

RESOLUTION NO. 2018-01

CPA17-0003 Comprehensive Plan Amendment

WHEREAS, on December 3, 2017, the Spotsylvania County Planning Commission authorized public hearings to consider amendments to the Comprehensive Plan of the County of Spotsylvania, Chapter 1, Introduction and Vision, to add a policy supportive of renewable energy generation, data centers, and high-tech industries; to add a policy supportive of agritourism, agribusiness, and renewable energy generation in agricultural and rural areas; and Chapter 2, Land Use, to add a policy applicable to all land uses supportive of renewable energy generation when designed to minimize impacts on neighboring properties, uses, and roadways; and

WHEREAS, staff has reviewed the subject amendments and recommends approval as stated in the executive summary dated February 7, 2018 and March 7, 2018; and

WHEREAS, the Spotsylvania County Planning Commission held a public hearing on February 7, 2018, duly advertised in a local newspaper for a period of two weeks, and interested citizens were given an opportunity to be heard; and

WHEREAS, the Spotsylvania County Planning Commission recommends approval of the amendments with a vote of 6-0; and

NOW THEREFORE, the Spotsylvania County Planning Commission certifies the attached Comprehensive Plan amendments and provides them to the Board of Supervisors for consideration at public hearing.

Discussion Items

Reconsider Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan – Social Services/VDH Building

Ms. Parrish reminded the Planning Commission that they reviewed the proposed addition of a new Social Services and Health Department building to the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) on February 7, 2018 and had a number of questions about the necessity to construct a new building. The Board of Supervisors is in the process of reviewing the CIP and FY2019 Budget and has also questioned whether the offices can be housed in existing County facilities or in vacant commercial or office space. Staff is requesting that the Planning Commission reconsider their

finding of February 7th based on a broader examination of how to provide the needed office space in a cost effective and efficient manner.

Mr. Newhouse stated that he is willing to find them as substantially in accord with the Comprehensive Plan, but not yet. He stated that he met with the Social Services staff and the space is needed. He advised the Commission that the bylaws require several committees and he would like to make appointments to the CIP committee before taking action. He asked Commission members to express interest and if there is no interest, he will make the necessary appointments.

Amendments to the Planning Commission Bylaws

Ms. Parrish advised that the draft amendments had not gone through legal review prior to going out in the packet. She stated that a lot of the changes are capitalization.

Ms. Spaulding stated that she has since reviewed the draft bylaws and that they are fine with the amendments. She stated that it's important to take speakers in order of the sign-up sheet.

There was also discussion about allowing speakers to state either their address or their voting district.

Ms. Parrish stated that staff will provide a clean copy once adopted by the Commission.

New Business:

Mr. Newhouse stated that he would be contacting members to complete the assignments as laid out in the bylaws.

Public Comment:

Dave Hammond: He stated that he is not opposed to solar energy but has some concerns about the proposal coming before the Commission in the future. He stated that the proposal is a massive project. The proposal will produce 500 MW of electrical power from 1.8 million solar panels. The project would be:

- One of the largest solar facilities in the world (tied for 12th)
- 5th largest in the US. All four of the larger US power plants are located in remote desert areas of California, Nevada, Arizona.
- Proposed project is surrounded by residential neighborhoods.
- Solar panels are placed on 6.350 acres, or 10 square miles. This is equal to the size of the City of Fredericksburg, VA, or almost half the size of Manhattan.
- Largest solar energy facility on the East Coast is just over 100 MW.
- Largest solar energy facility in Virginia is 100 MW (Southampton), started up in December 2017
- Unprecedented step-out in scale on East Coast, 5 x larger.

Judy & Richard Genaille, 12000 Fawn Lake Parkway: They both spoke on the water usage rates and how the scale of the development will increase the water usage.

- sPower states that they need 308 million gallons of water during 18 months of construction. This is a 10% increase in well water consumption in Spotsylvania. Peak loads could easily be 15-20% higher when accounting for weekends and other non-working days.
- sPower may propose trucking in water due to the large requirements during construction. A semi-sized tanker truck holds about 9000 gallons, and weights 80,000 lbs. Supplying 787,000 gallons every workday would require 87 maximum size tanker truckloads every workday for 18 months (over 34,000 loads). This would be in addition to the approximately 3850 tractor-trailer loads of solar panels, and the indeterminate number of concrete, heavy equipment, and other supply deliveries to the construction site during this same period. This will have a huge impact on traffic and our roads and bridges.
- In addition, sPower states that 8 million gallons per year is needed during operation. The water will be used for landscaping and panel washing on an annual basis. Peak loads during panel washing could be millions of gallons in a few days.
- The panels will have to be washed much more often than once per year, given the pollen, pine sap, bugs and birds that are so prevalent in Virginia. Monthly cleaning seems more realistic, resulting in water requirements being 10 times higher than sPower's estimate.

Extreme Water Extraction Threatens Aquifers, Wells, and Fawn Lake

- Excessive extraction of water from new large capacity wells could lower groundwater levels and irreversibly damage aquifer.
- There are 1000 + households that depend on well water in the immediate vicinity of the project. Many of these residents report problems with their wells during periods of drought. Further stress on the aquifer could exacerbate the problems, requiring the county to spend millions of dollars to supply drinking water to these residents.
- Fawn Lake depends on ground water from several springs plus water from Greenfield Creek. A reduction in groundwater levels could dry up these springs, which would reduce the lake level and make it unusable for recreation. This would be devastating to the Fawn Lake Community.
- The group recommends that an independent hydro-geologic/drilling study be performed to determine if the water extraction rates are feasible and sustainable.
- The group suggests that any limitations on well water extraction rates must be included in the SUP conditions.

Mr. Lester Gabriel, Stafford Virginia stated that he is working with his friends.

Due Diligence is needed to assess the impact of building a world scale solar power plant in this region

- There has not been time to study the environmental impacts due to the large solar projects in Virginia (50-100 MW) because have only recently been completed. Negative

environmental impacts from increasingly larger solar power plants in Virginia environs. Adjacent to residential neighborhoods, should be carefully evaluated before allowing even larger facilities to be constructed. Some impacts can be irreversible and devastating.

- The “solar heart island effect” could significantly impact the local climate. Local temperatures could increase by 5 to 7 degrees Fahrenheit and rainfall could be reduced by 20%. This is another risk that is scale dependent, and much more research is needed to understand and mitigate the risks in Virginia environs, near residential neighborhoods.
- Wherever possible, the County Ordinances should be revised to ensure that adverse consequences are avoided or mitigated. In addition, the SUP should provide specific constraints and requirements for this project to avoid harming the residents, wildlife, or the environment.
- sPower is trying to make the county the “guinea pigs” that will find out about the potentially serious impacts of building such a large scale solar energy power plant on the east coast. Due diligence is necessary to ensure that we can live with the consequences.

Michael O’bier, Chancellor Meadow Lane: He stated that this proposal is adjacent to where six school children get on the bus.

Sharon Brill, she stated that the short term benefits need to be weighed against the potential for long term degradation.

Lester Leamer, Spotsylvania: He stated that he lives right in the middle of this proposed development and that the land that they are proposing the development on does not perk. He also has concerns about runoff into the streams.

Mr. Newhouse stated that they appreciate the comments this evening.

Motion and vote: Mr. Thompsen made a motion, seconded by Ms. Carter to adjourn. The motion passed 7-0.

The meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Paulette Mann

Date