

**REGULAR MEETING OF THE
LURAY PLANNING COMMISSION
FEBRUARY 15, 2012**

The Luray Planning Commission met on Wednesday, February 15, 2012 at 7:00 p.m. in regular session. The meeting was held in the Luray Town Council Chambers at 45 East Main Street, Luray, Virginia at which time there were present the following:

Commissioners Present:

Tom Potts
John Meaney
Pam Flasch
Joey Sours

Absent: Clifton Campbell

Larry Hakel
Ronald Good

Others Present:

Bryan Chrisman, Assistant Town Manager
Ligon Webb, Town Planner
Jason Spidler, Town Attorney

Chairman Tom Potts called the meeting to order and everyone joined in the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

A motion was made by Commissioner Flasch that the minutes of January 11, 2012 meeting be approved as presented. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Meaney. The vote was as follows: YEA: Commissioners Sours, Flasch, Meaney and Potts.

APPROVED: 4-0

Mr. Webb asked if everyone had their Economic Interest Statement turned in.

2012 Comprehensive Plan Update:

The state code requires that counties have adopted a comprehensive plan to insure orderly growth and development. The plan is also required to provide a current snapshot of the population growth and the demographic social makeup of the locality. The plan is not binding but rather conceptual in nature and is intended to serve as a general guide for appointed or elected officials. There are a couple of things required to be in the plan but other than that, it is pretty broad. It says it has to be updated every five (5) years. We did one in 1993, 2007 and now 2012.

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Between here and there, I think all we did was re-adopt it every five years; didn't really change it; might have changed it a little bit and basically adopted it, which is pretty common for smaller communities. In 2007 we put out a consulting bid, and we had people who sent back bids to do a comp plan for us for like \$90,000. We ended up finding a consultant and I think we paid \$25,000 for the consultant that helped us last time. We are not going to use that this time. This time we are going to do it in-house and I am getting a graphic artist to do maps and things like that for us to make it really look good, but the content will come from us; me, and people like that. We are doing it for much less than what we paid last time.

All of you have a copy of this one – the 20/20 Town Vision. We'll probably call it the same thing. We can change the planning horizon and we can talk about keeping it as a town plan or comprehensive plan. I thought town plan as it sounded more town like. A 20 year horizon; but again there are no set rules. In general, you look at 20 years in the future. The 2007 town plan created an overall town vision; you might remember that vision statement and I suspect we will still use that. We can look at that later in this process and see if it needs to be tweaked, but I thought it was really good. Five or six of us sat in here and made a little chart, put words up and actually worked out a really good process. I thought it sounded really good and it still holds true today. It detailed specific goals and objections for guiding future town policy for economic development, transportation, residential growth, housing, community design, community facilities and this document will still do that. It has a great deal of text material. The 2007 Town Plan can be carried over to the 2012 Vision Statement and many other goals and objectives can still be true to 2012. However, the 2012 Plan should be more dynamic to produce a visually pleading document which places greater focus on planning, development, and prioritizing future physical improvements to the town. You remember though this Comprehensive Plan is a Capital Improvement Plan. That's kind of the goal here. It can be used to guide a Capital Improvements Plan but it is not specifically intended to be let's try to itemize everything. This is 20 years, a perfect world; what would we like to see done.

What I thought we will do when we get half way done here, is to put an ad in the paper and invite people to come in and look at the maps and get their feedback. We are also planning to create a website and put some of these materials on the website so people can look at them. People are more apt to look at something on-line as opposed to coming to a meeting. They could send e-mail comments and post comments on line.

Mr. Webb then began a review and discussion of several transportation projects and drawings for the west end of Luray.

