

**MINUTES**  
**PAGE COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION**  
**August 22, 2023**

**Members Present**

Catherine Grech, Secretary, District 1  
Jared Burner, Chairman, District 3  
William Turner, Vice Chairman, District 5

Chris Adams, District 2  
Isaac Smelser, District 4

**Staff Present**

Josh Hahn

Tracy Clatterbuck

**Call to Order**

Chairman Burner called the August 22 Page County Planning Commission Work Session to order in the Board of Supervisors (BOS) 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*. Chairman Burner reminded all commissioners and speakers to please turn on and/or speak into the microphones. Ms. Clatterbuck conducted an attendance roll call.

**Adoption of Agenda**

Mr. Hahn requested the Planning Commission consider amending this agenda to allow discussion of the Subdivision of Land Ordinance Amendments under New Business. Mr. Adams made a motion to amend the agenda to allow discussion of the Subdivision of Land Ordinance Amendments under New Business. Mr. Smelser seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously (5-0). Chairman Burner noted that this new item will be added after the Adoption of Minutes.

**Public Hearing**

**A. Campground Ordinance Amendment**

Mr. Hahn noted there was not much to add from staff than what has already been mentioned. He reminded the Commissioners about the change recommended by the county attorney, discussed at the last regular meeting. He also referenced a list of questions that had been emailed to staff and forwarded to the Commissioners, which he has provided to the Planning Commission tonight. Chairman Burner opened the public hearing at 7:02 p.m. Chairman Burner reminded speakers they are limited to three minutes, and it is not an interactive format. Discussion should be limited to the campground ordinance amendments.

Frank Filipy: He is a Page County resident. He read the proposed regs with great interest. There have been a lot of improvements made, and he thanked the Planning Commission for its hard work. But he still thinks we have a ways to go. On Page 2 under campgrounds, three or more campsites constitutes a campground. He asked why there is no upper limit on the number of campsites. He thinks there should be an upper limit. On Page 5 it says that "No campground shall be less than 10 contiguous acres." He asked why there is no upper limit on the size of campgrounds in Page County. He thinks this needs to be quantified. As he read the document, he searched for references to water, specifically the Shenandoah River and perennial streams, and he found it in only one part – landscaping. He is very pleased with landscaping and Virginia native plants. But he is distressed that there is no mention of river riparian setbacks. We should have a mandated 50-foot setback for riparian buffer on any new proposed campground. A riparian buffer is not to be confused with a green belt. These are ecologically important habitats. It is not something to be landscaped. He thinks the regulations should state that no vegetation except for invasive species should be removed from the riparian buffer, with the limited exception to foot access to the river's edge. He referenced language from the definition of "green belt" which could be used for this.

Babette Thorpe: She lives at 5995 Page Valley Drive in the landscape recognized by the Commonwealth of Virginia as important to the benefit of wildlife between the Blue Ridge Mountains and the George Washington National Forest. Most of her property is zoned Woodland-Conservation and Ag. Most of her land is conserved, but they did buy 12 acres recently that would come under the terms of this ordinance if they or future owners wanted to develop a campground. They have conserved their property, but she likes to see people enjoying the river and mountains, too. She appreciates that the Planning Commission is working to strike a balance with these revisions. She thinks what the Commission has done is so much better than what existed before. She likes the lowered density. She likes the requirements for more details on the site plan, especially in encouraging campground owners upfront to tell you how they will minimize impact on neighbors. She likes the requirement for open space. She likes the requirement for native plantings. She likes the prohibition on drones and fireworks. One change she hopes the Commission will consider is reducing the density more, especially in areas zoned Woodland-Conservation or shown in the Environmental Protection Tier. The [Comprehensive] Plan says these areas should experience little or no development because of their location and other factors. But if she understands the revisions correctly, 100 acres of land zoned Woodland-Conservation in the Environmental Protection Tier could be developed with hundreds of campsites - she thinks 900 - after the 40 acres is designated for open space or recreation. That would probably require a wastewater treatment plant, which the Comprehensive Plan recommends be discouraged in the Environmental Protection area. She worries the density allowed is much higher than would be allowed for residential development in the same place, and this paves the way for private sewage treatment plants throughout the county, creating problems down the road as the plants age out. One more concern is that we do a great job marketing beautiful places in Page County. We've invested time, money, and staff to do that. She would like to see us do just as good a job and invest at least as much money in conserving those places, especially lying along the river. It feels like time is running out to conserve large properties along the river. She would like to see Page County step up to the plate and help provide options to landowners who are interested in selling their development rights along the river and in other special places. She thanked the Planning Commission for their time.

