

**AMHERST COUNTY
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2012
MINUTES**

VIRGINIA

A public meeting for the Amherst County Planning Commission was held on Thursday, February 16, 2012, in the Board of Supervisors Room located in the Administration Building at 153 Washington Street, Amherst, VA.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Donald Hedrick, Chairman
Mitch Heishman, Vice-chairman
Leslie Irvin
Derin Foor
Beverly Jones
Donald Kidd, Board Liaison

MEMBERS ABSENT: George Brine

STAFF PRESENT: Ellen Bowyer, County Attorney
Jeremy Bryant, Director of Planning/Zoning
Stacey Stinnett, Administrative Assistant

STAFF ABSENT: Matthew Rowe, Planner/Assistant Zoning Administrator

Agenda

1. Call to Order
2. Approval of Agenda
3. Public Hearing
 - a. Amherst County Ordinance 2012-0001:
Personal Wireless Services Facilities
4. Old/New Business
5. Adjournment

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Hedrick called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The agenda was amended by adding the correct name for Item 3:

A. Amherst County Ordinance 2012-0001: Personal Wireless Service Facilities

Planning Commission Recommendation:

Motion: Jones

Motion to approve the amended agenda.

Second: Heishman

The motion carried by a 5-0 vote.

3. PUBLIC HEARING

A. Amherst County Ordinance 2012-0001: Personal Wireless Services Facilities

Mr. Bryant introduced the Personal Wireless Services Facilities Ordinance. Mr. Bryant asked that the Planning Commission take in consideration the public's comments and then consider a public hearing to the Board of Supervisor's for March 2012.

Ms. Bowyer, County Attorney, briefly explained the changes in the current document versus the original document.

Mr. Hedrick opened the public hearing.

Ms. Claudia Tucker, Board of Supervisors for District 2, resides at 713 Thrashers Creek Road in Amherst, spoke in favor of the Wireless Facilities Ordinance. Ms. Tucker expressed her appreciation to the Planning Commission, County Staff and Verizon for their work and patience in this process. Ms. Tucker encouraged the Planning Commission to recommend this ordinance to allow Verizon to build infrastructure to allow citizens of rural Amherst the same abilities to participate in commerce that citizens in Madison Heights and more suburban areas are able to enjoy. Ms. Tucker also acknowledged Steve Coffey, a resident in Amherst who also gives his support to this ordinance.

Mr. Douglas Hackey, resides at 311 North Forks Road in Amherst, spoke in favor of the ordinance. Mr. Hackey stated that every citizen in Amherst County should have the advantages of wireless service that helps enable safety, education and communication.

Mr. Marsh, resides at 1547 North Forks Road in Amherst, spoke in favor of the ordinance. Mr. Marsh stated that he has a land line and during storms he loses his service. Mr. Marsh stated that with passing this ordinance he will have wireless service which will be a convenience as well as a safety assurance.

Ms. Laura Vassar, resides at 145 Mill Ridge Lane in Amherst, spoke in favor of the ordinance. Ms. Vassar stated that she has family and a business in Amherst and that by allowing wireless service in this area it will not only promote safety, communication and education, but will also help business owners run a successful business.

Ms. Lori Schweller, an attorney with LeClair Ryan representing Verizon, spoke in favor of the ordinance. Ms. Schweller expressed her appreciation to the Planning Commission and Staff for the work they have contributed throughout this eighteen (18) month process. Ms. Schweller stated that Verizon supports this ordinance and if approved then Verizon would work quickly to provide new and replacement facilities that would provide emergency services as well as wireless internet. Along with Ms. Schweller was Steve Waller, a consultant with GBN Sites for Verizon Wireless, available for any questions that the Planning Commission or public may have.

Mr. Randy Fauber, resides at 3671 Lexington Turnpike in Amherst, spoke in favor of the ordinance. Mr. Fauber stated that he has served on the Pedlar Fire Department since 1980 and is currently serving as Chief of this department. Mr. Fauber expressed his concern with safety in the event of having to reach fire and rescue when there are accidents in the areas that do not provide wireless coverage. Mr. Fauber stated that he is the owner of Ogden's Grocery located at Hwy 60 in Amherst and that there have been many times when people have had to stop and use his phone in cases of emergencies because wireless service was not accessible. Mr. Fauber stated that this would benefit the citizens of Amherst County as well as for individuals from out of town commuting to the area.