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This is our first idea for transportation related improvements in this Section 1 and we spoke with VDOT folks about a month ago. Some of the public had an opportunity to look at these maps. For the most part, the feedback was positive, but what we are talking about here is during the day, no left hand turns between 3:00 and 5:00 p.m. and in the morning when there is school traffic. So we are already limiting people coming out of Leaksville going this way; it's already limited. What we thought here is that we do something like this. Take these plantings right here and extend it making this a right only, making this a left only. So you would not be able to go left from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. or from 7:00 to 9:00 a.m. or whatever it is. This is going to be cut off. This crossover right here will be eliminated. The idea is to send everybody down to Northcott. This is probably one of the more dangerous sections in town. It is perceived as being dangerous and it is dangerous. The idea is to end that crossover there. Do you have any comments on that?

Mr. Chrisman stated VDOT had enough traffic data there, they were going to put signals at that intersection. If they considered it enough of an issue for traffic control, they were going to put a signal there rather than down at Northcott. We convinced them to move it down to Northcott simply due to the geography of that intersection and they agreed. They would love to see that pass-through go away, but I think the Luray Caverns is not going to be favorable to that because the vehicles coming out of their entrance won't be able to cross over to the east bound lanes. They would actually go up to the hotel and come over.

Mr. Chrisman stated that VDOT wants it gone, but I know that the Caverns doesn't. VDOT said they had no issue with that crossover staying so long as the right turns here; the right turn going east bound, angles far enough down to where somebody couldn't make a left hand turn to get up through there. Mr. Spitler stated almost every issue we have ever had at that intersection has always been that a vehicle pulls out and goes across the median. Mr. Webb stated sometimes cars stack right here and can be caught in the middle.

Commissioner Potts stated you might take down the Luray Caverns sign and move the right turn lane down further. Mr. Webb stated in talking to Rod and John, I did not hear them express any negativity about this because you are shifting the basic interests of the town right to their front steps. I know Nancy Lee Shifflett said she often goes down here and turns around anyway. One property owner does not like the idea and it's really because of convenience. He is so used to going out this way. For the most part, the few folks that did come didn't make a big issue with this.

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Commissioner Meaney asked if it has been determined how far you have to go to the right there. Mr. Webb stated this is just a rough sketch but when the actual engineering is done, they will determine something like this. All you are doing is extending these curves. Mr. Chrisman stated if we don't take up the crossover, and all you do is that island and repaint those lines there, they said we could probably do it for somewhere between \$25,000 and \$40,000. The thing that jacked up their estimate is they want to make the deceleration lane longer back west toward the motel to try to slow people down instead of coming off there at 55 miles per hour and shooting through the neighborhood. That was part of their \$100,000 estimate. They wanted to make that deceleration lane longer. Mr. Webb stated for the projects we are looking at, there is money designated right now. We have to work on VDOT as far as getting the work done.

Commissioner Sours stated that would be a tough stand alone project though. Would you do this one as a stand-alone project or do you have to do it in conjunction with other improvements? Mr. Chrisman stated they will do Northcott first and then this one would be second. You have to have some place for the traffic to go before making modifications.

Mr. Webb stated the next idea right here - this is existing. You have your signals here. Here we have a new right turn lane, that's the only change. This would be a straight and a left and Bryan says that the plan also is to put a right turn lane there so that would need to be included. I will put that in there. The only two new things you have is right turn lane here, and a right turn lane here. Commissioner Sours asked is there a crosswalk up from that a little bit? Mr. Chrisman stated the crosswalk is further on up and they are going to keep it up. The Caverns specifically asked for that right turn lane there because what happens is with only one lane coming out of Cave Hill Road, all these cars back up past their lower entrance and then it causes some traffic issues there, but they agreed and VDOT did too, that keeping the crosswalk as far away from 211 is the safest by far. So keeping it way on up there where it is now is something they want to see and VDOT wants to see that too. Mr. Webb stated these are pretty easy fixes here. This lane is already there. Here is Northcott and West Main, the first option. These options will really be determined once you do a traffic study and see what the need is. Put a right turn lane here, right turn lane in here. There will be a left turn lane here. If you are coming from the east, you want to get over here in this turn lane. I don't know how long this would be and that's determined by the traffic study as to how many cars can be stacked here. It will probably be longer than this, but regardless, left lane for people who are going out. If this here is closed off, this is the new entrance to the town. The only issue here is determining what the models would be; they will look at the traffic and say this could handle what you are doing. Anything else might be over kill. You could meet your

