



Clarke County Planning Commission

MINUTES – Comprehensive Plan Committee Meeting

Thursday, February 17, 2022 – 10:30AM

Berryville/Clarke County Government Center – Main Meeting Room

ATTENDANCE:			
Matthew Bass (Board of Supervisors)	✓E	Bob Glover (Millwood)	✓
Anne Caldwell (Millwood)	✓	Randy Buckley (White Post)	✓
George L. Ohrstrom, II (Ex Officio)	✓E		

E – Denotes Electronic Participation

NOTE – Chair Ohrstrom participated electronically due to health issues related to the current pandemic. Commissioner Bass participated electronically for personal reasons.

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

CALL TO ORDER: By Mr. Stidham at 10:32AM.

1. Approval of Agenda

Members approved the agenda by consensus as presented by Staff.

2. Approval of Minutes – January 25, 2022 Meeting

Members voted unanimously to approve the January 25, 2022 meeting minutes as presented by Staff.

Motion to approve January 25, 2022 meeting minutes as presented by Staff:			
Bass	AYE	Glover	Absent
Caldwell	AYE (seconded)	Buckley	AYE (moved)

3. Comprehensive Plan Update

Discussion, Foreword and Introduction (Initial Draft)

Mr. Stidham led the Committee through a review of the initial draft of the revised Comprehensive Plan's Foreword and Introduction sections.

On Page 9 of 37, Chair Ohrstrom noted in the third paragraph, last sentence, that the word “general” seems to be odd and Commissioner Bass added that it is redundant. Mr. Stidham asked the Committee whether they would be more comfortable keeping the word “general” or the word “guiding.” Members agreed to keep “guiding” and delete “general.”

On the same page, Commissioner Caldwell said that she loves the quote at the top of the page and Chair Ohrstrom agreed. She also suggested adding a bullet regarding the mountain lands to the bulleted list as it is another unique part of the County. Chair Ohrstrom said you could add it to the third bullet by referencing the mountain areas in a new sentence listing examples of unique

resources. Commissioner Bass suggested referencing the Shenandoah River as well. Chair Ohrstrom also noted that this list does not reference allowing some growth in the rural areas consistent with sliding-scale zoning. Mr. Stidham replied that since we have sliding-scale zoning in place, is it really considered to be “growth” if build out is limited to the finite number of dwelling unit rights (DURs) available in the rural areas. Chair Ohrstrom replied that it is considered growth because it allows for more people to move into the County. Mr. Stidham said that his point is that growth is already managed by sliding-scale zoning. Chair Ohrstrom replied that this is true but that readers of the Comprehensive Plan may not know about sliding-scale zoning or how it works. Mr. Stidham said that he will try to add a second sentence to the first bullet point to reference rural growth consistent with sliding-scale zoning.

Commissioner Caldwell suggesting creating a new bullet for the mountain areas and river to be included after the second bullet. Vice-Chair Buckley asked if this change would require striking “natural” in the third bullet. Commissioner Glover agreed and suggested wording that references topography. Mr. Stidham replied that you would not need to strike “natural” because the third bullet references these unique resources county-wide. Commissioner Glover said that if you have a bullet for the mountain areas and river, you also need a bullet about the valley and karst areas to make sure every area is highlighted.

Mr. Stidham stated that looking at the Comprehensive Plan from a 30,000 foot level, the document contains this bulleted list of guiding principles in the Foreword, a similar list in the Summary Statement of Purpose, and Chapter II’s Goals, Objectives, and Policies as descriptions of the County’s land use philosophy. He asked the Committee whether they think that there are too many different lists that serve a similar purpose. Commissioner Glover said no, adding that it is important to over-communicate these days and that the Foreword may be the only page that some people read. Mr. Stidham noted that this was a point of emphasis in the previous Plan update, that some people may only read the introduction so the language needs to communicate our philosophy in a direct manner. Chair Ohrstrom said that there is no problem having multiple lists so long as they are all well-written.

Commissioner Bass suggested including language in the first paragraph of the Foreword indicating that comprehensive plans are required to be reviewed at least once every five years per the Code of Virginia. Chair Ohrstrom pointed out that this language is included at the beginning of the Introduction section on Page 11 of 37 but he did not have a problem including it in the Foreword as well. Mr. Stidham asked Commissioner Bass how he would structure the language, and he replied that you could add it as a footnote or just a short sentence in the first paragraph. Chair Ohrstrom added that you could say that comprehensive plans are mandated by the State. Mr. Stidham suggested adding the following sentence to the end of the first paragraph, “The Code of Virginia requires every county to adopt a comprehensive plan and to review it at least once every five years.”

