Mathews County Planning Commission

Tuesday, March 16, 2021 at 7:00 PM

MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER

AT A REGULAR MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF MATHEWS COUNTY, VIRGINIA, HELD IN THE MATHEWS COUNTY HISTORIC COURTHOUSE ON March 16, 2021 AT 7:00 PM.

Planning Commission Members Present:	Tim Hill, Chair David Rollins, Vice-Chair James Robinson Doug Wilton Billy Cook Brian Russell Paul Hudgins, Ex-officio
Members Absent:	Danette Machen
Also Present:	Thomas D. Jenkins, Director of Planning & Zoning James Knighton, Planner/Marine Project Coordinator Heather Thomas, Planning & Zoning Mindy Conner, County Administrator Hal Bourque, Economic Development Authority Brenda Moore, Economic Development Authority Christian Collier, 911 Dispatch Supervisor

THE MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION, FOLLOWED BY THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.

2. INVOCATION

Rev. Gary Barker, Kingston Parish, provided the invocation.

3. ROLL CALL OF PLANNING COMMISSION

Mr. Knighton called the roll and established that a quorum was present.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

4.A. Planning Commission Meeting Minutes - February 16th, 2021

Mr. Hudgins stated he is concerned that a lot of important information was left out of the original minutes for the meeting on 2/16/21. He added that a statement in the Gazette Journal didn't match the minutes or recorded video of the Planning Commission meeting. Mr. Hudgins stated he is disappointed that the planning commission's input was not considered and he did not support such a process. Mr. Hill asked Mr. Hudgins to be more specific. Mr. Hudgins stated a whole paragraph was added in the revised minutes. Mr. Hill asked Mr. Jenkins that we go back and double check this. Mr. Jenkins stated the question is, whether the revised minutes are sufficient for the group. Mr. Cook stated that the only thing that was left out was that Mr. Russell was appointed to research the dispatch and Fire/EMS systems. Mr. Hudgins read the information that was added to the revised minutes. Mr. Cook asked if the minutes seemed ok with Mr. Hudgins now. Mr. Hudgins stated they did other than the fact that Mr. Russell was not listed as the liaison. Mr. Cook asked Mr. Rollins if he agreed with the minutes. Mr. Rollins stated that in the meeting minutes it is written that Mr. Russell will speak with the Sheriff's Department. Mr. Hudgins asked if everyone received the original minutes as they were printed then revised. Mr. Cook stated that the only thing he thought was missing was that Mr. Russell was appointed and we took a second vote for Mr. Russell to meet with the Sheriff's office about their dispatch system. Mr. Hill asked that with those inclusions, would the committee be ok to go forward. Mr. Rollins made note that the Planning Committee does not approve but only recommends approval. He stated the minutes need to be changed to recommends approval to reflect this. Mr. Hill asked for a motion to approve the minutes as amended. Mr. Cook made the motion to approve the minutes as amended and Mr. Rollins seconded. All in favor. The vote was 6-0 as follows: Mr. Hill – aye; Mr. Rollins – aye; Mr. Robinson – aye; Mr. Cook – aye; Mr. Wilton – aye; and Mr. Russell - aye

5. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

No public comments

6. SPECIAL PRESENTATION

6.A. Role of the Mathews County Economic Development Authority (EDA) - Hal Bourque, Chair