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objectives here with putting in some turn lanes. You have a lot of width here; you wouldn't have to really take any land, you could almost restripe those current existing roads. Here you would have to take a little bit and I went out there with Mr. Racey and you could probably get this without having to move this wall. There are some benefits here; one being cost. The only thing is can it handle the volume that would be expected once you shut down out there. The other option which the Caverns really liked, and a lot of people seem to like, is the round-about. This and everything right now we can probably do within budget fairly easy. These become expensive, but they also handle traffic very well. Rough design is not an engineering plan, but it just kind of shows you what it can do. Anybody wants to come into this, say Mr. Modjeska, he would simply look into this; everyone has to yield and go around, so coming into this round-about would be a lot easier than trying to do the road or what he's talking about doing. He likes the idea that there could be a round-about that he can maybe someday look into and be a relatively easy process. The Caverns supports it and I am actually surprised at how many people like the idea. I have had one person who objects to it. If objectives could be met here at the cost and that's standard, then that's by far the cheapest. I believe with this being shut down here, this would handle it. Mr. Chrisman stated that the left turn stacking lane has to be about 300 feet long. You have to go way down there. Mr. Webb stated you are going to have the same problem you have now; people still can't get across here to this traffic. Of course if this was shut down up here, you wouldn't have many people go that way.

Commissioner Sours stated it would look great there. Rick thought of an idea; just to give you an idea of an alternative design, we would hate to have to take out that monument right there. Mr. Webb stated I think Mr. Modjeska owns this portion right here; this is the Caverns land as well; we know they like the idea. If you could stay off land that you might have issues acquiring, then here's another idea. Just to give you an idea of what can be done without having to encroach down here, you can move it up here and still achieve the same thing.

Mr. Webb stated this is not to scale as it's designed here. It could be designed to get a semi through. You would probably have to come up here a little further. First you would put a stop bar here, stop bar there. This is not an engineering plan; it's just a rough sketch idea of what it could look like.

Mr. Chrisman stated I think this is going to be cheaper to build than the previous options simply because of the geography of that intersection. That's a bank; the lower part of that is a steep bank and you would basically have to get a grading easement probably 100 feet down that hill to be able to build that up enough to support the edge of that round-about.

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If you slide the round-about up and to the left, you basically stay in-grade properly. You'll still have your 90° intersections, but it will just be better. Mr. Webb stated this is really a large grandiose round-about which would work well. This right here would be about \$500,000 or \$600,000 job; that's what VDOT told us.

Mr. Chrisman stated what he is concerned about is we haven't seen the breakdowns on the construction estimates about what all are included in those figures. The advantage of a round-about is that you do not have to restripe the road any length and you don't really have to acquire a whole lot of land and the land we want to acquire is in the correct direction, so we can't go to the Singing Tower side; we have to go west, so I'm not sure what all is in that estimate but I have a suspicion that there's some stuff in there. You have to include lighting there where the center of the round-about is. There has to be sufficient street lighting there and you have to put up signage and all that but not \$500,000. You can put a signal up for \$300,000; the round-about is simply asphalt and paint and a little bit of concrete so construction cost wise that's what I'm concerned about too. We see the breakdowns so until Ligon and I get that from VDOT, I don't know what they have added into that \$500,000 cost estimate.

Mr. Webb stated here at Leaksville, we have this taken care of. We had put a right turn lane in here and you realize if you are coming down here, is a left turn lane really necessary. If you are coming down this way, at this point you have 4 or 5 houses here on Leaksville Road. It's very unlikely you are going to go up here and try to double back; it's possible, but in reality, if you are coming down this road, you are probably going this way and probably going down Leaksville, so everyone is making a left hand turn; if you are not you just keep going straight through. The question - is this left hand turn really necessary here. It probably isn't.

Mr. Chrisman stated once the round-about goes in at Northcott and West Main, you could make that a straight through or a left. Mr. Webb stated very few people are going to go back here and turn around so this could probably be eliminated but we can show it and just put in the text this might not be necessary. The one thing I think would really be good is of all the improvements, I think this right here probably would be the most useful is this triangle raised landscape area. You are taking a right, you are taking a left; this would keep that separation. That would probably be one useful design tool that would naturally keep separation of cars. Mr. Chrisman stated if you make a drive up curb or drive over curb, like a roll top for trucks and buses. The first two or three feet are actually concrete and then you have your landscaping. If there was a long vehicle there, they could come up because one thing Ligon hasn't talked about yet is from this intersection down to Northcott is the town's truck route from Leaksville Road, so the

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trucks are all supposed to go to the right; none of them are supposed to turn left here. I think Ligon is right; if you get rid of that center turn lane there, the other impact you have is you don't need that road widening right across from the island right there. In between A and B there, you don't need that widening. That would cut down a lot on construction.

Mr. Spitler asked left of B, why do we need two lanes at all if we are anticipating that traffic is going to double back and we know we are not going to let them go across. The intersection to the west; why do we still need to maintain two lanes instead of just one lane coming in. Mr. Chrisman stated some people may go to this intersection here and turn left; I don't know why they would do that. Mr. Webb stated I still think for people who want; the people who live here. Mr. Chrisman stated it's primarily for the residents that live right there. If they want to go left and get back on 211 without having to go through both of those other intersections, they can just turn left there and go out and make a right turn and shoot down 211 to 340 or whatever. I think it's primarily for them.

Commissioner Sours asked what is the cost of maintaining that roadway for three houses. Mr. Chrisman stated the difference is too small to compare; it's nothing we have to build, it's already there. It's just a matter of restriping it.

Mr. Webb stated they had talked about at one time putting a cul de sac here. I just think you want to try to map every possible little entry point, exit point to relieve some of the traffic. I feel like taking this right turn lane out here would definitely not be a good idea even though, as Jason says, it's correct. I guess if people here would want to go into town they would get on the bypass; it would still be a small relief valve for a few cars.

Mr. Chrisman stated the cul de sac was not probably further considered because Northcott would then have to become four or five lanes wide. If you force everybody down to the current light, the traffic counts are such that to get into downtown Luray, you would have to actually make Northcott wider with additional lanes which kills the idea of a manageable round-about, once you get into multiple lanes.

Mr. Webb asked for comments from the Commission. This could probably come out and we will make recommendations and the text will have the plan. Is there anything else in Study Area 1 that's missing? Mr. Webb stated it doesn't all have to be about transportation; that's a big part in Area 1. Mr. Chrisman stated there is probably a couple of storm water problems and maybe some water and sewer problems out in the sector. I guess my question to you and to the Planning Commission is should those things be in the Comprehensive Plan because the Plan is like a vision. Whereas, utilities, things like storm water, water and sewer; we don't have a choice with that; we can plan for them but we have to do them as they arise.

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Some of those things are going to have to be done, so I don't know if you want to include that. I think sidewalks are great because sidewalks are directly a multi-modal sort of transportation which deals directly with planning improvements, but I don't know personally whether the utilities and storm water is an appropriate thing to include in the Comprehensive Plan, but if you think they are, we certainly will. Mr. Webb stated some places do and some don't, not many put storm water in utility plans but I have seen it. Mr. Chrisman stated sidewalks and multi-modal paths and transportation. Commissioner Sours stated with utilities you would if you are talking going from poles to buried and things like that. Mr. Webb stated I didn't identify any in that section but my thought with utilities is that to think about areas that are highly visible and maybe consider the 400 block of Mechanic Street.

