

**Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee
February 21, 2008
Old Library/DIT Building
Meeting Summary**

In attendance:

Jeff Breaks
Warren Deal
George Zahn
Tom Arnold

Christopher Corr, Chairman
Wes Wilson
Kenny Richardson
Buddy Rogers

Staff:

Jay Scudder, Director
Anne Ducey-Ortiz

Emily Gibson
Christopher Perez

Discussion of Joint Meeting

Chairman Christopher Corr began the meeting with a discussion of the joint meeting held with the Board of Supervisors and the Planning Commission on February 19, 2008. In general, it was felt that there was a good level of discussion, but not that much direction from the Board. However, it was noted that the Board did not seem to be opposed to the direction the Steering Committee was taking to date.

One member expressed concern with some of the discussion regarding limiting the amount of potential residential development (SC-1). In addition, there was concern about the Housing Study's recommendations. When the Comp Plan was done in the 1990's, the county was concerned about the quality of housing and the preponderance of starter homes. Several members brought up this issue that plagued several counties in the late 1980's and early 1990's of cheap starter housing – "smurf villages". It was noted that some of the houses built during this period did not even have the minimum square footage to meet HUD standards.

The discussion continued to focus on affordable housing. It was questioned whether housing could be made affordable based on the costs of land and materials. Even "doublewide" trailers are valued beyond what the Housing Study indicated as affordable.

One solution to affordable housing is to allow accessory structures and apartments to be a permitted use accessory to owner occupied housing.

Multi-family housing may be another solution to affordable, provided there is adequate infrastructure to serve it. The issue of infrastructure (water, sewer and roads) is a large one in Gloucester County.

When the 1998 zoning was amended to implement the 1991 comp plan, multi-family, industrial, and to some extent, commercial districts were created where the uses already existed. It was decided not to zone for these uses by-right, but to have them established through rezoning. The Planning Commission focused more on the location and density of single residential development and that these other uses would be located within the development district where services were available.

Staff indicated that the current comprehensive plan does not have multi-family as a land use category. Other than through a PUD or in the Village Mixed Use areas, there is no direction as to where and under what circumstances multi-family housing would be appropriate. At a minimum, the Comprehensive Plan should provide performance standards, similar to those provided for the PUD district, which indicate where and how multifamily development would be appropriate.

Some of the committee members indicated that multifamily should be permitted in the development district provided public water and sewer are available and there is adequate access.

One committee member stated that from a developer's point of view you need to make an adequate return on development to make the investment worth while. This is where the infrastructure, or lack of infrastructure, comes into play. It is not cost effective for a developer to put in the infrastructure. How can a developer resolve this issue? Staff responded that if there is no infrastructure, the land is not ready for high density development that requires such infrastructure.

The group discussed density bonuses in the SF-1 to provide for affordable housing. But infrastructure is still a big part of the equation. Increased density may make the extension of infrastructure more cost effective for developers, but would also result in increased impacts on roads, schools and other county resources.

Also, the market conditions cannot be controlled by the locality. The homes that were developed in the "smurf village" are now selling for \$250 or \$300,000. This is the real barrier to affordable housing.

Housing Goals and Objectives

As a continuation of the above discussion, the committee tried to focus on the Comp Plan's Housing Goals and Objectives to address the affordable housing issue; however due to time constraints and the need to discuss the Community Meeting scheduled for March 20, 2008, the committee chose to continue this discussion in April.

The following Goals were discussed:

1. Recognize the need to create affordable work force housing for county workers. *Define affordable housing – what is real affordable housing? Give examples – The study cites 30% of the median income which at the time of the study the median household income in Gloucester was \$45,421 which would allow someone to buy a house for \$160,000 or rent a place to live for \$844 per month.*
2. Create incentives for developers to provide affordable housing – no proffers, reduced fees, density bonuses.
3. Allow accessory apartments/cottages as rentals in owner occupied single family residents.
4. Enforce National Housing Maintenance Code to provide for sustainability of existing workforce housing in established neighborhoods. *The National Housing Maintenance Code is a minimum maintenance code to provide for safe and decent housing but does not necessarily address aesthetics. Increased enforcement would require additional staff using specific guidelines for how the program would be implemented. It was noted that this was an issue in some parts of the county where the property was divided between heirs and these properties often have absentee landlords who are not around to maintain or monitor the property.*

The Committee will re-visit Housing Goals and Objectives at their April Meeting.

