

AT A MEETING OF THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION ON MAY 20, 2015 IN BOARD ROOM, COUNTY GOVERNMENT CENTER, CHRISTIANSBURG, VIRGINIA:

**I. CALL TO ORDER:**

Mr. Miller, Chair, called the meeting to order.

**II. DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM:**

Mrs. Ross established the presence of a quorum.

Present:            Bob Miller, Chair  
                      Coy Allen, Member  
                      Sonia Hirt, Member  
                      Steve Howard, Member  
                      Bryan Rice, Member  
                      Trey Wolz, Member  
                      Chris Tuck, Board of Supervisors Liaison  
                      Emily Gibson, Planning Director  
                      Brea Hopkins, Development Planner  
                      Dari Jenkins, Planning & Zoning Administrator  
                      Candace Ross, Sr. Program Assistant

Absent:             Scott Kroll, Vice-Chair  
                      Cindy W. Disney, Secretary  
                      Bryan Katz, Member

**III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

On a motion by Mr. Rice, and seconded by Mr. Allen and unanimously carried, the agenda was approved.

**IV. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA:**

On a motion by Mr. Howard, and seconded by Mr. Rice, and unanimously carried, the consent agenda was approved.

**V. PUBLIC HEARING:**

Request by the James Tyler Otey Hoge, Et Al (Agent: Balzer And Associates, Inc.) for an amendment to the 2025 Montgomery County Comprehensive Plan to change the policy map designation of approximately 171.896 acres of property located east of Brookfield Road, North of Prices Fork Road and identified as Tax Map Nos. 052-3-2; 52-1-20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25 (Parcel ID 160511) from Resource Stewardship to Village Expansion with a further designation of Low-Density Residential in the Prices Fork Village Plan.

Mr. Miller introduced the request.

Mrs. Hopkins stated Ms. Hoge was requesting to amend the future land use designation from Resource Stewardship to Village Expansion for property located east of Brookfield Road, north of Prices Fork Road. In addition, the property would be designated as Low Density Residential in the Prices Fork Village Plan. She presented the Commission with detail regarding the existing conditions since the Comprehensive Plan's future land use map was last adopted. This included more than half of the "Hoge Farm" being preserved through conservation easement. In addition, the Prices Fork Elementary School has been relocated and may change the development patterns in this area. Future development of the property would be Residential Low Density with a maximum density of 2 (two) units per acre, similar to the adjoining Sterling Manor subdivision. The properties would be served by public water and private septic systems unless sewer can be extended. If approved, rezoning will be required. Mrs. Hopkins stated staff recommends approval, given the conditions have changed on the property and in the area since the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Rice confirmed with staff that the conservation easement was dedicated after original designation of Resource Stewardship.

Mr. Miller asked about the proximity of public sewer to the property?

Mrs. Hopkins said it is located behind Prices Fork Elementary School and that it would not be financially feasible to bring across Prices Fork Road.

Mr. Miller opened the public hearing.

Steven Semones, Balzer and Associates, stated he had been working for approximately five years on ways to develop the Hoge property. A comprehensive plan amendment would allow development of the front portion of the property. He explained the rear portion is in a Conservation Easement; which, contains a historic house and a portion Tom's Creek that flows through the property. The property currently has a forty (40) foot access to property off of Brookfield Road; however, is not suitable as a main access to a development. To address that issue the Hoge family has been working with the Virginia Tech Foundation to obtain a main entrance off of Prices Fork. A land exchange has been approved and will take affect with the new budget on July 1<sup>st</sup>. He stated due to relocation of the school, the rezoning/development of the old Prices Fork Elementary School for senior housing and commercial neighborhood uses, this amendment would be appropriate for the Prices Fork Village. Mr. Semones also referred back to Mr. Miller's question about distance from nearest public sewer line, which is several thousand feet.

Mr. Miller asked how many designated home sites are within the conservation easement.

Ms. Hoge, the applicant, stated three (3) more besides the existing home.

Ms. Hoge gave a background summary of what the family has tried to plan out in order to keep the farm. She explained 272 acres were placed in the conservation easement, and an additional 22 acres was gifted to Virginia Tech. That leaves 150 acres for potential development. The family may retain 50 acres closest to the conservation easement.

