

Powhatan Comprehensive Plan Update

Summary of Joint Work Session
Powhatan Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission
December 4, 2008

Agenda

3:00pm

1. Review Plan Process Status
2. Presentation of Diagnosis and Assessment
3. Review Vision, Goals, and Objectives
4. Discuss Policy Questions
5. Next Steps

Attendance

Powhatan Board of Supervisors

Powhatan Planning Commission

County Administrator and Staff

Representatives from Citizen Work Groups

Clarion Consultants Greg Dale and Roger Waldon

Presentation of Diagnosis and Assessment

Greg Dale referred to a Diagnosis and Assessment of current conditions and plans, which sets the foundation for the new plan. Discussion today is to focus on the draft statement of Vision, Goals, and Objectives.

Discussion of Draft Vision Statement

Greg Dale introduced purposes and objectives of this joint meeting, and reviewed the schedule for completion of the new Comprehensive Plan.

A key and fundamental point in this initiative is to coordinate with other ongoing initiatives (Citizen Work Groups and Board-appointed Committees), to use the ideas generated in those groups, and to provide an overall framework for policy and implementation that incorporates those ideas.

Greg Dale described what issues belong in a Comprehensive Plan, and how this draft set of goals and objectives has been structured.

COMMENTS ON DRAFT VISION STATEMENT

- Adjust language here and elsewhere in the document describing commercial activity along Route 60 east of 288. Description here and elsewhere should refer to two locations for commercial activity: along Route 60, and along Route 711 east of 288.
- Question about why this refers to jobs “for local residents?” Don’t we want to encourage job creation in general, to help balance the tax base? It was noted that part of the reason for this language is the goal of not requiring people to leave the county for work. But adjustment in the draft language is appropriate to clarify that a main principle is that job creation is desirable.
- The second paragraph modifies the 1st paragraph, and helps to clarify intent.
- Start a new bullet at “These mixed use clusters . . . “

Discussion of Land Use

Comments on the Goal:

- Location of regional transportation facilities does not affect land use patterns. The influence of water and sewer availability is more significant than transportation. County decisions about utility services drive land use patterns more than anything. Strike the word “regional.”

Comments on Objectives:

- Discussion of the desirability of promoting a range of housing options.
- Interest in continuing to use the tool of conservation subdivisions. A good example is Appomattox Trace.
- Interest in getting more specific about which characteristics of conservation subdivisions are desirable, and which are not. Interest in being clearer about criteria for a village or a conservation subdivision, (e.g., availability of utilities, how far out in the county should these tools be available for use, be more specific about villages and what is meant). Is it possible to offset the impacts of higher densities with lower densities elsewhere? Discussion of a hamlet as a term and concept to consider using in the plan.
- Preservation of land in R-5 - - It is desirable to preserve land that is environmentally sensitive, that has agricultural value, visual appearance from the road, etc. Be specific in the plan about what it is that seeks to be accomplished with R-5 subdivisions.
- The Planning Commission recently drafted a refinement of existing R-5 strategies. The decision has been to defer consideration of that issue, to be reviewed with the Comprehensive Plan update.
- Add green practices and the conservation of energy and development. Possibly a 7th objective. Consensus to do that.

Comments in Response to Key Land Use Policy Questions:

- Base density of 1 unit per 5 acres: Revisit? Consensus to leave it as is.
- Planning Commission recommendations regarding R-5 subdivision regulations were suggested technical adjustments - - these adjustments are more of an ordinance issue than a comprehensive plan issue (e.g., type of land to be set aside - - suitable for recreation, etc.) Discussion followed about the current 75 lot provision. Current language says that going above 75 lots, a developer must provide recreational amenities. This provision is not specific, and difficult to implement. The Planning Commission came up with ordinance language to match the comprehensive plan intent.
- R-5 is a good balance of interests, at least in rural areas. It might be even better with some mixed use.
- There is need for more strategy options for the western part of county. Mandate cluster subdivisions? Mixed support for that.
- Consensus around the idea of better and more criteria about what is to be accomplished with R-5 subdivisions. A time component may be appropriate, or proximity to utilities, roads, etc. Another possible criterion might be demonstration of adequate public facilities.
- Questions were raised about workforce housing, and where it would/should be located.
- The Citizen Work Group on land use has a proposal, and a presentation of those key concepts was requested. Greg Dale offered a description, including discussion of the proposal to create a mechanism for Transfer of Development Rights, a wider corridor for Route 60 commercial activity (4,000 feet on each side), with residential density of 2 dwellings/acre in the corridor, and a substantial secondary receiving area further out to be a density of 1 unit per two acres - - and achieving a density of 1 unit per 10 acres with encouragement of TDR in reserve areas. Density should be able to transfer at a rate of 1 unit per 5 acres.
- It was noted that discussion of TDRs was to be on the 7pm agenda later the evening.
- Consensus: Yes to policy question #1 (R-5 is desirable, with technical adjustments).
- Discussion of a classic TDR problem - - perception that higher densities in receiving areas are appropriate, even without density transfers from sending areas. The objective is not to say that that one unit per two acres is appropriate without TDR's in those receiving areas. In those designated receiving areas, higher density is only appropriate with TDR's.
- A caution: Don't count on using TDR to accomplish the goals. It may work, but it is difficult to put in place. A system of transferring development rights involves