Mr. Hill introduced the following Economic Development Authority of Mathews County board members, Hal Bourque and Brenda Moore. Mr. Bourque stated that the EDA is an organization that is authorized by the state of Virginia to allow the issuance of tax exempt bonds to qualifying bond request from legal entities. In general, that means all non-profit institutions. The EDA receives an allocation of $10,000,000 a year. Most bond requests exceed that amount, so they are shared by multiple EDAs at a time. It has been two years since the Mathews County EDA has completed a bond request and the last few that have been done were from participating with other EDAs. The EDA's revenue is based on 1/8th of 1% of the outstanding balance of any bond they authorize. Mr. Bourque gave an example; if they do a $10,000,000 bond then they receive $12,500 for the first annual draw. They have invested unallocated funds in a qualifying pool that is approved for government entities. The EDA's mission other than bond inducement letters is to try to do anything they can to facilitate economic development that sustains or improves the tax base for the county. Several years ago they did a feasibility study on assisted living facilities which would be something a health organization would have to have in order to get financing. At that time it was a priority of the Board of Supervisors and that is why they took that on. Mr. Hill asked how long ago that was. Mr. Bourque replied with, 10-15 years ago. Mr. Hill asked about the location. Mr. Bourque stated it did not involve a site it just involved the demographics of the county and the reimbursement situation for assisted living facilities at the time along with whether it was an economically viable possibility. Mr. Bourque stated it was positive enough to take to a lender to get a loan. Mr. Hill stated that after his conversation with Mr. Bourque and Mr. Jenkins, he spoke with 2 contractors along with a group of realtors, about revisiting the request as the county demographics have changed, in relation to a 28 acre parcel. Mr. Bourque stated that as long as it was non profit but a proprietary organization could not come to the EDA. Mrs. Moore stated they are still getting residual income from previous bonds. Mr. Cook inquired about the minimum bond amount. Mr. Bourque stated that there is no minimum on their end but that it would be decided by the bond attorney. The maximum for the EDA is their allocation. Mr. Hill asked what type of bond was the last one they participated in. Mrs. Moore stated that the last project was for Williamsburg Landing. Mrs. Conner stated they have also helped with the Mariners Museum and a private school in Charlottesville. She also stated the only one they are still receiving funds from is the Williamsburg Landing project. Mrs. Conner stated that the Mathews County EDA has done a good job establishing themselves as a reliable partner in issuing bonds. She also stated that one of the other authorities the EDA has is to buy and sell property, as the local government is a lot of more restricted in that regard. Mr. Robinson inquired on whether these properties would be county owned. Mrs. Conner stated they would be owned by the EDA and marketed through them. Mr. Bourque stated they do have a regional economic board and the state is forwarding opportunities of businesses that want to locate to our area. He stated that what Mathews really needs in order to bring theses businesses here is a "vanilla shell." A building with a certain amount of square feet, water and sewage which will prevent them from needing any permits. Mr. Bourque stated they only give about 2 weeks to respond to these requests and are mostly small businesses. He stated there have been a lot of requests but they have to turn them all down due to space constraints. Mr. Bourque said it is really important to try to expand the tax base from being so dependent on real estate and if the new comp plan could recognize this that would be great. He also noted that tourism is an excellent source of revenue for the county but feel like they are held back a lot because there is not a place for an overnight stay for a tour bus. Mr. Robinson asked whether the site mentioned before could be a tourism site instead of industrial site to address that issue. Mr. Bourque reiterated that from an economic standpoint, we are too reliant on real estate tax revenue and we need to diversify to be smart. Mr. Hill thanked Mr. Bourque for coming to the meeting.

