

**GARRETT COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND LAND MANAGEMENT**

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**MINUTES**

**The Garrett County Planning Commission** held its regular monthly meeting on Wednesday, February 1, 2017, at 1:30 p.m., in the County Commissioners Meeting Room. Members and guests in attendance at the meeting included:

Tony Doerr	Bruce Swift	Deborah Carpenter-staff
Jeff Messenger	Jeff Conner	William DeVore -staff
Tim Schwinabart	Elizabeth Georg	Chad Fike -staff
William Weissgerber	David Moe	Paul Durham

1. Call to Order - by Chairman Tony Doerr at 1:30 pm.
2. The January minutes were unanimously approved, as submitted, by a vote of 6 to 0.
3. Report of Officers – None
4. Unfinished Business – None
5. New Business – Director Carpenter announced that Chad Fike is now Assistant Director

**A. Miscellaneous**

**1. Deep Creek Watershed Zoning Appeals Cases-**

- a. **VR-763** - an application submitted by Gregory W. Germain for a Variance, to allow the reconfiguration of three grandfathered lots into two lots. The property is located at 310 Rock Lodge Road, tax map 50, parcel 268, Lots 16, 17 and 18, and is zoned LR1.

After discussion, the Planning Commission offered no comments on the Variance request.

**2. Action on (PRDs) Planned Residential Developments- None**

**3. Action on Planned Major Subdivisions-None**

**4. Comprehensive Plan Continued Review of Chapter Two and Begin Review of Chapter Three.**

**Note: The audio of this discussion has been recorded in its entirety and can be found on the county website: [www.garrettcountry.org](http://www.garrettcountry.org)**

**Follow up from meeting of January 4-**Director Carpenter addressed some of the questions that were brought up during the previous meeting of the Commission. The director requests that the Commission carefully consider which questions that they would like to pursue and consider if those questions would affect the growth scenario forecast. Ms. Carpenter specifically addressed five questions from the last meeting and the answers to these questions. The presentation replied to questions about the number of rental units, owner occupied dwellings vs. non-owner occupied dwellings, average household income, food stamps/housing assistance and other questions from the previous meeting. The Commission believes that the presentation regarding these issues does not measurably impact their decisions from the previous meeting.

The director presented a 16-page, PowerPoint program which is attached as part of these minutes. The presentation was used as an outline for this Planning Commission meeting.

After some discussion, a majority of Commission members and some guests believe that 100 new housing starts per year is overly optimistic. They believe that most people in the County could not afford a new home at this time, especially in consideration of new Health Department and Fire Marshal regulations. The group feels that 75 new housing starts per year may be more realistic, so this part of the growth scenario was revised accordingly. The breakdown of the location of the housing starts would be 40 percent in the Deep Creek Lake watershed, 10 percent in the municipalities and 50 percent outside of the towns and the watershed.

**Chapter Two Review Continued Discussion-** This section of the Plan was reviewed by the Commission, line by line. Topics include:

*Section 2.5.1 Projections by Watershed-* The Commission discussed the watershed –based approach to the Plan. The County contains all or portions of seven major watersheds. Director Carpenter has already inserted the proportional figures into the spreadsheet, by watershed, based on the projected new housing starts. The methodology involved to attain these figures was also explained.

*Table 2.3 -Housing Unit Projections by Watershed and Sub-area* was also reviewed by the Commission. This table shows the County's housing unit projections by watersheds, town and sub-areas. A map of the watersheds in the current Comprehensive Plan and the plotted new residential units, between 2000 and 2016, were also shown, as part of the presentation.

*Map 2.2: Comprehensive Watersheds*- The map of the county Comprehensive Plan watersheds was also reviewed and discussed. There is no plan to change the watershed map at this time

*Section 2.6 - Commercial and Industrial* –The Commission noted the discrepancy between the MDP employment figures with the Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation figures. The projected job growth in the County was also discussed.

**Chapter Three-Land Use- Review and Discussion**-Director Carpenter noted that the first two chapters were basically rewritten. The director explained that the Commission will be taking a broader look at the following chapters. Chapter 3 includes goals and objectives, existing land use, projected land use, land use categories, watershed land use plans, and policies and actions. This chapter sets policies that directly affect the Subdivision Ordinance and in a limited geographical context, the Deep Creek Watershed Zoning Ordinance.

In 2008, the Commission had several concerns:

- 1) Rapid growth/concern of loss of resource land
- 2) Layout and design of subdivision for conservation
- 3) Direction of growth to available infrastructure
- 4) Designation of land for economic development/discourage strip development
- 5) Location and availability of affordable housing
- 6) Encourage quality building and site design and
- 7) Protect state owned lands from encroachment by incompatible development.

Many of these concerns were addressed in Sections of the 2008 Plan including: *3.1-Goals and Objectives and 3.2-Land Use and Development Trends*.

In 2008, the planned Land Use suggested actions were:

- 1) Expand AR and RR districts
- 2) Recommend direct county contribution for ag preservation
- 3) Add cluster provisions
- 4) Expand growth around the towns
- 5) Clarify TR and TC multifamily unit standards
- 6) Require mandatory sketch plans
- 7) Emphasize the 500 foot buffer around state lands and
- 8) Resolve issues with un-platted lots.

Chad Fike noted that some of these topics were addressed by changes to the subdivision or zoning ordinances, but some recommendations that were suggested to be mandatory, ended up being encouraged by offering incentives instead. The County did not start its own ag-land preservation program. The 500-foot Rural Resource buffer around state lands was clarified in the latest version of the Subdivision Ordinance, but probably had little effect on any county subdivisions. The Septic Bill greatly limited the likelihood of developers using the optional

clustering provisions added to the Subdivision Ordinance since most rural properties are now limited to seven new lots. Questions also arose as to whether the three-acre minimum lot size in AR and RR is appropriate anymore in light of Septic Bill restrictions.

The ten county land use goals are listed in the Plan in *Section 3.1*. The goals were reviewed one by one. Some discussion ensued regarding the progress of the goals and their continued relevance. After discussion, no specific recommendations were made.

*Map 3.2 Priority Funding Areas (PFA) - Garrett County.* This map shows the location of all of the PFA's in the County. The County has a unique problem in that only 2.7% of the County is in a PFA and only those areas within PFA's are eligible for state funding. The director suggests the expansion of Priority Funding Areas to at least include areas located around major road intersections. The PFA exception process is time consuming and can slow down the building process of important projects. Expansion of PFA criteria is something that can be mentioned in local documents but cannot be accomplished without the cooperation of state agencies and an amendment to the PFA law.

The director also suggested that before the next meeting, the Commission consider several questions:

- 1) What are the current concerns?
- 2) Do you have an issue with where residential/commercial/industrial growth has, is or will occur?
- 3) How have things changed?
- 4) Do any old concerns still apply?
- 5) What are the implications of the Septic Law on conservation?
- 6) What is the purpose of minimum lot size in the current context?
- 7) What is the roll of PFA's and infrastructure in encouraging development to occur in certain places?

The Commission will plan to continue the review of Chapter 3 at the next meeting.

- B. Next Scheduled meeting** - The next regular meeting of the Planning Commission is scheduled for **March 1, 2017** in the County Commissioners Meeting Room **at 1:30 pm.**

Respectfully submitted,

William J. DeVore  
Zoning Administrator