

**RICHMOND COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES**

October 5, 2015

The Richmond County Planning Commission held its regularly scheduled meeting on Monday, October 5, 2015, in the Public Meeting Room, County Administrative Building, Warsaw, VA.

The following members were present:

Glenn Bowen

Jesse Clark

Vice Chairman Darnell Clayton

Rick Cox

Chairperson Martha Hall

Cassandra Jackson

Clifton Jenkins

John W. Lewis

Joyce Pemberton

Patrick Weakland

Also present:

Joseph Quesenberry, Planning and Zoning Administrator

Mercedes Pierce, Planning Commission Secretary

Shannon Waters, Northern Neck News

CALL TO ORDER, INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chairperson Martha Hall called the meeting to order at 7:00p.m. Mr. Jesse Clark gave the invocation and Chairperson Hall led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES - SEPTEMBER 8, 2015 MEETING

John W. Lewis made a motion to approve the minutes as submitted. Rick Cox seconded the motion and they were approved unanimously.

SOLAR POWER FACILITY ORDINANCE AMENDMENT – UPDATE

Joseph Quesenberry informed the Planning Commission he reached out to Northern Neck Electric and SUNENERGY1. Mr. Quesenberry stated he has gathered that Dominion's contract for allowing solar power companies to build plants is running out around the end of this year, so

they are trying to get out as many proposed sites as possible. Mr. Quesenberry informed everyone he added another section to the proposed solar power facility ordinance amendment, titled "Surety Bond," which reads, "The facility will be subject to all proper surety bonds deemed necessary by local, state, and federal officials, per the Richmond County Zoning Ordinance." Mr. Quesenberry stated that the Zoning Ordinance leaves it open to what the County can bond and it mainly pertains to roads, Stormwater, and Erosion & Sediment Control. Mr. Quesenberry shared that he added a sentence to Item K of Section 8, which reads, "If the entity purchases the property, an agreement must be signed with County officials that ensures proper decommissioning and removal of all equipment." Mr. Quesenberry stated he spoke with Mr. Quicke, County Administrator, and he asked that the Planning Commission schedule a Public Hearing for this Ordinance amendment next month.

Mr. Rick Cox questioned whether or not Northern Neck Electric and Dominion had any issues or concerns. Mr. Quesenberry stated he is not aware of any issues or concerns with the Ordinance amendment language, but they could have concerns with the proposed project. Mr. Quesenberry believes the site would fall on about 99% of Dominion's coverage and about 1% of Northern Neck Electric's coverage areas.

Mr. Quesenberry stated the Ordinance amendment language was reviewed by two officials at Northern Neck Electric and they seemed to be okay with it and he has not been able to reach out to Dominion, but it can be done in the future.

Chairperson Martha Hall asked Mr. Quesenberry if he has any answers to the summary questions provided in the packet. Mr. Quesenberry submitted the questions to the legal counsel of the company proposing the project, but has not heard back.

Mr. Patrick Weakland asked if both Dominion and Northern Neck Electric are aware of the possibility of a solar energy site coming to the County and if so, if they have expressed how they feel about it. Mr. Quesenberry stated that so far, the companies have been neutral.

Chairperson Hall asked the Planning Commission if they are ready to have a Public Hearing on this amendment next month. Ms. Joyce Pemberton stated she is not ready. Chairperson Hall agreed with Ms. Pemberton and stated she would like to make sure the Planning Commission has all the information they need in order to provide appropriate responses during the Public Hearing.

Mr. Jesse Clark asked Mr. Quesenberry if any of the neighboring counties have addressed this issue. Mr. Quesenberry stated that per Northern Neck Electric, Essex County has approved a solar power facility in Dunnsville and there is a plant being built in Accomack County. Mr.

Quesenberry added that Dominion put out a bid to have these plants brought into their area to make a larger footprint for green energy.

Mr. John W. Lewis requested confirmation as to whether or not the solar power companies would be selling directly to the individual consumer. Mr. Quesenberry confirmed that the companies would not be selling directly to individuals.

Mr. Lewis asked if the structures/platforms would be subject to setbacks. Chairperson Hall stated the general standard setbacks are already included in the proposed amendment language.

Mr. Cox asked if the County has an actual application from SUNENERGY1. Mr. Quesenberry stated the County does not because solar power facilities are not currently allowed in the County.

John W. Lewis made a motion to schedule the Public Hearing for the proposed solar facility language during next month's meeting. Cassandra Jackson seconded the motion and all were in favor.

BRIEF STAFF UPDATE

Joseph Quesenberry informed the Planning Commission this would be the last meeting he attends since he has decided to accept the position of Director of Tourism with Patrick County. He thanked the Planning Commission for allowing him to work with them for a year a half and stated he will miss everyone.

Chairperson Martha Hall wished Mr. Quesenberry the best and stated he stepped right in and held things together very nicely and she has appreciated his guidance to the Commission and his willingness to entertain the Commission's various concerns. Chairperson Hall told Mr. Quesenberry she is sorry to see him go and he will be missed.

Mr. Quesenberry provided the Planning Commission with his personal email and telephone number with hopes of keeping in touch with everyone.

OTHER BUSINESS

Patrick Weakland stated there was a 7-2 vote when the Commissioners voted to recommend approval of the rezoning request for Fones Cliffs and asked if any of the Commissioners have changed their minds. Chairperson Martha Hall and Jesse Clark both stated they did not have a change of vote.

Joyce Pemberton stated she would like to set up the Nominating Committee for Officers for 2016. Chairperson Hall asked Ms. Pemberton if she would be Chair and Clifton Jenkins and Cassandra Jackson if they would both serve on the Committee. Ms. Pemberton, Ms. Jackson, and Mr. Jenkins all agreed to serve on the Nominating Committee.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Shannon Waters, Northern Neck News, introduced herself. Chairperson Martha Hall welcomed her.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chairperson Martha Hall adjourned the meeting at 7:21p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mercedes Pierce
Planning Commission Secretary