

**Northumberland County Planning Commission
December 19, 2024
Minutes**

The regular monthly meeting of the Northumberland County Planning Commission was held on December 19, 2024 at 7:00 p.m. in person at the Northumberland Courts Building and using Zoom (internet and telephonic meeting) with the following attendance:

Chris Cralle	Present	Roger McKinley	Present
Vivian Diggs	Present	Patrick O'Brien	Present
Allen Garland	Absent	Garfield Parker	Present
John Kost	Present	Heidi Wilkins-Corey	Present
Richard Haynie	Zoom	Charles Williams	Present

Others in attendance:

Stuart McKenzie, County Planner
Philip Marston, Zoning Administrator

RE: CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Parker at 7:00 pm. Mr. McKinley gave the invocation, as well as leading the commission in the Pledge of Allegiance.

RE: AGENDA

Mr. O'Brien a motion to accept the draft agenda as revised and Mr. Kost seconded the motion. All voted in favor of approving the revised agenda.

RE: MINUTES – November 21, 2024

Mrs. Wilkins-Corey made a motion to accept the November 21, 2024 meeting minutes, and Mr. O'Brien seconded the motion. All voted in favor of accepting the minutes.

RE: COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

There were no commissioner comments.

RE: STAFF MEMBERS' COMMENTS

Mr. McKenzie wanted to inform members that at the January Meeting, in addition to the election of officers, the commission will also need to form the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) subcommittee, which consists of the Chairman and two members from the Planning Commission. Mr. McKenzie noted that the preliminary CIP schedule states that the county administrator will review the CIP requests from the county Department Heads, and give to the Planning Commission in January and the CIP Subcommittee

RE: CITIZENS' COMMENTS

There were no citizen comments.

RE: PUBLIC HEARINGS

Chairman Parker asked Mr. McKenzie if he was ready to open the public hearing. Mr. McKenzie stated he had to get the sign in sheet to see who had signed up to speak. Mr. McKenzie displayed the public notice advertisement and read the notice, a request by James Robert Caudle, Jr., owner, for a Conditional Use Permit to allow a small retail business, furniture repair shop on property zoned A-1, Agricultural. The property is shown as Tax Map Parcel #9-A(1)-34, is one acre in size, and is located at 2829 Northumberland Highway. Mr. McKenzie also displayed a map of the site on the projection screen showing the tax parcel with the aerial photo to show the surrounding area in the village of Lottsburg.

Mr. O'Brien asked the Zoning Administrator, Mr. Marston, when the last time this property was used for Agriculture. Mr. Marston stated never, that it was previously used as a contractor's storage yard, which is a by-right use in the A-1, Agricultural zoning district. Mr. Kost asked Mr. Marston why not rezone the property to business. Mr. Marston replied that there are no other business zoned properties nearby, and that conditional use suited Mr. Caudle's needs better. Mr. Kost asked if the Board of Supervisors can rezone it after Mr. Caudle gets his conditional use permit? Mr. Marston stated that the Board cannot initiate a rezoning of a tax parcel, as only the owner can request a rezoning.

Mr. Williams asked Mr. Caudle to describe his proposed project. Mr. Caudle stated that he wanted to repair furniture and also sell retail items such as antiques and collectibles at the storefront in Lottsburg. Mr. Cralle asked Mr. Caudle if he is renting the building or does he own it? Mr. Caudle replied he bought the store and property and is the owner. Mrs. Wilkins-Corey asked Mr. Caudle about the semi-trailer that is placed behind the store. Mr. Caudle stated that he is planning on removing that trailer to free up some parking spaces, and that there will be a driveway all around the building so that customers do not have to back up into Route 360. Mr. McKinley asked Mr. Caudle if he is OK with the conditions that staff has recommended for the conditional use permit? Mr. McKenzie then displayed the proposed conditions on the projection screen so Mr. Caudle and the Commission members can read the proposed conditions that accompany the conditional use permit. Mr. Caudle stated he thought the conditions seemed reasonable to him. Chairman Parker stated that for the public and those online, the public hearing is now officially open at 7:11 pm. Mrs. Wilkins-Corey asked regarding the first proposed condition, if VDOT has imposed any type of requirement on your regarding the entrance to your business? Mr. Caudle stated no, not that he knows, but added that VDOT is going to put a turn lane in the center of the road. Mr. McKenzie stated that Rt. 360 in Callao and Lottsburg will be restriped with a center turn lane, and the speed limit reduced to 35 mph. Mr. McKenzie stated that he and Philip have not received any correspondence for or against this Conditional Use permit request. Mr. Caudle stated he went and talked to

his neighbors, telling them what he was planning on doing, and they all were fine with what he was planning.

Mr. O'Brien made a motion to recommend to the Board of Supervisors to approve the conditional use permit with the suggested conditions and Mr. Kost seconded the motion. The vote was as follows:

Chris Cralle	Aye	Roger McKinley	Aye
Vivian Diggs	Aye	Patrick O'Brien	Aye
Allen Garland	Absent	Garfield Parker	Aye
John Kost	Aye	Heidi Wilkins-Corey	Aye
Richard Haynie	n/a	Charles Williams	Aye

The motion passed unanimously. Mr. Parker closed the public hearing at 7:24 pm.