designating “sending” areas, those areas within which development entitlements would be reduced; and also designating “receiving areas,” those areas within which densities and development entitlements would be increased as a result of the transfer. In practice, it has been difficult for communities to identify areas where it is acceptable to increase allowable densities through a transfer.

- Policy question #3: There is need for discussion with the Route 60 working group about recommended nodes of development - - characteristics, location, etc. What should be done about existing strip commercial development that is not in locations called for in the plan?
- Route 522 and 60, at Flat Rock - - where arterial roads come into Route 60 - - that is an ideal place for nodes of development. The places where Route 60 crosses the previously winding east-west thoroughfare are likely candidates for development.
- Discussion followed of the relationship between Citizen Working Groups and this Comprehensive Plan. What is the ongoing intent? The intent is to use the ideas, and keep dialogues going. A White Paper from a Citizen Working Group may be 80% of what the consultant needs on a topic; but the CWG should be on-call for consultant inquiries.
- The Consultant needs to take CWG reports and put them into the Comprehensive Plan. The Consultant should identify conflicts or questions, and work with CWG’s to work those out.
- Clarification was offered that the Huguenot Trail Advisory Committee is equivalent to other CWG’s.
- Along the eastern edge of the county: Hold the line, or arrange for a transition from the higher densities in Chesterfield County? A key point of consensus is that land use patterns in Powhatan are should remain different from the more intensive land development patterns found across the county line in Chesterfield. There may be changes in density, but the transition should not be seamless. Rural areas near the Chesterfield line should be the same as rural areas elsewhere in Powhatan County.
- Is it possible to implement TDR’s for commercial development, along Rte 60, to compensate downzoned property owners? That may be easier than a residential transfer.
- The County Attorney has suggested using a mechanism such as tax incentive to accompany a downzone of commercial property coming out of the commercial strip.
- Should land use designations be adjusted around the new State Park? That might be a place for 5-acre-average-cluster zone - - where a high percentage of land has to be set aside. Need to protect the integrity of the area around the State Park. Make this a new item in this list, #7.

- There needs to be a strategy for what to do with land that is near Route 60 but may not be in newly designated commercial nodes - - Not appropriate as agricultural use or zoning. What should approach be? Some low-intensity office? Probably not residential. Maybe a hierarchy of commercial uses, or mixed uses.

Discussion of Economy

- It was suggested that language here not “over-shoot” or be unrealistic.
- The key concept - - attract visitors .
- This is not about jobs just for Powhatan citizens; this is about job creation in general to help achieve balance.
- How do we work toward these goals? How do we target economic sectors?
- There is a need to adjust regulations to get the quality we want. There is also need to take care to not make changes that would result in more development than is desired.
- Regulations will not attract people.
- The county is proud of quality of development that has been attracted. High quality.
- Other communities have been aggressive in recruiting employers, with initiatives such as building an industrial park, with infrastructure.
- Powhatan has the misfortune of not having money to fund infrastructure in advance of development.
- There is a nexus between the Comprehensive Plan, Economic Development, and the Planning Department.
- What is an Economic Development Plan? How long is the planning horizon?
- The Comprehensive Plan should address the question of how aggressive the county should be regarding recruitment of industry and employers.
- Insert a new item #1, “Create an Economic Development Plan.”
- A Comprehensive Plan should articulate principles and general guidance to inform an Economic Development Plan - - and also make links to land use and utilities, and articulate the strengths of the county to be built upon.
- Make #3 the new #1, and shift everything else down.

- Be clear about what asterisks and footnotes mean.
- 70/30 split. No math to back that up. Do we need/want a fiscal impact study to calibrate that number? That might be helpful. The amount of the tax base that is non-residential now is low.
- What about new development paying its own way? (#5). Consensus around the first sentence.
- Discussion of whether or not to take out 70/30 as a target for residential/non-residential tax base. Consensus to leave it in as a goal. The county is well below that target now; make it clear that the objective is to achieve better balance than the county has now, and that the county wants to move toward that goal, even though the exact # of the goal is not precise. What the county has now in terms of non-residential tax base is not good enough.

