

CECIL COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
CITIZEN OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE
Meeting Minutes
15 April 2009

Present: Bennett, John; Broomell, Diana; Butler, Eileen; Cairns, Ed; Clewer, Jeff; Colenda, Sarah; Denver, John; Derr, Dan; Doordan, B. Patrick; Duckett, Vernon; Ellerton, Vaughan; Folk, Patricia; Gell, Robert; Hodge, Robert; Jackson, Ann; Lane, Diane; Polite, Dan; Pugh, Mike; Rossetti, Rupert; Shaffer, Henry; Smyser, Chuck; Stewart, Gary; Strause, Vicky; Tapley, Donna; Thorne, Owen; Walbeck, Carl; and Wiggins, Ken.

Absent: Bolender, Brian; Buck, Walter; Bunnell, John; Day, Shawn; Deckard, Donna; Edwards, Sandra; Gilley, Paula; Kilby, Phyllis; Priapi, Vic; Snyder, Linda; Whitehurst, Dan; and Whiteman, Will.

Guests & Observers: McWilliams, Thomas; Moore, Tari; Bayer, Michael (ERM); Graham, Clive (ERM); Di Giacomo, Tony.

Call to Order: Dr. Diane Lane called the meeting to order at 6:16 p.m. Dr. Lane advised that this meeting was intended to be an information meeting, with presentations by the Economic Development Subcommittee, the Housing and Recreation Subcommittee and the Land Use Subcommittee, as well as a presentation from COC member Vernon Duckett. She also made the committee members aware of the fact that Randy Hutton had resigned.

Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the 18 March 2009 meeting were approved, upon the motion of John Bennett, seconded by Mike Pugh.

Old Business: Under old Business, Dr. Lane reviewed the revised schedule contained on page 5 the distributed meeting packet. The schedule began with this, the 15 April 2009 meeting, and ended with a tentative date of 23 February 2010 for a Board of County Commissioners' Public Hearing. The next scheduled COC meeting was for 20 May 2009, from 6:00 – 9:00 p.m. in room 208 of Cecil College's Technology Center, and Dr. Lane requested to receive all of the goals and recommendations from the subcommittees by 24 April 2009 to allow adequate time to put them together into one document prior to the 20 May meeting.

Clive Graham next gave a progress report in the context of the schedule contained on page 5 the distributed meeting packet, and indicated the transportation and water analysis modeling would be done and reviewed at the 20 and 27 May meetings. The 3 June meeting shown on the schedule would be held only if needed.

In answering questions about deliverables or outcomes, Mr. Graham referred to the scheduled 17 June 2009 COC meeting, and said that a Draft Concept Plan would be presented to the COC on that date. The Draft Concept Plan is anticipated to be approximately 20 pages in length, it would include a land use map and policy goals, and it

could be conceived of as an outline for the full plan. If needed, the revised schedule included COC meetings on 24 June and 1 July to iron out any issues.

Next, the Draft Concept Plan would be presented to the public at a public forum, scheduled for 15 July 2009. Mike Pugh and Rupert Rossetti questioned the Draft Concept Plan's availability to the public beforehand, and various methods of making it available and advertising the forum were discussed.

Vicky Strause questioned whether the Draft Concept Plan document would be an executive summary or an outline. After discussion of distinctions between the two formats, Dr. Lane saw the document as more of an "overview."

Responding to questions regarding how and when the public could react to the Draft Concept Plan, Mr. Graham said that the 15 July 2009 public forum would be a give-and-take session that would place emphasis on getting feedback from the public as well as acquainting the public with the plan's elements, issues, goals, and recommendations.

Ann Jackson questioned if the schedule met all state and county requirements vis-à-vis public review period lengths. She was also concerned if the 60 day review period was adequate. Pat Doordan expressed concerns about how well the schedule meshed with the Planning Commission's regularly scheduled meeting, and requested staff to review it to eliminate any schedule conflicts.

Carl Walbeck questioned how the document would be made available to the public. He said it needs to be available in multiple formats; not everyone has access to the internet, for example.