Community Meeting – March 20, 2008

Page Middle School – 7:00 pm

Committee members should plan to be there at 6:30 to go over the strategy

In lieu of the regular March meeting, the Steering Committee will have its first community meeting to gather input. Additional meetings were discussed and the group decided to reserve their decision on this based on the input from this meeting.

The chairman encouraged all the committee members to attend and spread the word about the meeting. Staff noted that it will be advertised in the Beehive that goes to all County residents, notices distributed at “Celebrate Families” on March 8, 2008, website and emails, as well as Public Service Announcements in the local papers and radio station. Hopefully one of the papers will do a story on it as well.

Staff presented a draft agenda for discussion. The committee modified the agenda (see attached). The committee provided valuable input regarding the flow of the meeting as well as what should be presented and how. Chris Corr will open the meeting and do the introductions and possibly Warren or another Committee member may wish to add some input from the 1991 perspective (similar to the comments made at the joint meeting). The main topics for the existing conditions will come from the list of topics discussed with the Board and Planning Commission.

Staff had proposed the idea of break-out groups for discussion. The logistics of how this would work were debated. It was finally decided to present the results of the survey as a catalyst for discussion, and then divide the audience into groups to come up with the main issues of concern, as well as the main strengths and weaknesses they saw in the County. Staff and Steering Committee members will facilitate the discussion in each group and be the spokesperson/scribe to report out to the larger group. The group also discussed having the survey available for people to take again or for the first time – like a second round – to re-affirm the results of the current survey or adjust it as needed.

It was estimated that the community meeting would take about 90 minutes although staff and the committee would certainly stay longer if the discussion continued past that point.

The final item on the agenda was to come up with a slogan for our update – some kind of catchy title for the plan. This will be discussed at a future meeting.

Draft Agenda As Modified by the Steering Committee for
March 20, 2007
Community Meeting
Working Version

- I. **Welcome and Introductions** (SC Chair Chris Corr & 1991 SC Chair Warren Deal – similar to 2/29/08 meeting)
 - A. Introduce BOS, PC, SC and staff (by group – have them raise their hands or individually if not many)
 - B. Make sure everyone signed in
- II. **Comp Plan 101 - PowerPoint** – brief overview – 10 minutes
 - A. what is a comp plan,
 - B. what does our current plan represents –future land plan, current zoning
 - C. why up date it, etc
 - D. process – redo flow chart – make simpler – more aesthetically pleasing
- III. **Existing Conditions – PowerPoint status of the community** – major points we want to stress – 10-15 minutes
 - A. Populations trends – make-up
 - B. Commuting patterns
 - C. Bedroom community
 - D. Percent cover – current land use
 - E. Agriculture, Forestry and Aquaculture as industries in the county
 - F. Others – topics from 2/19/08 meeting
- IV. **PowerPoint Survey Results and Summary**
- V. **Discussion/Group break out** – facilitated discussion between each topic
 - A. 5 Major Issues
 - B. 5 Strengths/Opportunities
 - C. 5 Weaknesses/Constraints
- VI. **Wrap Up**
 - A. Thank you's
 - B. Stress continued updates on Website and opportunities for input

Agenda for
March 20, 2007
Community Meeting

- I. Welcome and Introductions
- II. Comp Plan 101 - PowerPoint – 10 minutes
- III. Existing Conditions – Status of our Community – PowerPoint - 15- 20 minutes
- IV. Survey Results and Summary - PowerPoint - 5 – 10 minutes
- V. Discussion/Group break out
- VI. Wrap Up