



## **LAND USE & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

### **Meeting Minutes – February 21, 2019**

#### **Attendees:**

Deirdre Clark	John Marshall Soil and Water Conservation District
Steve Cook	Virginia Department of Health
Joe Costello	Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission
Michelle Edwards	Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission
Mike Fisher	Madison County Planning Commission
Andrew Hopewell	Fauquier County
Carlyle Howard	Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute
Peter Hujik	Piedmont Environmental Council
Iara Lacher	Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute
Kendall May	Culpeper County
Mike Mosko	Madison County Planning Commission
Gary Rzepecki	Fauquier County
Jim Sawyer	Fauquier County
Carl Stafford	Virginia Cooperative Extension
Michael Trop	John Marshall Soil and Water Conservation District

#### **Fauquier County Rural Lands Plan**

##### ***Andrew Hopewell, Fauquier County***

Andrew Hopewell presented an overview of Fauquier County's Rural Lands Plan (see attached), which is part of the County's Comprehensive Plan. The Plan was adopted in the 1990s, and is being updated now in order to "address the economic importance of the agricultural and rural economy." The draft plan itself is available on the County's website at [www.fauquiercounty.gov/home/showdocument?id=21013](http://www.fauquiercounty.gov/home/showdocument?id=21013). The Plan covers the following resource topics:

- Agriculture
- Visual/viewshed
- Environmental
- Cultural
- Water
- Other rural businesses

Carl Stafford asked what the Plan considers "inappropriate tourism." Mr. Hopewell replied that

multiple special event centers on one rural road is an example. Mike Fisher asked Mr. Hopewell to define “uncommon easement,” to which he replied that when subdividing, 87% of the site must be preserved in one parcel under easement. Mr. Fisher asked how would the number or size of events be scaled to acreage in cultivation. Mr. Hopewell answered that it would be accomplished through ordinance.

Mike Mosko noted that a state law was passed in 2009 allowing local tourism zones, and asked whether Fauquier County created any. Mr. Hopewell answered that the County’s Economic Development Department looked into the possibility, but he is not certain whether any have been created yet. He agreed to check with the Department Director Miles Friedman, and report back to Michelle Edwards. [Edited to add: Fauquier County created tourism zones in 2012, which run concurrently with the service district boundaries. They have not been used much, due in part to the fact that many of the County’s tourism attractions such as wineries lie outside of the service district. Most uses have been for small projects in towns such as the Wort Hog in Warrenton.]

Deirdre Clark stated that she has not seen strategies for plan implementation, and asked if those will be forthcoming. Mr. Hopewell responded that implementation strategies may not be included in the plan due to political will to get into such specifics at this time and an unwillingness to tie the County to strategies that may become obsolete when ready to implement in the future.

Mr. Stafford stated that Fauquier County is a great locality to model. Agriculture is currently in a hole nationally, but it has a chance in this part of the state due to local policies supporting agriculture and agri-tourism. He suggested examining how neighbors could contribute funds to preserve their viewsheds rather than only giving opinions. Mr. Hopewell noted that the County has a successful Purchase of Development Rights Program that accomplishes this to some degree.

Peter Hujik asked whether there is another local government model the County is striving toward. Mr. Hopewell responded that the County researched other models in Virginia such as Albemarle County. Fauquier County tends not to look outside of VA for potential models, due to the Dillion Rule.

For further questions and comments regarding the Fauquier County Rural Lands Plan, please contact Andrew Hopewell, Assistant Chief of Planning, at (540) 422-8210 or [Andrew.Hopewell@fauquiercounty.gov](mailto:Andrew.Hopewell@fauquiercounty.gov).

### **Changing Landscapes Initiative**

*Carlyle Howard and Iara Lacher, Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute*

Carlyle Howard and Iara Lacher delivered a presentation on the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute’s (SCBI) Changing Landscapes Initiative (see attached). Dr. Lacher leads the initiative, which covers fifteen counties in northwestern Virginia. It seeks to understand how land use impacts ecosystem services and then looks for gaps in research, education, outreach, etc. The Virginia Working Landscapes program also falls under SCBI.

The Institute developed four scenarios based on two variables: 1) population (high versus low)

and 2) planning style (reactive versus strategic). The variables were chosen based on input from experts and other regional stakeholders. A recent trends model was then created and run through the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Model. They are currently working with Virginia Tech to interpret the resulting data to determine what the numbers would actually mean for residents.

