

PRESENT: T. Cole, Vice Chairman  
W. Hite  
K. Shiflett  
E. Shipplett  
R. L. Earhart, Senior Planner and Secretary

ABSENT: K. Leonard, Chairman  
J. Curd  
W. Garvey  
T. Fitzgerald, Director of Community Development

VIRGINIA: At the Regular Meeting of the Augusta County Planning Commission held on Tuesday, May 14, 2013, at 7:00 p.m. in the Board Room, Augusta County Government Center, Verona, Virginia.

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**DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM**

Mr. Cole stated as there were four (4) members present, there was a quorum.

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**MINUTES**

Mr. Shipplett moved to approve the minutes of the worksession and regular meetings held on March 12, 2013.

Mr. Hite seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

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**Comprehensive Plan Review**

Mrs. Earhart introduced Carson Holloway, Chief of Augusta County Fire and Rescue, who gave a presentation on the Public Safety Section of the Comprehensive Plan.

Chief Holloway stated that public safety is the most important goal of the Augusta County Fire and Rescue (ACFR) Department. He stated that there are 15 in-county and 4 out-of-county fire departments and 11 in-county and 3 out-of-county rescue agencies that provide services to Augusta County. He discussed the policies that help maintain and support the continuation, development, and enhancement of fire rescue services. Policy 1 under the Master Plan addresses developmental components; Policy 2

encourages growth of volunteer based fire rescue systems and recognizes that such systems are dynamic and fluid in their service delivery; and Policy 3 addresses the continuation of training at all levels and the continued development of a regional training facility. Chief Holloway stated that ACFR is working in conjunction with Valley Vocational Technical Center to expand the EMT curriculum to include Fire Fighter I and Hazmat classes. Future needs for equipment and additional fire and rescue stations will continue to be monitored and will be based upon the growth of the County and where the growth is taking place. ACFR will continue to form partnerships with the private sector to receive support for station locations, apparatus, and equipment. He explained that ACFR received a \$1.2 million Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grant in 2012. This grant helps offset the expense of staffing and is issued for two years. He stated ACFR will continue to form partnerships with other localities such as Staunton and Waynesboro to share services, and will continue to work with ACSA on fire flow system upgrades. He stated that one way the current water system can be complimented is by using Tanker Strike Teams. This is a supplement to fire hydrants and is not meant to replace them.

Mrs. Earhart asked Chief Holloway to explain what a Tanker Strike Team is.

Chief Holloway stated that a Tanker Strike Team helps provide water in areas where there are limited hydrants by hauling between 1000 and 3000 gallons of water on large fire trucks. The Tanker Strike Teams are strategically located and can respond more quickly than calling other stations.

Mr. Shippelt asked how long 3000 gallons of water last.

Chief Holloway explained that if water is being pumped out at 1000 gallons a minute, it would take three minutes to use 3000 gallons of water. He stated that it depended on the size of the fire as well.

Mrs. Shiflett asked how long the strike teams have been in place.

Chief Holloway stated two to three years.

Chief Holloway explained that another supplemental system that is used in conjunction with the current water system is the dry hydrant system. This system is made of PVC pipe and hooks into ponds or water supplies near the road. They are a good source but can be high maintenance. The cost to install a dry hydrant system is between \$1200 - \$1500.

Chief Holloway discussed the Wildfire Protection Plan and stated that a brush strike force team is being considered because it is more difficult for the larger tanker trucks to access woodland areas. Smaller equipment is needed to access the woodland and forest areas.

Mr. Shippelt asked how many paid employees and how many volunteers ACFR has.

Chief Holloway said there are 81 paid employees. There are 900 volunteers on the books with an estimated 250 – 300 active.

Mr. Shipplett asked if the volunteers were paid for each call they assist with.

Chief Holloway stated that the volunteers do not get paid at this time, but there are some incentive programs being considered.

Mr. Shipplett asked if ACFR responded each time a vehicle accident was called in, and if so, is it cost effective to respond to each accident.

Chief Holloway stated that they do go to each call and it is debatable if it is cost effective. They communicate with the dispatcher on the significance of the accident to determine what equipment they will need and try to keep from sending trucks that are not necessary. However, he noted that the firemen are also often first responders and EMTs and they can get to the scene quicker than rescue units in many cases.

Mrs. Shiflett stated that there is a concern about fire and rescue teams being able to reach the taller apartment buildings.

Chief Holloway stated that they are aware of the need for additional ladder trucks. ACFR has one ladder truck and Staunton and Waynesboro each have 100' ladder trucks that are available, if needed. Realistically, 5 - 6 stories is the highest that can be reached, however, setbacks and parking issues can hinder rescue efforts at times.

Mrs. Shiflett asked if ACFR does training on farm equipment extrication.

