



Clarke County Planning Commission

MINUTES – Comprehensive Plan Committee Meeting

Tuesday, October 31, 2023 – 1:30PM

Berryville/Clarke County Government Center – Main Meeting Room

ATTENDANCE:			
Randy Buckley (White Post)	✓	John Staelin (Millwood)	✓
Bob Glover (Millwood)	✓	Terri Catlett (Board of Supervisors)	✓
George L. Ohrstrom, II (Ex Officio)	X		

STAFF PRESENT: Brandon Stidham (Director of Planning), Jeremy Camp (Senior Planner/Zoning Administrator)

CALL TO ORDER: By Mr. Stidham at 1:30PM.

1. Approval of Agenda

Members approved the agenda by consensus as presented by Staff.

2. Approval of Minutes – October 6, 2023 Meeting

Members voted unanimously to approve the October 6, 2023 meeting minutes as presented by Staff.

Motion to approve the October 6, 2023 meeting minutes as presented by Staff:			
Buckley (moved)	AYE	Staelin	AYE
Glover	AYE	Catlett	AYE (seconded)

3. Old Business -- Continued Discussion, Rural Lands Plan Development – Millwood Village

Mr. Stidham stated that the discussion will be focused on the village of Millwood. He noted the 2004 report from “The Future of Millwood Study Committee” included in the packet and said it reflects many of the same issues that are still being addressed today.

Mr. Stidham said that he wanted to start with a discussion of the draft plan area map included in the packet and asked for comments from the members. He explained that this approach was created by using the Millwood residents’ entryway signs to plot a four-sided plan area that appears to include areas that most would agree are within the village. Commissioner Staelin said how you define what this plan area means is important, noting that it definitely captures the village’s transportation network. Mr. Stidham said it will be important in the village meeting to give the public enough background information before asking them to comment on the map. He said the map is intended to show properties within (in whole or in part) or adjacent to the plan area and would be subject to the Rural Lands Plan’s guidance. Commissioner Catlett said that she thinks the plan area looks a little big. Commissioner Glover suggested labeling the map as the plan area. Commissioner Catlett noted that Carter Hall is only partially in the plan area so

how does the guidance apply to that property. Commissioner Glover suggested having the line more along the road frontage.

Mr. Stidham said that as a rule of thumb, a plan area needs to be general unless it is based on specified boundaries such as the Berryville Area Plan and annexation area. He added that Millwood is an unincorporated community that has no boundaries and we are attempting to create boundaries for a study area. He said there will need to be language that says any properties within, in whole or in part, or adjacent to the plan area will be subject to the Plan's guidance. He added that the fact that the plan area is large is a benefit as it appears to include all potential adjoining properties that could have impacts on the village.

Commissioner Staelin noted that there is extensive language on the future of the Carter Hall property which he likes. He said calling the area depicted on the map as a study area or plan area is clear, adding that the people in that area want to know that we are considering what will happen next to them as we did with Carter Hall. Commissioner Glover asked if the boundary could follow property lines in some places and also asked for confirmation that the properties in light green are conservation easements. Mr. Stidham confirmed that those are eased properties. Mr. Camp noted to Commissioner Glover that the corners of the plan area are the Millwood signs. Vice Chair Buckley said that he thinks the plan area lines make sense but it is weird that there are so many areas within the boundary that he would not think would be part of Millwood. Commissioner Glover said this is why he suggested a road frontage approach and Vice Chair Buckley replied that there are so many different roads going in different directions. Commissioner Glover said that the fact that some properties are split may cause confusion with the property owners. Mr. Stidham said that it will need to be described as a general line rather than a hard boundary and Commissioner Glover suggested using a dashed line.

Commissioner Catlett said that in a recent Millwood Community Association communications committee meeting, it was noted that four speed tables are proposed to be installed for traffic calming. She also noted that the Association is planning to create a committee to design changes for the welcome signs, particularly to note to travelers that they are entering a different area. She said it would be interesting to see how the signs change or if they are going to be moved. Mr. Stidham noted that the 2004 study recommended installing signs that caution drivers to observe the posted speed limits.

