



**AMHERST COUNTY
PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING**



MINUTES

June 26, 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, Catherine Gamble, Michael Bryant, Michael Martineau, David Pugh (Board of Liaison Non-Voting Member) and Christine Vroomanc (EDA Liaison Non-Voting Member)

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

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

2. Invocation & Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Foor led in prayer and then led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Approval of Agenda

Planning Commission Recommendation:

Motion to approve the agenda as submitted.

Motion made by: Foor

Seconded by: Gamble

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 stated that due to a notification error, this request is coming back before the Planning Commission as a public hearing for a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors. A slight change to the conceptual plan has been made by the petitioner. See the attachment labeled "Updated Site Plan, Road Shift 6.12.2025".

Chair Jones opened the public hearing.

Natalie Young, Project Manager at OneEnergy Development LLC, spoke in favor of the request and gave a brief PowerPoint presentation highlighting the community impacts of the project and reviewed with the Commission the lines of sight and addressed how the request aligned with the Comprehensive Plan.

Steve Zolnowski, agent for adjoining property owner Joshua Joslin, spoke in favor of the request.

Gary Ahern, adjoining property owner, spoke in opposition, stating that he had concerns about it being so close to the river and how this could open up opportunities in the future for infrastructure in the Agricultural District on agricultural lands and farms.

Tim Fuller, a resident of Amherst County, spoke in opposition to the request. His concerns were that at the end of the project's life, these panels would be put in our County's landfill and that the beauty of the county needed to be preserved and protected.

Christina Whorborne, spoke in opposition. She felt like the county farmlands should be protected.

Jeff Rowe, citizen of Amherst County, spoke in opposition to the request. Mr. Rowe was concerned that the glare from the panels would reflect in the flight path of aircraft. Mr. Rowe stated that this was not feasible in Amherst County and there would be no benefits to the citizens of the county.

Dan Davis, who resides at 235 Rivers Edge Lane in Amherst, spoke in opposition to the request. Mr. Davis was concerned about the line of sight distance and how it would negatively affect the property value of adjoining property owners.

Kimberly Maddox, who resides at 234 Rivers Edge Lane in Amherst, spoke in opposition to the request. Mrs. Maddox had many concerns regarding protecting the watershed, the Buffalo

River, the decrease in property value, and how this request does not align with the Comprehensive Plan. Mrs. Maddox stated that the view behind her house has always been very special to her and her family. She asked the Commission to picture their favorite spot and what that view meant to them, then picture it uprooted by 12K solar panels, and asked how they would feel if this were to affect them.

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

The Planning Commission had a brief discussion.

Planning Commission Recommendation:

Motion: I would like to make a motion in accordance with Virginia State Code section 15.2-2232, that special exception 2025-115 is not consistent with the Amherst County Comprehensive Plan due to:

1. Park and Recreation Section, Goal #2, Objective #2 states: Protect natural resources while promoting public access.
2. Cultural Resources and Community Aesthetics Section, Goal #1 states: To preserve and improve the aesthetic of Amherst County.
3. Cultural Resources and Community Aesthetics Section, Goal #1, Objective #1, Strategy #5 states: Consider the architecture and aesthetic of a proposed development as one factor in recommending approval or denial of a rezoning or special permit request.
4. Cultural Resources and Community Aesthetics Section, Goal #1, Objective #2 states: Preserve and maintain the unique natural features of Amherst County.
5. Land Use section, Goal #2 states: To promote the preservation and use of open space and encourage viable agricultural and forest land uses to protect the County's natural beauty, rural character, wildlife habitats, and water resources.
6. Land Use section, Goal #2, Objective #7 states: Promote retention of agricultural and forest land use in Amherst County.
7. Land Use section, Goal #3 states: Minimize the negative environmental impacts of new and existing residential, commercial, and industrial development.
8. Land Use section, Goal #3, Objective #3 states: protect the County's water and air resources from degradation.
9. Land Use section, Goal #4 states: To protect our scenic view sheds.

Motion Made by: Gamble

Seconded by: Thompson

Motion carried by a 6-0 vote. (Denied)

Planning Commission Recommendation:

Motion: I find that such use will be of substantial detriment to adjacent properties, that the character of the zoning district will be changed thereby, and that such use will not be in

harmony with the purpose and intent of the uses permitted by right in the zoning district, and with the public health, safety, and general welfare to the community. Therefore, I move to recommend denial of the applicant's request for a special use permit for a solar energy system, utility-scale.

Motion Made by: Gamble

Seconded by: Foor

Motion carried by a 6-0 vote. (Denied)

B. 2025-113 Posterity Acres, LLC (Special Exception)

Request by Posterity Acres LLC for a special exception in the A-1, Agricultural Residential District. The purpose of the request is to allow for a short-term tourist rental of a dwelling. The parcel is located at 146 Garrett Farm Road and is further identified as tax map number 146-A-33.

