

**RICHMOND COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES**

July 10, 2017

The Richmond County Planning Commission held its regularly scheduled meeting on Monday, July 10, 2017, in the Public Meeting Room, County Administrative Building, Warsaw, VA.

The following members were present:

Walter Ball

Vice-Chairperson Glenn Bowen

Chairperson Jesse Clark

Rick Cox

Cassandra Jackson

John W. Lewis

Harry Smith, Jr.

Clifton Jenkins

The following members were absent:

Darnell Clayton

Martha Hall

Also present:

D. Barry Sanders

Richard English

Hope Mothershead

CALL TO ORDER, INVOCATION, AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chairperson Clark called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Cassandra Jackson gave the invocation and led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – APRIL 10, 2017 MEETING

Chairperson Clark asked if there were any additions or corrections to the minutes from the April 10, 2017 meeting. Walter Ball made a motion to approve the minutes, as presented. Cassandra Jackson seconded the motion and they were approved unanimously.

FRACKING

Chairperson Clark noted that the content of the meeting would be for discussion of the topic of fracking. Fracking is described as drilling into the earth to release a chemical mixture, resulting in natural gas. The fracking subcommittee, consisting of Glenn Bowen, John W. Lewis and Rick Cox, have completed research on the activity. Chairperson Clark looked to Mr. Bowen for comment. Mr. Bowen noted that King George has passed restrictions on fracking and the Planning Commission of Westmoreland County has presented recommendations to the Board for review/approval as to the fracking topic. Mr. Bowen added that the only pro he sees to fracking is clean energy, with cons of increased crime rate from transient workers, water pollution and work being done around-the-clock, 24/7 (loud noises, light pollution and road traffic).

Mr. Lewis noted that he understands that the money would help the economy but some of the cons he added were noise/light pollution and possible contamination of the water. Mr. Lewis advised on his conversation with Kathy Clarke from the Northern Neck Soil and Water Conservation Office. Ms. Clarke informed Mr. Lewis that residents in southern Virginia are making lots of money on fracking. However, the depth in those areas is much greater than Richmond County would experience. Mr. Lewis added that here in Richmond County, the drilling would be very shallow and much closer to the surface of the earth.

Mr. Cox continued to add that upon his findings from the Attorney General, the County can legally prohibit fracking. He felt that the long-term risks are not worth the short-term benefits. There are so many unknown factors and without having the answers, Mr. Cox is not sure what Richmond County will be left with if fracking is allowed and problems arise.

Mr. Lewis is also very concerned about the unknown chemicals that are used for fracking and reminded everyone that this is only affecting approximately 10% of the County.

Mr. Ball questioned if the companies were sure that the gas is available in the area or if companies were still in the searching phase. Mr. Cox noted that test wells were drilled in Westmoreland County.

Mr. Jenkins said that he thought most of the workers necessary for the drilling jobs would be laborers and would not benefit the community on a long-term basis.

Mr. Smith added that he did not see any pros at all as the jobs that are created will probably be filled with out of town workers. Mr. Smith also noted that if restrictions are placed on the activity, there will need to be someone to enforce the restrictions.

Ms. Jackson continued to note that Richmond County is a retirement community for many and as the planning commission she felt that the people need to be considered. This activity will bring inconvenience to many in the area.

Mr. Ball asked if any other adjoining counties had approved fracking. Chairperson Clark noted that Westmoreland and Richmond are the only counties within the Northern Neck that is part of the Taylorsville Basin. Mr. Bowen noted that Westmoreland County is working towards regulations, etc.

Cassandra Jackson made a motion to suggest denial of hydraulic fracking within the borders of Richmond County. Glenn Bowen seconded the motion. The motion carried with a vote of 8-0 (*John W. Lewis – yay; Harry Smith – yay; Glenn Bowen – yay; Rick Cox – yay; Cassandra Jackson – yay; Walter Ball – yay; Jesse Clark – yay; Clifton Jenkins - yay*).

It was the concensus of the Commissioners to make the above suggestion to the Board and receive direction on proceeding. The Planning Commission understands that an ordinance amendment, including public hearing, would be necessary for the prohibition of hydraulic fracking.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chairperson Clark adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Hope Mothershead
Commission Secretary