

**WASHINGTON COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
WORKSHOP MEETING
August 16, 2021**

The Washington County Planning Commission held a workshop meeting on Monday, August 16, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. in the Washington County Administrative Complex, 100 W. Washington Street, Room 2000, Hagerstown, MD.

Planning Commission members present were: Clint Wiley, Jeff Semler, and David Kline. Staff members present were: Washington County Department of Planning & Zoning: Jill Baker, Director, Jennifer Kinzer, Deputy Director; Travis Allen, Comprehensive Planner; Wyatt Stitley, Comprehensive Planner; and Debra Eckard, Administrative Assistant.

CALL TO ORDER

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 6:10 p.m.

Comprehensive Plan Update

Ms. Baker began a review of Chapter 7: Housing. She noted this was not previously a required element; however, in 2019, the State passed legislation requiring this element in local Comprehensive Plans. This legislation focuses on affordability and workforce housing and discusses specifically defining the AMI (average median income).

Ms. Baker briefly discussed staff's method of gathering data and resources used to do so. She noted that the data and information contained in this draft document focuses on the last 20 years; however, there are historic trends discussed and analyzed relative to development patterns, social patterns, etc. There was a brief discussion regarding people living and working in the County as opposed to living here and working elsewhere and working here and living elsewhere. Currently, it appears there is a good balance in Washington County.

Members briefly discussed the re-purposing of large, underutilized office buildings. It was noted that currently, Class A office space is not being sought due to more employees teleworking from home. Ms. Baker stated that these types of uses, if this is what the County wants, need to be incentivized through its planning documents and ordinances.

There was a brief discussion regarding accessory dwelling units. This should be considered for Washington County and staff will obtain additional information to share with Commission members. Staff can add language to the affordable housing section of the Comp Plan to discuss accessory dwelling units.

Ms. Baker informed members that staff is proposing to retract the Urban Growth Area boundary to the City of Hagerstown's Medium Range Growth Area (MRGA) due to the lack of water capacity to support growth and development.

Ms. Baker began discussions regarding Chapter 8: Transportation. This section focuses on adequate infrastructure and how the infrastructure handles the traffic issues facing our county. Also discussed in this element is connectivity to local, regional and global economies, census data, recreational trails, safety, interstates, new environmental considerations, such as air quality and resiliency, and multi-modal facilities, such as the airport, freight, rail and transit services.

There was a brief discussion regarding the Civil War Heritage trail at Weaverton. It was noted that the property is owned by the State of Maryland. This issue should be addressed in the Land, Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan which will be updated later this year; however, it will be acknowledged in the Comp Plan. Ms. Baker noted that an acknowledgement in the Comp Plan will not guarantee this trail will be built but it will leave avenues open that it could happen in the future. Mr. Semler believes that language could be added to discuss the economic impact this trail might have in the County. He believes that cost will be an impediment to the development of this trail.

The final chapter for review was Chapter 9: Economic Development. This element analyzes past and current employment trends in the County to help determine what growth industries we may see in the future. Across the State of Maryland we have seen increases in professional services and health and social wellness; however, in Washington County we are seeing a steady hold in manufacturing. Manufacturing is evolving to computerization; however, one disadvantage in the County is the undereducated

population. Retail and hospitality will probably continue to increase due to our proximity to two major interstates.

There was a brief discussion regarding air freight. One drawback for the Hagerstown Regional Airport would be the lack of customs officers for any freight coming from overseas. Currently, retailers are continuing to use larger airports. Ms. Baker noted that we are making strides in promoting and obtaining airline related activities.

There was a brief discussion regarding agriculture, land values, land preservation values, agri-tourism, etc. Members discussed the niche agricultural businesses being developed throughout the County, such as event centers, wineries, distilleries, etc. These topics will be discussed in a later element for Agriculture and Forestry.

Staff will distribute Chapters 10 (Community Facilities) and 11 (Historic) during the August 30th Planning Commission regular meeting.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

1. Monday, August 30, 2021, 7:00 p.m. – Washington County Planning Commission public rezoning information and regular meeting

ADJOURNMENT

The Chairman adjourned the meeting at 8:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,


Clint Wiley, Chairman