

## Appendix

### **Results of Joint Work Session of the Planning Commission and Land Use Planning Stakeholders Group, on Land Use Planning Issues and Options**

*October 24, 2005, Elizabeth B. Waters, facilitator*

#### ***Introduction***

A major goal in Accomack County's 3-Year Strategic Plan is to "revise the county's comprehensive plan and zoning ordinance to strengthen the county's ability to guide and manage growth and development". In September 2005, the Board of Supervisors appointed a Land Use Planning Stakeholders Group to assist the Planning Commission and the Board in their work to accomplish this goal, building on the work already underway by the Planning Commission. The Stakeholders Group includes representatives of a wide range of range of civic and business interests in the county and it will be an important sounding board for the Commission and the Board as they develop land use plan and zoning changes to take to the public at large.

An initial joint work session was held for members of the Planning Commission and the Stakeholders Group on October 24, 2005, in the Shore Bank Conference Room in Accomack County. The purpose of the session was to identify land use issues the county needs to address during the update of its land use plan and zoning ordinance and possible ways to accomplish this.

Participants said that some of the development problems the county is living with are the result of earlier plans and ordinances that have been changed, but there are a number of concerns that have not been addressed. These concerns need to be addressed to manage the increased growth pressures the county is experiencing. There was a general view expressed by the participants throughout the discussions that this planning process needs to focus on what is best for the county as a whole, not provide benefits to a few special interests. The following is a summary of issues and possible solutions identified during the session.

#### ***Issue Identification***

During the first portion of the discussion, participants identified assets, goals and problems that need to be taken into account as planning and zoning options are developed and considered.

##### ***Natural, Cultural and Economic Assets***

- Natural resources: groundwater, open space, wildlife, etc. need to be protected.
- Historic resources need to be identified, preserved and promoted.
- Agricultural land needs to be preserved.

- The Wallops facility needs to be protected from residential and commercial encroachment.
- Existing towns and communities need to be strengthened.

### ***Goals for Planning/Zoning Changes***

- Preserve the rural lifestyle, farming, seafood, and aquaculture activities, etc. that give the Shore its distinct identity.
- Encourage development that will provide jobs and housing for young people.
- Protect landowner's rights.
- Preserve the economic value of property.
- Ensure that the safety of Route 13 is preserved.
- Preserve and enhance agricultural profitability.
- Increase affordable and "starter" housing so local people can have adequate housing and begin to build equity.
- Preserve existing business and employers.

### ***Problems that Need to be Addressed***

- The county lacks appropriate, enforceable zoning regulations.
- Zoning around existing towns is not adequate and this pushes people out into agricultural areas.
- It's too easy for development to come into agricultural areas. These areas lack adequate roads for residential development and it often creates conflict among users.
- There is a countywide lack of affordable housing. Almost all of the new housing being built is out of reach for moderate income and first-time buyers. Most of it is second home development being marketed to people from outside the county and there is not enough decent housing for the local labor force.
- Increases in entrances and exists along Route 13 are threatening the safety of that corridor.
- Ways have to be found to balance preservation and growth in the county.
- The community needs to agree on the definitions of historic and natural resources in order to identify them and plan to protect them.
- The county needs to decide how much it wants to encourage and develop tourism. There may be conflicts between tourism-focused businesses and traditional agricultural and seafood activities. Too much tourism growth may tax the roadway system. On the other hand, many tourism focused activities like farmer's markets, pick your own farms and eco-tourism are good matches with the Shore's rural character.
- The best farmland is also the best land for development and something needs to be done to balance these competing demands.
- Expansion around existing towns is difficult because the soils are not suitable for septic systems and centralized wastewater treatment facilities are not available.
- There is competition for developable land, there isn't space for everything and the county has to set priorities.

- Residential development often costs more for services than it generates in taxes, although this depends on the size of the house and the type of services needed.

### ***Possible Approaches to Address Problems and Goals***

After identifying many of the major issues the county faces, participants identified a number of approaches that might help the county deal with these different problems, goals and concerns. They recognized there are limits on what counties are allowed to do in Virginia, but even within those restrictions there are many tools to manage growth that the county needs to consider.

At this early stage no attempt was made to reach agreement on specific approaches, but participants did suggest that this process should try to identify plans, ordinances and review processes that:

- enable long-time residents to continue to live and thrive in the county;
- welcome new residents and businesses in ways that protect the character and natural resources of the county while contributing to its vitality; and
- protect the rights of farmers and other landowners to use and benefit from their land.

Many options were identified that the county can consider during the update of its land use plan, zoning and development review processes. They have been divided into four major categories below. These ideas can serve as a starting point for further research and discussion.

### ***Development Patterns***

- Concentrate new development in and around existing towns and communities. They are well situated, have good access and this will help revitalize these communities.
- Identify ways for larger new developments to reproduce the attractive village concept that is already found throughout the county.
- Encourage more commercial development in existing villages to serve residents and attract tourists.
- Use Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) with their own sewage treatment plants so development can occur in areas with poor soils for septic systems.
- Review and update soil suitability maps, flood zone areas, etc. to determine the most appropriate locations for future development.
- Take account of the sole source aquifer in deciding where development should take place and how much. The cumulative water demand of all new developments needs to be tracked over time.
- Take account of the county's agricultural and forestal districts in deciding where to encourage future development.
- Make zoning changes recommended in the US Route 13 Corridor Plan to improve the safety and aesthetics of new development in the corridor.

