

LANCASTER COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

Minutes

June 18, 2009

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Lancaster County Planning Commission was called to order at 7:00 p.m. in the General District Courtroom of the Lancaster County Courthouse, Lancaster, Virginia.

Present were David Jones, Chairman, Tara Booth, Steve Sorensen, Robert Smart, Ty Brent, and David Chupp.

Also present were Butch Jenkins, Board of Supervisors Representative, Don Gill, Planning/Land Use Director, Charles Costello and others.

Mr. Jones asked if there were any corrections or additions to the minutes of the May 21, 2009 regular meeting.

Mr. Jones moved to approve the May 21, 2009 minutes as submitted. **VOTE: 6-0.**

DISCUSSION ITEM #1

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Gill stated that Mr. Terrance Melcher was on hand to give a presentation on the various types of wind turbines. Mr. Gill stated that Mr. Melcher has a degree in land planning and design is very knowledgeable in this area.

Mr. Gill stated that as requested by the Planning Commission at last month's meeting, he had provided definitions of a windmill and wind turbine as follows:

Windmill- A latticework mill or machine operated by the wind usually acting on oblique vanes or sails that radiate from a horizontal shaft serving as a wind-driven water pump or electric generator primarily on farms.

Wind Turbine- The blades and associated mechanical and electrical conversion components mounted on top of a freestanding monopole tower whose purpose is to convert kinetic energy of the wind into rotational energy used to generate electricity.

Mr. Gill stated that either structure, if over 35 feet tall, would require a special exception from the Board of Supervisors.

Mr. Melcher stated that in his presentation he had put together an image of the wind rating from the Virginia Eastern Shore to the Middle Peninsula and Northern Neck. Mr. Melcher stated that some industry facts are: the United States market for small wind turbines that are 100 kilowatts and under grew 78% in 2008 and that the industry predicts a thirty fold growth in five years. Mr. Melcher further stated that the thirty percent tax credit bill that was signed in February 2009 to help consumers buy small wind systems has helped with the demand.

Mr. Melcher stated that the wind rating was a three on the East Coast and a two inland. Mr. Melcher stated that he was proposing to have a wind map for the Northern Neck. He further stated that the wind map would help to compare our area with other areas of the country.

Mr. Melcher stated that the best local wind area is in the Windmill Point to Smith Point area.

Mr. Melcher spoke about farmers using wind turbines for revenue and to reduce their energy costs.

Mr. Jenkins asked what number of turbines constitutes a wind farm.

Mr. Melcher stated that according to the American Wind Energy Association a wind farm is defined by one turbine.

Mr. Jenkins stated that the farms were based on the velocity of the wind, not the number of turbines.

Mr. Jones asked what it would take to power an average home.

Mr. Melcher stated that a five-kilowatt turbine could be comparable to an all house generator or power about eighty percent of an average home.

Mr. Jones stated that he wanted it to be understood that on sites that don't have a lot of wind, a five-kilowatt turbine will not be able to power an entire home.

Mr. Smart stated that he thought the county was safe from a big wind farm because the wind patterns are not here. Mr. Smart further stated that he thought the windmill definition should be looked at further. He stated that he thought that the small turbines should not be discouraged.

Mr. Jones stated that the majority of the citizens in Lancaster County cannot afford a wind turbine and also people will complain about a lot of towers in the County. Mr. Jones stated that the Commission should proceed slowly on the issue and make sure the definitions of windmill and wind turbine are well stated.

Mr. Gill stated that he thought the roof mounted wind turbines would be more acceptable than the turbines that are placed on a pole.

Mr. Gill stated that Mr. Melcher had spoke about the waterfront areas being the best place for wind turbines and he thought that the topography of the land in the upper end of the county should also be considered, where there is open farmland.

Mr. Gill stated that windmills are only allowed in the R-1 zoning district, but not defined. Wind turbines are not defined or allowed in any district at the present time.

Mr. Jones asked if there were any wind turbines close to the County. Mr. Jones stated that he thought it would be helpful to see one as it was working.

Mr. Melcher stated that there was one in Northumberland County and he is planning on having a wind turbine by September.

Mr. Jones asked if the Commission wanted to work on both definitions at the same time or one at a time.

Mr. Jenkins suggested that the definition of windmill be addressed first.

Mr. Jones asked Mr. Gill if the definitions would have to go to public hearing.

Mr. Gill stated that it would need to go to public hearing because it is an amendment to the ordinance.

The Commission talked about what should be stated in the windmill definition.

Mr. Jenkins stated that part of the definition should read that a windmill is a dedicated energy source.

Mr. Jones stated that the definition should also include what a windmill looks like and how it operates.

Mr. Jenkins stated that the definition should also include the wording of “less than 35 feet tall.”

Mr. Smart stated that he thought the word “small” should be including in the definition language as well.

Mr. Gill stated that he checked with other surrounding counties and they have no definitions for windmills or wind turbines.

Mr. Jones stated that the Commission would like Mr. Gill to come back to next month’s meeting with a revised definition for a windmill.

DISCUSSION ITEM #2

REVIEW OF PERMITTED USES IN C-1 AND C-2

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

Mr. Gill stated that prior to the Planning Commission's extensive work on the new R-4 zoning district, the revision to Section 5-26 of the Subdivision Ordinance and the cash proffer study, the Commission was reviewing the permitted uses in each zoning district, as required by the Comprehensive Plan, to verify that the permitted uses are compatible with the intent of each zoning district.

Mr. Gill stated that the Agriculturally zoned A-1 and A-2 Districts were reviewed and changes were recommended and forwarded to the Board of Supervisors in December 2007. He further stated that the Residentially zoned R-1 and R-3 Districts were reviewed at last month's meeting and no changes were recommended.

Mr. Gill stated that churches were listed twice in C-1, and other than that, he had no other recommendations.

Mr. Jones stated that he thought that in C-2, Sections 8A-1-1 and 8A-1-2, which refer to coin-operated laundry and dry cleaning and restaurants, that the 2,000 square foot limit was too small.

Mr. Smart stated that he thought in C-1, Section 8-1-36, where it reads veterinary hospital and/or kennel, he thought it should also read "pet store."

Mr. Brent asked why there were no square footage requirements in District C-1.

Mr. Gill stated that was because the district is general commercial and there are very few C-1 properties.

Mr. Brent asked about lighting issues.

Mr. Gill stated that lighting was addressed in Article 22 of the Zoning Ordinance.

Mr. Jones stated that he thought the Commission should consider enlarging the square footage for restaurants and coin operated laundry businesses in District C-2 to 4,000 square feet and taking the special exception off of post offices.

Mr. Brent stated that he thought the restaurants being the larger size would be acceptable, but he didn't know about the larger repair shops in the C-2 District.

Mr. Jones stated that the Commission members should consider it for next month's meeting and then forward it for public hearing.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Jones stated that he wanted to make sure there was ample consideration of size and setbacks on any signage that was going up in the corridor overlay.

ADJOURNMENT

The June 18, 2009 regular meeting of the Lancaster County Planning Commission was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.