

# LANCASTER COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

## Minutes

**April 16, 2015**

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Lancaster County Planning Commission was called to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Board meeting room of the Lancaster County Administration Building, Lancaster, Virginia.

Present were David Jones, Robert Smart, David Chupp, Glenn Pinn, Steve Sorensen and Ty Brent. Tara Booth was absent.

Also present were William R. Lee, Board of Supervisors Representative, Don Gill, Planning/Land Use Director, John Mann, Lancaster Public Schools Director of Operations/Transportation, Terry McGregor, Chief of Emergency Services, Captain Martin Shirilla, Sheriff's Department, Dr. Robert Westbrook, Chairman of the Lancaster County School Board, Audrey Thomasson, Rappahannock Record and Charlie and Anne Costello.

Mr. Jones asked if there were any corrections or additions to the minutes of the March 19, 2015 meeting.

Mr. Jones moved to approve the March 19, 2015 minutes as submitted. **VOTE: 6-0.**

### **PUBLIC HEARING #1**

#### **UPDATE TO THE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT BUDGET – FY 2016-2020**

Mr. Jones asked Mr. Gill to present the issue.

Mr. Gill stated that he had included an updated spreadsheet in the Commission members' packets that showed the prioritization from last month's meeting. He stated that he had included a couple of additional attachments, which included the three-page handout that Mr. Brent had supplied detailing the Marshall and Swift Valuation per square foot of similar buildings to the proposed Emergency Services/Emergency Operations Center (EMS/EOC) building. He stated that Captain Shirilla provided a memo reducing the Sheriff's Office request for the computer upgrade from \$74,766 to \$59,150, which was the result of only one-third of their workstations needing replacement.

Mr. Gill stated that he had learned this week that the school system would like to move an item from FY 17 to FY 16. He stated that there are representatives from the school present at the meeting to address that matter.

Mr. Gill stated that there were many questions concerning the proposed EMS/EOC building and the replacement of the emergency communications radio equipment and Chief McGregor is present at the meeting to answer questions. He stated that Chief McGregor would like to address the Planning Commission before the public hearing is opened.

Mr. Gill stated that the public hearing has been advertised as required by law and other than the discussion at the previous two Planning Commission meetings, he has had a few inquiries from the public questioning the size and cost of the proposed EMS/EOC building.

Mr. Gill stated that the Capital Improvement Budget will need to be forwarded to the Board of Supervisors at this meeting after all revisions have been made by the Planning Commission to keep the budget process moving forward.

Chief McGregor stated that he had received some new information from people with experience in building emergency operations centers and their experience in the last five years is that the buildings are ranging from approximately \$250 to \$350 a square foot. He stated that the people he had consulted with had recommended reducing the size of the proposed building to 5000 square feet. He stated that the estimate of the cost of the building itself, based on his recent conversations, can be adjusted to \$1.35 million. He stated that figure does not include site work for a one-acre site at approximately \$350,000 and another \$350,000 for equipment and furnishings for the building. He stated that the revised project total is \$2.05 million.

Mr. Smart stated that he understood that building the structure to withstand Category 2 hurricane winds makes it more expensive, but what other factors are making the price per square foot so much more than regular construction.

Chief McGregor replied that things included in the cost are back-up utilities, generators and back-up sewage facilities, as well as water containing equipment. He stated that additional cost comes from hardening the facility so government continuity can be maintained and disaster recovery from a significant event.

Mr. Chupp referred to the maternity center and asked what it would cost to make that building suitable for the needs of the EMS Department.

Chief McGregor replied that the last time the building was advertised for sale, they were asking \$1.6 million dollars. He stated that he did not know how much it would cost to acquire the building, but renovation costs have to be considered along with the purchase price. He stated that, after spending two years working out of the building, he

does know that the HVAC system needs to be replaced. He stated that the other issue with the maternity center is that there is not enough undeveloped land on the parcel to add a garage.

Mr. Jones stated that the budget request does not state whether or not the EMS building will be a new one or an existing one. He stated that they are simply deciding on allocating money and what priority it will be.

Chief McGregor agreed and stated that if the maternity center turns out to be viable and the Board of Supervisors agree, then it could be an option. He stated that his department has already been using the building for two years.

Mr. Chupp stated that the \$2.05 million is based on a new building. He stated that he had heard the maternity center may be sold for a lot less than the original price.

Mr. Lee stated that if the maternity center is a viable option, there will still be renovation costs. He stated that just because the money has been allocated, does not mean that it will be spent.

Mr. Chupp stated that, it looked like to him, all the emphasis is on a new building.

Chief McGregor stated that the process was started about a year ago to look at the maternity center being the EMS Operations Center. He stated that they did not know what it would cost to acquire it, but they did know that structural modifications and possibly additions would be needed. He stated that the maternity center has never been “off the table.”

Mr. Jones asked if the maternity center could serve as an emergency shelter.