Mr. Miller closed the public hearing.

Mrs. Hirt asked if any citizens have contacted the office with concerns.

Staff reported they have not received any correspondence from other citizens.

Mr. Rice stated he felt comfortable that enough has changed in the area and given the placement of the conservation easement, he is in favor of the amendment.

Mr. Howard concurred.

A motion was made by Mr. Rice, seconded by Mr. Wolz and unanimously carried, to recommend approval of the request by the James Tyler Otey Hoge, ET Al (Agent: Balzer and Associated, Inc.)

for an amendment to the 2025 Montgomery County Comprehensive Plan from Resource Stewardship to Village Expansion with a further designation of Low-Density Residential in the Prices Fork Village Plan.

Ayes: Howard, Miller, Hirt, Allen, Rice, Wolz

Nayes: None

Abstain: None

## **VI. PUBLIC ADDRESS:**

Mr. Miller opened the public address; however, there being no comments the public address was closed.

## **VII. OLD BUSINESS:**

Potential Amendment to the Zoning Ordinance: Beekeeping in Residential Districts- Report from Subcommittee

Mrs. Gibson said the subcommittee met on May 12 and was very successful. Beekeeping is currently allowed in A-1, C-1 and R-R zones as a permitted use. Discussion was held regarding the bee's habits such as their flight patterns, behavior, and how the hives operate. Mrs. Gibson mentioned potentially updating the animal unit definition. Also, if it was allowed in residential districts, what the regulations would look like, setbacks and lot size requirements. Staff researched how the towns regulate beekeeping. The Town of Christiansburg allows three (3) hives by right in residential districts, for personal use. The Town of Blacksburg considers beekeeping as an accessory use if you are in a residential district. Currently in the County, zoning districts R-1, R-2 and R-3 do not allow beekeeping. These properties equal approximately 5% of the county. Items that Mrs. Gibson suggested the board to consider: lot size requirement, number of hives, residency requirements, location, hobby versus commercial use, access to water, and setbacks.

Mr. Wolz stated that it makes sense to allow residential beekeeping; however, setbacks were a concern. He stated that he would be comfortable with a 50 ft. setback to allow a buffer.

Mr. Rice added as a hobby beekeeper himself, he is interested in setbacks. The number of hives is something he is least concerned about.

Mr. Miller stated his concerns for Africanized hives and of people that might tamper with the hives out of mischief.

Mr. James Hill, Vice President of the NRV Beekeeper Association, spoke to the commission about reasons why they should consider beekeeping in residential zones. He used Roanoke County's beekeeping ordinance as an example to address issues such as density and setbacks. He noted that in his opinion, a 50 ft. setback and he would rather see a 25-30 ft. setback. Referring to density, Mr. Hill suggested no more than six (6) hives on a one acre property and two (2) on a quarter acre properties. He also asked for a provision in the ordinance to allow additional hives during swarm season. This would allow flexibility for the beekeeper to do whatever he/she wants with the extra hive. Mr. Hill said access to water supply on premises is crucial for bees so they don't stray to neighboring pools that may be around.

Mr. Richard Reed, President of the NRV Beekeeper Association spoke to the commission and wanted to make the members aware of the difference between honeybees and other bees such as

yellow jackets, wasps and hornets that are in a different family and much more defensive. He also pointed out that Washington D.C. and New York City allow beekeeping in residential areas and have not had any complaints. Mr. Reed currently has fourteen hives located 50 ft. from the rear property line in a community garden and has not received any complaints.

Mr. Jerry Borger, past President of the NRV Beekeeper Association, stated there has been a 40% loss nationwide in honeybees. He stated concerns regarding limiting placement of hives in the rear yard only. Mr. Borger also said he would like for the commission to allow no less than two hives and a nuke, in case something was to happen to one of the hives.

Mr. Allen asked how many hives the members of the association thought should be allowed on a quarter acre lot?

Mr. Hill said two hives and a nuke would be ideal for a hobbyist.