### ***Affordable Housing***

- Adopt incentives to encourage developers to produce creative affordable housing options.
- Designate areas for well-designed trailer parks that include requirements for landscaping, maintenance, etc. This is often the only kind of housing local workers can afford.
- Develop PUD regulations that call for combining single family, duplex and triplex units that look similar but allow for a range of housing costs.
- Create a zoning ordinance that encourages affordable housing proffers.
- Consider adopting some property tax relief provisions for low-income homeowners.

### **Subdivision Regulations**

- Limit the amount of prime agricultural land that can be easily subdivided.
- Change some land from agricultural to rural residential category while keeping other land in agricultural designation.
- Require clustering in new subdivisions to protect open space.
- Protect groundwater quantity and quality by requiring “Best Management Practices” (BMPs) for all new developments. Some BMPs like stormwater retention ponds can be assets to new developments.
- Consider a special section of the subdivision ordinance that applies to mobile homes and establishes requirements for the design of these parks.

### **Development Process**

- Create a clear, easily enforceable zoning ordinance.
- Revisit the current requirements to subdivide land to be sure the process is in the best interests of the county and landowners.
- Consider requiring re-zonings for all conversions of agricultural land into residential use.
- Make all revisions to the development process easy to understand and easy to execute.

### **Next Steps**

The county is in the process of hiring a consultant to work with the Planning Commission, the Board and the public at large to identify various approaches and techniques available to manage growth and to update their land use plan and ordinances. In the months ahead, research will be done and additional public workshops will be held to help citizens and decision-makers gain a better understanding of the different approaches and techniques so they can reach consensus on which of these approaches and techniques are best for Accomack County. Throughout this process, the Land Use Planning Stakeholders group will play an important role in helping the Planning Commission and the Board identify the best solutions for the county.

## **Summary of Results of Public Forums for Updating the Accomack County Comprehensive Plan**

*Milton Herd, AICP, and Vlad Gavrilovic, AICP, Facilitators*

*First Forum on September 25, 2006 at Nandua High School Cafeteria*

### **General Discussion**

#### **Are there any statistical forecasts of growth?**

Various growth projections have been compiled, including the Cooper Center (UVA) (official forecast). County staff can provide specific data files. [Official forecast is average 0.65% annual growth during next two decades; recent trend rate would be between 1% and 2% average annual].

#### **Would village residential category be on sewer or septic?**

Not determined – want to hear public comments. Mainly, village residential would be generally smaller lots/higher density than rural residential.

#### **What is status of Wallops sewer opportunity?**

County is currently negotiating – will probably be limited to industrial / commercial uses

#### **Concern that good soils are not an issue if you use central utilities.**

Wachapreague was considering expansion but they need sewer system in order for commercial to expand – but – hard to find environmentally appropriate location for it.

#### **How would central sewer be financed?**

- 1 – by users/future rate payers
- 2 – special service district (incremental tax on real estate within the district)
- 3 – general county funding assistance
- 4 – private central systems

#### **Would TDRs be appropriate? [transferable development rights program]**

Yes, it's an option to be considered [recent state legislation permit localities to do TDR, although the mechanics of successful implementation are complex]

#### **Concern over insurance for new homes on coastline – who pays?**

**Has anything been planned on alternative corridors for Rt. 13?**

- 2002 study recommends bypass from Route 175 to Temperanceville
- In 2006 General Assembly approved study for new interstate highway on Shore
- No funding has been available for major improvements to Rt. 13

**Is “central sewer” a mass drainfield or a central [discharge] plant?**

This is still an open question.

**Can we recommend that no discharge be put into streams when considering central sewer? Concern over impacts of discharge.**

**Would it be beneficial to have separate district to protect aquifer recharge spine?**

Yes, potentially – please note that in the small groups

**Results of Small Group Exercises**

Group 1

Circled around existing village to be future village residential (1/2 mile radius)  
Included existing towns as village residential  
Rural residential from Bloxom to Greenbackville – commercial should be included in village residential  
Industrial in existing industrial park  
Preserve “necks” on both coasts  
Green between concentrations of development along Rt 13 – protect groundwater

Group 2

Need EMS service for district 9  
Growth should be close to towns  
Need town sewer/water systems  
Large lots close to water  
Follow up 1997 plan and use it  
Interim ordinance to stay

Group 3

New growth should be on 316, not on 13 from Tasley to Bloxom  
Need growth around NASA  
Need nice park in mid-County with ballfields, skate park, picnic, lake  
Preserve cemeteries and historical sites  
Businesses on 13 clustered at traffic lights – no strip development  
Need master drainage plan for county – lost trees in Wachapreague

Group 4

Need to look at “what should be there” not “what is there now”  
Village residential could also mean mixed uses

