

**Planning Advisory Board
Meeting Summary
April 12, 2023**

Attendance:

Kristin Kirkwood
Glenn Gillis
Stephanie Flasch
Casi Boyer
Aimee O’Neill

P&Z Staff:

Shane Grimm
Jennifer Freeman

- 1) The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m.

1. **Minutes/Summary**

The PAB members approved the summary of the March 2023 PAB meeting. They decided Aimee O’Neill would be the Vice-Chair of the PAB.

- 2) **Planning and Zoning Transition Documents**

The members decided to discuss and comment on the Planning and Zoning Transition Team recommendations. Ms. Boyer asked what has been put into place. Mr. Grimm said some of the short-term recommendations have been put into place. Others have been looked at and discussed. Ms. Boyer said communication with the public is dependent on what the administration does. Mr. Grimm said the administration hasn’t discussed the transition report with him. Mr. Grimm said the staffing issues are challenging because they were asked to reduce their budgets and personnel is mostly his budget. So, he won’t be able to hire many people. Ms. Boyer asked about the QR code. Mr. Grimm said they are moving forward. Mr. Grimm said you are going to be able to get updates sent to you, if you sign up. QR codes will be added to DAC agendas and eventually signs.

The first recommendation was about Zoning and Easement Enforcement. It is to get properties into compliance. Mr. Grimm said they are moving forward with civil infractions capability. It needs to go to the county council. Ms. Kirkwood asked about Ag Preservation easements being monitored. Mr. Grimm said his staff is moving forward on it. And 12 new properties were approved. Ms. Flasch asked if there is a priority list for enforcement issues. Mr. Grimm said there are higher priority issues. They have been notified. Mr. Gillis asked about the process. How are new violations identified? Mr. Grimm said they are anonymous complaint driven. There isn’t a priority. It is as they come in. They are inspected and if there is a violation they proceed with the next steps.

Those steps may be changing. Most environmental violations are done by DPW. Planning and Zoning does NRD and tree clearing. Forest Conservation is administered by the Development Review section. A bond is submitted. And if they are planted and maintained for 2 years, they get the bond released. Ms. Kirkwood talked about new Ag Preservation legislation that is being introduced. Ms. Flasch said it was interesting they were adding residential zoning into the program.

The next few recommendations were discussed. These are part of the Immediate Actions. Staffing was discussed. Mr. Grimm said they are looking at filling the Board of Appeals planner position. The members asked for an organizational chart. Ms. O'Neill said the Ag Preservation recommendation (1A-2) looks like it is being worked on. There is new legislation being worked on and looked at. Ms. Kirkwood said the next recommendation talks about the budget for Ag Pres. The next budget will have wording to explain the budget for this.

Mr. Grimm said he believes the next recommendation about data management isn't clear. He doesn't see that there is an issue. The next few recommendations talk about HarfordNEXT. The first was about tracking progress. Mr. Gillis said he is interested in the watershed plans. Ms. Kirkwood said those reports are generated in DPW. So, P & Z is reliant on DPW for those plans. Mr. Gillis said they should still be updated to see what the issues might be, especially before comp rezoning. Mr. Grimm said they use the environmental features on the site more than looking at the plans. Mr. Gillis said the watershed, forestation and agriculture should be looked at to see what needs to be done. Mr. Grimm said the Forest Conservation Act may affect how much these issues are needed. The PAB members want to discuss the Act in future meetings. Ms. Flasch asked about the redevelopment incentives that were mentioned. Mr. Grimm said there has been no action on that yet. Mr. Flasch said it seems like the document focuses on communication between P&Z and Economic Development. Mr. Grimm said that has been a priority. A new position in Economic Development is a Business Navigator. It is constant contact with P&Z, DPW and DILP. He helps the project through the entire process. And there is a business subcabinet that gets together and talks about projects. There is a new FastTrack process being worked on. Ms. Boyer asked how they will work with municipalities. Mr. Grimm said that hasn't been discussed but it is a good point.