Mark Frondorf: He is the Shenandoah River Keeper, and he is also a Page County resident living in Rileyville. He thanked the Planning Commission for the permit revisions in the draft. He knows a lot of hard work went into it. He knows how hard it is slogging line-by-line in documents. He said he wanted to speak on four concerns. First – the “Purpose” section mentions protection and proper use of land. He recommends inserting the words “the Shenandoah River” following that phrasing to make it clear that Page County values not only the land but also the amazing public resource we have, the south fork of the Shenandoah River. Second, under the “Enforcement; zoning application requirements” section, paragraph 3 states there needs to be a property management plan that discusses how the impact of the campground will be minimized with respect to the neighbors. This makes perfect sense – that nearby neighbors aren't bothered by campers trespassing across property lines. He asks that public water be included in this section of the property management plan. Luray Campground has the ability to put 750 people on the river at any one time. This creates density that impairs Page County residents' own use and enjoyment of the river. Residents will not want to go to the 211 bridge access to swim or fish because it will be too crowded. Third – truth in advertising. What was put forth in the November 2021 meeting and approved by the Page County Board looks a lot different than what you see now off of route 211. There needs to be accountability such that what the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors approved actually ends up looking like what is being built. There needs to be better accountability. Fourth – back in November 2021 when Page County leaders had the vote on the rezoning and the Special Use Permit (SUP), they did themselves a disservice by having both votes on the same night. There needs to be 30 days between the rezoning vote and the special use vote

so residents can have time to digest what is being put forth. A lot of the acrimony and dissent that took place since then would have been addressed on the front end.

Ken Jamielity: He has read the ordinance. He likes it. A lot of work went into it. A lot of things are detailed out that he approves of. He was asked by someone who could not be here tonight to mention that there is no mention of checking for possible graveyards or burial sites before issuing a permit for a campground. He referenced the recent circumstances at Bluewater where bones were found that turned out to be animal bones. He recommended adding a line that due diligence should be done to verify that there are no burial sites on a proposed campground.

Paul Otto: He was going to say a few words touting the good work that everyone has done on this. But listening to the prior speakers, he is wondering if further considerations should be made. He knows a lot of work went into it. Six or seven months in committee. He is sure everyone is anxious to get it off the table. In light of some of the things that have been discussed tonight, he doesn't think it would be a good idea to rush.

Chris Anderson: She expressed agreement with the previous commentor and those before that this is a big deal. There are a lot of details in it and we have invested quite a bit of time and energy, already. But we don't need to be in a hurry. As Mr. Frondorf said, things happen where we have to experience the unexpected when we get in a rush. The one thing that makes her nervous still is that we didn't address the onsite septic and water systems/package plants. This may not be the ordinance to do that in, but she thinks we need to consider whether we want to allow those. There are some other counties that do not allow package plants, at all. She wanted to use the remainder of her time to continue Mr. Filipy's comments on lighting in particular. The ordinance draft states, "Any lighting that is provided on the campground should be directed downwards, so as to minimize glare onto adjoining properties, the night sky, or public roads." Downward-facing lighting is a step in the right direction to reduce light pollution. This can be approved upon greatly by requiring, at a minimum, cut-off light fixtures, and at best, full cut-off light fixtures. A full cut-off light fixture is best for preserving our natural night sky because it prevents light from being emitted on or above the horizontal plane. However, cut-off fixtures are fair options for reducing light pollution. She provided a handout to the Planning Commissioners and staff. She thanked the Planning Commission.

Mr. Hahn indicated there were no more speakers. Chairman Burner closed the public hearing at 7:17 p.m.

Ms. Grech stated she had several comments, but invited her colleagues to speak first.

