

Open Work Session
Draft Comprehensive Plan
November 15, 2016

Mr. Jack Lenox, Director of Planning, Zoning and Community Development, and Mr. Keith Hall, Long Range and Transportation Planner, came before Council. Mr. Hall said they would like to see if there are any outstanding questions that Council may have on the Draft 2016 Wicomico County Comprehensive Plan, as well as discuss the plan adoption process and potentially put out some dates for Council's consideration. Mr. Hall said there have been quite a few meetings over the past year. This is an extensive policy document that will drive growth and development for Wicomico County over the next 20 to 30 years and given the importance of the document, he wants to make sure Council has had appropriate time to vet the document, before moving forward for ultimately a public hearing. Mr. Joe Holloway said, if that is the case, Council needs to get it done because nothing else is driving growth and development in Wicomico County right now. Mr. Kilmer said during one of the past Council meetings, the town growth areas were brought up. He then asked if the town growth areas are separate but related to the Comprehensive Plan, to which Mr. Hall responded, yes. Mr. Kilmer said he went to a meeting in Sharptown, and they were not aware of the desire to rezone the County land around the towns, which is what was talked about. Mr. Hall said that is one of the concerns or challenges moving forward. When Sharptown completed its plan in 2008 or 2009 as a function of municipalities adopting plans, they had to put in future areas for annexation consideration. As part of that process, before the incorporated jurisdiction could adopt a plan, they met with staff to make sure whatever they were proposing as part of the municipal plan, was consistent with the County's plan or County's zoning. At that time, Sharptown had hired a consultant. Mr. Hall said he is not sure if it is a matter of turnover with the commissioners or not. He would, however, be more than glad to go out and meet with the commissioners and share with them what was adopted and show them how the County has carried that forward in the County's Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Kilmer said he does not think the commissioners were saying that the plan is inconsistent, they were just saying that they were not aware of the changes that the County was going to make. He would like to encourage efforts to reach out to the outlying municipalities so that everyone is working together. Mr. Hall said their goal all along has been to strive for consistency, not just in the County's internal documents, such as the Water and Sewer Plan, and the Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan. Equally important is recognizing the municipalities in what their future growth considerations are and how that is balanced with the County's plan as well. Mr. Lenox said with the passage of time and a turnover in commissioner members, it is understandable, which is why it is good for the towns to start going back and looking at their own plans, but feel confident that what is in the County's draft Comprehensive Plan, is what the towns have adopted. Mr. Hall said the County waited for all the cities and towns to complete their plans, before the draft Comprehensive Plan was put together and worked through the Planning Commission as well as the County Council. He said everyone is on a 10-year review cycle as a result of changes in state law. He said it is time for some municipalities, such as Sharptown, to review their plans. He said the County will be ahead this time and then the municipalities will update their plans and then staff will come back and the cycle continues. Mr. Cannon asked when does the 10-year cycle for municipalities begin, to which Mr. Hall said it is based on the adoption; it is a review and, if necessary, amendments. He said most of the cities and towns completed the update of the plans between 2008 and 2010. Mr. Hall said Council has been discussing the draft Comprehensive Plan for almost a year. After the plan has been fully developed and has gone through the Planning Commission, it takes almost a year for the towns, maybe a little less. Mr. Cannon then asked if the towns need to start thinking about changes now to their Comprehensive Plans to meet the 10-year deadline, to which Mr. Lenox responded the 10-year deadline is between 2018 to 2020 for most of the plans. Mr. Cannon asked if the references to the zoning, such as

