

STAFFORD COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2014

The Planning Commission had another productive year. There were fewer regular meetings, TRC meetings as well as conducted fewer public hearings compared to the previous year. However, this was not reflective of the work activity for the year. There was one less regular meeting, one less TRC meeting but eight joint committee public meetings with members of the Stafford Regional Airport Authority. There was a decrease of 56 actionable items on the Planning Commission meeting agendas (47 compared to 103) compared to the previous year. There were 3 fewer preliminary subdivision plans reviewed than the prior year (6 compared to 9). The number of public hearings conducted decreased from 54 to 37. Even though the raw numbers were lower, there were a number of items that required extensive effort to come to a conclusion. The Oakenwold reclassification application had a continued public hearing and involved extensive discussions over a number of meetings. Proffer Guidelines and Transfer of Development Rights both took considerable time and effort from the Planning Commission in order to achieve a favorable final recommendation. The Joint Committee worked diligently with staff to create an airport land use compatibility report that can be the basis of a Comprehensive Plan Amendment. There was also an increase in the number of residential lots approved with preliminary subdivision plans as well as lots considered in reclassification applications. Many of those items requested additional scrutiny due to potential community impacts. A summary of this activity is listed below.

Meetings Conducted:

A total of 22 meetings were conducted during twelve months. There were *20 regular meetings* (the January 22nd meeting was postponed to January 29th due to a snow event and, the May 28th meeting was cancelled due to scheduling concerns), and *one joint meeting with the School Board* on December 16th. The Planning Commission conducted *an on-site training seminar/retreat* with staff on June 21st. Various Planning Commissioners attended 18 Technical Review Committee (TRC) meetings and eight Joint Airport Committee meetings. Commissioners Bailey, English and Gibbons comprised a Proffer Guidelines Committee that met with the Fredericksburg Area Builders Association (FABA) on February 21st and had a productive discussion that led to a consensus regarding monetary proffer calculations. Commissioner Bailey as a Planning Commission representative attended seven Architectural Review Board meetings. Commissioner Apicella attended five Board of Zoning Appeals meetings as an alternate member. Mr. English attended five Parks and Recreation Commission meetings as the Planning Commission representative. Chairman Rhodes attended two meetings with representatives from the City of Fredericksburg, Spotsylvania County, and the George Washington Regional Commission regarding proposed amendments to the City's Comprehensive Plan.

Subdivision Plans Reviewed:

Six plans comprised of 832 lots. 732 of the approved lots were for townhomes. One hundred lots were for single family homes. Rappahannock Landing comprised the majority of the approved lots, 561 townhouse lots zoned R-2, Urban Residential-Medium Density. Foxchase Commons had 99 townhouse lots zoned R-3, Urban Residential-High Density. Whitson Woods had 55 townhouse lots zoned R-2, Urban Residential-Medium Density. Shelton Knolls was approved for 94 single-family detached lots and Southgate Hills for single-family detached lots 17 zoned R-1, Suburban Residential. There was only one subdivision approved with a location outside of the Urban Services Area. The Beach subdivision comprised six lots zoned A-1, Agricultural. The Virginia General Assembly amended state code effective July 1, 2014 to limit the County's ability to require preliminary subdivision plans for developments of 50 or fewer lots. This may have contributed to the reduction in the number of plans considered during the year. Many of the agriculturally zoned subdivisions that the Planning Commission had approved in recent years involved plans with 50 or fewer lots.

Public Hearings Conducted:

A total of 37 *public hearings* were conducted.

Comprehensive Plan:

Four public hearings were conducted regarding the *Comprehensive Plan*. There was public hearing to amend the text regarding Proffer Guidelines. A second public hearing pertained to Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) amending both the text of the plan and creating a new map identifying sending and receiving areas for the TDR program. Another amendment affected the plan map to include the proposed relocation of Anne Moncure Elementary School into the Suburban Area of the Urban Services Area. There was one public hearing held for Comprehensive Plan Compliance to authorize extension of public sewer utilities to the existing Crow's Nest Harbour subdivision.

Ordinance Amendments:

Twelve public hearings were conducted regarding changes to the *County Code*. *Seven* of the amendments changed provisions within the *zoning ordinance* (ARB Membership, remove the Chesapeake Bay Act from the zoning ordinance, changes to paint color in historic districts, two amendments to the TDR provisions, size of Planned Traditional Neighborhood Zoning Districts, and revising the Flood Hazard Overlay District requirements). *Three* of the amendments changed provisions of the subdivision ordinance pertaining to Chesapeake Bay Act provisions, elimination of the requirement for approval of cluster and preliminary subdivision plans for developments with 50 or fewer lots, and eliminating the requirement for Board of Supervisors approval of community septic systems. The Planning Commission also conducted a public hearing regarding creation of chapter 27B of the County code. That amendment moved the Chesapeake Bay Act provisions out of the zoning ordinance and created a new chapter for its administration and enforcement.

Reclassifications:

Thirteen public hearings were conducted regarding changes to zoning classifications of properties as well as amendments to proffers. *Nine* of the applications involved strictly *changing zoning classifications*. Those applications were: Oakenwold – 650 dwelling units and 250,000 square feet of commercial space, Hilldrup Transfer and Storage – parking lot expansion, McWhirt Loop Commercial – 3 retail buildings, Quantico Corporate Center Building A-1- one office building, Austin Ridge Commercial – 3 commercial buildings, Liberty Knolls – 52 dwelling units, Winding Creek – 97 lots, Reserve at Woodstock Lane – 40 lots, and George Washington Village – 2,957 dwelling units and 1.55 million square feet of commercial space. *Four* of the applications involved *proffer amendments*. Those applications were North Stafford Office Complex, Hilldrup Transfer and Storage, Stafford Nursing Home and Retirement Community, and Hills of Aquia Commercial.

Conditional Use Permits:

Eight public hearings were conducted regarding Conditional Use Permits. The applications were: North Stafford Office Complex – Sheetz gas station, Anderson Propane – distribution tank, McWhirt Loop Commercial – 2 drive-through businesses, Falls Run Industrial Park – auto sales, North Stafford Office Complex – drive-through for a grocery store, Courthouse Manor – cluster development with increased density, Winding Creek – cluster development with increased density, and Freddy's Frozen Custard and Steakburgers – drive-through.

Waivers:

Three applications for subdivision waivers were considered this year. One was approved for block length in the Glens Sections 4, 5, and 8A in order to avoid a stream crossing. A second block length waiver is under review for the same reason for the Liberty Knolls subdivision. The third waiver was approved for side lot line configuration for a boundary line adjustment in the Bridle Lake Estates subdivision.

Other Business:

The Planning Commission conducted extensive studies regarding amending the Comprehensive Plan to eliminate Urban Development Areas and public notification requirements. Work is on-going regarding both efforts. Additionally, the Planning Commission created its first legislative agenda request to the Board of Supervisors. The Planning Commission recommended six changes to state law. The Board adopted one of those changes to be part of its legislative platform. That recommendation dealt with cluster development and the configuration of open space.

Budget:

FY 2014 ended with expenditures *within budget limits*. Mid-year review of FY2015 finds the expenditures within expected levels.

Training:

All Commissioners were in compliance with required certification classes. Mr. Coen attended the Certified Planning Commissioner course in 2014. Mr. Gibbons attended the Virginia Chapter of the American Planning Association annual conference.