Mr. Chrisman stated curb and gutter on Northcott and sidewalks are one thing that we don't have right now that may be worthwhile. Mr. Webb stated I had put curb but not sidewalk. Mr. Chrisman stated especially on the right side where the pond and Singing Tower is because you could actually link that sidewalk with the path around the pond and then the sidewalk on West Main. I don't think we want to get to the point of encouraging people to try to walk across the intersection at 211. Stopping that somewhere up there at the Singing Tower or just past the Singing Tower would probably be ideal.

Mr. Webb stated think about this in the next month and e-mail or call me. Maybe you have some ideas tonight about what I call the South Court area. The first one would be the intersection of Memorial and Court Lane. The hospital is planning improvements to that intersection to make it more of a T intersection. Mr. Chrisman stated we have already started the acquisition process for that and planning construction.

Mr. Spitler asked is that something issued by you guys or by VDOT or a little of both? Mr. Chrisman stated we asked the hospital for it and they said yes. Mr. Webb stated they are just going to straighten that up. Mr. Chrisman stated they are just going to make that more of a 90° intersection rather than that sharp angle. It's very difficult for people to look back over their right shoulder to see up into the hospital campus. You come down Court Lane to that intersection; it's very difficult for you to look back this way because that's going to be the primary entrance for the new hospital too. There's going to be a lot more traffic coming in and out of there. The other thing Ligon - don't forget right there along Court Lane in the existing parking lot of the hospital, there are no landscaping buffers in there. When they paved the parking lot for the hospital, they paved it right up against the edge of the street and so there is not any kind of curb delineation between the travel way on Court Lane and the actual parking lot. There's painted areas on the parking lot but that's where you put the raised curb planters with trees and shrubs and

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things like that to slow people down and delineate that. That's another little project that Ligon and I talked about that would be worthwhile. We do get some close calls there from time to time; people coming out of the parking lot and having an issue.

Mr. Webb stated we talked about applying part of the hospital's proffer and the matching funds of \$160,000 that we are going to try to get matched. This is going to be downtown – but sidewalks on Memorial Lane all the way to Main Street as a goal and also sidewalks from Court Lane all the way out. The development, Luray Heights, has proffered sidewalks down here whenever they do their Phase I right here along Court Lane and they have proffered a sidewalk on the whole stretch. This length of sidewalk will be paid for through VDOT matching funds through the hospital proffering this stretch of sidewalk with the proffer by the developer whenever he starts Phase I. You can walk from South Court all the way to Main and that will be on the Plan. Along this stretch of Court, I really haven't identified anything but maybe sidewalk improvements. They are kind of narrow; we could maybe think of bringing them up to the standard but you don't want to lose any parking. Of course people who park out here, I wonder sometimes if they really like their vehicles that much. Mr. Chrisman stated the Police are actually looking at that right now from the Emergency Services Building down about 100 yards. The road starts to widen out but in that narrow little neck right there, they are looking at painting that curb yellow all the way down. Mr. Webb stated a car parks there and it's literally like in the middle of the road. Mr. Chrisman stated he went down to where the old hospital was; it starts to widen out in there but they are looking at that now. I think probably this coming spring or the following spring at the latest that curb is going to get painted yellow.

