

MINUTES FOR THE WEEKLY MEETING OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE ON MONDAY, MARCH 16<sup>TH</sup>, 2009 AT 3 PM IN THE COUNTY GOVERNMENT CENTER BOARD ROOM, BUILDING F.

**PARTICIPANTS:**

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Chris Henderson  
Julie Leverenz  
Mary Jones  
George Billups  
Tom Tingle  
Mark Wenger  
Jack Fraley  
Ruth Larson

NOT PRESENT:

Vaughn Poller  
Bill Porter  
Rich Krapf

STAFF PRESENT:

Tammy Rosario, Planning  
Dave German, Planning  
Ned Cheely, Parks and Recreation  
Leanne Reidenbach, Planning  
Allen Murphy, Planning  
Brian Elmore, Planning

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Fraley called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m.

**II. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mr. Jack Haldeman, 1597 Founder's Hill North, representing the James City Concerned Citizen's Coalition (J4C), gave a presentation on the 2008 Comprehensive Plan update. He stated this version of the presentation had been revised since previous public meetings. His presentation discussed the wishes of County residents on growth matters, discussed those wishes within the context of the 2003 Comprehensive Plan, documented how the 2003 Comprehensive Plan fell short in execution, issued remedies for shortfalls, and advanced the three goals of the 2008 Comprehensive Plan. He stated the three overriding goals of the 2003 Comprehensive Plan were to preserve the quality of life, control residential growth while preserving the County's natural beauty, and preserve rural lands. Mr. Haldeman gave J4C's assessment on attaining these goals. He stated the surveys taken at the beginning of the current Comprehensive Plan update showed that citizens felt that land development was growing too quickly, that there should be restrictions on land sold for commercial and residential development, and that more needed to be done to preserve farmland. He stated the County grew 29.4% from 2002 – 2009, which was the highest rate in the Hampton Roads area. Mr. Haldeman stated that 5,168 residential units were constructed between 2003 and 2008, a 19.8% increase. He stated the County had a 14-20 month inventory in unsold new homes. The Coalition felt that government's decisions were responsible for the growth. He stated that the Coalition felt that this growth was responsible for the increase in impervious surfaces, increase in empty storefronts and offices, flooding and watershed degradation, and the deterioration of infrastructure. He discussed perceived growth impacts on tourism. Mr. Haldeman showed pictures of many residential developments throughout the County to support the Coalition's concerns. He showed examples of the empty storefronts that were mentioned earlier. He stated most of the new growth stemmed from legislative cases. Mr. Haldeman stated that citizens have called for action on population growth and safeguarding open space and the environment. He stated these demands were made in 2003 and have not been addressed. He asked the Steering Committee to reconcile citizen wishes for slower growth with the Coalition's projected build out population of 129,000 and with the County traffic figures projected built out population of 180,000. He said

J4C's goals were to allow no land use changes without cumulative impact studies, to halt extension of the PSA, and to allow no land changes creating a greater population than allowed by-right.

Mr. Tom Tingle stated that the Steering Committee had discussed the traffic build out numbers and determined they were well beyond anything anticipated by Planning staff.

Mr. Jack Fraley stated the 180,000 number was based upon maximum population per land use designation, while 118,000 people were projected under current zoning. He said population models will be run again after land use changes are determined.

Ms. Tammy Rosario stated that population projections from land use designations did use a discount factor for environmental features and infrastructure.

Mr. Haldeman stated J4C wanted developers to clean up the lots for any delayed projects.

Mr. Tingle stated James City's business vacancy rates were lower than most people expected, at around 6%. He does not want people to believe the area is a depressed business market.

Mr. Chris Henderson stated the Steering Committee had already discussed several tools for preserving rural lands, including purchase of development rights and agricultural initiatives. He said preserving rural lands was high on the Committee's priority list. He said that the current housing inventory was in line with twenty-year development trends in the County.

Mr. Fraley stated the Steering Committee should review Community Participation Team citizen survey data and assess how those wishes have been addressed during the current Comprehensive Plan. He said the ordinances could be changed to limit further development, including limiting the number of vehicle trips a development can generate, additional open space requirements, and public facilities tests.

Mr. Bill Spaller, 1556 Harbor Road, a member of J4C and the Community Participation Team, stated that people's fundamental concern was the changing character of the community. He said even if growth is stable year to year, the cumulative growth is the issue. He said he had not seen any policies proposed that would fundamentally affect the rate of growth.

Mr. Fraley stated that after the Comprehensive Plan's adoption, citizen committees will conduct an ordinance review using the new plan as the guide.

Mr. Henderson asked the Coalition to determine what it would consider an appropriate growth rate.

Ms. Mary Jones stated the Steering Committee and Board of Supervisors were listening to citizen concerns and gaining a better understanding of cumulative impacts. She said frequently legislative projects are better than by-right developments regarding impacts.