Mr. Smelser stated he thinks we received some good feedback. He doesn't see any reason why we couldn't take at least another meeting to consider these, and discuss some now. Mr. Adams expressed agreement with Mr. Smelser.

Ms. Grech noted two of the speakers, Ms. Anderson and Mr. Otto, were on the subcommittee, which she had the pleasure of chairing. Two of her colleagues were also on the subcommittee. We spent six months discussing this, with a lot of thought. She appreciated that the speakers thought we had made good progress. Some of the topics that were addressed tonight were actually discussed, such as riparian buffers. Somebody from the public had some interesting recommendations, but she thinks staff had determined that we can't address riparian buffers because they are addressed by state code. She recommended we look back into that. She agrees we need to at least consider some mentions of the Shenandoah River. There were a couple other recommendations that she thinks we should consider. She referred to the questions that had been submitted in writing, from Mr. Alan Eldridge. He questioned whether we should leave the term "primitive sites," since it was defined but not mentioned later in the draft. The answer to that is

primitive sites may be addressed in the SUP. He had also asked whether the signage on perimeter fencing would also be required along riverfront property lines. He also asked about setbacks along the riverfront. She noted that the river is coming up in a lot of comments, tonight. There was a lot of displeasure over the permitting for Luray RV resort. She thinks the least we can do is give those thoughts some more consideration. She made a motion that we table a decision until the next meeting so that we have time to at least look at these points that have been brought up. Some of these will require a bit of work from staff, and she is happy to help. She thanked Mr. Otto and Ms. Anderson for their suggestion, and she indicated she would like to defer to them since they were also on the subcommittee. Mr. Smelser seconded the motion. Chairman Burner asked for a roll call. The motion passed unanimously (5-0).

Mr. Hahn asked if there was anything staff should work on specifically for the next meeting. Ms. Grech said she would like to address that, but not this minute. She would like to reread her notes on the comments and potentially discuss more with the public after the meeting. She will put these into notes and discuss this with staff before the next meeting. She asked Chairman Burner if this was acceptable. Chairman Burner agreed, adding that one thing he would like to determine is exactly where the line would be for property lines along the river. He stated this could be on the river or in the center of the river. The last thing we want to do put a fence in the middle of the river. Ms. Clatterbuck agreed that deed language on riverfront property lines can vary. Ms. Grech stated this is why we didn't specifically address this. The interpretation of the zoning ordinance is left to the Zoning Administrator, which can be appealed in a formal process. This is why we're not writing out too many specifics. Ms. Grech also referenced a comment about the noise ordinance. It is helpful to remember that the noise ordinance is not enforced by anyone in zoning. It is not our turf. It is the Sheriff's Office and the Board of Supervisors.

### New Business

#### **A. Adoption of Minutes- August 8, 2023**

Chairman Burner allowed for some time to review the minutes. He asked if there were any changes that needed to be made, and there were no changes recommended. Mr. Turner made a motion to approve the minutes for August 8, 2023, as presented. Grech seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously (5-0).

#### **B. Subdivision of Land Ordinance Amendments Discussion**

Mr. Hahn stated the reason he requested this be added to the agenda is he wanted to make the Planning Commission aware of some staff comments he intended to make to the Board on the following Monday. This is in regards to the amendments to the current Subdivision of Land ordinance the Planning Commission had approved some months ago. He summarized these changes, including the change to the 25-acre rule. We haven't presented that to the Board, and we're planning to do so on Monday. Staff is going to recommend the Board not take these amendments to public hearing. This recommendation is based on a few things. Staff, Chairman Burner, and one Board member met with VDOT shortly after this amendment was passed. That meeting created reservations regarding sliding scale, which was associated with the 25-acre rule. Also, last meeting the Planning Commission created a new Subdivision Subcommittee, the purpose of which was to review the [Subdivision chapter of the] Berkley Group consolidated draft. The concern we have is any recommendation we make to the Board, we may just be undoing in a couple months based on what the subcommittee and the Planning Commission decide. Mr. Hahn stated he did not want to make this staff recommendation without first informing the Planning Commission. He offered to answer any questions. Chairman Burner stated Mr. Hahn had reached out to him and he agreed this is something we could do, but as Chairman he can't make decisions for the Planning Commission. He stated we feel we need to have consensus from the Planning Commission members.