one in three and one in fifteen, will come out of the Comprehensive Plan, to which Mr. Lenox responded, no sir that will stay in the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Hall said right now Council is looking at the policy document being the plan and the plan does not have regulatory teeth. It is regulated or implemented as a function of making changes to the zoning map, or the actual text in the zoning code. Mr. Lenox explained that there is nothing in the draft Comprehensive Plan that would direct Council to go back and change the one to fifteen or one to three cluster, unless Council wants to make changes later. Mr. Matt Holloway said he did not think the one to three cluster was mentioned in the Comprehensive Plan, to which Mr. Hall responded, it is in the Comprehensive Plan as a cross reference. Mr. Hall said neither staff, nor the Planning Commission is advancing any changes to zoning density in the A-1 zoning district. Mr. Cannon said he gets confused as to the mandates from the state that override the density. He then asked why is the density mentioned if it has been overridden by the state, to which Mr. Hall responded, the state did not override zoning density. He said what the state essentially did is create an overlay zone on top of the zoning districts. He said the County is coming up with hybrid solutions for the state's consideration. He said it did not change the one house per three acres and one house per fifteen acres; it does cap how many houses you can have as a function of a subdivision. Mr. Hall said they presented a plan for Council's consideration and consensus that includes the Land Use Plan, Growth Tier Map, as well as a hybrid for the changes in the Priority Preservation Area Map, that are consistent with the County's goals, plans and objectives, as well as, when applicable, to the municipal jurisdictions. Mr. Matt Holloway said, hopefully, by passing the Comprehensive Plan, with the overlay, the County will get in the good graces of the state by becoming a certified County again. Mr. Hall said that is the goal with the priority preservation. If the County does not have that part in the Agriculture Chapter, then that is the first checkbox the County has to go through to apply for recertification of the County Ag Program. He said that is the reason for incorporating it in the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Cannon then asked for clarification on the discussion on getting water and sewer at the airport and trying to get some type of development in the corridor between here and there. Mr. Lenox said he has not had an opportunity since their discussion at the Chamber meeting to talk to Mr. Keith Hall. Mr. Lenox said there is the area at the airport that is not just the airport. He said we have the runways and associated support system, then you have areas that have been designated for airport development, commercial parks, industrial parks, and industrial type uses. In addition, if you look at the zoning map, there is a cross-hatch area that is much larger, which is also sometimes referred to as the airport zone. He said it is the radius, so according to the County's plans and County Code, we try to not only direct development toward the airport but also try to discourage development in the radius surrounding that designation. He said the recent amendment to the Water and Sewer Plan to work in cooperation with the City to extend water to the airport would be in a manner similar to the sewer line, which he knows Mr. Creamer has worked on for a long time, is a dedicated line. Mr. Lenox said when the County and City agreed to extend water from the tank at Wor-Wic out to the airport, it was distinctly for economic development purposes. The state said they are approving the Water and Sewer Plan amendment to serve the area around the airport because that is a designated growth area in the Comprehensive Plan, and it is not intended to serve residential growth along the way. Mr. Lenox said, in the future, if the County chooses to reevaluate the Comprehensive Plan because the airport is doing so well that it wishes to expand the economic development area that possibility is there. They are not trying to create opposition to airport expansion. They discourage high density development, residential development, in the airport area. The line will be dedicated to serve economic development. Mr. Joe Holloway said the water line is going to run by a couple of developments, one being the Walston Trailer Park and the other being Kilbirnie Estates, both of the those have had septic problems. Sometimes people cannot get wells put in because of the septic system. He then asked if the line can be used to serve those areas as it is not creating growth. Mr. Lenox said that can be done but that is a decision that Council would have to make and sponsor. If it happens that the Walston Mobile Home