Mr. Bob Fener, resides at 1011 Swapping Cabin Road in Amherst. Mr. Fener stated that he was a former member of the Planning Commission. Mr. Fener expressed concerns regarding height requirements (towers being too high) which could affect the esthetic value of the County.

Ms. Christy Vrooman, resides at 13047 Franklin Creek Road in Amherst, spoke in favor of the ordinance. Ms. Vrooman stated that if you weighed the constituents by esthetic value and by public safety that public safety was the most important issue for the citizens of Amherst County.

Ms. Wanda Beverly, resides at 142 Woodhaven Court in Madison Heights, spoke in favor of the ordinance. Ms. Beverly stated that she is the president of the Amherst Chamber of Commerce. Ms. Beverly stated that Amherst County not only needs to be family friendly but also business friendly which consists of the basic necessity of wireless communication to enable citizens to live, work and do business within the County.

Mr. Gary Roakes, Director of Public Safety and lifelong resident of Amherst County, spoke in favor of the ordinance. Mr. Roakes stated that cell phone service is vital to emergency responders as well as for the public. Mr. Roakes stated that many times when emergency responders are on a scene that wireless service is a tool needed to respond to other agencies to help in assisting an emergency. Mr. Roakes stated that every year there are at least two (2) emergencies that occur on the Appalachia Trail and that wireless service is needed as a

resource in assisting the emergency. Mr. Roakes stated that while he appreciated the beauty of the area he also had to consider that the County provides appropriate resources to the citizens and individuals that are transient from other areas. Mr. Roakes stated that he hoped this ordinance would invite other companies to look into locating facilities in other areas within the County that had no wireless services such as Pleasant View and Temperance School areas and areas within the 130 corridor.

Ms. Ursula Martin, resides at 932 Franklin Creek Road in Amherst, spoke in favor of the ordinance. Ms. Martin stated that she had a cellular phone but did not have access to wireless service at her home. Ms. Martin's concern is for safety in the event that she got hurt and did not have access to her land line.

Mr. Joe Baker, resides at Forks of Buffalo, spoke in favor of the ordinance. Mr. Baker stated that he worked from his home and that wireless service is vital to his livelihood. Mr. Baker stated that he needed access to more than one tower because the system was slow due to multiple users with limited facilities. Mr. Baker stated that natural resources are important however, the infrastructure services are a necessity that the County must have in order to function and grow.

Mr. Gary Jennings, a lifelong resident of Amherst, spoke in favor of the ordinance. Mr. Jennings was Chairman of the Planning Commission for fourteen (14) years during 1966-1980 and at that time the Comprehensive Plan was completed, Zoning was developed and the Subdivision Ordinance was passed. Mr. Jennings stated that the Wireless Facilities Ordinance is one that he supports for obvious reasons that have been shown at tonight's meeting and that he did not see how anyone could be against this request.

No one spoke in opposition of the request.

There being no further speakers, Mr. Hedrick closed the public hearing.

The Planning Commission all spoke in favor of the Wireless Facilities and expressed their appreciation to the public, Verizon and the Staff for their efforts in this process.

Ms. Bowyer briefly reviewed the two (2) amendments that were added to the ordinance.

Mr. Hedrick asked Staff to clarify on several statements and definitions.

Planning Commission Recommendation:

Motion: Jones

Motion to recommend the Amherst County Ordinance 2012-0001: Personal Wireless Service Facilities with two (2) amendments to the Board of Supervisors.

Second: Heishman

The motion carried by a 5-0 vote

4. OLD/NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Bryant updated the Planning Commission on the status and \$2200.00 cost of the six (6) new laptops.

Planning Commission Recommendation:

Motion: Foor

Motion to submit request to the County Administrator to consider adding funds in the Planning Commission budget to allow for costs of six (6) new laptops.

Second: Jones

The motion carried by a 5-0 vote

Mr. Foor updated the Planning Commission on the progress that the Business Taskforce has made on the sign ordinance.

Ms. