

PRESENT: L. Howdyshell, Vice Chairman
C. Bragg
K. Shiflett
R. Thomas
J. Wilkinson, Director of Community Development
L. Tate, Senior Planner

ABSENT: K. Leonard
G. Campbell
T. Jennings

VIRGINIA: At the Called Meeting of the Augusta County Planning Commission held on Tuesday, July 14, 2020 at 4:45 p.m. in the Board Room, Augusta County Government Center, Verona, Virginia.

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Ms. Tate discussed the items on the agenda for the upcoming BZA meeting.

The Planning Commission reviewed the following rezoning request and traveled to the following site, which will be considered at the Public Hearing.

**6.33 acres, owned by Augusta County,
located off Dooms Crossing Road**

Chairman

Secretary

PRESENT: G. Campbell, Chairman
L. Howdyshell, Vice Chairman
S. Bridge
T. Jennings
K. Shiflett
R. Thomas
J. Wilkinson, Director of Community Development
L. Tate, Senior Planner

ABSENT: K. Leonard

VIRGINIA: At the Regular Meeting of the Augusta County Planning Commission held on Tuesday, July 14, 2020, at 7:00 p.m. in the Board Room, Augusta County Government Center, Verona, Virginia.

DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM

Mr. Campbell stated as there were six (6) members present, there was a quorum.

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Minutes

Mr. Howdyshell moved to approve the minutes of the called and regular meeting held on June 9, 2020.

Ms. Shiflett seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

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Public Hearing

Mr. Campbell stated that there were two requests on the agenda.

Ms. Tate read the request to rezone from General Agriculture with Floodplain Overlay to General Agriculture and Floodplain Overlay with a Public Use Overlay approximately 6.33 acres (TMP 68-54C) owned by County of Augusta located south of Dooms Crossing Road (Rt. 611) approx. 0.2 miles west of the intersection of Dooms Crossing Road (Rt. 611) and Eastside Highway (Rt. 340) in Waynesboro in the Wayne District. The proposed general use of the property is recreational fishing, boating, picnic area, boat launch, lighted accessory parking area, and passive recreation. The use of the property stated in the Comprehensive Plan is Rural Conservation Area.

Mrs. Tate stated that the property was acquired by the county using Dupont settlement money. The County has plans for dam removal and stream restoration projects. Mrs. Tate stated that the Community Development office has been working alongside with the Parks & Recreation department to identify areas for a potential boat launch. Mrs. Tate mentioned that the zoning for this area would remain the same only add the public use overlay to the property to allow for additional uses. Those uses would be for recreational fishing, a picnic area, boating along with a boat launch area, and an accessory parking area. Mrs. Tate stated that there were no plans at this time to have the parking area lit, but lighted was included for the Planning Commission's consideration.;

Mr. Jennings asked if there were any plans for public restrooms.

Mrs. Tate stated that there were no plans for a restroom. If in the future plans were made for a restroom, the request would need to come back to the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors to add as a use in the Public Use Overlay.

Mr. Campbell opened the public hearing and asked if anyone present wished to speak on the request.

Robert VonBernuth of 597 Rockfish Rd. stated that he had some concerns about the request. Mr. VonBernuth stated that he was told that the hours of operation for the area would be limited.

Mrs. Tate answered that there is currently nothing in the overlay that would address that issue.

Mr. VonBernuth stated that if the plan is to limit the area to daytime use only that there would be no reason to have a lighted parking area.

Mrs. Tate stated there are no plans to have the parking area lit at this time.

Mr. VonBernuth stated that he has concerns about the public nuisance with the parking area and allowing access through private property. Mr. VonBernuth asked what the plan was to keep people from entering private property and what the plan is to keep the trash cleaned up.

Mrs. Tate said the trash maintenance would be a responsibility of the Parks & Recreation department.

Mr. VonBernuth asked about the boat launch area and associated entrance would be constructed.

Mrs. Tate stated that the engineering department had been working on that with VDOT.

Mark Haynes of 120 Doods Crossing Rd. spoke against the proposed request. He stated that the request would cause an increase in traffic. Mr. Haynes stated that he really did not want to see a boat launch put in. He also mentioned his concern about the dam removal. He stated that there are high concentrations of mercury in the water where the dam is located and is concerned where all of that will go once the dam is removed.

James Doods of 278 Doods Crossing Rd. also spoke out against the request. He stated that he too has concerns with the traffic increase. He mentioned that he is concerned about intoxicated people on the river and who will police them. Mr. Doods stated that if a

gate were not put up, people would be out all hours of the night. Mr. Dooms mentioned that he may not be able to water his cattle and irrigate his fields once the dam is removed, stating the river will change.

