

2045 Comprehensive Plan Update Work Session Notes

August 8, 2023

Planning Commission Members: Mike Shepp, President; Matt Knott, Vice President; Wade Louthan, Secretary; Steve Stolipher, County Commission Liaison; Jack Hefestay, and Aaron Howell, and were present in person. A quorum of the Planning Commission was present for the Work Session.

Staff: Jennifer Brockman, Chief County Planner; Luke Seigfried, County Planner; Michelle Evers, Planning Clerk; Joe Guttman and Shenan Ragle, Comprehensive Plan Staffers; were present in person.

Executive Summary

On 8/8/23 the Planning Commission held a work session to hear Staff presentations on the County Fair and Heritage Festival Activities, current regional transportation conditions, and data analyzed from the Goals and Objectives Survey. Planning Commission discussed and began drafting Goals for the 2045 Comprehensive Plan Update (CPU), and agreed to a second Work Session on 8/29/23 to continue the process.

Agenda

1. Community Outreach Preparation
 - a. Staff Presentation on County Fair and Heritage Festival Activities
2. Livability Profile
 - a. Staff Presentation of Community Data
 - b. Goals and Objectives Survey Review
 - c. Review of Existing Land Use Map
3. Comprehensive Plan Composition
 - a. Drafting of Comprehensive Plan Goals

Item 1: Community Outreach Preparation

Staff began the Work Session by reviewing the planned activities for the upcoming County Fair and African American Cultural and Heritage Festival events. Following this, Ms. Brockman presented the existing conditions of regional transportation. Planning Commission heard an overview of the 2023 Jefferson County Transportation Summit and the locations of recurring transportation system issues. Commissioner Knott remarked that the Bakerton Rd underpass is a dangerous location that did not appear on the list of problematic locations. Ms. Brockman and Commissioner Stolipher clarified that the WV Department of Highways (WVDOH) cannot add a location to the list until a certain number of serious transportation incidents have occurred. The role of the Hagerstown Eastern Panhandle Metropolitan Planning Organization (HEPMPO) as a liaison for Federal funding and transportation planning was outlined and discussed, and Ms.

Brockman stressed the importance of including HEPMPO projects in the 2045 CPU for better connectivity and long-range planning effects. Planning Commission was informed that when the population of HEPMPO's area of operation exceeds 200,000 residents, the organization is placed in a new tier and defined as a Large Urbanized Area. This designation means HEPMPO must compete with larger cities and urban areas for funding, resulting in less available funds for both HEPMPO and the Eastern Panhandle Transit Authority (EPTA). Commuter transportation was discussed, including decreased MARC train activity, current and planned EPTA bus routes, and existing bike route conditions and improvements. Staff mentioned that adding and improving bike routes parallels the environmental and connectivity suggestions from the Goals and Objectives survey responses.

Item 2: Livability Profile

After the presentation on transportation conditions, Planning Commission heard staff present the data collected from the Buildable Lot Analysis, showing that roughly 6,900 or 23% of the residential parcels in the county did not have an address and could be considered buildable.

Planning Commission then heard a staff presentation of the Goals and Objectives Survey data. The demographic data was discussed first, including the percentage of responses from each zip code area and length of time living in Jefferson County. Staff reported that a majority of respondents indicated a household income of \$100,000 or more and the average respondent's age was higher than the County average. The numbers of respondents who were retired or not working and those who were commuting correlated with Census Bureau numbers. About 77% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the quality of life in the county compared to 80% within the top 50 largest metro areas. On average, Shepherdstown respondents reported a higher percentage of satisfaction across the County.

Staff then described the data regarding medical care; almost one third of the respondents go out of the county for all medical care. Many respondents that receive some medical care in the county still go to other urban centers for certain types of care, principally Winchester, VA, and Martinsburg, WV. The two most popular choices for types of housing development were single family detached houses and age restricted or senior living communities. Ms. Brockman confirmed that Shepherd Village is the only existing age-in-place community in Jefferson County, and President Shepp commented on the difficulty that potential developers for such communities have in acquiring a certificate of convenience and necessity within Jefferson County. Staff then mentioned the respondent's opinions on availability of affordable housing for communities.

When asked their opinion on a new business park, lower income respondents had more negative responses than other respondents. Staff also presented the survey data regarding environmental and land use concerns, where most responses indicated that manufacturing was viewed negatively and agricultural uses were viewed positively. Respondents' opinions on traffic in the county were more diverse with nearly 75% of respondents reported that traffic was not a great impact to their schedule. Regarding historical sites, most responses implied that residents wish to preserve and protect historic sites and attract tourists.

Following this, Staff outlined the analysis of the open response comments collected from the survey. Responses indicate that Jefferson County residents want direct community involvement

and transparency in decision making processes, amenities and recreation to draw in families and young people, utilization of historical sites and natural beauty in the county to promote tourism, protection the county's watersheds and increased environmental conservation initiatives, and improved quality of life and safety regarding traffic concerns and medical facility locations. Main concerns among respondents were curtailing heavy industry, preserving open spaces in the county, and managing new growth.

Once the presentation of survey data was completed, Staff reviewed the Existing Land Use Map and confirmed that it will be displayed at the upcoming community outreach events.

Item 3: Comprehensive Plan Composition

Planning Commission used the rest of the Work Session to draft the outline of Goals for the 2045 CPU. Commissioner Stolipher began the discussion by suggesting a goal about land use and property rights. Ms. Brockman commented that the Urban Growth Boundaries could be a point of consideration, especially regarding land use and development. Commissioner Stolipher mentioned that Jefferson County has the advantage of development corridors along the main roads, and President Shepp responded that high density growth could be encouraged in those areas while allowing room for low density development in rural regions. Commissioners Knott and Howell brought up the importance of affordable workforce housing and more professional job opportunities as the county develops. Ms. Brockman added that having affordable housing and job opportunities geared towards young adults increases the likelihood that they will remain in the county. Planning Commission ended the discussion by deciding that the main topics concerning the 2045 CPU Goals would be land use, economic development, housing, job opportunities, and property rights. Staff will present recommended Goals including these topics at the next Work Session.

Planning Commission then decided to host the 2nd Public Input Meeting at Jefferson High School and confirmed that the Agricultural Input Meeting will be held at Washington High School. Mr. Seigfried asked if any organizations should be notified, and the Commissioners recommended that the Farm Bureau, Jefferson County Development Authority Agricultural Committee, and 4H Club all be informed of the meeting. President Shepp and the Planning Commission agreed to an additional Work Session on 8/29/23 at 6:00 p.m. to discuss and edit Staff's recommended Goals.

These notes were prepared by Shenan Ragle.