Ms. Grech stated it would be nice if we could put this into context by reminding us exactly what we sent to public hearing and approved, since it has been quite a few months. She asked why we would present this to the Board at all if we're just going to send it right back. Mr. Hahn stated these were great points. However, the Planning Commission has duly passed this, so the Board needs to take some action. Ms. Grech agreed. Mr. Hahn stated the Board very well may disregard staff's recommendation and send this to public hearing. Ms. Grech recommended just explaining to the Board that there is a subcommittee meeting on this. They can send it to public hearing and pass what we approved, but it would be a waste of time and county resources if we're going to go back and undo it. Mr. Hahn stated this is exactly why staff is making this recommendation. Ms. Grech stated she had no problem with this. Mr. Hahn asked if he should clarify what the Planning Commission had voted on. Chairman Burner asked if anyone has any objections to staff's recommendation to the Board. All other commissioners verbally indicated they had no objections, and Chairman Burner stated no formal vote was required, and consensus agreed with the recommendation. Chairman Burner agreed it might be a waste of resources to just have to undo some of these changes in six months. He wants us to get it correct right away and not patch it.

### **Unfinished Business**

#### **A. Zoning Ordinance Amendment – Quarry Operation**

Mr. Hahn stated we've had a few meetings with a lot of good discussion. He reminded the Planning Commission that Mr. Kretsch from Virginia Energy had spent some time answering questions at the last meeting. The Planning Commission has so far not made any changes to the existing draft in the packets. He noted he had updated the table showing various regulations for localities adjacent to Shenandoah National Park, as well as Shenandoah County. He added columns for zoning categories and setbacks. He added that within the last couple of weeks, he received an email from Rob Lanham, who is the Aggregate Program Manager for Virginia Transportation Construction Alliance (VTCA). He pointed out that Mr. Lanham is here tonight and willing to offer an industry perspective, if that's something the Planning Commission would like to hear. Also, David Frazier of Frazier Quarry is present. Frazier quarry was discussed a couple times at the last meeting.

Chairman Burner said he has fielded a few phone calls, today. He wants to make sure we're clear on what exactly we're trying to do. A business came forward to the Zoning Department with an interest in operating a quarry. Our current zoning ordinance does not allow quarries. It doesn't matter which state entities are regulating it. He thinks there is confusion that we're writing this ordinance to regulate quarries. We are, to a certain degree. But we're also writing it to give people an opportunity to open a quarry in Page County. The work we're doing is to allow a quarry to exist in Page County, because right now a quarry could not open. Even though state entities regulate quarries, local ordinance have to allow the use. Ms. Grech stated that in reading one of the past quarry permits Mr. Hahn had sent to the Planning Commission members, she noticed that the zoning ordinance was interpreted erroneously at that time as to say if a use was not mentioned it was allowed. So, quarries not being mentioned in the current ordinance means they are not allowed. In order to even make that use a possibility, we need to imagine regulations to allow it. That is the stage we are examining now – what a quarry is. She is doing a lot of research on blasting, noise, and a lot of things. She stated she has a lot of comments for tonight.

Mr. Smelser stated he would like to hear from the speakers that are here. Chairman Burner invited Mr. Lanham and Mr. Frazier to the podium. Mr. Lanham thanked the Commission for the opportunity to address the Planning Commission and for the clarification regarding the purpose of these discussion in creating a way quarry and mining operations can exist in Page County. There are several other counties that are looking to limit, restrict, or eliminate the ability to have mines and quarries in operation. He stated he had a short video that shows the process. He thinks the video will help answer some of the questions Ms. Grech had from a couple weeks ago.

Mr. Lanham stated the aggregate business is a very local business, and it has to be. Volumes are high for our product. Transportation cost is high for our product. The price for the product is relatively low. If you take your truck to a quarry, the price for a load of 57 gravel is about \$15 to \$20 a ton. To transport that material 20 miles, you have to add another \$10 to it. The average radius for a quarry's market area is about 25 miles. Once you get past 25 miles, the economics get out of wack. Tidewater Virginia has no rock – it's all sand and gravel. The aggregate in Tidewater is double what it is in Richmond, and that's before they distribute from the sale yards to the projects.

