

**WASHINGTON COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR / WORKSHOP MEETING
March 7, 2016**

The Washington County Planning Commission held a regular/workshop meeting on Monday, March 7, 2016 at 7:00 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 and Jill Baker, Chief Planner.

CALL TO ORDER

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

MINUTES

Motion and Vote: Mr. Bowen made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 4, 2016 regular meeting as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Reeder and unanimously approved.

Motion and Vote: Mr. Reeder made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 4, 2016 Closed Session meeting as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Bowen and unanimously approved.

Motion and Vote: Mr. Bowen made a motion to approve the minutes of the February 1, 2016 regular meeting as presented. The motion was second by Mr. Wiley and unanimously approved.

Motion and Vote: Mr. Bowen made a motion to approve the minutes of the February 22, 2016 workshop meeting as presented. The motion was second by Mr. Wiley and unanimously approved.

WORKSHOP

Comprehensive Plan Update

Ms. Baker began by discussing the commuting patterns coming into the County versus leaving the County. During the February 22nd workshop meeting, Mr. Wiley noted that there were more commuters coming into Washington County than leaving the County as referenced in an article in the Herald-Mail. There were approximately 500 more commuters coming into Washington County during 2014; however, during the same time period there was a decline of approximately 1500 jobs.

Ms. Baker reviewed the County's Mission Statement and began a discussion regarding the goals and objectives of Goal 2: "Promote a balanced and diversified economy, including agriculture" of the current Comp Plan.

- Objective 1: Maintain at least 50,000 acres of land in agricultural production putting an emphasis on farming as a way of life and promoting the agricultural support industry.

Ms. Baker explained this is the acreage that has been calculated to support agriculture and agricultural industries in Washington County. We currently have approximately 28,000 acres of permanently preserved agricultural lands, not including any governmentally owned lands.

- Objective 2: Preserve our mineral resources for continued future production.

Ms. Baker noted that the County currently supports shale pits, limestone quarries, and a sand company that has recently moved into the Hancock area.

- Objective 3: Expansion of existing businesses while encouraging development of new manufacturing and high tech industries.

Ms. Baker noted that retention and expansion of existing businesses is currently the #1 priority of the County's Economic Development Commission and Business Development Department.

- Objective 4: Provide new locations for industry that will encourage the use of existing infrastructure facilities and take advantage of the interstate transportation system.
- Objective 5: Encourage and expand opportunities for recreation, leisure and educational tourism development with emphasis on heritage tourism attractions.

Ms. Baker noted that we received a lot of feedback regarding tourism from the community during our public participation process.

- Objective 6: Promote educational opportunities that develop and improve labor force.

This objective should be re-evaluated as it relates to land use.

- Objective 7: Maximize opportunities for using the airport and railroad and promoting economic development.

Ms. Baker noted that airport ridership has increased and new businesses including aviation related schools are now located at the airport. Throughout this process, the Commission may evaluate the Airport's Long Range Plan. Consideration needs to also be given to promoting railroads and the intermodal transportation facility just across the Pennsylvania state line.

- Objective 8: Transformation of the former Fort Ritchie military base to the Lakeside Corporate Center.

The Lakeside Corporate Center no longer exists; however, the Pen Mar Corporation is extremely interested in re-development of this site. This objective needs to be re-evaluated.

Mr. Bowen began a discussion relative to technology and making decisions for the future of the County. Many industries are using more technology, which means more skilled labor and training is required for jobs even in manufacturing and warehousing. Members discussed ways to promote, from a land use perspective, more educational opportunities in the County. Ms. Baker noted that creating a new zoning designation and application of it to the Hagerstown Community College provided an opportunity to meet its own needs whereby businesses could provide internships at the college with the hope of growing and expanding in the County in the future.

Members discussed ways to promote diversified industries. Ms. Baker noted that the current Comp Plan promotes targeted economic development areas such as the Hopewell Valley, Friendship Technology Park, the Airport, etc. Should the County promote more opportunities in the Town Growth Areas? Should the County provide more incentives for the expansion and location of industries in the County? It was noted that projections are showing a 10% decrease in manufacturing jobs over the next 20 to 25 years statewide.

There was a brief discussion regarding ways to encourage the growth and expansion of smaller businesses and how this relates to land use. Some of the following questions were raised: 1) should we promote programs to have land and/or buildings ready?; 2) Are there land use regulations undermining this process?; 3) Do we have zoning districts that don't allow this to happen? Members discussed the current incentives that the County has to offer to attract businesses such as: available work force, available flat land, and available water and sewer.

Mr. Bowen asked if there are other cultural influences that could affect land use. For example, dining out has increasingly become more routine in recent years as well as the use of bicycle and pedestrian pathways.

Consensus: The Planning Commission recommends adding an objective relative to small business development and expansion to the economic development section.

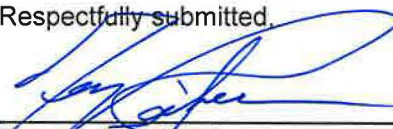
Mr. Weddle briefly discussed issues related to the preservation of farm land in Washington County. Due to changes in State land use regulations he believes that the County will be losing agricultural to development acreage and getting less money through the ag transfer tax to spend on preserving farmland. Mr. Goodrich stated that the County currently has 7 agricultural land preservation programs. Mr. Weddle expressed his opinion that most of the preserved (open space) land in the County is being preserved using Rural Legacy funds instead of preserving farmland using MALPP (Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Program) funds. MALPP funding is split with the State contributing 60% and the local government (County) contributing 40% of the funds. Mr. Weddle expressed his opinion that other counties around the area are preserving more farmland than Washington County. He questioned where other counties are getting the money to preserve this land.

Ms. Baker explained that the County currently has Priority Preservation Areas (PPAs), which includes approximately 75,000 acres of primarily agricultural land. There was a brief discussion relative to the methodology used to establish the PPAs. Staff would like to further explain the methodology used and guidelines dictated by the State of Maryland when establishing the PPAs.

ADJOURNMENT

The Chairman adjourned the workshop meeting.

Respectfully submitted,



Terry Reiber, Chairman