Mr. Stidham noted that another thing you can do graphically with the plan area is to show the boundary as a cloud to emphasize that it is a general area. Commissioner Staelin said the dotted line approach makes sense too. He added that it would be better if you could adjust the lines to incorporate the boundary Rural Residential (RR)-zoned lots that are only partially included in the plan area but you would still be left essentially with a trapezoid-shaped area. Mr. Camp noted that a dashed line softens the boundary and makes it appear less concrete. Commissioner Glover said that people may complain that their assessments might be adversely impacted based on whether they are inside or outside of the plan area.

Mr. Stidham said that having larger properties included in the plan area is important so that the Plan's guidance can apply to those properties. He noted that Carter Hall is partially in the plan area and guidance is proposed to address it, but also noted that future development could occur

on the game preserve property that would adversely affect the village. There was a brief side conversation about how the County and State regulate game preserves and whether Staff has received any complaints about the Millwood game preserve.

Commissioner Catlett asked if Powhatan School is included in the plan area and Mr. Stidham noted the location of those lots on the map. Commissioner Staelin asked if there would be value in having guidance to address future development of Powhatan School. Mr. Stidham replied that it is a good question because the larger the school grows, the more traffic will increase on Route 723. He said the part of the property adjoining the plan area is their athletic field and he added that he did not think they would expand onto their only athletic field. He said we definitely could include recommendations to address future development at the school. Vice Chair Buckley suggested verifying that the Crocker Conservancy is correctly shown on the map because it is in conservation easement.

Mr. Stidham said that Staff will make adjustments to this map based on today's discussion and will bring it back for the Committee's review before finalizing for use in public meetings. Commissioner Staelin recommended for each member to drive the roads in the village to get familiar with the properties. Mr. Stidham drew the members' attention to the map showing the Neighborhood Commercial (CN)-zoned properties, the Historic (H) Overlay District, and the boundaries of the Commercial Historic District on the National Register. There was a brief side conversation about the Lee property located off of Tannery Lane and how it was originally zoned CN.

Mr. Stidham provided an overview of the draft Goals and Strategies document, noting that it can be used in a number of different ways. He said that it can be presented at public input meetings to get reactions from participants or we can scale the document back so as not to give the appearance that we are asking the public to approve it. He said for this group's work, it is important to get as much on paper at this stage for discussion. He added that a comment was made at the last meeting to have original guidance language and not simply repeat guidance that is already in the Comprehensive Plan or other component plans. Commissioner Staelin said that in the interest of full disclosure, he owns properties in Millwood including the post office property.

Mr. Stidham reviewed each of the draft Goals and Strategies and provided background information for each one. Regarding Goal 1 Strategy 1, Mr. Stidham noted that a new zoning district tailored to Millwood could be developed that, among other things, could include residential design requirements to ensure new homes are compatible with the village. Commissioner Glover asked if we had this anywhere else in the County. Mr. Stidham replied no but that prior staff attempted to use uniform size and setback requirements in the RR District to achieve a similar result. Mr. Camp added that the concept is similar to the Historic Access Corridor Overlay District. Mr. Stidham noted that regulating house size could be a problem and also noted that residents indicated in the 2004 report that they did not want the Historic Overlay District to restrict what could be done with residential properties. He said this could be a question to pose at the public meetings for input.

Commissioner Staelin asked about the concept of allowing residential properties to be used flexibly for some commercial uses, specifically asking about what commercial uses would be of an appropriate scale. Mr. Stidham replied that professional office is one example. He noted that someone may be interested in renovating a house but does not want to live in it and could rent it out as a low-impact business office. Vice Chair Buckley asked how this would have affected the former Black Penny building if the rule was previously in place. Mr. Stidham replied that it would have allowed that structure to be used as a residence or a business. He added that we would want this concept presented to the public for input and we would need to make it clear that this would be added to the Rural Lands Plan guidance with a separate text amendment process later. He noted that our home occupation regulations are pretty lenient so this approach may not be necessary. He also noted that the 2004 report stated concerns with redevelopment of RR-zoned lots and a desire to have a minimum lot size of ½ acre. He said that text amendments after 2004 established the current minimum lot size with utilities at 30,000 square feet. Commissioner Staelin said that these are good points to bring to the community for comment. Mr. Stidham replied that even if they say they want things to stay the same, this is valuable input for the Plan.

Mr. Stidham reviewed Goal 1 Strategy 2. Commissioner Staelin asked what the definition of “village core” is. Mr. Stidham replied that it is the properties zoned RR and CN and that this will be defined in the text. Regarding special uses having to mitigate impacts on existing uses, Commissioner Staelin asked for confirmation that this includes on AOC properties as well. Mr. Stidham replied yes and that this includes all properties in whole or in part in the plan area. Commissioner Glover suggested referring to “nearby properties” and not “nearby village properties.”

Regarding Goal 1 Strategy 2, Commissioner Glover asked if there are properties in the village that are on private wells that could be impacted by development on the Carter Hall property. Mr. Stidham said that he thought there might be some properties still using wells and noted that he would add this into the text. He noted that the water line goes through the entire village but the sewer service district stops at the church on the hill. Commissioner Staelin noted that the sewer was limited this way to avoid serving larger properties to the north that could be further subdivided. He also said that the grant program was to benefit low-to-moderate income homeowners so the sewer was limited to the smaller properties in the village. Commissioner Catlett asked when the sewer was installed and Commissioner Staelin said around 2003.

Mr. Camp noted that Goal 1 Strategy 3 did not specifically reference noise and light impacts. Mr. Stidham replied that this is included in “significant degradation of natural resources,” noting that the Comprehensive Plan defines all of the elements that are considered to be natural resources. Commissioner Staelin noted that Goal 2 Strategy 4 addresses avoiding light pollution. Mr. Stidham asked if there needed to be specific language to address the office building. Commissioner Staelin said that we should be careful not to imply that the nonconforming use of the building is not allowed. Mr. Stidham asked about the proposed future use of the office building. He said that we probably should not say that there are no compatible uses for that building because there may be one that we are not contemplating, such as a low-volume day school. Mr. Camp suggested adding language to the narrative to describe the office building and preferred uses. Commissioner Staelin suggested modifying “Proposals for other uses” to “Proposals for other future uses.” Commissioner Glover suggested language to make it clear

how close Carter Hall is to neighboring properties and uses. Mr. Stidham noted that this is a matter of perspective for future owners that may come from urban areas and think that the neighboring properties are a long distance away from Carter Hall. Commissioner Catlett suggested referencing “agricultural neighbors.” Mr. Camp said that “natural resources” is not always perceived as including light and sound. Commissioner Glover suggested adding “and nearby properties” after “natural resources” in the next to last sentence. Mr. Stidham noted that it would be a good idea in this case to have the text description of Carter Hall and the recent zoning case for the public to discuss and comment on.

Vice Chair Buckley suggested using the language “quality of life” in addition to natural resources to describe the impacts to be mitigated. Members and staff agreed that this is good language to add. Mr. Stidham asked whether “quality of life” should be added to Goal 1. Commissioner Staelin cautioned that you could be implying to focus on quality of life but not so much on some other aspect. Mr. Stidham noted that one could argue that the proponents of the Carter Hall special use application who would have benefited by having jobs there would have their quality of life improved with the application’s approval. Commissioner Catlett noted that there is also the question of the economic viability of the village.

Mr. Stidham asked whether prohibiting public sewer to Carter Hall is the best guidance since it would benefit the environment by replacing the drainfields. Commissioner Staelin said yes since you can develop the property more intensively with sewer. Mr. Stidham proposed the example of a compatible private school use that planned to put a portion of the property in conservation easement but also required public sewer as a situation in which we may want to allow a sewer connection. Commissioner Staelin said that the office building should be described as a nonconforming use that should not be expanded. Mr. Stidham noted that someone could apply for a special use permit to operate a retail store in the office building.

Regarding Goal 1 Strategy 4, Commissioner Glover suggested referencing that the water and sewer systems have limited capacity. Mr. Stidham replied that he would add “village’s limited” before “public water and sewer system.” Commissioner Staelin said this relates back to the office building issue and limited development capability.

Regarding Goal 1 Strategy 5, Commissioner Staelin asked for confirmation that this strategy does not include Carter Hall and Mr. Stidham replied that this is correct. Mr. Stidham asked what the members thought should be considered the commercial historic district, suggesting that the CN-zoned properties would be the most logical ones to use. Commissioner Staelin said there is limited demand for commercial property in Millwood and if you wanted to allow more commercial uses, they would have to be located contiguous to the commercial district. Mr. Camp asked how the Red Schoolhouse would be treated and Mr. Stidham replied that we are just focusing on uses in the commercial district. Mr. Stidham added that the question is what properties do we want to consider to be in the commercial district, and he reiterated that the CN-zoned properties might be the best ones to use. Commissioner Glover asked if Millwood is going to be served through the All Points fiber broadband project. Mr. Stidham said he could not remember because Millwood is currently served by Comcast. He said it is possible that they could be served if Comcast service is not currently provided at Federal broadband minimum speeds. Commissioner Glover said that if fiber broadband is available, it might make business

development in Millwood more viable. Mr. Camp suggested that the real question is whether we want to expand commercial zoning beyond the current CN-zoned properties.

Mr. Stidham reviewed Goal 2 and its proposed strategies. Regarding Strategy 2, Commissioner Glover asked about the second mill in Millwood. Mr. Stidham noted the location of the Lower Mill on the draft plan area map. Commissioner Glover suggested adding language to note that we encourage conservation easements. Commissioner Staelin said easements could only be taken on Agricultural-Open Space-Conservation (AOC)-zoned properties but it would be good to note that we do not have an issue with conservation easements adjacent to the Millwood's commercial or residential zoned properties. Mr. Stidham said he would add a new strategy under Goal 2 to encourage conservation easements on AOC-zoned properties.

Regarding Goal 2 Strategy 3, Mr. Stidham asked if the members were comfortable with including the Lower Mill. Commissioner Glover noted that the Lower Mill is privately owned and Mr. Stidham added that it has not been open to the public. Commissioner Staelin said it is not something we want to see turned into a commercial use and Vice Chair Buckley added that it should be protected. Mr. Camp said the owner has wanted to hold events there in the past. Mr. Stidham suggested changing the language to, "Protect and preserve the historic mills." He said this would note that we want them protected for historical purposes and not repurposed for commercial uses. Commissioner Staelin said we encourage adaptive reuse in another strategy. Mr. Stidham said that "protect and preserve" would prevent converting the Burwell-Morgan Mill to a different use. Vice Chair Buckley said that the topography at the Lower Mill makes entry and parking difficult. Commissioner Staelin said that the Lower Mill is no longer a functioning mill and the internal workings are gone. Mr. Stidham suggested removing the strategy. Commissioner Glover said that we should keep the language because we recommend the future use of Carter Hall in a different strategy. Commissioner Staelin said we did not come to a consensus on whether to address the office building at Carter Hall specifically. Commissioner Glover suggested merging the mills into a different strategy. Mr. Stidham said that he would only reference the Burwell-Morgan Mill in Strategy 3. Commissioner Catlett said the Lower Mill is still a unique structure that should be protected.

Regarding Goal 2 Strategy 4, Commissioner Glover suggested referencing dark sky compliant lighting. Mr. Stidham noted that "light pollution" also encompasses light generation that would not be addressed by dark sky regulations such as the glare that would have been generated from the proposed glass conservatory building on the Carter Hall property. Commissioner Glover asked if "avoid" should be replaced with "prohibit." Mr. Stidham added that you are actually trying to prevent unnecessary light pollution such as the glass conservatory building or the use of spotlights to highlight a building rather than for safety purposes.

Regarding Goal 2 Strategy 5, Commissioner Staelin asked about whether this could help us with the historic mill strategy and Mr. Camp asked if buildings outside the Historic Overlay District should be included. Mr. Stidham suggested striking Strategy 3 and adding the sentence at the beginning of Strategy 5, "Protect and preserve historic structures within the plan study area." Members agreed with this change.

Mr. Stidham reviewed Goal 3 and noted the questions about who should be responsible for exploring and developing new parking options. Commissioner Staelin noted that the Board would probably not be interested in committing public funds. Commissioner Catlett said that the County does not want to be responsible for maintaining the lot and it may set a precedent for White Post or Pine Grove to ask for a County parking lot. Mr. Camp said we can modify our zoning regulations to facilitate approval of off-street parking.

4. New Business

Members agreed to tentatively schedule the next meeting for Thursday, December 14 at 2:00PM pending Commissioner Glover confirming his availability.

ADJOURN: Meeting was adjourned by consensus at 2:53PM.



Brandon Stidham, Clerk