Mr. Creasy presented the staff report and stated that staff recommended the following conditions:

1. Lighting: All outdoor lighting will be glare-shielded and directed so as to prevent illumination across the property line.
2. Sewerage Facilities: The applicant shall follow all regulations prescribed by the Virginia Department of Health.
3. Parking: Guest shall be required to park on the property and not park on neighboring lots or on any right-of-way outside of their property unless they have written permission.
4. Short-Term Tourist Rental: The applicant shall meet all requirements of Section 916.

Mr. Creasy stated that a fifth condition was recently added, which stated:

5. The subdivision plat with a revised date of June 26, 2025, shall be recorded before the issuance of a zoning permit.

Chair Jones opened the public hearing.

Edward Coleman, one of the applicants/property owner, spoke in favor of the request.

Jim Beckner, an adjoining property owner, stated that he withdrew all of his previous concerns and is now in favor of the request.

Steven Crowder, an adjoining property owner, spoke in favor of the request. Mr. Crowder stated that he was impressed with how they had made improvements to the property.

Shawn Hartman, an adjoining property owner, stated that he withdrew all of his previous concerns and is now in favor of the request.

Joshua Vickers, a neighboring property owner, spoke in favor of the request.

Charles Coleman, one of the applicants/owner, spoke in favor of the request. Mr. Coleman stated that he wanted to be good neighbors and address any concerns that anyone may have.

The Planning Commission had a brief discussion.

Planning Commission Recommendation:

Motion: Based on the Analysis, the Planning Commission recommends to the Board of Supervisors approval of Special Exception 2025-113 at 146 Garrett Farm Road to allow a short-term tourist rental of a dwelling with the following conditions:

1. Lighting: All outdoor lighting will be glare-shielded and directed so as to prevent illumination across the property line.
2. Sewerage Facilities: The applicant shall follow all regulations prescribed by the Virginia Department of Health.
3. Parking: Guest shall be required to park on the property and not park on neighboring lots or on any right-of-way outside of their property unless they have written permission.
4. Short-Term Tourist Rental: The applicant shall meet all requirements of Section 916.

and to include condition number five,

5. That the subdivision plat with a revised date of June 26, 2025, shall be recorded before the issuance of a zoning permit.

Motion made by: Foor

Second: Bryant

Motion carried by a 6-0 vote.

6. Energy (Battery) Storage Facility Ordinance

A. Attachment

Mr. Creasy stated that the Board of Supervisors at their May 20, 2025, meeting directed the Commission to take up a proposed battery storage ordinance. This meeting provides the Commission with a first read to make any necessary changes to the proposed ordinance.

The Planning Commission discussed concerns and addressed certain criteria and changes that they would like for staff to look into and include in an ordinance and bring back in July for a second review and bring back in August to be advertised and considered as a public hearing.

7. Blueridge Railroad Overlay

A. Discussion

Staff asked if the Commission could table this until the next meeting after they had received the graphics from Timmons Group, so the Commission would have a better visual of what the setbacks would look like.

Planning Commission Recommendation:

Motion to table the Blueridge Railroad Overlay until the next Planning Commission Meeting.

Motion made by: Thompson

Second: Jones

Motion carried by a 6-0 vote.

8. Rt 29 Beautification Geographic Change

A. Discussion

Staff discussed with the Planning Commission changing the Route 29 BBC charter for the youth participant term to be for one (1) academic year, from September to May.

Staff also discussed that the Rt 29 BBC committee is interested in changing the charter to expand the Rt 29 BBC geographical footprint. Staff and the Planning Commission discussed alternatives and changes made to the expansion.

Planning Commission Recommendation:

Motion to table until staff can relay the Planning Commission's concerns, suggestions and changes to the Route 29 BBC committee at their next meeting and then will bring them back to the Planning Commission to review.

Motion made by: Foor

Second: Jones

Motion carried by a 6-0 vote.

9. Site Plan Review

A. Attachment

Mr. Amburgey updated the Planning Commission on the current siteplans.

10. Old/New Business

There was no discussion.

11. Approval of Minutes for May 6, 2025 & May 15, 2025

A. May 6, 2025 Meeting Minutes

Planning Commission Recommendation:

Motion to approve the May 6, 2025 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes as submitted.

Motion made by: Gamble

Second: Thompson

The motion carried by a 5-0 vote. (Martineau abstained)

B. May 15, 2025 Meeting Minutes

Planning Commission Recommendation:

Motion to approve the May 15, 2025 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes as submitted.

Motion made by: Gamble

Second: Martineau

The motion carried by a 6-0 vote.

12. Adjournment

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 9:28 pm.

Planning Commission Recommendation:

Motion to adjourn.

Motion made by: Gamble

Second: Martineau

The motion carried by a 6-0 vote.


Chairman