Mr. Lanham stated aggregate is used in all the roads, under all the roads, in the concrete, in your toothpaste, in aspirin, in antacids, in glass, in the paint in the wall. It's everywhere. You use it every day. The National Association says every American uses about 10 tons of aggregate per year. That's not coal, lithium, or copper – those are metals. It's not fuel. It's aggregate – crushed stone or sand or gravel. It is a key component of everyday life for every person.

His association represents about 91% of all the metal/nonmetal mineral production in Virginia. Our members, like Frazier, Luck Stone, Rocky Dale quarries, are upstanding operators. They want to comply. This morning he was in Arlington meeting with the head of enforcement for safety asking him how can we comply better. We want to comply. Mr. Kretsch had mentioned when you build a quarry, the investment you put in for something you're going to sell for \$15 a ton has got to be very long term. The financial models for quarries are 50 years. Some of them run out to 100 years. He stated they have commissioned the Virginia Tech Center for Economic and Community Engagement to develop an economic impact statement for the aggregate industry in Virginia. He'll be happy to get that to Mr. Hahn when it is available.

Mr. Lanham recommended that the as the Planning Commission develops the ordinance, it should permit these operations, but make sure it permits good operations. He asked Mr. Frazier how long they have been in business, and Mr. Frazier answered since 1915. Mr. Lanham stated the last thing that the Fraziers want is a bad operator in the industry. That makes the whole industry look bad. He asked the Planning Commission take into account those considerations that enhance the operator's ability to operate in a good way for the county, society, and the operator.

Mr. Lanham asked if Mr. Frazier had anything to add. Mr. Frazier said Mr. Lanham covered it. He highlighted the hyper-locality of most quarries. They are operating within a 20 to 25-mile radius. Most of those operators live and raise a family in the community in which they operate. They hire locally. They are fully aware that a lot of their product stays within the community they are serving.

Ms. Grech indicated she would like to see the video. She also has a few questions. She referenced Mr. Lanham's recommendation to permit good operators. She asked Mr. Lanham to elaborate. Mr. Lanham stated that the mineral mining program in Virginia pretty much dictates what environmental impacts are going to be permitted by them. They have a state code. The locality can go beyond the state code. Mr. Lanham referenced Ms. Grech's comment from the last meeting, agreeing we don't want a quarry near Luray Caverns. Absolutely not. You don't want a quarry that is an eyesore to Shenandoah National Park. These are national treasures. Take those into consideration. Make sure the roads leading into and out of the proposed sites can accommodate a lot of trucks. It is a significant number of trucks that come in and out of the quarry. One thing to keep in mind is that quarries and aggregate serve a local market. Those trucks are going to come to serve the local market – they're just coming from further away. It's technically not an increase in trucks. It's just a shift of where they are coming from. But when you repeatedly run them in and out of one site, you need to make sure traffic controls are in place and the lanes and the roads are wide enough to handle that for safety and convenience.

Ms. Grech asked if he had any recommendations regarding noise, health of the population in terms of aggregate and dust, and water protection. Mr. Lanham stated water protection is addressed through the mineral mining program's permit. They review and issue the permits, and DEQ enforces the permits. DEQ comes out to their sites and reviews their structures and BMPs to make sure they are complying. The industry has to take quarterly samples to monitor the water they discharge out of every outfall off their site. Most quarries are very good about directing all the runoff into the quarry. That gives the water opportunity to settle and become cleaner when they pump it out. Quarries also need water for dust control. Mr. Lanham stated the video shows the dust control sprayers as well as tire washing systems for the trucks leaving the quarry. A lot of quarries have tire washing systems, and this is something you can put in your regulations. Regarding noise – unfortunately the video does not have sound. They had the video made so they can speak during the presentation. The noise of crushers is a low rumble. You can put time restrictions on it so that they don't run after 5:00, or Mondays through Fridays. The blasts are surprisingly quiet. He stated Ms. Grech had a lot of questions about blasting at the previous meeting, and there is a blast in the video. Blasts are unexciting, which is what we want. They only last about a second. A very large quarry, such as in Northern Virginia, might be blasting two times a week, and it lasts about one to two seconds. So, over the course of a year, only a couple minutes of actual blast time. It's a fraction of disturbance, and a lot of that disturbance barely leaves their site. They've designed their blast to not leave the site. The sound isn't loud. The blast is not one of the loudest things that happens at a quarry. Mr. Frazier stated they're typically going to be below 130 dB. Mr. Lanham stated the backup alarms on the equipment or the truck driver slamming his tailgate to get the mud off is typically going to be louder than a blast.

