

MINUTES FOR THE WEEKLY MEETING OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE ON MONDAY, MARCH 30TH, 2009 AT 4 PM IN THE COUNTY GOVERNMENT CENTER BOARD ROOM, BUILDING F.

PARTICIPANTS:

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mark Wenger
Rich Krapf
Mary Jones
George Billups
Julie Leverenz
Chris Henderson
Jack Fraley
Ruth Larson
Vaughn Poller
Bill Porter

NOT PRESENT:

Tom Tingle

STAFF PRESENT:

Tammy Rosario, Planning
Allen Murphy, Planning
John Carnifax, Parks and Recreation
Leanne Reidenbach, Planning
Brian Elmore, Planning

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Jack Fraley called the meeting to order at 4:05 p.m. Mr. George Billups and Mr. Vaughn Poller arrived later in the meeting.

II. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Fraley opened the public comment period. There being none, Mr. Fraley closed the public comment period.

III. MINUTES

Mr. Chris Henderson moved for adoption of the minutes as presented, with a second from Mr. Rich Krapf.

In a unanimous voice vote, the minutes were approved (8-0; Absent: Tingle, Billups, Poller).

IV. PARKS AND RECREATION

Mr. Fraley stated that Planning Division staff would present changes made to Parks and Recreation Goals, Strategies, and Actions (GSAs) since the last meeting and discuss performance standards.

Ms. Leanne Reidenbach stated she would present statistics requested at the last meeting before going through Technical Report text changes and discussing Goals, Strategies, and Actions and facility standards. She discussed the County's Parks and Recreation revenue recovery rates versus other localities.

Mr. John Carnifax stated some of the data from other localities may not reflect a direct comparison to Parks' revenue data. Often, spending in different departments, such as General Services, can influence Parks and Recreation revenue recovery rates and are not always consistently factored in among different localities. He stated there would be additional follow-ups needed to get more comparable percentages.

Ms. Reidenbach stated staff had not yet compiled a comparison of per capita park spending due to similar reasons of the difficulty of obtaining consistent revenue recovery rates.

Mr. Carnifax stated that some localities remove revenue before developing a per capita spending figure.

Ms. Reidenbach reviewed other questions asked at the previous Steering Committee meeting. She stated there was a question regarding the sidewalk ordinance and suggested that a dedicated sidewalk fund would be reviewed under the Transportation section of the Comprehensive Plan. The Transportation section is considering GSAs related to the update of the Sidewalk Master Plan and sidewalk ordinances to provide additional flexibility and obtain a more accurate inventory. She also stated that 469 acres were currently protected under the Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) Program, with 103 acres in a recently closed easement. Seven additional applications were working through the program. She stated that the action plan for the Greenway Master Plan allowed flexibility for when the Greenway Master Plan should be updated. Due to an elongated time frame for implementing the plan on account of financing and property rights issues, staff felt that the Greenway Master Plan did not need to be updated concurrently with the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. She noted that both documents were still in agreement with each other and implementation of the Greenway Master Plan action plan was still a prominent and important goal of the Comprehensive Plan.

Ms. Reidenbach discussed changes to the GSAs wording and language based on Steering Committee members' suggestions. Wording regarding to promotion of healthy lifestyles was added to the Goal. Action 1.1.1 was amended to strike "proposed" and replace with "approved." Action 1.1.7 was added, encouraging regional cooperation in the development of recreation facilities. Action 1.2.1, the internal staff workgroup, was stricken. Action 1.2.2 was amended to include adjacent localities and organizations in implementation of the Greenway Master Plan.

Mr. Carnifax stated greenways are constructed and maintained through a variety of conditions and agreements. He said internal park trails are completely County-owned, while the Capital Trail is only maintained by the County.

Mr. Henderson asked about greenway strategies for Community Character Corridors.

Mr. Carnifax stated that Parks and Recreation tries to obtain a 50-foot easement for trails in order to provide some surrounding natural buffer, but that the width is limited by developers, property owners, and topography, so often includes only the area necessary for trail construction.

Ms. Reidenbach stated Action 1.2.4.e, the creation of a greenway advisory committee, was eliminated. Action 1.3.2 was amended to include that grant-in-aid monies could be used for any improvement to a neighborhood park. Action 1.3.6 was relocated to under Strategy 1.3. Action 1.5.4 was amended to consider adding a percentage of private recreation amenities to the existing inventory. She stated that the Committee, after reviewing a sampling of known subdivision amenities, could consider whether they felt this was worthwhile to pursue.