Mrs. Gibson said with the information gathered from tonight's meeting and the subcommittee meeting, staff will put together text to circulate to the subcommittee members between now and the next Planning Commission meeting.

## **VIII. NEW BUSINESS:**

### Potential Amendment to the Zoning Ordinance- R-3 Compact, Lot Frontage

Mrs. Gibson stated it came to staff's attention that the ordinance has some discrepancies in regards to the compact development option for residential zoning districts. In reviewing the ordinance, there is a 20 ft. reduction in two of the districts and two others didn't have that, error or intentional, the text would fix it. She discussed the potential impacts and noted that if there is a 20 ft. reduction in lot width curb and gutter should be required for the subdivision. Mrs. Gibson would like to bring back text and have a public hearing.

Mr. Miller had a question about whether staff was talking about sidewalks or not.

Mrs. Gibson said curb and gutter is a necessity, sidewalks may or may not be required and could be dependent on the density of the subdivision.

Mr. Rice asked who makes the determination on if sidewalks are required.

Mrs. Gibson stated in some districts they are required which ties into the compact development. She believes this would be a natural fit.

Mr. Miller asked John Neel with Gay and Neel, Inc. to speak.

Mr. Neel stated that while working on a current project, they realized R-3 Compact did not have a reduced lot width. He discussed sidewalks and pedestrian facility and the requirement to provide accessible green space.

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## Legislative Update-2015 General Assembly Session

Mrs. Gibson reminded the Commission of the Legal Seminar by the Land Use Education Program (LUEP) in Charlottesville May 29<sup>th</sup>. She said the largest bill will be how the Board of Zoning Appeals considers variances. Mrs. Gibson shared slides and ran through a brief overview of items that included house bills, land use taxation, new real estate disclosure for floodways and ground water. She also mentioned fracking, land preservation tax credits and transportation bills. Mrs. Gibson stated she will have more detailed information after the LUEP session to share with the Commission.

### **IX. LIAISON REPORTS:**

Board of Supervisors: Mr. Tuck reported the Board of Supervisors approved the construction for a new animal shelter to be complete by 2016. There are still ongoing talks about the old Blacksburg Middle School site. He said their next meeting will be held on May 26<sup>th</sup>, the pipeline representatives will be there. Mr. Tuck stated they are proposing three alternative routes, and looking at a compressions station near mile marker 220.

Blacksburg Planning Commission: Mr. Allen said the Blacksburg Planning Commission met April 7 and May 5 and only discussed minor town issues. The old Holiday Inn has been torn down.

Christiansburg Planning Commission: No Report.

Economic Development Committee: No Report.

Public Service Authority: Mr. Howard said the PSA Board discussed improving water pipe connections and announced water rates were raised. They also discussed protecting the New River.

Parks & Recreation: Mr. Wolz reported the new books are out for Spring/Summer programs. He said in the meeting the costs of maintenance and repairs to the Frog Pond were discussed. Dick's Sporting Goods are sponsoring several Parks & Rec programs this summer, and announced June 5 is Montgomery County Parks & Rec night at the Red Sox game.

Radford Planning Commission: Mr. Miller stated the last two meetings were consumed with revising their Comprehensive Plan. They are working with Virginia Tech Design Assistance Center.

School Board: No Report.

Tourism Council: No Report.

Planning Director's Report: Mrs. Gibson said she attended the county's first Familiarization Tour. She also stated that she would like to invite Lisa Bleakley with Tourism to speak at a future meeting. Mrs. Gibson said The Crooked Road's Mountains of Music Homecoming has one of their sites at Christiansburg High School and are looking for volunteers. She will have more information in the June 10<sup>th</sup> packet.

Mrs. Gibson reminded the members of the dinner and meeting being held by NRV Regional Commission on May 21<sup>st</sup>. They were formerly known as the PDC and unveiled their new logo last week.

Mrs. Gibson said since Mr. Tuck mentioned in his report of the approval of the new animal shelter, she wanted to let the Commission know staff will be bringing forward several items related to the review and use of the new site.

Mrs. Gibson also gave an update on the Safe Routes to School grant. She said that plans will be made to hold future Planning Commission meetings at each location.

**X. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:57 pm.

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Chairman

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Secretary