7. COMMITTEE REPORTS

7.A. Brian Russell 911 Dispatch Equipment

Mr. Russell discussed the public safety radio system. He stated Sheriff Barrack along with Ronnie Lewis and a representative from the rescue squad met with him. Mr. Russell gave some background on the issues that the Fire/EMS have incurred with the previous radio system. He stated in October 2012 the analog system was losing communications as well as having dead zones where deputies could not call for help so repeaters were put in to fix the issue. In 2013, a grant was applied for which changed the system from analog to digital which included Fire/EMS but was only a "band-aid" fix. Weather conditions effected the digital system and the tone out was not working probably. Two systems were looked into to replace the current radio system used. The Harris system which is used by King & Queen, Tappahannock and Essex. As well as, the Hall system which is used by York, James City and Gloucester County. The Harris system quoted $875,000 in 2018 and will honor that quote with an additional $125,000 for handhelds. Also, it was stated that in July 2020 some discussions about not going to either systems had occurred. In 2021, there was a problem with the analog system failing when toning out. They had to replace a repeater which was no longer being manufactured but had kept a spare. Then in January 2021 at a regional meeting they were briefed on the Harris System that all would use. He stated that an advantage for the Harris system would be that they have a rep on the regional board and local dispatch would stay. Mr. Russell stated that the EMS and Fire Dept. supports the system which is quoted at $1 million. Mrs. Conner has been tasked by the BOS to find the funding for that system and then report back on where it would come from. Mr. Russell stated that there was some discussion about putting it out for bids but this is a system that is already out regionally. He stated that another advantages of the Harris system is if for some reason our dispatch system went down, due to natural disaster or whatnot all the calls could be transferred to the counties with same system. The other issue with the current system is that it doesn't allow dispatch takeover. If a firefighter went down inside a building and laid on his mic it would shut down the whole system which is a huge safety concern. Mr. Russell opened the topic up to questions. Mr. Cook stated that he was disappointed that this was not discussed longer and they were not able to research both systems. He stated that these departments have time to turn in their CIPs and he has discussed this with Mr. Jenkins. They came up with a way to fix this by assigning a liaison between four entities: Fire, EMS, Sheriff's Office and school system. He also noted stablishing this would put the future emergencies down to a minimum. Mr. Rollins inquired on how quickly the system would be implemented and online as well as the life expectancy. Mr. Russell stated it would be 8-9 months for total installation and that he could follow up on the life expectancy. Mr. Hudgins asked Mr. Russell if he had looked at any current coverage maps. Mr. Russell stated he had not looked at any but he is guessing there is still dead zones. He stated that the sheriff said weather does effect the communication. Mr. Wilton asked about the handheld pagers. Mr. Russell said they will be replaced with digital ones.

Mr. Russell started the discussion for the Sheriff's Office consoles for the dispatch system. The consoles are estimated to cost around $79,000. The location of the current dispatch system is toward the front of the building which is not a secure location. They are going to move the dispatch room to the rear of the building which will be a more secure location and has the space to contain all the servers as well as the state police system that has to be locked up. Mr. Hudgins asked if these consoles had been replaced with the last upgrade. Mr. Russell stated that he believed they were 20 years old and they had went over to look at them. Mr. Collier stated that current consoles were put in when the building was built. He stated the project is just moving the dispatch center and replacing the consoles. Mr. Russell asked Mr. Collier what the life expectancy of the Harris system is. Mr. Collier stated that it is a continuously evolving system with upgrades. Mr. Rollins asked what the cost of the annual contract was. Mr. Collier stated he was not prepared to discuss this, so he did not have those figures in front of him. Mr. Rollins asked Mr. Russell to follow up on that and he agreed. Mr. Cook asked to clarify what they were discussing. Mr. Collier stated that the quote for $229,000 for the dispatch and consoles was sent to the planning commission in error. He stated he has a grant to cover the cost of replacing the system every 5 years.

8. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

8.A. 2030 Comprehensive Plan 5-year Review:2021 Discussion

Mr. Jenkins stated Mr. Robinson drafted the tourism memo in the packet. Mr. Rollins stated that we are unique in that the fact that we are not on the way to anywhere and asked Mr. Robinson if he could put that into some perspective. Mr. Robinson answered that he believes the county has an opportunity to attract tourism. He stated it is a communication issue more than anything else. Mr. Hill said after reading the memo there is a clear delineation between when there was money spent on marketing and when it stopped. Mr. Wilton stated that Mathews is becoming a retirement community. Mr. Hill stated that from a real estate stand point he has seen younger couples showing interest. Also, he said when looking at the Yacht Club's new members, they have been 40-50 year old's with families due to them working from home. Mr. Cook stated that he had spoken to people at Haven Beach ranging from 18-30 years old and that internet was the issue. He said Mathews is doing a good job and needs to continue to get coverage to the rural areas. Mr. Jenkins stated that pages 7 and 8 lay out the goals for 2030. He did note that tourism is not mentioned in the goals section and it is one area that is probably lacking. Mr. Russell asked if they have an anticipated money amount for the lodging tax and the 3% that is going towards marketing tourism. Mrs. Conner stated that Mr. Jenkins can pull up more exact figures but that the 2% had generated about $20,000 which is more than they had anticipated. So the additional $20,000 will stay in the general fund and the 3% will be earmarked in a stand alone fund for marketing efforts. Mr. Rollins asked Mrs. Conner if she knows the percentage of actual places that are paying the tax. Mrs. Conner stated it was a difficult thing to audit and is tracked through the permits that are issued. Mr. Robinson stated that along with marketing we also need places for tourist to stay and eat. Mr. Jenkins asked Mr. Knighton to read the amendment to the goals section.