Mr. Fraley stated that instead of “considering” counting facilities, the action should authorize the counting of private facilities in the existing inventory using established formulas to determine reduced need for County facilities.

Mr. Bill Porter stated that staff should determine what percentage of private recreational facilities should be added to the inventory.

Mr. Fraley stated the language should be changed to “apply a percentage” of private facilities, and Mr. Mark Wenger concurred.

Mr. Henderson stated the formula should consider the high percentage of residents who live in high amenity communities that have already provided facilities. Residents were already paying for those facilities through their homeowner’s associations.

Mr. George Billups stated federal laws should be considered before developing significant additional recreational facilities or relying on private facilities for public access.

Mr. Henderson asked if the County suggestion of preferring proffered land for neighborhood parks instead of cash contributions towards a larger area park was a policy the Steering Committee wanted to set in the Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Fraley stated that the Development Review Committee preferred neighborhood facilities rather than cash proffers to the general fund, without knowing how the money would be spent.

Ms. Reidenbach stated the suggestion would not be included in the Comprehensive Plan, but was a summary of what was being proposed in the updated Parks and Recreation proffer guidelines. She said Action 1.5.5 was added to amend the Zoning Ordinance to facilitate the development of neighborhood park facilities in by-right projects in accordance with design standards. Strategy 1.8 was amended to change the word “stress.” Strategy 1.11 to include the design and construction of facilities in a sustainable manner, and incorporate LEED guidelines in parks facilities. She noted that there are no LEED specific standards for Parks and Recreation. The revenue recovery rate would fall under the business plans section for park facilities.

Mr. Vaughn Poller noted that the Committee discussed incorporating sustainable strategies for Parks and Recreation facilities where feasible.

Ms. Julie Leverenz suggested that wording be added to Action 1.11.2.

Ms. Reidenbach discussed Parks and Recreation facility standards. She stated the County had 17.5 miles of four-foot (or less) enhanced shoulder bike lanes, reducing the County’s bike lane deficit.

Mr. Wenger stated that facilities should be upgraded according to a known, measurable standard, but that these standards only served as general guidelines. He said recreational activities vary in popularity over time. A list would be compiled of public needs the County needs to address. National service standards should not override local needs. The deficits only serve as the basis for a capital improvements list and facility requests would be distributed (i.e. the entire 13 basketball court deficit would not be expected to be funded and built in one year). Since acquisition of additional park land is outpacing new programs, he expects revenue recovery to fall. The new lands should be used for revenue raising special events, such as fishing tournaments at Chickahominy Park. Revenue recovery for specific facilities should also be taken into greater account.

Mr. Carnifax stated Parks and Recreation waits for the appropriate opportunities to expand and weighs input from citizens rather than strictly following national standards. He said the waterfront access goals from the 1993 Parks and Recreation Master Plan did not happen until Chickahominy Park's purchase in 2000 and the recent Jamestown Beach Campground and Yacht Basin purchase.

Mr. Henderson noted that changing path widths would have a large impact on cost to develop in terms of right-of-way dedication.

Ms. Reidenbach stated that shared roadways or enhanced shoulder bike lanes would require less right-of-way than multi-use paths.

Mr. Carnifax stated the six-foot wide bike lane was a goal rather than service standard. Costs, property rights, and landscape often result in a narrower path, but six-feet is the revised AASHTO construction standard.

Mr. Billups stated facilities should be planned with a thirty-year vision and build-out in mind.

Mr. Poller stated the County's reputation as a biking destination would not directly contribute to revenue recovery, but it would bring in additional tourist dollars. He said today's retirees are more active and will desire more trails.

Ms. Reidenbach stated the facility deficits should be considered along with the equity mapping analysis in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan to prioritize where new facilities should be constructed. She said deficits may be more severe in different districts depending on the facility.

Mr. Carnifax stated that in the future, citizens will ask for facilities not currently identified in the master plan. He said that gaps in the equity maps may result from a lack of available properties in a particular area. He said state, national, and private parks should be factored into total recreational facilities. Parks has \$3 million left from the \$15 million bond referendum for Freedom Park, as well as some funds to complete Warhill Park. He said parks are seeing increased use and program enrollment despite the economic downturn.