Scott McDevitt of 112 Anen Town Ln. stated that he is concerned with the safety issues. Mr. McDevitt asked if there would be any warning signs for high water. He stated that there are dead trees in the river that boaters can get hung up on. Mr. McDevitt stated he is concerned with the traffic also. Mr. McDevitt mentioned that he did not want to have to put up No Trespassing signs every hundred feet on his property. Mr. McDevitt stated that there are many safety issues that need to be looked at.

George Malouin of 593 Rockfish Rd. stated that he has no issues with the request. Mr. Malouin stated that he felt the dam was dangerous and felt it would be safer in the river with it removed. Mr. Malouin mentioned that people are still going to use the river regardless, but this would actually give them a safe way to exit the river.

Mrs. Tate pointed out that this was a Planning Commission meeting and that the Planning Commission is a recommending body. Mrs. Tate stated that Board of Supervisors will still hold their public hearing regardless of what the Planning Commission recommends.

With no one else wishing to speak, Mr. Campbell closed the public hearing.

Mr. Jennings asked if the Parks and Recreation Department were the ones who would be controlling this area.

Ms. Tate stated that the Parks and Recreation Dept. would handle the trash pick-up and that the facilities at this location would be minimal.

Mrs. Bragg asked if any of the money from the DuPont settlement would be for clean-up of the stream.

Mrs. Tate stated that samples of the water were taken and that the concern about the mercury levels were looked into and determined that the dam could be safely removed without causing a rise in the mercury levels. Mrs. Tate mentioned that the county was working with the Department of Recreation and state agencies on this project.

Mr. Jennings asked what passive recreation is and to define what is meant by picnic area.

Mrs. Tate stated that it would be a picnic table or two and maybe a picnic structure. Mrs. Tate described passive recreation as more of a natural type recreation with few structures, and not organized group recreation

Mr. Jennings stated that he is concerned about the inclusion of lights in the zoning change.

Mrs. Bragg stated that it should be recommended that the lights be taken out of the plan and to recommend the area be restricted to day use only. She also stated that she would suggest not putting in the picnic tables, for the reason that it would encourage people to stay longer. Mrs. Bragg stated that she felt this would give people a safe area to exit the water without infringing on neighboring personal property.

Mr. Howdysshell stated that he can appreciate the county trying to develop the property but can also sympathize with the property owners. Mr. Howdysshell stated that the county

should have had a conceptual plan on what the area would look like, and a plan on how it was going to be policed. Mr. Howdysshell stated that he felt the area should be gated.

Mrs. Bragg made a motion to approve the request with the conditions of daytime use only, no lights, add a gate to the parking area, and leave the picnic tables out. The suggestion that the area be policed by the Augusta County Sheriff's office was also included but not included in the zoning recommendation.

Mr. Jennings seconded the motion, which was carried unanimously.

Mrs. Tate read the next item on the agenda, which were Amendments to the Augusta County Comprehensive Plan Transportation Chapter. Amendments include the addition of priority transportation projects: Woodrow Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center secondary access location, Rt. 256 Weyers Cave Road improvements between I-81 ramp and Triangle Drive, Route 250 improvements from Old White Bridge Road to Lew Dewitt Blvd, safety improvements to intersections 254/262, 254/792, and 254/640, and improvements on US 11 from Rolling Thunder Lane to Frontier Drive.

Mrs. Tate stated that the transportation chapter of the Comprehensive Plan was approved in 2015. Since then, there have been more studies regionally and locally that have led to more transportation improvements. There was a VDOT STARS (Strategically Targeted Affordable Roadway Solutions) study done on Routes 11 and 250.

Mrs. Tate stated that a reference is made to I-81 improvements, and adds projects for Smart Scale Round 4 to a priority list. That list includes a secondary access to WWRC, access management for Rt. 11, access management for Rt. 250 along with pedestrian improvements, safety projects for the intersections of Rt. 254 and 262, and Rt. 792 and 640. The update also includes improvements to Rt. 256 and a park & ride facility.

Mrs. Tate referenced page 3 of the Augusta County Comprehensive Plan Transportation Chapter amendments included in the Planning Commission packets, which notes that in 2019 legislation was passed to provide funding for the I-18 corridor and that the County supports the improvement efforts.

Mrs. Tate stated that Smart Scale is the program, which is used to apply for funding for projects. Mrs. Tate also stated the importance of adding projects to the Comprehensive Plan to show studies have been done and what the recommendations are.

Mr. Campbell opened the public hearing.