RE: WORK SESSION ITEMS

Chairman Parker asked Mr. McKenzie about his revisions to Chapter 4 of the County Comprehensive Plan. Mr. McKenzie stated that he would project Chapter 4 of on the projection screen for the members to see the changes and would explain as he went along. Mr. McKenzie he inserted the 2024 VDOT Traffic County Map and explained the "road diet" that VDOT is implementing in Callao and Lottsburg. Mr. McKenzie added that the VDOT Existing Conditions Map was redundant, basically showing the same information as the VDOT Functional Classification map, so the map was deleted. Mr. McKenzie stated that if the Commission has a problem with that he could leave it in, but the Commission was OK with that change. Regarding public transportation, Mr. McKenzie updated the Bay Transit section, as they provide scheduled pickups from residences, provided they reserve the ride 24 hours advance, and added their website address. There was some discussion by Commission members about whether Uber was established in Northumberland County. The consensus was that it has been tried by a few individuals, but that they have not continued, presumably due to the lack of demand. Mr. Cralle asked if the Bay Transit ride service was free, and Mr. McKenzie stated yes, adding that if you reserve a ride and do not take the ride, there are some penalties involved. Mr. McKenzie stated he added a section on the Natural Heritage Area in the Potomac Heritage Scenic Bicycle Trail, which is the official county bicycle trail. Mr. McKenzie noted in the public water access section, that he added the creation of the canoe/kayak launch at the Great Wicomico Fishing Pier, and that the county is working on establishing water access at Hampton Hall Landing in the future. Mr. McKenzie stated he also added updated weblinks for the existing water trails in Northumberland County, on the Northern Neck Chesapeake Bay Public Access Authority (NCBPAA), the state water trail website, as well as the Northumberland Association for Progressive Stewardship (NAPS) paddlers guide for the county.

Mr. McKenzie explained that this section talks about improvements to four existing water access facilities that were planned back in 2005. Mr. McKenzie explained the background of Coopers Landing proposed improvements and that VDOT basically stated there is not enough parking for the existing boat ramp, therefore, there will be no improvements to

Coopers Landing in the future, as State standards will not allow any expansion. Mr. McKenzie then discussed the proposed improvements to the dock at Rowes Landing, namely a floating canoe/kayak launch platform, and added that the permits had been completed and approved, but that funding had run out before construction. Mr. Kost noted that instead of saying funding ran out, to replace that sentence with funding is still needed, to which Mr. McKenzie agreed. Mr. Cralle asked about maintenance of a floating dock, and Mr. McKenzie stated all infrastructure needs periodic maintenance, and that the main thing regarding securing a floating dock is to make sure you have 8-10 foot of anchor pilings ABOVE mean high water, so that during a tropical depression or hurricane, the float dock can rise without overtopping the anchor pilings. Mr. McKenzie stated that originally the county had proposed a floating dock at the Great Wicomico Fishing Pier, but that VDOT did not like having a pier that close to the bridge pilings, so the county modified the plan so that there was no pier, only sand beach launching. Mr. McKenzie struck the section for the canoe/kayak launch at the Fishing Pier, as it has been constructed and noted elsewhere in the document. Finally, Mr. McKenzie revised the Hampton Hall Landing proposed improvements to note the overgrown vegetation on site and removed the canoe/kayak pier and platform, as currently the plan is to create a waterfront park and decide on what type of water access at a later time. To summarize, Mr. McKenzie noted that of the four water access improvement projects, one was completed (Great Wicomico Fishing Pier Canoe/Kayak Launch), one was removed (Coopers Landing) and two remain (Rowes Landing Canoe/Kayak floating launch platform and Hampton Hall Landing waterfront park). Mr. O'Brien asked if there had been any developments since the Planning Commission worked on Hampton Hall Landing? Mr. McKenzie stated the Board approved the funding to clear the access road, however, Mr. Tadlock is currently researching the funding source, as the county has a grant from the Department of Forestry, which if could be utilized would save county money currently held by the NNCBPAA. Mr. McKenzie stated that he went to a VDOT workshop and mentioned that he hoped that VDOT would design the entrance and build the access road. VDOT staff stated that they could help design the road, but that they would have to charge the county for their engineering services. Mr. McKenzie said he will have to contact VDOT to get additional details, but that it might be easier for the county to contract out the design and building of the access road, to avoid all of the red tape that accompanies contracting with VDOT. Mr. O'Brien asked if the county had a quote for designing the entrance. Mr. McKenzie stated we received two quotes from engineers for designing the entrance to Hampton Hall Landing and they were \$3-\$5,000.

Mr. McKenzie stated that he revised the Recreational Areas and Facilities map to include the new canoe/kayak launch at the Great Wicomico Fishing Pier in the legend. Mr. McKenzie reviewed basketball, courts, and baseball, stating there are no public basketball courts, and no tennis courts. There are baseball fields, but they are for the little league and high school, Mr. McKenzie mentioned the backstop at Shell Landing as a place one could play baseball or softball. Mr. Kost stated this section of Chapter 4 ends without any goal or action item. Mr. McKenzie stated that the past six months the Board has been in discussion with the School Board regarding replacing the playground at the elementary school, and it has been very contentious. Mr. McKenzie stated that he did not want to overcommit the county to building basketball and tennis courts, when the county budget is stretched as it is. Mr. O'Brien stated that now is not the right time to add this to the

Comprehensive Plan. Mr. O'Brien stated that in five years, the county may have more interest in funding recreational facilities, but that now is not the time.

