

Meeting Notes York 2040 Committee

Wednesday, November 7, 2018 – 7:00 p.m.
York County Public Works Administration Building
105 Service Drive, Yorktown VA

Members Present: Mark Bellamy, Gregory “Skip” Brooks, Chad Green, Leigh Houghland, Montgoussaint (Montee) E. Jons, Michael King, Vivian McGettigan, Rick Moberg, Rich Myer, Sheila Myers, Jacob Rizzio, Eugene Seiter, Buddy Spencer

Staff Present: Neil Morgan, County Administrator; Susan Kassel, Director of Planning and Development Services; Timothy Cross, Deputy Director of Planning and Development Services; Amy Parker, Senior Planner; Earl Anderson, Senior Planner, Gail Whittaker, Public Information Officer

Chairman Michael King called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m., and all those present introduced themselves. Chairman King stated that he plans to start these meetings on time so that people can get back to their homes at a reasonable time.

Chairman King introduced Neil Morgan, County Administrator, to offer remarks. Mr. Morgan thanked all of the members for volunteering to serve on the committee, stating that the Comprehensive Plan update is an important project that will have a lasting impact on the County and its citizens. He stated that as the County looks ahead to the planning horizon of 2040, everyone needs to recognize that changes will occur that cannot be predicted today. By way of illustration, he asked everyone to think back twenty-five years and identify changes that have taken place since then that could not have been anticipated at the time. Responses from the Committee included cell phones, the internet, and driverless vehicles. Mr. Morgan spoke about some of the implications of these technological advances on land use planning, noting, for example, the impact of internet sales on bricks and mortar stores. He emphasized that as important as long-range planning is, it needs to be approached with a certain amount of humility and a recognition that it will be affected by things that cannot be foreseen.

Mr. Morgan also stressed that in planning York County’s future, it should be recognized that the County is part of the Hampton Roads region and that its future will be affected by regional forces outside the County’s borders. He distributed copies of a handout with a series of charts depicting regional economic data and he spoke about some of the trends, stating that the Hampton Roads economy is driven largely by federal spending, port activity, and tourism. He noted the region’s low rate of growth in gross product compared to other comparable regions, while adding that the tourism sector is doing reasonably well. Regarding the many military and other federal facilities in the region, he stated that while they provide relatively stable employment centers, there is also an opportunity cost since they consume significant amounts of land that are not subject to local taxation. Mr. Morgan also noted that in terms of household incomes, York County is relatively affluent relative to most neighboring localities.

Lastly, Mr. Morgan spoke about long-term global trends that have been identified by a team of futurists who were commissioned to identify disruptive trends that can potentially affect local governments. He distributed handouts describing some of these “mega-trends” and noted in particular some that were identified by the Board of Supervisors as priorities. These included

energy disruption and elderly expense (highest priorities): education reform, climate change, and fiscal uncertainty (significant priorities); and citizen engagement, city-to-city collaboration, and desalinization (other priorities).

Lastly, Mr. Morgan stated that the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission recently approved a resolution acknowledging the science behind the documented sea level rise in the region and encouraging localities to adopt policies to incorporate sea level rise into their planning decisions. He commented that this will need to be incorporated into the next Comprehensive Plan, and he added that he believes there is a need for more sidewalks and bike paths that should be addressed in the Plan.

Gene Seiter commented that when he retired from the military, he and his wife did considerable research before deciding to live in this area based on many factors, including the quality of the school system, excellent health care, the low crime rate, and the cost of living. He stressed the need to recognize the County's positive attributes and retain or even strengthen them. He added, however, that he does agree that there is a need for more sidewalks and bike paths.

Chairman King expressed his agreement with Mr. Seiter's comments and added that the Committee also needs to hear from the County's younger citizens, who might have a different perspective and can offer their insight as to what can be done to make the County more attractive to people of their generation.

Buddy Spencer commented on the need to create opportunities that will allow the County to retain its best and brightest citizens.

Sheila Myers stated that she has spent time in Denver, Portland, and Seattle and that her observation is that younger people in those communities are attracted to good schools and good jobs, but that recreational amenities and quality of life are also very important to them. She stated that young people are willing to sacrifice employment opportunities for lifestyle.

Skip Brooks spoke about the Colonial Parkway, noting that years ago, when he was with the National Park Service, there was a proposal to construct a bike trail along the Parkway but it was ultimately rejected for various reasons. He stated that he would like to work to revive this idea and advance it forward.

Montee Jons spoke on the importance of mass transportation, stating that there is only so much roadway capacity that can be built and that we need to find a way to get people out of their cars. In addition, he talked about the need to take advantage of the many educational institutions in the area and to work to ensure that the curricula being taught are relevant.

Rick Moberg stated as a member of the Economic Development Authority that people need to recognize that the amount of property available for development in York County is extremely limited and that for this reason the County is not likely to attract a major industry. He stated that York County is largely a bedroom community where most residents work in another locality. With regard to attracting young people, he noted that a lot of them prefer a more urban environment.

Chairman King thanked everyone for their comments, and he thanked Mr. Morgan. He then introduced Mr. Cross to talk about the Comprehensive Plan and the staff's proposed review process.

Mr. Cross gave a slide presentation, which included an introduction to the Comprehensive Plan and an overview of the proposed review process. He explained that the Comprehensive Plan is the long-range plan for the physical development of the County and that it addresses not just land use but transportation, housing, economic development, public facilities, the environment, and historic resources. He stated that the Code of Virginia requires every locality in the state to have a Plan and to review it every five years. York County's plan, he noted, was last updated in 2013, so it is time to review and update it again. This review, he added, will be more extensive than previous reviews, providing an opportunity to take a fresh look at the issues and challenges facing the County, which are significantly different from those that the County faced in 1991 when the original Plan was adopted. Mr. Cross added that there are certain issues – such as transportation, affordable housing, sea level rise, and broadband – that the state code requires to be addressed in the Plan.

Mr. Myer commented on affordable housing, explaining the so-called “workforce housing” concept, which is based on the idea of providing housing opportunities for police, firefighters, service employees and others who often cannot afford to live in the communities they serve.

Mr. Cross then gave an overview of the staff's proposed review process and schedule, which he stated is expected to last about two years, with two rounds of public outreach meetings in the spring of 2019 and the spring of 2020. He added that there are plans to conduct a scientific survey of County residents, as has been done as part of the last few Comprehensive Plan reviews, to gauge the citizens' attitudes on various long-range planning issues. Mr. Cross noted that there is a detailed work program included in the Committee members' notebooks, and he stated that at the next meeting the staff would like to get feedback from the members after they have had a chance to review it in detail. In addition, he referred to the tentative schedule of meeting dates, stating that generally, Committee meetings will be at 7:00 p.m. on the first Wednesday of each month, which was selected based on an email poll of the membership. He noted, however, that some meetings, such as January 2 and July 3, will probably need to be rescheduled or canceled.

Chairman King asked the members to review the proposed work program and be prepared to discuss it at the next meeting, which will be on December 5. He also asked if the Public Works Multi-Purpose Room is an acceptable meeting place. Everyone agreed that it is.

Chairman King asked all the members to review their contact information on the committee roster and let the staff know of any changes.

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 8:25 p.m.