Ms. Grech referenced the buffer zone along the perimeter of the campground in the draft campground ordinance. She asked if that would be of any use in a quarry, and if this would be protective of sound and dust. Mr. Lanham answered absolutely. With the quarry for whom he worked for 22 years, the intention was to build as big a buffer as they could. They were operating on about 400 acres. The pit was about 40 acres. They had a processing plant, a stockpile area, and areas undisturbed under the permit. But he owned 2,200 acres, because he didn't want to disturb neighbors. That's very market-sensitive, though. This is in Culpeper. In Northern Virginia, where land is sold by the square foot, it's not practical. That's why you're starting to see quarries in Northern Virginia close down. A big one in Centerville is getting phased out and being reclaimed.

Ms. Grech stated she assumed it would be a good idea to have something in our ordinance regarding a reclamation plan. Mr. Lanham stated Virginia Energy already requires that. It has to be renewed every year. The renewal process can be we have no changes to the current reclamation plan, and they pay the permit fee.

Ms. Grech asked the Chairman if we can watch the video, and he agreed. Mr. Hahn played the video Mr. Lanham had provided. Mr. Lanham spoke over the video, which was approximately five minutes. He discussed the process of removing overburden and laying out a pattern for blasting, designed by licensed blasters. They want to create as much violence as they can within the blast because that's the cheapest way to break rock. Ms. Grech asked where this quarry was, and Mr. Lanham said it was Luck Stone Quarry in Richmond, obviously a very large quarry. The video showed a blast, loading of material into haul trucks, and hauling to a primary crusher. He noted how the dust is minimized by using a water spray bar. He described the conveyor belts and various crushing steps to turn the rock into gravel.

Ms. Grech asked about the size of the quarry in the video, and Mr. Lanham said he wasn't sure. One of the nice things about a quarry is the footprint expands slowly even though you're extracting more material, because you're going down. He described benching, using an example of digging 50 feet down, then 50 feet laterally, then 50 feet down.

Continuing with the video, Mr. Lanham noted when you get to the granite quarries in the Piedmont, this time of year with limited rain, they don't have enough water. Ms. Grech asked what happens, and Mr. Lanham stated they stop. Mr. Lahham stated that quarries build ponds to hold water for that reason. He pointed out the wheel washing station in the video. He stated a lot of quarries recycle their water. The only time quarries discharge water is when there is a lot of rain. One of the things they're working on with DEQ now is when there is a heavy rain, 8 to 10 inches, a stream might reach into a quarry, and now you have massive flooding in the quarry. The quarry fills up with 40 to 60 feet of water, and DEQ won't let them pump it out until it reaches a certain level of clarity, so the quarry has to shut down. They are working with DEQ to change that level so that quarries can pump sooner, because if you have flooding at that level, bridges, culverts, and roads are washed out, and localities need the product to put the infrastructure back.

Ms. Grech stated it is reasonable to assume any quarry operation would need to be located near a body of water. Mr. Lanham stated no. Quarries can keep the runoff water in the quarry. And in this area where there is a lot of karst topography, there is an inherent amount of groundwater. Ms. Grech asked, since there are concerns of drought in the Valley, and some farmers have had their wells run dry, will this drain on the water table be undesirable for our farming operations. Mr. Lanham stated that he doesn't know. He has been in the industry for 42 years, and in an area where the groundwater is not in the rock, and he's never known this to be an issue. The water table is the water table. They've heard from hydrologists that the water for a 100-acre pit is a tiny bucket in the scale of the water table. Most of what a quarry is doing is using and recycling the runoff. They only pump out when they have too much. Mr. Frazier agreed, adding they do have a sump at the bottom of their pits, which they use to pump water for their operations. They don't do any wet screening – it is all dry screening. But they use water suppression to control the dust. The state regulates this. Mr. Lanham agreed, stating DEQ regulates the dust emissions. They actually have a harder time staying compliant in the winter, because they can't run water suppression below freezing temperatures.