Discussion of Housing

- Key policy questions: #1 - - Consensus that more diverse housing is needed.
- Include the concept of villages as opportunities for higher densities, perhaps lower costs, maybe not now but in the future. Probably not in the Route 60 corridor patterns.

Discussion of Transportation

- This section of writing is in a holding pattern while the Transportation Citizen Work Group continues its discussions. The CWG is asking developers what they think a good Thoroughfare Plan would consist of. On December 15, the Consultant will meet with CWG and developers. The CWG is looking at projects on the 6-year plan, but anticipating cuts. Looking at grant opportunities.
- Work is being coordinated with the Huguenot Trail Advisory Committee. The Route 60 CWG has not started on transportation yet.
- Functional issues (such as transportation) and geographical issues (such as the character of a particular corridor) intersect, and both points of view need to be integrated. .
- The first three objectives come from the current Comprehensive Plan. The 4th one is suggested by the Consultant. Need to define the last one better. Consensus that it is a good idea to go into “green” issues.
- There is a concern about access management on Rte 60. This topic should be included in the plan. Current requirements contain strong rules governing access

management. Those should be continued, and possibly enhanced if there is opportunity to do so.

Discussion of Infrastructure and Community Facilities

- Objectives: Rural areas get rural services.
- The county should be looking at Level of Service standards (LOS), and benchmarking how the county is doing in achieving those standards.
- Key Policy questions. #1: Target and limit water and sewer to the three service areas currently in plans? Yes, with addition of a fourth (to the west) and introduction of a deferred growth strategy - - not all areas will be served right away.
- What about long term water supply and sewer capacity? The Plan should include discussion of this.
- The Plan should address school capacity and planned facilities.
- There are many detailed recommendations in the report of the Infrastructure Citizen Work Group - - Some of those do not need to appear in the Comprehensive Plan, but it should be clear about where those ideas go and who is responsible for follow-up.
- Discussion of what level of detail is appropriate for this plan (e.g., relation to CIP, etc.). Consensus to list those plans, and include language about how those fit into the County's decision-making structure. Describe how they are linked together, and relate to each other, and do not duplicate. These plans are operational mechanisms for pursuing the Comprehensive Plan's intent.
- Need to identify locations for new water and sewer infrastructure facilities (e.g., concentration of new residential development in western part of county). It might make sense to have the western area as a secondary receiving area. Put it on the plan with intent that extension of services to that area is well off in the future. Other opinion is that it is premature to show it on the plan, that it will encourage premature interest and development. One idea: Don't put it on the map, but describe it with words. Another idea: Hash-mark it as a 30-year time frame for those areas. The narrative is what is most important, what it says about pursuing Cobbs Creek Reservoir, etc. Decisions are still to be made: E.g., will the county be piping raw water or treated water? There are aspirations for multiple growth areas, and infrastructure to serve it. Consensus is to approach as follows: "These areas on the map are targeted for long term growth in the future, but not until _____
_____."

Discussion of Natural Resources and Open Space

- Objectives: re: #4 - - use the term here (re: conservation subdivisions) that was suggested to be used earlier.
- Consider a Purchase of Development Rights strategy, possibly.
- Include language: “such as PDR, etc,” in #6.
- Protect inland game and fishery lands, wildlife management land - - work into #2 or #3. Include reference to State Park.

Discussion of Historic Resources

- Objectives: Conserve, Monitor, adaptive re-use.
- Consensus: This topic is Important - - build this into the plan.
- Recommend adding historic preservation provisions to the zoning ordinance, with standards (e.g., conservation subdivision criteria).
- Recommend a mechanism to assure that new development is compatible with existing structures.
- The Huguenot Trail Advisory Committee will be presenting an important piece of work on this topic.
- The visibility of this issue needs to be raised

General Comments

- November 12 document is good: It takes the Citizen Work Group proposals, adds new ideas, and ties things together.
- Interesting to watch the process.
- Rewarding to see this work coming to this point.
- Very pleased with work to date.

Next Steps

- Modify the November 12 document, as suggested in this meeting, in “track changes” mode to facilitate review of the changes.
- Take that revised version to the Planning Commission and Board for comment.
- Aim for endorsement of these visions, goals, and objectives. This will come back in the form of a draft plan, and so can be changed; but it gives the ideas more standing than simply a suggestion. Consensus on that point. Planning Commission is ready to go.