Mr. Stidham reviewed the proposed changes to the Summary Statement of Purpose. Regarding the last bullet, Chair Ohrstrom suggested adding “to address those needs” at the end of the sentence to explain the purpose for the solutions. Members agreed with the change. Mr. Stidham said that this sentence still seems clunky and asked members what they thought about replacing “sectors of the community” with “stakeholders.” Commissioner Glover said that you

could take out “all sectors of” so it would say “participation from the community.” Mr. Stidham asked whether “stakeholders” is more inclusive because it would include entities that are not businesses or residents who make up the community. Commissioner Caldwell said that “stakeholders” has the connotation of referencing landowners and Commissioner Glover added that it is a word that he does not trust. Mr. Camp noted that the word makes sense to the Commission and Staff but not always to the general public. Commissioner Caldwell said that “community” is more intuitively inclusive. Mr. Stidham suggested going with Commissioner Glover’s language and adding the word “active” before “participation” to strengthen the message. Chair Ohrstrom noted that the second “community” should be deleted. Mr. Stidham said that he would make these changes.

Mr. Stidham reviewed the changes to the Introduction section and members had no comments or edits to this section.

Mr. Stidham reviewed the changes to the Form and Function of the Clarke County Comprehensive Plan section, noting that the Committee previously reviewed the changes to the component plan descriptions at an earlier meeting. On Page 13 of 37, Chair Ohrstrom suggested replacing the word “several” in the sentence on Chapter II with the word “many.” Commissioner Bass suggested just deleting the word “several” and members agreed.

Regarding the summaries of the component plans, Commissioner Caldwell said that in the Transportation Plan description on Page 16 of 37, in the third sentence the use of the word “clear” is a value statement that is not used anywhere else in the Plan. Mr. Stidham suggested replacing “provides a clear statement of” with the word “describes.” Commissioner Caldwell agreed with this change. Commissioner Bass referenced the Historic Resources Plan description and asked about the use of the term “action-oriented component plan.” Mr. Stidham said that he used this term to describe how the recommendations in that plan and in others are structured, noting that the Historic Resources Plan recommendations are mostly a list of action items to complete tasks or projects. Commissioner Bass suggested adding language to explain what an action-oriented plan is. Mr. Stidham replied that he would add this to Page 14 where Chapter III is first discussed. Regarding the Recreation Plan description, Chair Ohrstrom asked if we needed to include the word “grow” in reference to the County’s recreational resources when we are already saying that we are going to “promote” the resources. Commissioner Bass said to him they mean two different things -- that “promote” means to advertise the resource and “grow” means to add or expand the resource. Mr. Stidham asked if there is a difference between “grow” and “enhance.” Commissioner Bass replied yes and Commissioner Glover said that “enhance” can mean to improve what you already have.

Under “Process for Amending the Comprehensive Plan” at the top of Page 18 of 37, Chair Ohrstrom suggested referencing the “Virginia General Assembly” as some readers may not know what the General Assembly is.

Mr. Stidham reviewed the new “Citizen Participation in the Planning Process” section that was created from the current Comprehensive Plan objective with the same name. Commissioner Bass recommended noting that the members of the Commission and Board of Supervisors are also citizens.

Mr. Stidham reviewed the new “Scope of the Current Plan Revision” section. Commissioner Caldwell asked about the reference to determining whether to incorporate data from the Cost of Community Services Study into the Comprehensive Plan. Chair Ohrstrom replied that he thinks it would be a good idea to include data from the Study but he is not sure that everyone knows what the Study is. He added that it is a very useful tool because it can be used to determine whether a development project would cost the County more than it can afford. He said that the Study identifies different types of development and the revenue they generate versus the cost to the county to serve. Mr. Stidham noted that the list is a verbatim copy of the list that was adopted in the 2019 five-year review resolution and if new language is added to it, the section would have to be rewritten. Commissioner Caldwell recommended including a footnote. Mr. Stidham also said that he had trouble determining which data could be included in the revised Comprehensive Plan and whether including data would be a help or a hindrance. He added that a cost of community services study could be used to evaluate development proposals but the study would have to be updated on an annual basis to include the most current data in order to make it legally defensible. In other words, a development proposal’s impacts would be reviewed at the point in time in which the application is filed against the County’s cost to serve that development at that same point in time. Mr. Stidham also noted that there are various recommendations throughout the Comprehensive Plan that can be used to make similar arguments as factors in evaluating a development proposal. Chair Ohrstrom added that it would be expensive to update the Cost of Community Services Study each year.

Mr. Stidham said that he will work on a revised draft for the Committee’s review.