Mr. Fraley stated the rights of property owners must be balanced. He said there needed to be additional business growth.

Ms. Linda Rice, 2394 Forge Road, stated the J4C's would be hosting an economic development forum in Building C from 4:00-6:00 p.m. on March 19<sup>th</sup>. She said J4C would be hosting a forum on preserving rural lands in May.

Mr. Fraley closed the public comment session.

### **III. MINUTES**

Ms. Julie Leverenz made a motion for approval of the March 9<sup>th</sup> minutes with a correction to note that the committee approved all Public Facilities Goals, Strategies, and Actions (including broadband) except Action 1.1.6, pending staff and Mr. McDonald's recommendation on the Public Facilities Master Plan portion of the technical report.

Mr. Tingle seconded the motion.

In a unanimous voice vote, the minutes were approved as amended (7-0, Absent: Billups, Krapf, Poller, Porter).

Ms. Leverenz made a motion for approval of the January 29<sup>th</sup> minutes, with a second from Mr. Henderson.

In a unanimous voice vote, the minutes were approved (7-0, Absent: Billups, Krapf, Poller, Porter).

### **IV. PARKS AND RECREATION**

Ms. Leanne Reidenbach presented the Parks and Recreation Technical Report. Based on citizen surveys, County Parks and Recreation classes and facilities received high ratings, although there are service gaps in walking and biking trails, public water access, and youth friendly gathering areas. The surveys indicated citizen desires for lower program fees, a competitive indoor pool, maintenance of existing facilities, attention to historical sites, better trail interconnectivity, senior activities, and preserving green and open space. She stated there were a number of Parks and Recreation successes since the 2003 Comprehensive Plan, including completion of the Virginia Capital Trail, purchase of the Jamestown Beach Campground and Yacht Basin, three historical domiciles at Freedom Park, numerous improvements at Warhill, extension of the Powhatan Creek greenway, and construction of private facilities within new neighborhoods in accordance with the proffer guidelines. She said the technical report closely follows the Parks and Recreation draft Master Plan, scheduled for adoption by the Board of Supervisors in May. She discussed the role of demographics in park planning, including increases in the youth and senior populations. Higher incomes tend to focus people away from County recreational facilities and towards private recreational areas. She stated the County benefits from regional programs and parks. She gave an overview of County recreation facilities. The new Parks and Recreation Master Plan would include new service standards based on national standards and County goals. The service standards did not include private facilities and only included a percentage of school facilities. Although many standards are currently met, including park acres per person, based on current population trends, the numbers will be inadequate by 2017. Other standards are currently in deficit, including indoor recreation space, six-foot bike lanes (four-foot enhanced shoulders are not counted), and hard and soft surface trails, with deficits only expected to increase by 2017.

Mr. Ned Cheely stated from a planning perspective, four-foot enhanced shoulder bike lanes have safety concerns due to the width.

Ms. Leverenz stated the number of four-foot bike trails should be included in the report.

Ms. Reidenbach stated the six-foot lane amounts did not include multi-use paths like the Capital Trail. She said that roadway lanes and separated paths cater to a different user groups. She discussed emerging Virginia parks trends and the County facilities related to each, including greenways and blueways. Sustainability strategies for parks include strengthening the local economy, increasing property values, increasing quality of life and eco-tourism, encouraging activity and social responsibility, promoting environmental education, and providing for alternative transportation.

Ms. Reidenbach began discussion of Parks and Recreation Goals, Strategies, and Actions. The County is seeking to preserve greenspace while increasing partnerships with WJCC schools, connectivity, accessibility, and affordability. The GSA's have been changed to be more understandable, eliminate completed objectives and those in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan Strategy Matrix, and add new language about regional partnerships, connectivity, and programming.

Mr. Henderson asked how the County compared to other localities on per capita park expenditures.

Mr. Cheely stated that County spending was comparable to or higher than most nearby localities on a per capita basis. He said the County has the highest revenue recovery rate – 45% - compared to nearby localities. He said a disproportionate loss of revenue resulted from the development of large amounts of parkland that do not charge entrance fees.

Mr. Tingle questioned if private recreational facilities should be considered and included when viewing standards deficits.

Mr. Cheely stated parks facilities are developed to offer a wide variety of activities around the County and to fit the needs of the surrounding community. He said Parks and Recreation does not maintain or offer programs on any private property. The department functions more as facilitator than direct service provider. He did not consider neighborhood sidewalks as part of the recreational facilities inventory.

Ms. Reidenbach stated some localities have inventories of private facilities. Some counties use a percentage of private facilities when calculating their total recreation amenities. She said it would be a significant task for the County to develop an inventory of private recreational amenities.

Mr. Tingle stated the legislative process has made it clear to developers that parks amenities are important.

