

**RICHMOND COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES**

November 12, 2019

The Richmond County Planning Commission held its regularly scheduled meeting on Tuesday, November 12, 2019, in the Public Meeting Room, County Administrative Building, Warsaw, VA.

The following members were present:

Rick Cox
Glenn Bowen
J.R. Fidler
Harry Smith, Jr.
Brian Mothershead
Cassandra Jackson
John W. Lewis
Marion James Packett
Walter Ball

Members Absent:

Darnell Clayton

Also present:

Hope Mothershead, Director of Planning and Zoning
Liz Hylan, Administrative Assistant
R. Morgan Quicke, County Administrator
Approximately 1 other

CALL TO ORDER, INVOCATION, AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Glenn Bowen called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Mr. Bowen gave the invocation and Mr. Lewis led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Quicke introduced Mr. Jackson to the Commissioners. Mr. Quicke mentioned David Parr would likely be appointing Mr. Jackson to fill Walter Ball's seat on Planning Commission in January.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – OCTOBER 7, 2019 MEETING

Glenn Bowen asked if there were any additions or corrections to the minutes from the October 7, 2019 meeting. Chairperson Bowen noted some recommended changes to the minutes. Cassandra Jackson made a motion to approve the minutes, as amended. J.R. Fidler seconded the motion and they were approved unanimously.

VAULT PRIVY DISCUSSION

Mrs. Mothershead noted the Amish community has increased in our area and with the expansion came the need for a school. Mrs. Mothershead mentioned the traditional Amish school is a one-room building with no plumbing and only outside facilities. Mrs. Mothershead noted after much research and discussion an Amish school was permitted on Canal Road with two vault privies. Mrs. Mothershead mentioned an Amish school can accommodate up to 24 students and on the opening date of the school, 22 children were present meaning more schools will follow.

Mrs. Mothershead noted at the October meeting of the Richmond County Board of Supervisors, the Board expressed concern about the recent approval of the vault privies. Mrs. Mothershead mentioned ultimately, the Board voted to place a moratorium on the allowance of vault privies with the County until a time in which the Planning Commission could further study the issue and bring back a recommendation to the Board. Mrs. Mothershead noted the primary issue/ concern expressed by the Board of Supervisors was the lack of running water within the structure which does not allow for the traditional means of handwashing.

Mrs. Mothershead mentioned some questions to consider:

- What is the purpose of vault privies?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of vault privies?
- Should Richmond County amend the Zoning Ordinance to be more specific on when and where privies can be permitted or should the County consider banning vault privies, only allowing conventional and engineered systems?

Mrs. Mothershead mentioned she would like to get feedback in hopes to get some suggested language or recommendation to move forward with a public hearing for changes if necessary.

Mr. Cox reviewed a handout from the Center of Disease Control in regards to the benefits and risk of not properly washing hands.

Mr. Cox mentioned he attended the Board meeting in October and spoke to the Board about his concerns on having no hand washing facilities at the School. Mr. Cox noted he does not feel this should be strictly an Amish community issue.

Chairman Bowen asked about the use of hand sanitizer. Mr. Cox noted hand sanitizer won't do the job of getting the bacteria off as you would from running water.

Mr. Ball asked the cost of the vault privy compared to the conventional sewage system. Mrs. Mothershead mentioned that cost was discussed when the individuals came to apply. She explained that when constructing a vault privy, the same septic tank is placed in the ground that would be used for a traditional system but you would not run drainage lines. Mrs. Mothershead noted most of the cost we typically would have for a traditional system is being expended with just a vault privy. Mrs. Mothershead mentioned the Amish have two vault privies on their lot.

Mrs. Mothershead noted the Amish do have running water in their homes just not running water in the school. Mrs. Mothershead mentioned they do have a handwashing station with water that is brought in each day for the kids to wash and dry their hands.

Mr. Lewis asked where the water goes after handwashing. Mrs. Mothershead noted currently they are using a cooler full of water that goes straight to the ground. Mrs. Mothershead mentioned none of this water is going into the vault, it is just solid waste. Mrs. Mothershead noted if water went into the tank that is already in place for the vault privy, the vault privy permit would be null and void.