Group 5

Keep Bayside/Seaside as Conservation  
Keep industrial off recharge spine  
Light Industrial and business around existing towns  
Some new development in larger Towns – Belle Haven, Accomac, Parksley  
AG land shouldn't be fragmented  
Affordable Housing should be done by NGO's (Habitat and VESHEEC) – not by county  
Sewer in waterfront towns but no discharge in creeks  
Developers should give proffers to offset costs

Group 6

Rt 13 should be commercial  
Industrial around Tysons and Peaker Plant and Perdue and Melfa Industrial Park  
Village Residential:

Oak Hall  
Temperanceville  
Mappsville  
Modest Town  
Nelsonia  
Parksley  
Greenbacksville  
Accomac  
Onancock  
Melfa  
Keller  
Pungoteague  
Belle Haven  
Craddockville  
Atlantic

Group 7

Should enact zoning similar to Worcester and Northampton (1 per 20 acres)  
Leave coastal edge with very little development  
Overlay to protect recharge spine  
Concentrate development along existing towns  
Locate commercial/industrial in industrial park  
Protect sensitive area between Chincoteague and Wallops

Group 8

Concentrate development around existing sewer in Onancock  
Need sewer around Wattsville and Atlantic to reduce septic tanks  
Need commercial/industrial around NASA  
Sewer will allow smaller lots and slow development in Ag areas with larger lots  
Need sewer around Wachapreague / Quinby / Parksley / Bloxom to protect surrounding farms and expand businesses.  
Consolidate commercial / industrial – don't spread it on Rt. 13.

Common Themes

Implementation is Key Issue  
Building on 1997 Plan  
Inherent conflicts on central sewer vs. environmental protection and market for waterfront uses vs. need to protect waterfront

Other Comments

Can't adequately locate new growth without showing existing subdivisions – recommend maps at a scale showing each election districts

Need to provide more boat access – especially if growth is to be pulled away from waterfront  
Rt 13 is a “death trap” – we can at least close the crossovers.

Recommend “land banking” – use transfer tax to purchase easements

Need to learn from planning efforts in Washington State.

Concern that population will double in 20-30 years.

Look at Outer Banks for example of what could happen Accomack.

Need to consider what kinds of new business will be attracted here – not conducive to large plants like Tysons/Perdue any more.

Recommend transfer tax to provide funds for affordable housing and open space

Look at home businesses or the “distributed work force” for future job growth.

***Second Forum on September 26, 2006 at Arcadia High School Cafeteria***

**Results of Small Group Exercises**

**Group 1 – Heinrich**

Focused on FLU areas that need enlargement  
Industrial at Peaker Plant, Melfa airport  
Commercial – 175 toward Chincoteague, areas to south  
Village Residential – county line road near Belle Haven/Exmore  
Behind Nandua HS to Onancock – rural res  
Parksley to North – village residential to Bloxom, add to the east  
Ches Bay Act needed on seaside  
Q – what about future sea level rise?

**Group 2 - Terry**

Didn't do maps  
Focused on principles  
Conservation/ag – more is better  
Tax incentives and aquaculture – focus conservation area to protect  
Rural residential – low density to protect aquifer – 1 unit per 10 acres  
Rural Village – one to four units per acre  
PUD – seaside  
Commercial – cluster. Limit ribbon (strip)  
Industrial – focus in existing areas

**Group 3**

Rural residential  
No industry in natural areas  
Need better commercial development on Rt 13 – aesthetics  
Melfa industrial park – need jobs for poverty areas in south Accomack  
Disagreement on lot sizes – land value [impacts]  
New development on spine and away from shores

**Group 4**

Put development where it already is, based on soils  
Onley – Onancock – Tasley – Accomac: development area to preserve rural character outside;  
May actually become a small city in the middle of the county

Group 5A – Ron Wolff

Protect groundwater  
Protect coastal bays  
Expand village residential around incorporated town – one-mile radius  
Rural residential – 1 to 3 miles beyond  
One mile buffer along seaside with large lots – 3 acre to 20 acre lots  
No overboard sewage discharge  
Use decentralized WWT & above ground systems in poor soils  
Need some small dots in outlying areas  
Sewer – Onancock, NASA Wallops \_\_\_\_ Park  
Disagreement on lot sizes close to water  
Need pre-treatment of septic within one mile of the water  
Debate on EMS vs. development on long necks – people’s choice to live there

Group 5B – Stirling

Preserve white areas on map  
Look at existing developed areas and natural areas  
Peaker Plant – industrial  
Expand existing commercial areas  
Confine development to Onancock, Parksley  
Rural res around them  
Larger lots near water, bayside  
Rural residential on seaside  
Res and commercial development Onancock – Onley, Accomac – Parksley  
Density down on seaside  
Higher density in or near towns  
Lower density to preserve agriculture – ag is 50% of local economy  
Rt 13 – cluster and manage access  
Stricter septic requirements near shorelines to protect water and groundwater  
Map mostly green, but a lot of rural residential  
Encourage growth on seaside  
Residential between ESCC golf course and Onancock

Group 6 – Greg Lassiter

Small group / long conversation  
Threats to bayside – pollution \_\_\_\_; need BMPs for ag and commercial  
Rural res and Rural village on good soils