



**AMHERST COUNTY
PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING**



MINUTES

May 6, 2025

Administrative Office Complex
153 Washington Street
Public Meeting Room
Meeting Convened - 4:00 PM

1. Call to Order

Planning Commission Members Present: Beverly Jones (Chair), Derin Foor (Vice Chair), Jim Thompson, Michael Bryant & Catherine Gamble

Planning Commission Members Absent: Michael Martineau

Board of Supervisors Present: Claudia Tucker (Chair), Drew Wade, Scott Adams, Tom Martin & David Pugh

Staff Present: Michael Popovich (County Attorney), Jeremy Bryant (County Administrator) & Tyler Creasy (Community Development Director).

Madam Chair Jones called the meeting to order at 4:00 pm.

2. Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved as submitted.

Planning Commission Recommendation:

Motion to approve the agenda as submitted.

Motion made by Gamble

Second: Thompson

Motion carried by a 5-0 vote.

3. Discussion with Board of Supervisors

A. Battery Storage

Madam Chair Tucker stated that this meeting was for educational purposes only and that no action would be taken. Madam Chair Tucker informed everyone that Paul Rogers with ESRC

and Austin Jeffrey with Appalachian Power, as well as Amherst County's Public Safety, Community Development, and the Economic Development Authority, were present to assist with questions.

Pauls Rogers with ESRG, explained the concept of battery data storage units. Mr. Rogers answered the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors' concerns regarding training and safety.

The Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors asked questions and stated their concerns.

Lori Saunders, Director of Economic Development, stated that battery storage facilities benefit businesses and make our industrial parks more appealing to potential industrial businesses. Mrs. Saunders also stated that these siting agreements are a great source of revenue for the county.

Brad Beam, Director of Amherst County Public Safety, stated that these battery storage units were new to him. However, he felt that risks can come with anything. Mr. Beam stated that the risks versus the benefits need to be calculated. Mr. Beam commented that technology has come a long way, and he felt that public safety and the building and safety inspection offices could work together through regulations and codes. Mr. Beam commented the majority of concerns and risks would be put into place through litigation.

Susan Schjonning, co-owner of Swissomation, stated that her business was located across from the potential site of the battery storage facility. Ms. Schjonning expressed her disappointment in the joint boards for not being open-minded and showing biased discretion towards this concept. Ms. Schjonning stated that there are always risks. However, she felt that the joint boards should be more mindful of current businesses as well as future businesses of Amherst County.

Bif Johnson, an Amherst citizen and President of Hurt & Proffitt, spoke in favor of the battery storage facilities in Amherst County. Mr. Johnson stated that every community development project has energy to it. Therefore, these facilities are important for infrastructure and growth.

Madam Chair Tucker of the Board of Supervisors reiterated that this meeting had been held for educational purposes only and that no action would be taken at this time. Madam Chair Tucker stated that the information heard today would be taken under advisement and added to the agenda to be advertised as a public meeting.

Madam Chair Jones of the Planning Commission, in closing, stated that Amherst County must look towards the future and work through prejudice and bias issues and make wise decisions based on land use.

4. Adjournment

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 5:25 p.m.

Board of Supervisors Recommendation:

Motion to adjourn.

Motion made by: Tucker

Second: Adams

Motion carried by a 5-0 vote.

Planning Commission Recommendation:

Motion to adjourn.

Motion made by: Thompson

Second: Foor

Motion carried by a 5-0 vote.


Chairman