Chief McGregor replied no. He stated that a public shelter requires a space where the public can come and go freely and won't be in the way of other emergency operations. He stated that there was not enough space at the maternity center.

Mr. Chupp stated that he was not talking about using the maternity center the way it is now. He stated that obviously it would have to be modified. He stated that the surrounding land is farmland and more land could be purchased for an addition and garage, if the landowner chose to sell to the County. He stated that he would think the County would be exploring this option at the same time that the new building is being considered.

Chief McGregor stated again that the maternity center option was “not off the table.”

Mr. Brent asked if the intention was to ever use the building as a shelter.

Chief McGregor replied no. He stated that it would serve as a command post.

Mr. Smart asked Chief McGregor to go over the updated figures again.

Chief McGregor stated that the estimated cost of the structure itself is \$1.35 million, site work of \$350,000, and \$350,000 for furnishings and equipment for a total of \$2.05 million.

Mr. Jones asked if it was Chief McGregor's intent to lower the estimate and reduce the size of the proposed building.

Chief McGregor replied yes.

Mr. Gill asked Chief McGregor to briefly explain the proposed replacement of the emergency communications radio system.

Chief McGregor stated that the current radio system transmits from a single site at the radio station in Kilmarnock and that transmit site does not adequately cover the entire County. He stated that there are numerous places within the County where they are not able to communicate with dispatch. He stated that it was a huge safety problem. He stated that when looking to upgrade the radio system, the intent was to address the dead spots and to build a radio system that meets our current needs and establish a foundation to serve future needs as well. He stated that what they would like to do with the proposed radio system is to install equipment that is compliant with the P25 standard, which is a universal standard across all radio systems regardless of their technology and allows those radio systems to operate together. He stated that the proposed system will be P25 capable, but not fully functioning at that level. He stated that in order for his department to ever seek grant funding for communications, the County's system has to be capable of these operations and currently it is not.

Chief McGregor stated that the proposed \$2 million dollar price tag will meet the immediate need and provide coverage across the entire County by installing five transmitter sites throughout the County.

Mr. Jones asked if other counties in the area have this problem.

Chief McGregor replied yes and most of them have already made upgrades to their systems. He stated that Northumberland County just completed their system upgrade.

Mr. Jones asked if Northumberland County has the same system that is being proposed.

Chief McGregor replied yes.

Mr. Jones asked if Northumberland paid \$2 million dollars for their system.

Chief McGregor replied that Northumberland paid less, partly because they already had some of the components in place that Lancaster does not have.

Mr. Jones stated that he had been retired from the fire department for a long time, but he did not remember dead spots being a big issue.

Mr. Gill added that there were dead spots along Route 354 in the Upper Lancaster area.

Chief McGregor stated that, in recent years, the FCC required all public safety bands go through what is called narrowbanding. He stated that they took the frequency bandwidth and cut it in half, so with less bandwidth assigned to a frequency, there is less power, so it decreases the coverage overall. He stated that has been a challenge with a lot of the older systems.

Mr. Lee stated that technology is changing so fast and his concern is that what is viable in 2016, may not be in 2020.

Chief McGregor stated that a lot of the proposed system is modular and modules can be replaced with upgrades. He stated that one of the benefits of the newer radio system technology is that they are software dependent versus hardware dependent.

Mr. Jones stated that he had concerns about spending that much money for a few dead spots.

Chief McGregor stated that last summer, the County experienced several electrical storms that took out the radio system for a week because there were no parts available. He stated that they had to scavenge for parts on e-bay and parts warehouses across the country.

Mr. Chupp stated that the \$2 million dollar price tag bothers him in a county with approximately 11,000 people. He stated that it also bothered him that Northumberland County bought the same radio system for half the price.

Chief McGregor stated that Northumberland County got a better price because they did not have to replace all of their infrastructure.

Mr. Gill stated that he did not think Northumberland had to add a tower either.

Chief McGregor stated that he believed they connected completely to cell phone towers.

Mr. Jones stated that it seemed like a lot of money for a county with a decreasing population.

Mr. Lee stated that it appears the County has not kept up with technology over the last ten to fifteen years with no new upgrades or new hardware, so that is why there is so much money involved now, because everything needs to be updated at once.

Mr. Jones stated that he agreed with that.

Chief McGregor stated that he thought the proposed upgrades would achieve the needs of public safety for the next ten years.

Mr. Jones asked what was being spent on public safety, excluding the Sheriff's Office, at the present time.

Chief McGregor replied roughly a million dollars a year.

Mr. Jones asked what was spent on public safety six or seven years ago.

Chief McGregor replied considerably less.

Mr. Chupp referred to the proposed EMS/EOC building and asked if the building being able to withstand Category 2 hurricane winds was a requirement or a desired feature.

Chief McGregor replied that it was a desired feature.

Mr. Jones opened the public hearing.