Mr. Stafford asked why forests are the biggest loser in high population scenarios. Dr. Lacher answered it is likely because forest were cleared in preparation for development in 2000-2010, but were not necessarily developed due to the downswing in the economy. Ms. Edwards asked how the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, Natural Heritage Division's green infrastructure mapping relates to this Initiative. Dr. Lacher responded much of the Natural Heritage Program's data was used in this model, but that two initiatives are at different scales.

Ms. Howard announced that SCBI is planning a workshop in 2019 to discuss potential implications of the Initiative's results, and implementation strategies. She will pass along details when available.

Mr. Fisher asked whether air quality is part of the Initiative. Dr. Lacher replied that measuring air quality impacts is beyond their current capabilities. The Institute plans to hire someone who can assist in doing so, since it is an important ecosystem service that should be included in the model.

For additional information regarding the Changing Landscapes Initiative, please contact Carlyle Howard at (703) 485-5366 or [HowardM1@si.edu](mailto:HowardM1@si.edu); or contact Iara Lacher at 540-645-0039 or [Lacheri@si.edu](mailto:Lacheri@si.edu).

### **RRRC Initiative Updates**

#### ***Regional Bike/Pedestrian/Blueways Plan – Joe Costello, Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission (RRRC)***

Joe Costello announced that RRRC will be holding a stakeholder meeting for its effort to significantly revise the region's Bicycle, Pedestrian and Blueways Plan. The meeting will be held on March 29, 1:00-3:00 pm at the Culpeper County Library. Mr. Costello has been collecting pertinent data and speaking with key stakeholders in the region, and then mapping the results. Those results will be shared during the meeting and further input gathered.

Ms. Clark asked whether he is integrating only official bike trails into the plan, or unofficial trails being used as well. Mr. Costello replied that both will be included in the plan. He will be launching an online wiki map that will allow people to map where they are biking and walking in the region, and where they would like to be. Ms. Clark recommended speaking to the owners/staff of the bike shop in Warrenton about the effort.

Gary Rzepecki stated Fauquier County will be updating its trails and comprehensive plans, so there will be new data available soon. He also expressed that cooperation between counties is critical to successful parks and recreation programs.

Further questions and comments concerning this effort should be directed to Joe Costello at [jcostello@rrregion.org](mailto:jcostello@rrregion.org) or (540) 829-7450.

***Chesapeake Bay Watershed Implementation Plan – Michelle Edwards, RRRC***

Michelle Edwards stated that RRRC submitted final drafts of the urban BMP input deck and Programmatic Strategies to the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DEQ) for the state's Phase III Chesapeake Bay Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP III). Copies were distributed to attendees (see attached). The documents were developed during four regional stakeholder meeting held July - October 2018. Once Virginia's Plan is finalized, DEQ will submit it to the US Environmental Protection Agency.

Following the regional WIP III efforts, DEQ approached regional Planning District Commissions (PDCs) in the Chesapeake Bay Region with the possibility of continuing the partnership with DEQ in order to assist with urban sector implementation. DEQ intends to establish an on-going yearly contract with PDCs similar to the Virginia Department of Transportation's Rural Transportation Program. While DEQ seeks on-going funding for PDCs for this effort, a \$21,500 bridge contract was proposed that would cover March to September, 2019. The final scope of work for the bridge contract was distributed to attendees (see attached).

The scope of work includes eight minimum deliverables, and nine optional deliverables of which five need to be accomplished. Ms. Edwards noted that optional deliverables e, f and g under Activity 1; Activity 2. d and e; and Activity 3.d. are the most likely for RRRC to choose. Overall, the intent of the contract is to provide regional implementation coordination and technical assistance to localities and other regional stakeholders, rather than commit localities to implementation activities. It may also lead to dedicated, on-going funding to PDC environmental staff. Ms. Edwards drew attendees' attention to Activity 1.a. which requires development of a regionally-specific annual scope of work for fiscal year 2020.

RRRC Commissioners will decide whether to enter into the contract with DEQ at their meeting next week. [Edited to add: the contract was approved by the Regional Commission on February 27.] For additional questions and comments regarding WIP III, please contact Michelle Edwards at (540) 829-7450 or [medwards@rrregion.org](mailto:medwards@rrregion.org).