Discussion, Public Infrastructure and Services section (Rough Draft)

Mr. Stidham reviewed the new Public Infrastructure and Services section to be included in Chapter I. He said that it is not ready for wordsmithing as it is a rough draft but wanted to get the Committee’s initial comments on this new section. He noted that he wanted to describe the different public services and infrastructure elements in a very general fashion and not include a lot of detail on the nuts and bolts of how the services are operated. He then provided an overview of the new section.

Regarding the list of County departments on the bottom of Page 32 of 37, Chair Ohrstrom said that County Administration and the Department of Planning should be at the top of the list. Mr. Stidham replied that County Administration is referenced into the lead paragraph and Chair Ohrstrom replied that it should also be included in the list. Commissioner Bass noted that the names of the departments should be consistent. Mr. Stidham replied that some departments have official names and others do not. Commissioner Caldwell noted in the first line under General Government that the Board of Supervisors serves four-year terms and not five-year terms. At the top of the same page, Vice-Chair Buckley noted reference to the “Camp 7” property and said that most people would not know what this means. Mr. Stidham recommended changing it to “State-Owned” as it previously included both the Virginia Department of Corrections and Virginia Department of Transportation.

Regarding the Animal Control section at the top of Page 34 of 37, Chair Ohrstrom said that the description of the Animal Shelter is incorrect. He added that the Shelter is managed by the

County but is owned by the Humane Foundation. He also said that “American Humane member” should be deleted. Mr. Stidham noted these changes.

On Page 33 of 37, Commissioner Glover said that “Town of Berryville” should be preceded by “Law Enforcement” to be consistent with the title for the County Sheriff’s Office. He also noted that the Berryville Police Department description talks about the different programs they do and instead should be written more like the Sheriff’s Office description. Mr. Stidham noted that the description comes from their website.

On Page 34 of 37, Chair Ohrstrom noted under “Fire, Rescue, and Emergency Management” in the paragraph after the bulleted list, last line, the word “fire” should be included before “suppression.”

On Page 33 of 37 under “Public Safety Communications,” Commissioner Glover said that the Emergency Communications Center should be listed as a County facility. Mr. Stidham replied that they provide dispatch services for both the Town and the County. He noted that he could add to the end of the first sentence that dispatch is done for calls in the Towns of Berryville and Boyce and Countywide.

On Page 34 of 37, Commissioner Glover said that he does not think of the Blue Ridge Volunteer Fire and Rescue Company as being located in Shenandoah Retreat. Mr. Stidham said that he included the description as being near the Retreat because the mailing address for the Company is Bluemont. Vice-Chair Buckley said that he prefers “adjacent to” Shenandoah Retreat but definitely would not say that it is in the Retreat because that may sound like the Company does not serve other areas.

On Page 35 of 37, Chair Ohrstrom and Commissioner Bass noted a missing “a” in the first line of the Kohn property description between “is” and “currently.”

On Page 36 of 37, Chair Ohrstrom noted in the description of the Department of Social Services, fourth line, that “Protect” should be “Protective.” Commissioner Caldwell noted that the Northwestern Community Services is now offering their services in the County and could also be added to this section. Commissioner Glover noted at the bottom of the page that the five-member Joint Administrative Services board is an appointed board. Mr. Stidham said that he would make these changes.

On Page 37 of 37, Commissioner Caldwell suggested defining public roads in the first sentence of the Transportation section as being both primary and secondary roads. Vice-Chair Buckley suggested labeling U.S. 340 as Buckmarsh Street and Va. Route 7 as Main Street for clarity purposes. Commissioner Glover and Vice-Chair Buckley suggested adding homeowners’ associations (HOAs) as entities that can be responsible for maintaining private roads. Mr. Stidham replied that he thought about including HOAs but noted that not all communities have road maintenance agreements set up to be managed by an HOA.

Distribution of Chapter I Revised Draft (for review at next meeting)

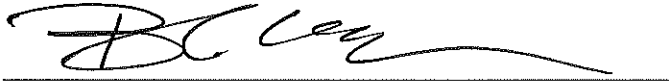
Mr. Camp distributed the revised draft of Chapter I. He noted that changes discussed at the last meeting have been incorporated but that Staff is still working to finalize all of the maps and one table. He said this draft is being distributed so the Committee will have extra time to review for discussion at the next meeting.

Mr. Stidham stated that if he can get the Public Infrastructure and Services section finalized and Mr. Camp is able to get the last table and maps finalized, the Committee could potentially finalize Chapter I at the next meeting. The last remaining item for the Committee would be to review a complete revised draft and decide whether to forward it to the full Commission for review.

4. Scheduling of Next Meeting

Members agreed to schedule the next meeting for Thursday, March 10 at 3:30PM.

ADJOURN: Meeting was adjourned by consensus at 11:40AM.



Brandon Stidham, Clerk