



AMHERST COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING



MINUTES

April 17, 2025

Administrative Office Complex
153 Washington Street
Public Meeting Room
Meeting Convened - 7:00 PM

1. Call to Order

Members Present: Beverly Jones (Chair), Derin Foor (Vice Chair), Jim Thompson, Michael Bryant, Catherine Gamble and Paul Kilgore (EDA Non-Voting Member).

Members Absent: Michael Martineau, David Pugh (Board of Liaison Non-Voting Member), Emerson Bryant (Youth Participant Non-Voting Member) and Beyla Cunningham (Youth Participant Non-Voting Member).

Staff Present: Tyler Creasy (Director of Community Development), Tyler Amburgey (Assistant Zoning Administrator/Planner) and Stacey Stinnett (Administrative Assistant).

Madam Chair Jones called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

2. Invocation & Pledge of Allegiance

Catherine Gamble led in prayer and then led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved as submitted.

Planning Commission Recommendation:

Motion to approve the agenda as submitted.

Motion made by: Thompson

Second: Gamble

Motion carried by a 5-0 vote.

4. Citizens Comments

There were none.

5. Public Hearing

A. 2025-115 OneEnergy Development LLC

Request by OneEnergy Development, LLC for a special exception request in the A-1, Agricultural Residential District for a solar energy system, utility-scale (5MW). The parcel is located at tax map number 82-A-84A. This request also requires a review for compliance with the Amherst County Comprehensive Plan, in accordance with Virginia Code Sec. 15.2-2232, for a proposed solar facility, on Tax Map Parcel 82-A-84A, zoned A-1, Agricultural Residential District.

Mr. Creasy presented the staff report and explained that, in accordance with Virginia State Code section 15.2-2232, this special exception must be consistent with the Amherst Comprehensive Plan. Staff did discuss that a couple of the adjoining property owners' viewshed may be affected by the request. Mr. Creasy stated that there were two motions in the packet, one for the special exception and the Comprehensive Plan Review.

Madam Chair Jones opened the public hearing.

Natalie Young, representative for the applicant, One Energy Development LLC, spoke in favor and gave a PowerPoint Presentation of the project. Ms. Young also addressed the Planning Commission's questions and concerns regarding the solar project. Such concerns were Stormwater issues running into the Buffalo River affecting the watershed, adjoining properties and view sheds that would be affected, as well as the grading and tree buffers for the project.

Kennedy Campbell, who is a resident of Madison Heights, spoke in favor of the project. Ms. Campbell stated that she is currently a civil engineer employed by the Timmons Group and, if this project were approved, she would be assisting in the project's design.

Kim Maddox, who resides at 234 Rivers Edge Lane in Amherst, is an adjoining property owner. Mrs. Maddox spoke in opposition, stating that the solar project would greatly impact her viewshed.

Justin Staples, who resides in Amherst, spoke in opposition. He read a letter that adjoining property owner Kim Maddox had written, giving reasons why the Planning Commission should not approve this request. He invited the Commission to visit her property to see how the back of her property's view shed would be affected.

Luann Ahern, who resides at 1056 N Amherst Hwy in Amherst, spoke in opposition to the request. Mrs. Ahern stated that she is also an adjoining property owner and her concerns were how her property value would decrease, and this project could make it difficult for her if she were to sell her home. Mrs. Ahern handed the Commission and staff members a printout of the reasons why she is against the solar farm.

There being no further speakers, Madam Chair Jones closed the public hearing.

Mrs. Gamble addressed this project as being very close to the Buffalo River and her concerns were about the protection of the watershed, as well as issues with retention ponds.

Mr. Thompson asked for clarification from the applicant on how the aircraft runway would be set up and used and could the panels impact the safety of that use. Mr. Thompson stated that it would be impossible for this project not to affect the concerned adjoining property owners' view sheds.

Mr. Foor questioned if the solar panels would block the view of the river for any of the adjoining property owners.

Mr. Bryant suggested the applicant and the concerned adjoining property owners meet to discuss options and how they could both perhaps work together on a solution and staff consider the changes/conditions.

Planning Commission Recommendation:

Motion to hold off on this request for 100 days so that the adjoining property owners and applicant meet to see if they could come to an agreement that would work for everyone.

Motion made by: Bryant

Second: Jones

Motion carried by a 4-1 vote. (Gamble)

Mr. Creasy stated that he would consult with the County Attorney to see if a contract agreement could be added as a condition with an adjoining property owner.

6. Roses Mill Trail Ordinance

A. Discussion

Mr. Creasy discussed with the Planning Commission that the Board of Supervisors at their strategic planning workshop discussed having a potential overlay ordinance along the Blue Ridge Railway Trail. Mr. Creasy stated that an overlay zone will be established along the Blue Ridge Railway Trail. The width of the overlay zone extends one hundred and twenty-five (125) beyond the property line of Amherst County.

925.01 Signs. All off-site signs, except those indicated in section 907.03, are to be permitted only as special exceptions in accordance with section 1003.03.

925.02. Minimum Setbacks of all structures from the Blue Ridge railway Trail.

1. Beginning at the trailhead and extending east along the boundary of the Amherst/Nelson

County border, a minimum setback from Amherst County's property line of one hundred and twenty-five (125) feet is required of all structures.

Mr. Bryant requested that staff bring back a visual aid to show where lines would be along the trail and river.

7. Route 29 Business Beautification Committee's 2024 Annual Report

A. 2024 Annual Report

Mr. Creasy presented the Route 29 Business Beautification Committee Annual Report for 2024 and updated the Planning Commission on the goals the committee has set for the current year 2025.

Planning Commission Recommendation:

Motion to approve the Route 29 Business Beautification Committee Annual Report for 2024.

Motion made by: Foor

Second: Bryant

Motion carried by a 5-0 vote.

8. Site Plan Review

A. Site Plan Updates

Mr. Amburgey updated the Planning Commission on the site plan reviews and current projects.

9. Old/New Business

Staff and the Planning Commission discussed Timothy Waldron's request being extended by the Board of Supervisors for an additional 60 days.

There was a discussion regarding an upcoming meeting between Mr. Patel, Virginia Department of Transportation and staff regarding Madison Heights Town Center's Main Blvd.

Mrs. Gamble inquired about any current updates regarding Central Virginia Training Center as well as the property across from 84 Lumber with the riprap.

10. Approval of Minutes for March 20, 2025

A. Minutes

Planning Commission Recommendation:

Motion to approve the March 20, 2025 Meeting Minutes as submitted.

Motion made by: Thompson
Second: Gamble
Motion carried by a 5-0 vote.

11. Adjournment

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 8:25 pm.

Planning Commission Recommendation:

Motion to adjourn.
Motion made by: Gamble
Second: Thompson
Motion carried by a 5-0 vote.


Chairman