Mr. Smelser asked Mr. Lanham, in his experience in Virginia, what is the effect of a quarry operation in karst topography. Mr. Lanham said he has been in this role for five years and was very active in the association for 15 years, and he has never heard of there being an issue. Mr. Frazier stated it would be responsible for any operator doing an open-pit quarry to do due diligence and core drilling at an appropriate depth to see if there are any sinkholes or caverns. Nobody wants to mine something that doesn't exist. Frazier Quarry has done this at all their operations. As far as karst topography, it's pretty solid rock. Mr. Lanham added that there are also early steps to make sure there is a local market for the stone. Then you need to do exploratory drilling to make sure there is enough material to last 50 to 100 years. If they dig down 100 feet and discover mud seams, caverns, or voids, they aren't going to want to operate there. They're going to spend a lot of money investigating.

Ms. Grech stated Mr. Lanham had answered her question about buffering in a positive manner, but he also mentioned that quarries can be an eyesore from Shenandoah National Park. That is really hard to buffer from, because it is much higher. There are very few places that aren't visible from Shenandoah National Park. Mr. Lanham stated about the only thing you can do is put them behind other ridges. They don't look much different from a landfill, the campground, or 20 acres of chicken houses. It's just something out there that's part of the landscape.

Mr. Smelser asked Mr. Lanham to briefly describe what a reclamation process looks like. Mr. Lanham said it's all over the board. The sand and gravel operations mostly in the eastern part of the state are very shallow pits. Maybe 30 feet deep. Those are mined for several years and generally restored back to their original state with the topsoil and vegetation put back. Sometimes they go into agriculture. The quarry in Centerville that is getting phased out is the first quarry that is going offline that he has seen being in the mining industry in Virginia, and they are filling it



back in with clean fill from construction sites around Northern Virginia. There is a real shortage of places in that area for contractors to dump the dirt. Their ultimate goal is to regrade the land and turn it into a park. He discussed some other reclamation plans, including one to be water storage for the District of Columbia. Mr. Smelser asked if a quarry can have additional benefit to a community at the end of its life cycle. Mr. Lanham agreed. He added he has seen some quarries become landfills. They make good landfills, because you're not going to have a blowout in a quarry for a landfill. Nobody wants a landfill, but it is an opportunity. Another quarry had discussed turning it into a ski slope. In Texas there is a roller coaster descending into a quarry. There can be amusement parks or concert venues. Shanghai China has an unbelievable hotel constructed in an old quarry.

Chairman Burner asked if there were questions. Ms. Grech thanked the speakers.

Chairman Burner suggested they spend some time looking at the ordinance draft. Ms. Grech stated she would like to discuss the setbacks. She thinks we should consider adding a minimum size of parcel under standards. She thinks we should add maximum slopes out of concern for erosion. She stated Mr. Kretsch had indicated blasting isn't required for shale pits and sand and gravel quarries, so depending on the nature of the application that might be coming for our examination, if blasting is not required, why are we opening a door wide open if it's just asking to be cracked? Why are we going to allow blasting when the only project that is currently being remotely considered doesn't require blasting? She would like to see an environmental impact statement as a requirement. She would like to see proof of adequate liability insurance, and she isn't sure if the state does that. She thinks these are things we considered in the solar ordinance. She would like for a buffer zone to be added like we did for campgrounds. In the description of vegetation, she thinks we need to ask for a description of bodies of water and creeks. She thinks we need to add a requirement for a reclamation plan.