Ms. Reidenbach stated that sidewalks were not included in the hard surface trail inventory. She said VDOT's new cul-de-sac regulations and the impact on pedestrian connectivity would be addressed in the Transportation section. New standards being considered in the draft Parks and Recreation Master Plan are linear parks/greenways, picnic areas, special use areas, splash grounds, off-leash areas, skate parks, bike lanes, field sizes, and indoor space. Volleyball courts, neighborhood parks, and public golf hole standards were included in the 1993 Parks and Recreation Master Plan but removed in the update.

Mr. Carnifax stated that although there is an athletic field deficit versus national standards, some fields have lighting and synthetic turf that increases their useable life. He stated that comments were added to the service standards reflecting private recreational facilities reducing public demand. He also noted that the majority of other localities that adopt facility standards, such as Roanoke and Chesterfield, also show significant deficits and that this is typical.

Ms. Reidenbach discussed the calculation of private neighborhood facility contribution weighted totals for recreational facilities standards. She noted that half the communities that PROS Consulting has worked with opted to include private facilities, and they suggested counting 25% of the facilities toward the inventory.

Mr. Poller stated pools' value was determined by its programming. Some residents of neighborhoods with pools may still use the Community Center pool due to the programs offered. The effect of private facilities on public need for recreational amenities may not be a clear linear deduction.

Ms. Reidenbach stated she had heard citizen concerns regarding a lack of indoor competitive pools that may not come through in a pure analysis of service standards and deficits.

Mr. Wenger stated programming, not property, was the initial heart of the Parks Recreation Division.

Ms. Reidenbach stated the Warhill Community Gymnasium project included in the recent Capital Improvement Program discussions would fall under the gymnasium/indoor space facility standard.

Mr. Carnifax stated school recreational facilities were factored into the total recreational inventory at a 25% rate. He said the proposed gym was not specifically included in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

Ms. Reidenbach stated text was changed in regards to swimming access along the Colonial Parkway. The National Parks Service stated swimming was allowed but discouraged.

The Committee provided guidance to leave the note regarding the discouragement of swimming along the Colonial Parkway in the technical report.

Mr. Fraley stated he would like to discuss setting a revenue recovery rate target.

Mr. Henderson stated increased public demands would require a higher recovery rate. He said a 50% recovery rate would not place a high burden on end-users.

Mr. Porter stated that setting the rate should be left to the author of the Parks and Recreation business plan. He said the Board would have to consider program affordability.

Mr. Poller stated that through his involvement on the Community Participation Team, he did not recall any citizen comments regarding revenue recovery rates.

Mr. Wenger stated the issue of revenue recovery was too complex for the Committee. He said scholarships, non-profit partnerships, and naming opportunities factor in. He said recovery rates could decrease with additional parks facilities coming online.

Mr. Henderson stated parks have a role in neighborhood connectivity and suggested that an action be added to address multiple points of access into park facilities for vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists.

Ms. Tammy Rosario asked the Steering Committee to preliminarily adopt the Parks and Recreation GSAs.

In a unanimous voice vote, the GSAs were preliminarily adopted (10-0; Absent: Tingle).

V. OTHER ITEMS

Mr. Fraley stated he wanted to discuss how the Comprehensive Plan would move forward to the Planning Commission. He said it may be more efficient to get Planning Commissioner input earlier in the

process. As each section is approved by the Steering Committee, it could move forward to the Commission for discussion.

Mr. Krapf stated the three Commissioners not on the Committee could access the public materials on the Comprehensive Plan website. He noted that because each section cross-references other sections, reviewing individual sections could cause the Comprehensive Plan to lose cohesiveness. He said that he could see more difficult sections being forwarded to the Commission earlier.

Mr. Fraley stated he did not know how many work sessions Planning staff had established for the Commission to review the Comprehensive Plan, but that a previous Board had sent a Comprehensive Plan back to the Commission. He said Parks and Recreation and Economic Development should be more closely reviewed by the Commission.

Ms. Mary Jones stated the remaining Planning Commissioners could share their opinions with the Steering Committee.

Mr. Fraley asked staff for ideas and timetables regarding the Planning Commission's review of the Comprehensive Plan. He also asked for a set of talking points be provided to the chair prior to Wednesday's Planning Commission meeting.

Mr. Porter stated all information reviewed by the Committee is available online.

Ms. Rosario stated the Committee was designed to comprise a majority of Commissioners, who would act as a funnel for Commission concerns. She said the amount and accessibility of electronic information allows for a high level of communication and transparency.

Mr. Krapf stated the Commission receives a monthly update on the Committee's progress.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Ruth Larson moved for adjournment, with a second from Mr. Henderson.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:05pm.

Mr. Jack Fraley, Chair