Rupert Rossetti voiced concerns about the phases of the revised schedule on 14 October and following, and what, at that point, would be the role of the COC and opportunity for additional public comment. Regarding the COC's role, John Bennett expressed concern about attendance at this and other COC meetings. It was pointed out that this meeting did, in fact, have a quorum, as have others.

New Business: Under new business, presentations were made by the Economic Development Subcommittee, the Housing and Recreation Subcommittee, the Land Use Subcommittee, as well as a presentation by COC member Vernon Duckett regarding transit oriented development and the importance of commuter rail.

Sarah Colenda made the presentation for the Economic Development Subcommittee. Ed Cairns questioned the recommendation of protecting agriculture in just the agricultural areas of the county. Rather, he felt that agriculture should be protected throughout the county, in all of the comprehensive plan's land use districts. John Denver questioned electricity's being included among the recommendations relating to infrastructure. He pointed out that electricity infrastructure, unlike public sewer or roads, is a function of investment by the private sector. Patrick Doordan had a question with regard to the 8th recommendation, relating to the Lower Susquehanna Heritage Greenway and support for

“a Nationally designated Heritage Area and Scenic byway through the designated growth area.” Rupert Rossetti asked if the Lower Susquehanna Heritage Greenway was the only heritage area that the county is going to have. Eileen Butler pointed out that there can be more than one scenic byway, and that the key to doing so would be getting access to more transportation enhancement funds through the State Highway Administration.

Jeff Clewer and Vicky Strause made the presentation for the Housing and Recreation Subcommittee. Eileen Butler raised questions about recreation and open space and to what degree recreational opportunities are linked to the provision of usable common open space in subdivisions. Robert Hodge pointed out that many of the Homeowners’ Associations, who own common open space, are dysfunctional. An ensuing discussion focused on the efficacy of acquiring more parkland rather than relying upon the use of common open space to meeting residents’ recreational needs and the role of the 2006 parks and recreation plan relative to this element of the comprehensive plan. Sarah Colenda spoke to the need for better coordination among providers of recreational opportunities. Regarding the issue of affordable and workforce housing, Diane Lane suggested examining the possibility of focusing more on rehabs, rather than new construction. There was also a discussion regarding the creation of incentive to provide adequate supply of affordable and workforce housing.

Anne Jackson and Mike Pugh made the presentation for the Land Use Subcommittee and its nine goals. Relative to the potential for there to be conflicts between land use goals and environmental constraints in certain areas, Rupert Rossetti observed that IKEA moved forward in a proactive fashion by bringing in environmentalists early on in their development in Perryville. Their laying out the issues and their proposed resolutions enabled them to move forward in a timely fashion. Mr. Rossetti felt that that kind of openness, and that found in the design charettes used by the developer of the Woodlands, creates opportunities for real communication that can go a long way toward overcoming potential opposition to development proposals. In consideration of increased building heights to achieve greater densities and intensities of use in the growth area, Vicky Strause observed that not all fire companies have ladder trucks that could reach the possible higher buildings. Mike Pugh pointed out that even in large cities, ladder trucks top out at 100’, yet they make do and higher buildings are permitted because of the use of sprinklers and safety standards set by the building codes.

Vernon Duckett made a motion “for the Comprehensive Plan to include methods for making the growth corridor more attractive to home buyers than the rural and ag areas.” The motion also included a “request” of “the Chair to ask all members to submit in writing their choice for such methods at the next C.O.C. meeting.” Dr. Robert Gell seconded the motion, which carried on a vote of remaining members present, 12-7.

Vernon Duckett then presented a concept plan for elements and features that could be considered as the final draft of the Comprehensive Plan is developed.

On the motion of Rupert Rossetti, seconded by Sarah Colenda, and unanimously carried, the meeting was adjourned at 8:47 p.m.

Next Meeting: Wednesday 20 May 2009, 6:00 – 9:00 p.m. County Administration Building, Elk Room

Respectfully submitted:

Anthony J. Di Giacomo, AICP
Principal Planner – Planning & Zoning