Captain Shirilla referred to the emergency communications radio issue and stated that the situation was more than just a few dead spots. He stated that when officers try to mark on or off duty, they cannot be heard and dispatch has to guess at who is calling in. He stated that the key issue is if they are not compliant with the P25 standard, they cannot get future grant money for upgrades down the road. He stated that the P25 compliant issue comes from the 9/11 tragedy and is a national standard for inter-operability for radios.

Mr. Jones stated that if the equipment is antiquated, then it needs to be replaced.

Captain Shirilla referred to the computer equipment upgrade for the Sheriff's Office and stated that they have reduced their request from \$74,766 to \$59,150 since all of the workstations did not need to be replaced.

Captain Shirilla referred to the EMS/EOC building and stated that there is no guarantee that the County will be able to buy the maternity center and they need to look at all options.

Mr. Mann stated that the school board has set up a committee led by Jimmie Carter to look into possible construction improvements for the schools and have asked that the amount of \$37,900 be moved from FY 17 to FY 16 for school improvement and construction studies.

Mr. Gill added that Mr. Carter wants to enlist the help of a facilitator for that committee.

Charles Costello, a District 2 citizen, stated that he supported the renovation of the maternity center for the EMS building. He stated that he knew it was not a given, but had heard that it might be available for approximately \$500,000.

Mr. Costello referred to the proposed radio system and asked if any other systems were being considered besides radios.

Dr. Robert Westbrook, Chairman of the School Board, stated that he was in attendance to support John Mann, however, he wanted to say that he was a training officer for the Air Force National Guard and the one message he learned from training is that one should expect the worst and be ready for it. He stated that it would only take one mass casualty situation, where our emergency services were hampered, to really drive this home. He stated that he thought they should stretch their imaginations to a worst case situation involving the need to have the proposed radio system so everyone can communicate.

Mr. Pinn referred to the tragedies at the schools and stated that even with everything that is needed in place, the enemy can still get in. He stated that he agreed with the systems' upgrades because of the times we live in and because other counties have stepped up and did what they needed to do. He agreed with Dr. Westbrook in preparing for the worst.

Dr. Westbrook stated that he visited the high school recently and was buzzed into the building, but it occurred to him that they could let anyone into the building and that person could have weapons on them and the staff would not know it because there is no metal detector. He stated that everyone would like to prevent bad things from happening, but once they have happened, it is good for the reaction to be appropriate and that is where good communication is important.

Mr. Lee stated that he wanted to address Mr. Costello's comment. He stated that he was in Franklin, VA when Hurricane Floyd came through and the whole town flooded. He stated that the only means of communication was the radio system used by the police and rescue squads because the telephone system was completely down and that is why the radio system is important.

Mr. Jones closed the public hearing.

Mr. Jones asked if the Commission wanted to change the construction study request from FY 17 to FY 16.

There was a consensus to change it.

Mr. Gill asked where the Commission would like to include the construction study request in the Capital Improvement Budget prioritization list.

Mr. Brent suggested placing the item after the County administration building renovations and before the purchase of the old library.

Everyone agreed.

Mr. Smart made a motion to change the amount of the Sheriff's Office Computer Network Upgrade to \$59,150, change the Emergency Services Headquarters/Emergency Operations Center to \$2.05 million, move the Construction Study for Future Schools from FY 17 to FY 16 and change its position to behind the County Administration Building Renovations and forward this revised prioritized list of the Capital Improvement Budget items to the Board of Supervisors recommending approval. **VOTE: 6-0.**

#### **OTHER BUSINESS**

Mr. Gill stated that elections will be held at the May meeting. He stated that there will also be an update to the future land use map. He stated that the County Attorney recommended that the future land use map be updated to include all public properties.

Mr. Gill stated that unless something comes up requiring Planning Commission action, he recommended that there be no June meeting since the Board of Supervisors will be holding several budget work sessions and meetings during that month.

Mr. Brent asked if the new land use map reflected the new flood zone changes from FEMA.

Mr. Gill replied no. He stated that the future land use map is just a general guideline of where things such as growth areas and other public use and need areas are located or may be located in the future.

Mr. Chupp stated that he would like to add a statement concerning his vote on the overall prioritization of the Capital Improvement Budget for FY 2016-2020. He stated that he agreed with the prioritization and the items, but he has significant reservations

about two items. He referred to the proposed emergency communications radio system replacement and stated that it bothered him that Lancaster County would be investing in essentially the same system as Northumberland County, but paying twice as much, and he did not understand it, especially for a county of roughly 11,000 people.

Mr. Chupp referred to the EMS/EOC building request and stated that he saw the need for that building, but thought that the County should be exploring all options. He stated that there may be more options than just the two that are being discussed. He further stated that for a county the size of Lancaster, how many \$2 million dollar items can be thrown around. He stated that he agreed with all of the other items and their placement on the list. He stated that he would like his comments to be passed on to the Board of Supervisors.

Mr. Gill stated that the Board of Supervisors will get copies of all Planning Commission meeting minutes that relate to the capital improvement budget.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

The April 16, 2015 regular meeting of the Lancaster County Planning Commission was adjourned at 8 p.m.