***Regional Food Policy Council – Michelle Edwards, RRRC***

Ms. Edwards distributed a list of notable statistics from the second year of the Regional Commission's USDA Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP) grant (see attached). The statistics were part of the annual grant report sent to USDA in December 2019. Data was gathered through surveys conducted by grant partners and viewership data provided by advertising and media companies used by grant partners.

She noted that the outreach totals increased considerably from last year. For regional marketing of locally-grown foods and beverages, the first year of the grant focused mainly on developing a regional brand and logo, as well as the label program. Once the Purely Piedmont program was created, the focus turned to marketing the brand and the region's locally-grown foods and beverages.

Farmers markets in the region saw very good results early in the season. The Culpeper Farmers Market experienced its best opening weekend in its forty years of existence, and the increase in attendance and sales could be traced back to additional marketing made possible through the grant. Then an extremely rainy summer and fall hurt both attendance and crop production. Even with the poor weather, Madison Farmers and Culpeper Farmers market producers reported an increase in sales of 31% compared to the previous season. Also, Culpeper Farmers Market saw an amazing increase of 36% in its SNAP benefits participants.

Tween Rivers Trail also did well during year two, increasing trail sites from 64 to 75. Its members also reported a 31% increase in sales of local agricultural products.

Promotion of the Purely Piedmont regional food label will continue through the final year of the FMPP grant. Ms. Edwards added that she intends to apply for a Healthy Culpeper grant with the Culpeper Wellness Foundation or possibly a Path Foundation Make It Happen Grant to continue the Purely Piedmont marketing program after the FMPP grant ends.

Additionally, a family-friendly regional food expo is planned called the Flavor of the Piedmont, which will begin as buyer-seller only tasting event and then open to the public. It is intended to build on the successes of the previous two buyer-seller events. Event planners also intend to incorporate a chef competition to benefit the Carver Food Enterprise Center that would be a more up-scale, separately ticketed event. The competition would also include local restaurant tasting. Piedmont Environment Council and Virginia Cooperative Extension will be co-hosting the event.

The Food Policy Council's next meeting will be held on Thursday March 28, 2019, at 5:30 pm in the RRRC conference room. For further information about the regional Rappahannock-Rapidan Food Policy Council, including upcoming meetings, please contact Michelle Edwards at (540) 829-7450 or [medwards@rrregion.org](mailto:medwards@rrregion.org), or visit RRRC's Regional Food System webpage at [www.rrregion.org/foodsystem.html](http://www.rrregion.org/foodsystem.html). To learn more about the Purely Piedmont label program, including free producer registration, please visit [purelypiedmont.com](http://purelypiedmont.com).

### **Member Roundtable**

- **Peter Hujik, Piedmont Environmental Council**– Jessica Palmer, head of PEC's Buy Fresh Buy Local program, is leaving the organization. Mr. Hujik will be one of the presenters at RRRC's upcoming Bike/ped stakeholder meeting. PEC is working with Shenandoah National Park to replace culverts at White Oak Canyon with a bridge, to be completed this year.
- **Kendall May, Culpeper County**– the County is starting the process to revise its comprehensive plan.
- **Mike Mosko and Mike Fisher, Madison County**– the County is working to plan for large-scale solar development applications and is considering creation of tourism zones. They are one year into revising Madison County's Comprehensive Plan. The Planning Commission completed its review of the draft plan during its last meeting and are looking to implementation.

- **Deirdre Clark, John Marshall Soil and Water Conservation District**– the District was recently awarded a grant to implement the Goose Creek TMDL.
- **Gary Rzepecki, Fauquier County**– the site plan for the Riverside Preserve river access point is currently being reviewed by the Community Development Department. The County wants to open the access site in April.
- **Carl Stafford, Virginia Cooperative Extension**– the Carver Center continues development. If Culpeper County okays the additional budget request, Cooperative Extension offices will be relocated to the Center and an elevator will be installed.

**Next Land Use & Environment Committee Meeting:**

The next Land Use and Environment Committee meeting is scheduled for May 16, 2019 at 10:00 am – 12:00 noon in the RRRC conference room. Please provide any suggestions for future meeting topics to Michelle Edwards at [medwards@rrregion.org](mailto:medwards@rrregion.org).