Mr. Webb stated think about this and if you have anything you want to provide me with, e-mail it to me. I'll sketch something up here. Of course down here at Court and Mill Creek, a geometry issue, and, of course, this is another proffer for this guy; Luray Heights, to tighten that intersection and bring it to a four-way stop. Its three roads coming in right now, but to tighten this up and do improvements. We talked about a round-about a long time ago but geography was not really suitable for a round-about but tightening the intersection up and making a proper three-way stop would be a good start there. My other ideas along Court Lane Extended is you have housing back here, the Greenway right here; right along here is really a great place for a sidewalk or a multi-use path; a Greenway trail almost. You have a lot of shoulder off the road; think about how we could get pedestrians from this neighborhood to walk to the Greenway. On this side of the road, you really have a lot of space. Over here you have utility poles all along this side and I believe on the opposite side too, so it might make a sidewalk or a path or

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whatever you want to call it, more interesting but I'll look at it with our graphic artist to see if maybe we could sketch something out that might work to show a sidewalk or a path that would bring people here and across sort of like a raised median leading right to the Greenway. Almost like a stub off the Greenway, picking up all of these houses; which I know a lot of people who live here use the Greenway, but if you could move all these people to the Greenway without having to get in the road or drive their car. Mr. Chrisman stated that's going to be the big thing; crossing the 340 corridor. Mr. Webb stated he will show several options. We'll do A, B and maybe a C. Do you like the idea of somehow connecting these people to that? The other idea right here is when you come into town, the dam is right here, you have the Welcome to Luray sign, here's the bridge; some sort of a raised median planters. At the bridge we could have the turn lane, do a raised median, landscaping, incorporate a crosswalk in there, so once again the idea is get you from here to here in some fashion. With transportation enhancement grants and all of those types of things that are out there, this is something we could go out and look for like I am doing with the bridge; look for grants.

Commissioner Sours asked so when are we going to put a 35MPH speed limit sign there? It says 25 unless otherwise posted. Coming the other way it's 35. Mr. Chrisman stated it changes to 35 at South Court if you are headed south. Commissioner Sours stated it doesn't say that; it says 25 unless otherwise posted. Mr. Chrisman stated I mean coming south. It changes to 35 there. If you are coming north, the 35 MPH sign starts just this side of South Court. People who turn left off of South Court onto 340 and are traveling north towards Linden and Oscar Sours Bridge, they believe that they are in a 25 MPH zone, which is fine, because right when they get to the turn, then it actually does change to 25 MPH zone. We have not put a 35 MPH sign there because we did not want to encourage anyone to speed up through the Oscar Sours intersection.

Mr. Spitler stated as you come into town across Dry Run coming the other way, just as you are passing the carpet place, before you go across the bridge, there's a sign that says something like Welcome to the Town of Luray, all speed limit zones are 25 unless otherwise posted.

Mr. Webb stated sort of like the round-about was the big plan here in Area 1. Here to here and all points in between will be the big item in this area. Mr. Chrisman stated I think the VDOT multi-modal guide is going to be important in there because actually it is space for the Greenway; it was supposed to travel along the eastern side of 340 from the railroad intersection all the way down to Linden Street but we were not able to do that because of the close proximity between the vehicular and the pedestrian traffic. Mr.

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Webb stated looking at this right here; you can get 10 feet off of here almost. Mr. Chrisman stated look at that guide when you are setting up that plan because as long as we can comply with that, I think that VDOT will say OK. Mr. Webb stated, of course, as far as the Greenway goes, that's another phase. Mr. Chrisman stated I think your intersection at South Court and Mill Creek is going to be significant. We have a good bit of fender benders at that location every year. Really what is supposed to happen is that through traffic is supposed to be on Mill Creek. South Court which was South Court Extended at one time, it's not called that now, that was actually supposed to be the stop point in the T. They didn't want people braking on the hill coming down into that dip; they wanted people coming up from the tunnel to stop either turning left or turning right and they didn't do it. It needs to be done. That's been on our VDOT list for probably for 10 years to fix that.

Mr. Webb stated we will look at that one next month and if you have any ideas or anything to add to that call, e-mail and maybe sometime late spring or early summer we will do a workshop and let people come.

Commissioner Flasch moved that the meeting be adjourned and seconded by Commissioner Sours. The motion carried and meeting was adjourned at 7:50 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Bryan Chrisman
Assistant Town Manager

ATTEST:
