

**Meeting Notes**  
**York 2040 Committee**

Wednesday, July 6, 2022 – 5:00 p.m.

Senior Center of York

5314 George Washington Memorial Highway, Yorktown, Virginia

Members Present: Mark Bellamy, Gregory “Skip” Brooks, Leigh Houghland, Michel S. King, Rick Moberg, Sheila Myers, Jacob Rizzio, Eugene Seiter, Cowles “Buddy” Spencer

Staff Present: Timothy Cross, AICP, Deputy Director of Planning and Development Services; Earl Anderson, AICP, Senior Planner; Amy Parker, Senior Planner; Cathy Tartabini, Planning Assistant; Richard Hill, Deputy County Attorney; Jeanne M. Sgroi, Management Analyst; Gail Whittaker, Public Information Officer

Members Absent: Chad Green, Richard Myer

Call to Order

Chairman King called the meeting to order at approximately 5:00 p.m.

Opening Remarks

Chairman King welcomed everyone and stated that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the draft Citizen Input chapter of the Comprehensive (Comp) Plan that was distributed to the Committee members last week.

Approval of Meeting Notes

Ms. Myers noted a minor error in the draft meeting notes for May 4, 2022. Mr. Cross stated that the meeting notes would be corrected. On motion of Ms. Myers, seconded by Mr. Spencer, the meeting notes were unanimously approved as revised.

Committee Discussion of Draft Citizen Input Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan

Chairman King stated that he would like to go through the Citizen Input chapter section by section and ask Committee members to provide any comments they have. First, however, he asked if anyone had any general comments they would like to make. Ms. Myers responded that the draft document accurately reflects the citizen input that has been received throughout the Comp Plan review process.

Chairman King asked if there were any questions or comments about the telephone survey. Ms. Myers suggested that language be added to state that the telephone survey included both landlines and cell phones. Mr. Cross said he would make the change.

Chairman King commented that scientific surveys using statistically valid random sampling methods are often confused with other types of surveys, such as internet surveys. He explained the differences between them, noting that with scientific surveys such as the Comp Plan telephone survey, the results can be used to draw conclusions, within a 5% margin of error in this case, about the larger population from which the sample was drawn. Mr. Moberg stated that he felt that was pretty well described in the document. Chairman King stated that he believed the County periodically conducts surveys such as this one. Mr. Cross responded that in the past there have occasionally been citizen satisfaction surveys conducted, although it has been a while since the last one.

Ms. Myers stated that she believed that the survey showed a difference between the upper County and the lower County regarding citizens’ satisfaction with their internet service, with upper County residents

being somewhat less satisfied. She wondered if that is worth mentioning in the document, especially if the difference was significant. She added that she lives in the upper County and knows how difficult it is to get good internet service. Mr. Bellamy stated that he believed it was discussed in the Broadband element, and he commented that the County is working on a project that will improve service in the upper County. Ms. Sgroi checked the survey numbers and stated that lower County residents are 20% more satisfied with their internet service than upper County residents. Ms. Myers stated that she would just like to see it mentioned somewhere in the Plan, either in the Broadband element or the Citizen Input chapter. Mr. Cross responded that staff would make sure it is included.

Chairman King asked Mr. Rizzio if he had any comments on the description of the youth survey – which was conducted by Mr. Rizzio – as it appears in the draft document. Mr. Rizzio responded that because some of the actual survey statistics are no longer available, it was necessary in some cases to approximate the numbers based on the bar charts. Chairman King asked Mr. Rizzio if he is satisfied with the description of the youth survey, and Mr. Rizzio responded in the affirmative. Mr. Hill noted that the survey was conducted prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and that if a similar survey were conducted today it would probably yield different results. Mr. Rizzio responded that the telephone survey was also conducted before the pandemic, and he suggested that it might be good to note in the document that both surveys were pre-COVID.

Moving on to the section of the document describing the public meetings, Chairman King stated that the Committee held four meetings in 2019 that were not very well-attended and two more meetings in 2021 that were devoted specifically to land use and had much higher attendance. He added that there will be other meetings, including public hearings before the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors, and that Ms. Whitaker and the Public Affairs Office do a great job of getting information out to the citizens about public input opportunities. Ms. Whittaker spoke about some of the public outreach challenges that have been brought on by the pandemic, noting that the Citizen News has changed from a printed newsletter to an online publication.

Mr. Spencer stated that he believes a lot of those who attended the land use public meetings in 2021 were members of an organized group that is opposed to certain things in the County and that they do not necessarily reflect the view of the population as a whole. Chairman King expressed agreement and said that is why the County has used several different methods of obtaining public input rather than relying solely on one. He added, however, that there were also attendees who were not affiliated with any group and spoke about other issues, such as one comment he received about the need for more publicly accessible parks in residential neighborhoods. He thanked Mr. Cross for including that comment in the document, and he asked him to add language to clarify that the comment was in reference to “pocket” or neighborhood parks.

Chairman King asked Mr. Cross to summarize the “CONCLUSIONS” section of the document. Mr. Cross stated that some of the survey results and public comments reinforce each other and that overall, there is a high level of satisfaction with the overall character of the County but there are also concerns about growth and development. He stated that this has been true of every Comprehensive Plan public input process since the original Plan adopted in 1991, and that it doesn’t matter whether the County is in a period of fast growth or slow growth at the time, there are always concerns about growth and its corollary, traffic. Similarly, he stated, strong support for the schools is a sentiment that is expressed whenever the County embarks on a Comp Plan update. Regarding traffic, Chairman King commented that compared to the Northeast or Washington DC, traffic problems in this area are minor.

Mr. Moberg asked if the statistics indicate that there is school overcrowding in the County. Mr. Cross responded that he hasn’t looked at the enrollment figures lately because they have been greatly skewed by the COVID-19 pandemic but that some schools were strained to or beyond capacity prior to the pandemic. Mr. Moberg commented that educational programs have a big effect on school capacity. Mr.

Cross said that is true and that statewide school mandates also have an effect. He added that the Public Facilities element would go into this topic in some depth. Mr. Cross commented that people's perceptions of school crowding are influenced by their expectations, similar to many citizens' perceptions of York as a rural county. He noted that while much of the County may be rural in comparison to nearby cities, people from the western part of the state would probably not view it as rural. He said that anything that interferes with citizens' perception of a rural or small-town character – such as traffic or school crowding – is magnified in the eyes of those citizens, many of whom moved to the County to get away from more urban environments.

Ms. Myers noted that the document shows a substantial jump in citizens' concern about sea level rise and recurrent flooding, and she wondered why that increase was not highlighted more prominently in the document. Mr. Cross responded that it was mentioned but that he did not want to make too much of it because questions about flooding were not asked in previous Comp Plan surveys. He explained that there is no way to know if people had those concerns previously but just didn't have an opportunity to express them.

Mr. Bellamy commented that while the "CONCLUSIONS" section of the document states that in general, most residents do not want the County to change very much, Page 2 states that in the survey people did identify specific changes they would like to see, such as more dining and shopping opportunities, sidewalks, and bike paths. He suggested that language be added to reconcile this apparent contradiction by clarifying that although most people are generally satisfied, there is support for certain changes. Mr. Cross said Mr. Bellamy had a good point and that he would revise that section of the document. Mr. Seiter stated that no locality is perfect, and he summarized that the general attitude of the citizenry is that York County is a great place to live but there is room for improvement.

Mr. Seiter stated that one of the great benefits of living in York County is that it is a safe community, and he commended the efforts of Sheriff Diggs to keep crime rates low. Chairman King said he agrees but that it really is not something that would be addressed in a comp plan. Mr. Seiter explained that he was not suggesting that it be discussed in the Plan but that he felt it was something everyone should be aware of and not take for granted.

Mr. Spencer asked how the citizen input will be integrated into the various Comp Plan elements. He stated that the County has challenges that it will need to face in the future, such as a shortage of housing, that might not be in line with some of the citizen input. Chairman King responded that the purpose of the Citizen Input chapter is simply to document the opinions that have been expressed and the comments that have been received. He stated that the citizen input would not necessarily override other policy considerations in the various Comp Plan elements. He cited the Housing element as an example, and he asked Mr. Cross to comment. Mr. Cross stated that staff has tried to incorporate the citizen input as appropriate in all of the draft elements. He stated that the Housing element specifically addresses the need to find a balance between conflicting community goals, such as support for more affordable housing versus opposition to density and growth.

Chairman King asked if anybody had any final comments to make before adjourning. Mr. Bellamy stated that he was speaking recently with the County Administrator about the Comp Plan review process and how long it has taken thanks to the pandemic and various other factors. He thanked the members for sticking with this project. Chairman King thanked Mr. Bellamy for his comments.

Mr. Hill asked if there would be a separate Schools element or if schools would be addressed in the Public Facilities element. Mr. Cross responded that schools would be discussed in the Public Facilities element. Mr. Hill said he was curious to know how the strong support for the schools that was expressed in the scientific survey compares with neighboring localities, particularly James City County, where, he stated, the citizens' satisfaction with the school system is significantly lower. Chairman King responded that

school programs and policies are beyond the scope of the Comp Plan, which is limited to facilities only. Mr. Brooks stated that he had recently seen a ranking of school systems across Virginia in which York was ranked third and James City was ranked ninth, so he didn't understand the low level of citizen satisfaction with their schools. He added that fewer and fewer people are choosing to teach as their permanent career, so as much as York County's citizens may love the schools today, that attitude could change five years from now.

#### Other Business

Chairman King thanked the Committee members for their comments, and he asked Mr. Cross about the next meeting. Mr. Cross responded there if there is a meeting in August, it will be on August 3. He said a decision would be made in the next few weeks.

#### Citizen Comments

There were no citizen comments.

#### Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:01 p.m.