

**WASHINGTON COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
WORKSHOP MEETING
February 22, 2016**

The Washington County Planning Commission held a workshop meeting on Monday, February 22, 2016 at 3:00 p.m. at the Washington County Administration Building, 100 West Washington Street, Room 255, 2nd Floor, Hagerstown, Maryland.

Commission members present were: Chairman Terry Reiber, Clint Wiley, Andrew Bowen, Jeremiah Weddle, Dennis Reeder and David Kline. Staff members present were: Washington County Department of Planning & Zoning - Stephen Goodrich, Director; Jill Baker, Chief Planner; Fred Nugent, Parks and Environmental Planner; Meghan Jenkins, GIS Analyst; and Debra Eckard, Administrative Assistant.

CALL TO ORDER

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

COMMISSION MEMBER APPOINTMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Mr. Reeder has been re-appointed by the Board of County Commissioners to the Planning Commission for an additional five year term.

Mr. Wiley's second full term will expire on March 31st. Previously the Planning Commission decided to recommend that the County Commissioners waive the two term limit and re-appoint Mr. Wiley because his experience and expertise during the on-going Comprehensive Plan Update will be extremely helpful. Mr. Wiley expressed his willingness to continue to serve. However, Mr. Goodrich stated that the County Commissioners' policy recommends that all boards and commissions should submit 2 or 3 applicants to fill vacant positions. Following a brief review of applicants interested in appointment to the Planning Commission, the Commission recommends the following persons to the Board of County Commissioners for appointment:

1. Clint Wiley (with the explanation for re-appointment)
2. Edward Wurmb
3. Philip Ulzheimer

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

Ms. Baker began the work session with a review of the County's mission statement, which is mimicked by the Comprehensive Plan goals for the County. The current Comp Plan focused on these goals, which were broken down into sub-goals or objectives. Recommendations were then developed to implement or achieve the goals and objectives in the most efficient manner. Staff has evaluated each goal and objective to determine if they have been accomplished. Ms. Baker noted that the last Comp Plan focused on Smart Growth Initiatives – Rural Area down zoning, the Urban Growth Area rezoning and Town Growth Area rezoning.

Ms. Baker explained that we need to decide what the focus of this Comprehensive Plan should be keeping in mind that there are regulations established by the State of Maryland to which we must adhere. Mr. Reiber expressed his opinion that we need to encourage economic growth from businesses; and, if the business growth comes we need to focus on housing and utilities. Mr. Reeder stated that during the public meetings that were conducted across the County, the main concern was the lack of utilities, such as water and sewer.

Mr. Wiley discussed industries with high water usage and low economic advantages and questioned how we regulate that through land use in the County. Ms. Baker suggested working with EDC to develop a priority system, starting with an inventory of land and uses that we currently have. Then the question becomes, should we concentrate on revitalization of under-utilized or vacant land?

Mr. Reiber expressed his opinion that the County only has a certain amount of land to be used for economic growth of both industry and housing. Where do we go after that is all used? Mr. Wiley expressed his opinion that we should look at the current trends and opportunities to make sure we are adequately addressing them so opportunities exist for landowners.

Members discussed commuters coming in and going out of the County for employment. The question was asked, "Is Washington County a bedroom community?" Our education system in the County is expanding; however, the jobs and salaries to keep people here is lacking. Members believe that we will have commuter traffic no matter what, but transit should not be the focus of the Comprehensive Plan. The Commission briefly reviewed commuter projections.

Members discussed the cost differential of installing utilities, such as electric, between industrial and residential development. Mr. Kline expressed his opinion that adequate utilities could be used as an incentive to entice businesses to locate in the County. Should we include adequate electricity, natural gas, and broadband as a necessary utility, the same as water and sewer? The Commission reviewed an inventory recently completed by EDC outlining under-utilized and vacant properties with potential for business development. This information will be provided to the Commission members for future use.

Commission members briefly reviewed projected changes in the job industry between 2013 and 2040 from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Members requested a copy of this chart for future use also. We also reviewed the list of the largest employers in Washington County. Mr. Weddle expressed his opinion that people with jobs, such as warehouse workers and farm employees, will need to be educated because technological advancements being used by these industries will continue to grow.

Ms. Baker stated that there are no agenda items for the regular Planning Commission meeting scheduled on Monday, March 7, 2016. After a brief discussion, Commission members decided they would like to schedule a brief Workshop meeting during that time to continue working on the Comprehensive Plan. Another Workshop meeting has been scheduled for Monday, March 21, 2016 at 7:00 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

The Chairman adjourned the workshop meeting at 4:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Terry Reiber, Chairman