Mr. McKenzie moved onto the Northumberland County Library section and he explained that he sent the relevant section to the Library staff for them to review and revise, and what is shown in this section is their response. The commission was fine with the updated library information.

Mr. McKenzie explained that the Northumberland Schools section that he sent this section to the School Superintendent, Dr. Wargo, and asked for revisions. Mr. McKenzie stated that he did modify some of the census population numbers in this section. Mr. McKenzie stated that there may be more revisions once Dr. Wargo returns the school section to Mr. McKenzie.

Mr. McKenzie stated that he revised the Schools and Other Public Building Map as the School Board moved from Lottsburg to Heathsville, and the Registrar moved from the County Administration Building to across from St. Stephens Church in Heathsville.

Mr. McKenzie stated that he modified the water supply reservoir section and added a paragraph stating that building freshwater drinking reservoirs and a countywide water system is not financially feasible at this time. Mr. McKenzie also noted that desalination technology is progressing, but even with that you still need a water purification plant and easements for a water pipeline distribution network, which is not financially feasible at his time. Mr. McKenzie also added a paragraph that states that the county has allowed private utility companies to provide water, and there is no historical precedent for the county government to deliver water to its citizens, so it would be up to future Board of Supervisors to decide to undertake that task. There was some discussion among commission members about groundwater levels, and Mr. McKenzie stated he would have to do some research to get a handle on the current status of groundwater in the Coastal Plain of Virginia. Mr. Parker stated that the groundwater level is still dropping. Mr. McKenzie stated that the groundwater levels are dropping but not as fast, but that he would need to talk to DEQ staff to be sure, and stated he would do that.

Chairman Parker asked when is the town seat of the county, Heathsville, going to get sewer? Mr. McKenzie stated that we are too spread out in this rural county. You cannot get enough people in a small enough area to make the payments on a sewage system loan, the critical mass of people that would pay for septic needs to be big enough to cover the loan payment, and currently that is not the case. Mr. McKenzie continued, then each year you would be dipping into county reserves to pay the sewer loan payment, and the county would continue to lose money. Chairman Parker stated we currently losing money on the Reedville Sewer System, correct? Mr. McKenzie stated that his last conversation with Mr. Tadlock about the sewer, he informed me that the only cost the county is paying now is the salaries of the Sanitation Department employees.

Mr. Kost stated that even if the groundwater levels are dropping, the paragraphs Mr. McKenzie added are still appropriate for the county. Chairman Parker stated there are still a lot of residents on shallow wells, and Northumberland County has the highest rates of cancer in Virginia, there must be a connection. Mr. O'Brien said age, we have an older

population and the older you are the more chance you have of developing cancer. Mr. McKinley asked if agricultural producers have to report their irrigation water, and Mr. McKenzie said yes, if they pump more than 300,000 gallons a day.

Mr. McKenzie then detailed the sewer section of plan, with updated information from the Sanitation District. Mr. McKenzie updated the Emergency Services section, because we now have paid rescue squads. Mr. McKenzie redid the Rescue Squad map, as one Rescue Squad in Reedville was disbanded, and the paid Northumberland Emergency Services rescue squad in Heathsville. Mr. McKenzie made the appropriate changes and revised the map for that section as well.

Mr. McKenzie then discussed the Health Services in the county, with updates to the elderly and disabled section as well. The Other Social Services section was consolidated and the website address added so citizens can research what services are offered.

Regarding the housing section, Mr. Kost stated that he thought we should add a sentence that the County is not in the public housing business, and Mr. McKenzie agreed to do that. Mrs. Wilkins-Corey stated she thought that the affordable housing section should be kept as is, since it an important issue in the county. Mr. McKenzie agreed.

RE: DISCUSSION ITEMS

There were no discussion items.

RE: BOARD OF SUPERVISORS REPORT

Mr. McKenzie stated there was a public hearing on using rifles greater than a 0.29 caliber to hunt deer from an elevated stand at least 8 feet off the ground. Mr. McKenzie stated that there was discussion about what constitutes loaded or unloaded. The Board made changes and will have to re-advertise for another public hearing later.

Mr. McKenzie also stated that the Evans, Jr request to build a boathouse public hearing was passed unanimously by the board.

RE: PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

RE: ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Kost made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Mr. O'Brien to adjourn the meeting at 8:42 pm. The adjournment vote was as follows:

Chris Cralle	Aye	Roger McKinley	Aye
Vivian Diggs	Aye	Patrick O'Brien	Aye
Allen Garland	Absent	Garfield Parker	Aye
John Kost	Aye	Heidi Wilkins-Corey	Aye

Richard Haynie

n/a

Charles Williams

Aye

The motion passed and the meeting was adjourned.