Ms. Larson stated that recreation activities are often the first casualties of school budget cuts. She hopes the Steering Committee will find answers for cutting recreation programs less frequently.

Mr. Fraley asked Ms. Reidenbach to include per capita expenses and locality service standards in the report.

Ms. Reidenbach stated the technical report consultants contrasted James City service standards against comparable national benchmarks rather than the surrounding area.

Mr. Henderson asked Ms. Reidenbach for statistics on the use of County facilities and similar private facilities.

Mr. George Billups noted that a number of new residential communities had been developed in the Roberts District since the James River Community Center was opened and asked about user rates for that facility.

Mr. Cheely stated that staff kept statistics on users of the James River Community Center by residence. With the exception of weekday lunchtime usage, most users lived within a ten-mile driving radius.

Mr. Billups stated it may be difficult to compare James City and York County park facilities due to York County's relationship with the National Park Service and the large number of acres preserved in the Battlefield area.

Ms. Reidenbach discussed the language and wording of the GSAs.

Mr. Henderson stated the goal should include wellness as part of Parks and Recreation's value statement.

Mr. Cheely stated that the mission statement included language on creating healthy lifestyles.

Ms. Reidenbach stated that the action to conduct citizen surveys would be removed from the GSAs due to its inclusion in the Master Plan and the fact they are an ongoing staff procedure. Several items were removed from the Comprehensive Plan due to their appearance in the Parks and Recreation draft Master Plan.

Mr. Cheely stated the park on the water tower parcel adjacent to the JC/W Community Center would likely be maintained as a passive use and discussed the feasibility of adding a field with Mr. Henderson.

Ms. Leverenz stated she would like to see the Green Spring National Historic Park site added to the technical report. She stated the National Park Service had shown interest in working with James City County to develop a bike trail.

In response to questions on Action 1.2.1, Mr. Cheely stated an inter-staff advisory group would improve the planning process, similar to Development Management Team meetings. It would allow better coordination between agencies and to better identify amenities to be developed to ensure connectivity and consistency in trail surfaces.

Mr. Fraley stated he did not want a staff advisory group to slow down the planning process further. He said that Parks staff was allowed to attend DMT meetings.

Mr. Henderson stated the A-1 ordinance only allowed recreational facilities under a special use permit. He said the working group's purview should only apply within the Primary Service Area where the Greenway Master Plan was in effect, although he did not know if a formal group was necessary.

Mr. Tingle suggested eliminated the wording of staff advisory committees as long as the work was performed at the staff level.

The committee concluded that Action 1.2.1 should be removed and incorporated into the standard plan review process.

The committee discussed the creation of a Greenway and Trail Advisory Committee and questioned why this was a carry-over action from 2003 but one had not yet been formed.

Mr. Cheely stated the slow implementation of the Greenway Master Plan was due more to insufficient funding and multi-jurisdictional issues than a lack of staff initiative. He said the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee could incorporate greenway master planning into their duties.

Mr. Fraley stated one cent of the tax rate was reserved for greenspace.

In response to the equestrian trail action, Mr. Mark Wenger noted that a number of interested parties were likely located in the more rural areas of the County and supported examining the feasibility of creating dedicated horse trails around the County.

Ms. Reidenbach discussed the green infrastructure plan action and noted that to be more useable for current planning review, the inventory would need to be catalogued as a GIS layer.

Mr. Tingle suggested allowing new developments that would not be connected to other neighborhoods to contribute to the greenways fund or a separate sidewalk fund instead of building sidewalks.

Mr. Fraley noted that the Development Review Committee was generally amenable to granting sidewalk waivers when they were presented by staff.

Ms. Reidenbach stated when a sidewalk waiver is granted, the developer must include an alternative all-weather surface trail to adjacent properties and that contributing to a fund was currently not an option per the ordinance. She noted that staff was aware of the need to review this section of the ordinance and felt Mr. Tingle's request would be examined during the post-Comprehensive Plan ordinance re-write.

The committee noted that discussion of the Parks and Recreation GSAs would be continued next Monday beginning with Strategy 1.3.

## **V. OTHER ITEMS**

There were no additional items.

## **VI. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mr. Fraley opened the public comment period.

Mr. Jack Fowler, 109 Wilderness Lane, discussed the condition of Little Creek Reservoir Park. He discussed the difficulties in accessing deep water, the high and unsafe angle of the boat ramp, and his frustration with the park being closed for a portion of the year for several recent years due to conditions.

Mr. Cheely stated the Little Creek Reservoir ramp would have minor repairs this year when water levels changed but that much of what Mr. Fowler stated was true. He said decreasing usage of the reservoir has pushed its repair down the priorities list.

Mr. Fraley closed the public comment period.

## **VII. ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. Henderson made a motion to adjourn, with a second from Ms. Leverenz.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:05 p.m.

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Mr. Jack Fraley, Chair