Mrs. Mothershead mentioned she has spoken with other localities that have Amish community's and most of those schools have vault or pit privies with no running water. Mrs. Mothershead noted those localities also allow vault privies just as Richmond County has allowed.

Mrs. Mothershead noted the vault privies will be pumped on a yearly basis. Mrs. Mothershead also noted the Amish treat the waste with lime to help the odor and flies away.

Chairman Bowen mentioned after researching rules and regulations of a vault privy with different localities it was noted hand sanitizer is used and the schools are cleaned on a daily basis.

Mr. Packett asked if disposing the hand washing water with soap onto the property is really an issue. Mrs. Mothershead noted she has spoken with Mark Brann at the Health Department, and Mr. Brann preferred a hydrant versus the water that is brought over daily in the cooler, which is what they are using now. Mrs. Mothershead also noted Mr. Brann stated if the hydrant is used for handwashing with a station to dry hands he did not see where that would be an issue.

Mr. Cox stated according to the Health Department regulations waste water on the ground is always a problem even if it's a hand washing issue.

Mr. Cox mentioned he believes the issue is if you do for one section of the community the County will have to do for others in the future.

Mrs. Mothershead noted there have been discussions in regards to the people who are going to want to put a vault privy on their lot if it doesn't perk. Mrs. Mothershead mentioned if you are going to live on your lot you have to have water and septic.

Mr. Fidler asked why the Amish won't have running water at the school if they have it in their house. Mrs. Mothershead noted it is a tradition within the Amish schools to have no running water.

Mrs. Mothershead mentioned their houses are built to code with no special exceptions.

Mrs. Mothershead noted the Amish stated in conversation that the school is built and used specifically for a school house and no other use. Mrs. Mothershead also noted church services are held at each other homes.

Mr. Quicke mentioned the County is trying to work simply with the new community that has come to the area and their lifestyle that is not the same as we typically see.

Mr. Quicke mentioned the County wants to be supportive of this community and does not want to give them special rules or treatment. Mr. Quicke noted anyone who walks into the County office, the County tries to work with that person to accommodate as much as possible.

Mr. Lewis noted if the lot does perk for conventional systems he does not feel the County should allow vault privies.

Mr. Ball stated he does not feel we should force or change the way the Amish live. Mr. Ball noted the Amish are custom to their lifestyle and know what they need to do in order to protect themselves from illness.

Chairman Bowen reminded the Commissioners the Board of Supervisors has voted to place a moratorium on the allowance of vault privies with the County until a consensus or recommendation is made to bring back to the Board.

Mr. Packett asked if the Health Department has any other responsibility or inspections with the school besides the vault privy. Mrs. Mothershead noted the Health Department has no other reasons for inspections at the school since they have no cafeteria or any means to cook or serve food.

Mr. Quicke noted there are other Amish communities within the State that also fall under these regulations.

Mr. Quicke mentioned Mark Brann has offered to attend a meeting for discussion.

Chairman Bowen asked the board for consensus to let Mrs. Mothershead gather more information from other localities and ask Mr. Brann to attend the December meeting for questions and discussion.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Cox noted the nominating committee met on October 21st. Mr. Cox mentioned himself along with J.R Fidler and Cassandra Jackson (via telephone) recommended Glenn Bowen as Chairman, Harry Smith, Jr. as Vice- Chairman and Liz Hylan as Secretary.

J.R. Fidler made a motion to recommend Glenn Bowen to serve as Chairman on the Planning Commission. Rick Cox seconded the motion and the motion carried with a vote of 9-0 (Rick Cox –aye; J.R. Fidler – aye; Glenn Bowen – aye; John W. Lewis –aye; Harry Smith, Jr. - aye; Cassandra Jackson – aye; Brian Mothershead – aye; Marion James Packett- aye; Walter Ball- aye).

Walter Ball made a motion to recommend Harry Smith, Jr. to serve as Vice- Chairman on the Planning Commission. John W. Lewis seconded the motion and the motion carried with a vote of 9-0 (Rick Cox –aye; J.R. Fidler – aye; Glenn Bowen – aye; John W. Lewis –aye; Harry Smith, Jr. - aye; Cassandra Jackson – aye; Brian Mothershead – aye; Marion James Packett- aye; Walter Ball- aye).

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Glenn Bowen adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Hylan
Commission Secretary