Chief Holloway stated that they do have training for this type of situation.

Mrs. Earhart referred to the Goals, Objectives and Policies for the Public Safety Section of the Comprehensive Plan and stated that the Plan recommends that the Fire/Rescue Master Plan continue to be updated. Once the Master Plan is adopted, the County should develop an implementation plan. She referred to the changes, additions, and deletions of this section as shown on the handout provided to the Commissioners. The Plan recommends continuing to actively recruit volunteers and upgrade of training facilities, along with the implementation of training programs through Valley Vocational Technical Center and Blue Ridge Community College. The need for improvements to the communication systems in rural areas is recognized and she noted that plans are underway to improve these systems. The need to look at alternative means of fire suppression is recognized in the Plan in areas where fire flow is insufficient and it is recommended that fire flow upgrades are incorporated into the Capital Improvement Plan.

Mrs. Earhart asked if there were any additions, deletions, or changes the Commission wanted to recommend.

The Commission had no changes.

The Commission reviewed changes, additions, and deletions to the Historic Resources Goals Section of the Comprehensive Plan. It is recognized that the funding for historical resources may not be as critical as funding other governmental services. Support of the preservation of Civil War battlefields is recommended, but not as a tourist attraction. Mrs. Earhart referred to the taxation policy for historic resources. She asked the

Commissioners if this policy should remain in the Plan. They recommended that it should and the wording should include “and incentives”. The Commissioners agreed to leave Policy 3, Goal 4 as is and add the wording “and other organizations” along with the Augusta County Historical Society.

The Utilities Section of the Comprehensive Plan was discussed. Mrs. Earhart pointed out that the County cannot prohibit direct discharge systems because the State allows them. There was discussion on how the County could approach the State or State representatives regarding the direct discharge systems and the inconsistencies within the various agency programs. Mrs. Earhart stated that she would gather more scientific information on the systems for the Commissioners to review in order to determine the direction they may want to take. Mrs. Earhart referred to Policy 1, Goal 2 and stated that even though the Comp Plan is a 20 year plan, the first priority of the County is to have public water and sewer in the Urban Service Areas, however, not all areas will have public water and sewer immediately. The growth of Augusta County was discussed and the importance of having water and sewer available for the growth areas.

Mr. Shipplett stated that the Lyndhurst area was a potential growth area because of the residential and industrial developments already in place there, and the convenience to Interstate for those that are employed in the Charlottesville area.

The Commission made no change to the draft section.

The General Government Section of the Comprehensive Plan was reviewed. Mrs. Earhart explained that Augusta County is now part of a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) which is a federally required transportation planning entity. Mrs. Earhart suggested adding a reference to the MPO to Goal 1, Objective B, Policy 1.

Mr. Cole asked if the County receives additional funding for transportation through this program.

Mrs. Earhart stated the MPO receives funding for transportation planning and that projects that are already planned are more likely to receive construction funding.

Mrs. Earhart suggested that the policies recommending Cash Proffer Guidelines and fiscal impact studies be removed from the General Government Section. It is felt that implementing either recommendation could discourage development in the Urban Service Areas.

The Commission agreed.

Mrs. Earhart reviewed the land use revalidation schedule and stated that the Commissioner of Revenue’s office had explored the possibility of changing the schedule to a six year schedule. There is concern that farmers would not be able to provide documentation for a six year period and would be forced to pay penalties. The Commission recommended the policy be deleted.

Mr. Shipplett asked if land use has to be applied for every year.

Mrs. Earhart stated that farmers are required to apply for land use every year and provide documentation that their property still qualifies for land use.

The Commissioners agreed to delete *Policy 1: Sliding-Scale Land Use Taxation* and *Policy 2: Revalidation Schedule*.

Mr. Cole stated that there would be an exception to the yearly application for land use. The exception is that under the State Code if the property is in a conservation easement, the property is automatically in land use.

Mrs. Earhart explained that Staff suggested that *Policy 3: Open Space*, be replaced with a policy that encourages the County to allow parcels with significant open space benefits to qualify for land use, especially if the property owner enters into an agreement with the county to restrict their land to the former conservation easement program use.

Mr. Cole stated that he is in favor of changing Policy 3. He stated he was concerned about the challenges this will present from a verification standpoint, but there should be a way to monitor how the land is being used.

The Commissioners accepted the remainder of the changes to the draft section.

## **STAFF REPORTS**

### A. CODE OF VIRGINIA – SECTION 15.2-2310

Mrs. Earhart reviewed with the Commissioners the requests coming before the BZA.

Mr. Cole asked if there were any comments regarding the upcoming items on the BZA agenda.

The Planning Commission took no action on the BZA items.

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There being no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned.

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Chairman

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Secretary