Chairman Burner stated he doesn't think it's wise to completely shut out blasting. The criteria for considering the special use permit includes an item regarding "considerations regarding the means and timing of extraction and processing of material." We can leave the blasting up to the SUP. If they don't want to do blasting, then we don't allow it. If they need to do blasting given the geology of the land, then we can consider it. He doesn't think we should take the option away. Regarding the reclamation plan during the SUP: they may not have an established reclamation plan until they go through the permitting process with the state. He doesn't think we'll get a copy of the final reclamation plan during the SUP process. Ms. Grech stated that we asked for a decommissioning plan as part of the application process for industrial solar, and she asked why this would be any different. This is part of the state process, anyhow. They should at least be able to provide what they plan to do. Mr. Hahn stated he imagines the reclamation plan would be quite expensive and something they would not want to embark upon until they have some indication whether the locality would approve their SUP. But he does understand why we would want to have some understanding of what the reclamation plan would be, along with some means of holding the applicant to that plan. Ms. Grech suggested it be a preliminary reclamation plan. Mr. Smelser asked Mr. Frazier about this. Mr. Frazier returned to the front and stated reclamation plans are required and can vary from site to site. The one they have in Harrisonburg is pretty simple. It essentially requires a certain amount of topsoil on site at all times. They have to reclaim where the plant was. The soil has to sustain at least two growth cycles of vegetation that is required by the state. Mr. Smelser asked if this is something unreasonable for us to ask for, and Mr. Frazier said absolutely not. Mr. Hahn asked Mr. Frazier if this is something reasonable for the locality to ask for at the local level before it gets to the state, and Mr. Frazier said he's not an expert, but he assumes the locality should have a say in it, to a degree. Ms. Grech agreed, saying if the life cycle is 50 years, she wants to know what is going to be there in 70 years. That is responsible planning. We need to have at least a preliminary reclamation plan.

Mr. Austin came to the front and asked about tying a reclamation plan to the site plan review. There was further discussion about site plans and reclamation plans. Chairman Burner expressed concern about what happens in seven years down the road if the intended reclamation changes. Is this going to put us in a situation where the intended reclamation plan changes and now the SUP might be voided. Ms. Grech stated if we're asking for it as part of the application, we don't necessarily need to make it part of the conditions. Mr. Smelser agreed a generalization should be sufficient. Mr. Austin expressed agreement, making sure the intention was not necessarily to tie the special use to the plans. Ms. Grech expressed agreement. Ms. Grech added what we are trying to do with all of these ordinances is to have as much information up front so we don't have extended SUP reviews, such as we had with campgrounds. Mr. Austin suggested requiring a geotechnical report. Most of the time they're already doing that work.

There was more discussion about what the county role, specifically the Zoning Administrator's role, would be if the reclamation plan dramatically changed, such as from a park to a landfill. Chairman Burner stated that a copy of the reclamation plan by Virginia Energy needs to be on file with the county if any changes occur within a certain time. Those uses would need to go through a separate SUP at the time they begin to be used in that way, including at the initial stages of that new use's development. There was more discussion about what a reclamation plan actually entails. Mr. Frazier indicated they are typically more general, and Ms. Grech clarified they are more about the means of reclamation. Mr. Frazier agreed. Ms. Grech stated it is then a matter of general interest to us as to whether we approve of the anticipated future use down the road. She recommended this be worded as a preliminary reclamation plan, or something that won't tie our hands. The specifics are regulated by the state, anyhow. Mr. Lanham added that by the time most operators have determined they need to come to the locality and apply for the SUP, they have a good idea what the mining plan will be. Ms. Grech agreed, adding we just want to know what that's going to be. Mr. Lanham added that we could require the mining plan, including the reclamation plan, during the SUP. Bigger, more urban counties have addressed this. He encourages us to look at other counties' regulations. Ms. Grech added that a savvy applicant may want to tell us what the ultimate use will be in order to make the project more exciting. Let's give them the opportunity to do this.

Mr. Lanham mentioned Mr. Frazier has extended an invitation for the Planning Commission members to visit one of their quarries, and Mr. Frazier agreed, providing some options. Chairman Burner asked members to consider language that needs to be changed and for staff to work on proposed changes for the next meeting.

- B. Review and discuss updates to the Page County Zoning Ordinance (Chapter 125)**  
Chairman Burner recommended not discussing this item tonight, given the time.

Adjourn

Mr. Smelser made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Turner. The meeting was adjourned at 8:27 p.m.

  
Jared Burner, Chairman