With no one to comment on the matter, Mr. Campbell closed the public hearing.

Mrs. Bragg made a motion to approve the amendments to the Augusta County Comprehensive Plan Transportation Chapter as presented.

Mr. Howdysshell seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

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STAFF REPORTS

Mrs. Tate presented draft, proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Plan, regarding utility scale solar. Mrs. Tate stated that on June 17th staff presented the draft language to the Board of Supervisors at a work session.

Mrs. Tate summarized the use of various policies related to multiple different sectors including transportation, land use, etc. that are found within the Comprehensive Plan. She stated that the bulleted language discussed tonight is envisioned to be listed as policies within the appropriate section of the Comprehensive Plan as it relates to the siting of utility scale solar.

Mr. Jennings asked if this would have the same legal weight as an ordinance.

Mrs. Tate explained that a comprehensive plan is used to serve as a guide for land use decisions, including rezonings and special use permits. She clarified that the included language is important as staff analyzes and evaluates project applications.

Mrs. Tate reviewed the Vision Statement of the Comprehensive Plan which all policies should support. Mrs. Tate reviewed the potential size ranges of solar project applications and the various Planning Policy Areas found within the County.

Mrs. Tate reviewed the bulleted list of draft policies summarized below:

- Augusta County encourages both distributed solar and carefully sited utility scale solar as a means of achieving renewable energy goals.
- The County recognizes the employment opportunities, especially for distributed solar, and economic diversification opportunities that utility scale solar provides
- The County desires to maintain rural viewsheds and agriculture as a predominant component of our economy, but sees synergy among agricultural and rural land development and utility scale solar development so long as the clustering of such facilities does not overwhelm the existing landscape and character of an area.
- Siting of projects should evaluate the agricultural landscape of the project area and surrounding area to assess the effects of a project on the agricultural economy.
- The County sees value in projects that innovatively combine agricultural practices with utility scale solar generation to continue the vibrancy of the agricultural economy of Augusta County.
- Siting of projects in Agricultural and Rural Planning Policy Areas should consider the presence of prime farmland producing soils and/or adjacent Agricultural and Forestal Districts.
- Siting of projects should take into consideration surrounding neighborhood developments and how visual impacts to those neighborhoods can be mitigated through appropriate buffers.
- Siting and design of projects should strive to utilize existing vegetation and buffers that exist naturally when adjacent to public rights of way or other adjacent property.

- The County desires to balance the utility scale solar land use with other important and valuable land uses for our citizens. The size/extent of projects should be considered in proximity to other developed land uses so as not to overwhelm the existence of nearby developed residential, commercial or mixed use communities.
- Projects within Urban Service and Community Development Areas should not detract from the compact, interconnected, pedestrian-oriented development pattern.
- The County supports projects that seek to actively create opportunities and partnerships that provide for natural open spaces and outdoor recreational activities such as pedestrian corridors, wildlife watching areas, and fishing areas, especially in publically accessible land and rights-of-ways.
- For projects that are adjacent to public spaces or other planned developments, the County encourages projects that provide for trails and linkages to adjacent land planned for or already developed.
- Projects should be designed, sited, and constructed in a way that protects and preserves the County's natural, scenic, and cultural resources including:
 - Streams, rivers, wetlands
 - Fertile soils
 - Habitats
 - Native vegetation
 - Forests
 - Historic and archaeological resources
- The County sees value in projects that create additional natural resource benefits through the use of native vegetation, the creation of wildlife corridors, and the use of pollinator species in buffer areas and underneath panels.

Mrs. Bragg made the suggestion to take into consideration areas that have pre-existing utilities.

Mr. Howdyshell questioned the language as being too restrictive on utility scale solar.

Mr. Jennings stated that he liked the language of the draft and thought it was positive towards solar development.

Mrs. Tate reviewed with the Commissioners the requests coming before the BZA at the August 6 meeting. A request was made by Jessica Weinstock to have a short-term vacation rental at her property at 17 Mount View Drive, Afton. Bradley Showalter made a request for a farm machinery and equipment repair shop at 230 Cupp Ln., Mt. Solon. Zachary Dean requested to continue to have outdoor storage and sales of farm and small construction equipment, to have a motor vehicle impound yard in conjunction with a towing operation, and to have outdoor storage of an inoperable vehicle at property located on East Side Hwy. John Reedy requested a special use permit to have weddings and other special events at 5086 Lee Jackson Hwy., Greenville.

The Planning Commission had no comments on these requests.

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Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Commission, Mr. Howdysshell made a motion to adjourn.

Mrs. Bragg seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Chairman

Secretary