They talked about the Southern County Task Force. Ms. Kirkwood said they were looking at Edgewood first. Mr. Grimm said it is more about livability than business related. Ms. Boyer said the whole county should be treated as the county which includes those municipalities. Mr. Grimm said the Southern County Task Force will include everyone. Planning and Zoning is getting all the data together.

The next recommendations (IA-6 and 7) relate to community engagement. Ms. Kirkwood said they discussed that at the last meeting. Mr. Grimm said they are working on the Track-It app and other public notice signs. Which also includes the recommendation for IA-8. Mr. Gillis asked about the effectiveness of CIMs. They need

to be looked at. How can input from the community be implemented? Mr. Grimm said they can't be required to implement the community input. The Department must approve a plan if it meets the requirements. They cannot make them do more. Ms. Flasch said the CIMs could be important if the developer was willing to listen and implement what the community is saying. Mr. Grimm said the only time it can be required is if it is a special exception. The Hearing Examiner may add conditions. Mr. Gillis said there needs to be a way to get more community input into the project. Ms. Flasch said council members could look at CIMs and see what the issues are. Ms. O'Neill said maybe change the name from Community Input to Community Information. Mr. Grimm explained no approvals have been granted before a project gets to DAC, except the Forest Stand Delineations. The point is to make sure a project meets the requirements. If not, they must resubmit. The project must be permitted by right. Some projects never receive approval.

The next recommendations were related to Board of Appeals cases. Mr. Grimm said sometimes they can't enforce the Hearing Examiner's decision. The Zoning Enforcement recommendations were discussed. Mr. Grimm said they are starting to use fines. The members also talked about the People's Counsel for Board of Appeals cases. Mr. Grimm said there is also a People's Counsel Advisory Board that looks at each case and recommends if they need to be involved.

The members discussed Short-Term Actions in the transition document. The first recommendation (ST-1) is about the department's location. Mr. Grimm said it is an ongoing discussion. Recommendation ST-2 has been discussed. Economic Development is forecasted to be within the building on Main Street with a presence still on Route 40, but it won't be the whole department.

The document listed 5 specific areas in HarfordNEXT that should be emphasized. They include Community Planning, Additional Avenues for Public Participation, Environmental Protection/Green Infrastructure, Redevelopment Incentives, and Small area plans and improved design standards. Mr. Grimm said they are splitting Ag Preservation and Historic Preservation.

They discussed the Zoning Code revision. They don't believe there should be a complete rewrite. Mr. Grimm said events are the current issue they are looking at now. These include wedding venues and farm breweries. Ms. Kirkwood said preservation programs each have different rules for what is allowed that go further than the zoning code. They discussed the Forest Conservation Act that was just passed. It may affect how much new development can be done. It focuses on redevelopment. They discussed apartments, mixed use development and retail development.

Mr. Gillis talked about traffic studies. Mr. Grimm said they are looking at who pays for the study. The traffic study is looked at by many agencies. They are looking at what

background traffic is included. They want to include projects under review. Mr. Gillis said they should include municipalities.

They talked about the recommendation for Green Infrastructure (ST-15). Ms. Kirkwood talked about the current Green Infrastructure Plan. It identifies core forests and corridors, which are streams. And there hasn't been much action taken from this plan. And the information doesn't factor into anything else. They talked about the Abingdon Woods project and tree cutting. They discussed the Enterprise zone and that it is for redevelopment. Abingdon Woods would not be considered redevelopment.

They are going to look at the rest of the document at the next meeting.

3) Other Business

The members discussed what to do at the next meeting. Mr. Kirkwood said they can discuss HarfordNEXT. Ms. O'Neill is interested in the Forest Conservation Act. And they discussed the new Ag Preservation legislation. Mr. Grimm said looking at sections of the Zoning Code would be helpful to the department. The members will come to the meeting with different ideas for agenda items.

This meeting was adjourned at 8:02PM.