8.B. Capital Improvement Plan FY22

Mr. Jenkins stated the only other recommendation to vote on was the discussion they had earlier about Mr. Russell's research on the dispatch and console systems. He asked if there were any other questions. Mr. Hill stated there were none. Mr. Wilton made the motion to recommend the dispatch and console replacement to the board. Mr. Rollins seconded it. All in favor. The vote was 6-0 as follows: Mr. Hill – aye; Mr. Rollins – aye; Mr. Robinson – aye; Mr. Cook – aye; Mr. Wilton – aye; and Mr. Russell - aye

Mr. Jenkins asked if the board had any recommendations or comments on the spreadsheet that takes a look at the meals tax for the next five years. He stated these are just examples not recommendations. Mr. Rollins asked if he wanted to include the lodging tax on that. Mr. Jenkins said he is not going to include that at this point because it is not included in the capitol improvements.

Mr. Jenkins asked everyone if they are comfortable taking a final vote on this to include all the expenditures. Mr. Cook asked if he could go through them one more time. Mr. Wilton moved to recommend the CIP FY22. Mr. Cook seconded it. All in favor. The vote was 6-0 as follows: Mr. Hill – aye; Mr. Rollins – aye; Mr. Robinson – aye; Mr. Cook – aye; Mr. Wilton – aye; and Mr. Russell - aye

Mr. Rollins asked that Mr. Jenkins let them know when this comes before the board.

8.B.1. Designation of Specific Department Liaisons for CIP

Mr. Jenkins discussed establishing liaisons to do the background work for the requests received. He suggested Mr. Russell for the Sheriff's office since he has familiarity with police and public safety. Mr. Cook with the fire dept. and school system due to his experience with contracting and building. Mr. Robinson with tourism since he has expertise and interest. Mr. Hill stated that it is a good idea and will be useful. Mr. Cook stated this should cut down on emergencies by reaching out once a year as well to see if they will have requests coming up. Mr. Russell agreed and also stated that this will help with determining future requests further down the road. Mr. Cook made a motion to accept recommendation of liaison assignments. Mr. Wilton seconded it. All in favor. The vote was 6-0 as follows: Mr. Hill – aye; Mr. Rollins – aye; Mr. Robinson – aye; Mr. Cook – aye; Mr. Wilton – aye; and Mr. Russell - aye

9. NEW BUSINESS

9.A. Introduce new Planning & Zoning staff member Heather Thomas

There were connection issues.

9.B. Review of online resources related to Planning & Zoning

Mr. Jenkins reviewed the GIS system and the layers available to show the land use possibilities as they relate to the comprehensive plan. He also reviewed where to find the codes and the digital version of the comprehensive plan.

10. OTHER MATTERS

Mr. Rollins stated that he was not going to be here in May but that the Planning Commission needs to have a written recommendation for county property for the Board of Supervisors. He stated, Mr. Cook and himself could get together prior to this and figure out what they want to say.

11. REVIEW OF BOARD OF SUPERVISOR ACTIONS

11.A. 1-ZA-21 - Text Amendment - classification of utilities

Mr. Jenkins stated that the Board of Supervisor did consider the text amendment at the February 23rd meeting, held a digital public hearing and passed it.

12. NOTICE OF VARIANCE AND APPEAL

There were no variances or appeals to discuss.

13. ADJOURN

THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS, ON A MOTION BY MR. WILTON AND SECONDED BY MR. COOK, THIS MEETING WAS DECLARED ADJOURNED.