Park or Kilbirnie Estates needs water, then that is a question that can still come forward. For now, the state has approved what the County asked and that is for water to be at the airport. Mr. Joe Holloway clarified that is something that can be considered in the future, to which Mr. Lenox responded, yes. Mr. Hall said it is very similar to the circumstances of Morris Mill, as once upon a time there was no service going to that area but, in a response to a public health concern, contaminated water, there were state approvals that allowed the County and City of Fruitland to work together to extend water service to that region. Mr. Joe Holloway asked if the size of the line is large enough for future use. Mr. Lenox said it is being sized for the service area around the airport. He said he can look into whether sizing is a constraint. He said there is some constraint as there is a maximum. Mr. Joe Holloway said it does not make a lot of sense to run the pipe that far. In 10 years from now, somebody may come along and say, well the County should have thought about that. Mr. Joe Holloway said Mr. Cannon's dad wanted the state to build four lanes across the Chesapeake Bay Bridge, and they did not want to do it. Mr. Lenox said supply is not the biggest constraint, it is pressure, so there may a position in the future where the County is looking to have additional storage built. He said that is more likely than having additional supply. Mr. Cannon asked if Mr. Lenox is suggesting that another lift station would be needed to accommodate additional pressure, to which Mr. Lenox responded, yes, the lift station is sewer terminology but there would be more water in the air just as the City of Salisbury has found. As Salisbury has developed, it has been to have more storage capacity, so the County may look at that at some point. Mr. Hall said from a capacity standpoint, it would be the water to not only ensure there is sufficient pressure to feed the airport, the airport business park, but any future nonresidential uses coming out at the airport. Mr. Joe Holloway said, in some cases, when someone goes to put in a new well, the well is too close to the sewer. Their sewer works fine; it is not a sewer problem. Mr. Lenox said there could also be another long term solution and that is the looping. He said you may see the sewer loop back to Route 50, and you may see water go back down Mt. Hermon Road and that could address future growth as well. Mr. John Cannon said the new awareness is the industrial property across from the airport. He said he hopes whatever the line might be that they will anticipate the revitalization of that property because that is critical to what was discussed at a prior Council meeting in order to send the application to the state in April. He then asked Mr. Lenox if he is correct, to which Mr. Lenox responded, there is a cycle in which you can submit an application to be part of the Enterprise Zone. The issue that was discussed before is that the Enterprise Zone could not include all the areas that the County wants to serve because it did not have the priority funding status, and it was not in the Water and Sewer Plan. Mr. Lenox said he knows the folks that are involved are balancing all of those pieces right now and they will all come together, but they may not hit all at the exact same time. Mr. Hall said the first domino to fall was the Water and Sewer Plan amendment, which the Maryland Department of Environment has approved. Mr. Hall said now they can proceed with both the PFA status and, ultimately, Enterprise Zone status to open up any economic development initiatives that could be recognized as increasing growth and development in that region. Mr. Cannon said that is what led to the discussion this morning. When you talk about a dedicated line, we still want to make sure that the dedicated line, similar to what Mr. Joe Holloway is talking about, is open to other avenues without the County having to reinvent the whole process again. Mr. Hall said another example would be Wor-Wic Community College. When water and sewer was run to that facility back in the late 80s or early 90s, it was also known as what is called a denied access line, meaning any place between the existing service and future service could not be connected to public services. However, as time has gone by, they have seen more and more development, almost as a function of annexation, municipal services have been opened up along that line. Mr. Lenox said that water is the biggest improvement. Mr. Hall said staff is looking for Council consensus to move forward was establishing a public hearing date. He said he knows a few public hearings have been scheduled for December 20th, however, they would like to have this part of the Comprehensive Plan wrapped before the end of the calendar year. Once this piece of the

Comprehensive Plan is adopted, then staff will go back to the Planning Commission and start working on the zoning map and text changes that Council has reviewed and has seen as a function of land use as well as what is in the various chapters. He said if they move forward with a December 20th public hearing date for the adoption, staff recommends that, although the public hearing is only required to be advertised once, they would advertise it twice on December 5th and 12th, and the final document would be completely revamped by approximately December 6th. Mr. Cannon recognized the vice-president of the Salisbury City Council Muir Boda in the audience.

*Following the Open Work Session, staff requested that the public hearing on the draft Comprehensive Plan be postponed until February 20, 2017 to allow time to complete an extensive and thorough review of the document.

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John T. Cannon, President

Absent

Matt Holloway, Vice President

No K

Ernest F. Davis, District 1

Marc Kilmer, District 2

Larry W. Dodd

Larry W. Dodd, District 3

John B. Hall, District 4

Joe Holloway

Joe Holloway, District 5

Matthew E. Creamer

Matthew E. Creamer, Council Administrator