

MINUTES
PAGE COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
July 23, 2019

Members Present

Bernie Miller, Vice Chairman, District 1
Steve Atkins, District 2
Jared Burner, District 3

Paul Otto, District 1
Donnie Middleton, District 2
Keith Weakley, Chairman, District 3
William Turner, District 5

Members Absent

James Holsinger, Secretary, District 4
Jonathan Comer, District 5

Staff Present

Kelly Butler

Call to Order

Chairman Weakley called the July 23, 2019 Page County Planning Commission Work Session to order in the Board of Supervisors Room located at the Page County Government Center, 103 S Court Street, Luray, Virginia at 7:00 p.m. The call to order was followed by *The Pledge of Allegiance* and a *Moment of Silence*.

Adoption of Agenda

Mr. Otto made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Miller. The motion passed unanimously.

New Business

A. Adoption of Minutes- June 25, 2019

Mr. Turner made a motion to approve the June 25, 2019 minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Miller. The motion passed unanimously.

Unfinished Business

A. Comp Plan – Solar Draft

Mr. Otto stated that at the last meeting, July 10, 2019, members of the commission were given copies of the proposed comp plan – solar draft for their study and review. This is being presented as the sixth draft. Not all members of the sub-committee were in consensus on the draft, but there was no objection to bring it to the full commission for review. Staff recommendations state that this draft includes too much detailed regulation that should not be included in the comprehensive plan. Mr. Otto stated that he took exception to their recommendation. He stated one reason he opposes their recommendation is that there are other sections in the current comp plan that have quite a bit of detail. The second reason is that in absence of an ordinance, and with no active sub-committee working on an ordinance, it would be prudent to proceed as quickly as possible to get something into the comprehensive plan addressing this issue. Mr. Otto has attended two seminars on the subject. These stressed the importance of counties having protections in their comprehensive plan and ordinance. Ultimately, all the control of the utility scale solar projects lies with the county. He would encourage the commission to pursue this with all diligence. Mr. Weakley asked if we knew a timing on the solar ordinance. Mr. Otto stated that it was the consensus of the board that the commission did not need to proceed with work on an ordinance. The board felt that an ordinance would preclude them from using the special use permit process for these projects. He stated that was incorrect, however, he has heard of no rescinding of that consensus. The board stated the commission did not have to continue work on an ordinance, not that they couldn't. It is within the commission's purview to work on things that are pertinent to the needs of the county. His

recommendation is to proceed with adopting the comp plan – solar draft as quickly as possible, and then proceed with working on a draft ordinance. Mr. Otto stated our recommendation should be to process this draft as an amendment to the current plan and not incorporate it in with the other revisions that are being done to the plan for the comp plan update.

Mr. Weakley stated that there are two members of the commission that are out that should have an opportunity to discuss the draft. Mr. Miller said he agreed with Mr. Otto that we do need something, but the detail that is in the proposed draft is so restrictive it's not fair to all members of the county. It goes after where we can't put it, it should be identifying where we can put it. It should be where there are transmission lines. It is restrictive to the farmer. He suggested that we bring in the Farm Association on this. This draft places restrictions on the individual property owners and the medium scale solar. Mr. Miller also expressed concern over the decommissioning and disposition of the panels themselves. Mr. Otto stated that those items can be covered in an ordinance. Mr. Burner said he feels that there are things that shouldn't necessarily be in there because once you put it in there you have to defend it. He asked Mr. Otto how the information was obtained to put in the draft. Mr. Otto stated that the information came mostly from other jurisdictions. Mr. Miller took exception to the item stating that the panels could not be within half a mile of a federal highway. There has to be good reasons and reasons why you don't necessarily don't have to do that. Mr. Otto said if there is a generally desirable site but it doesn't meet one of the criteria, and there is enough benefit to the county, then it should be considered. But if there is a generally undesirable site and it doesn't meet a lot of the criteria then it shouldn't be considered. This doesn't say that you can't go with it, but rather it just doesn't meet all the criteria. Mr. Weakley stated this is a should, not a shall. Mr. Miller said that people will take it as a shall.

Mr. Otto stated that this draft is what we have right now. Mr. Weakley stated that a compromise would be to get an amendment to the current comp plan to the supervisors to put into place now while an ordinance is being written. After an ordinance is written, then amend the amendment so that it is more general in nature. Mr. Weakley stated that all members of the commission should review the draft further and put it back on the agenda for the next meeting on August 13th. Staff will confirm that Mr. Comer and Mr. Holsinger will be at the next meeting. If they can't be at the next meeting then move it onto the next agenda (August 27th).

B. Sub-Committee Reports

Comp Plan Sub-Committee- Mr. Otto noted the Comp Plan Sub-Committee will be meeting tomorrow (July 25, 2019) to review Volume I, Chapter 2.

Chairman's Report


No Report

Clerk's Report

No Report

Adjourn

Chairman Weakley adjourned the meeting at 7:45 p.m.



Keith Weakley, Chairman



Jamie Holsinger, Secretary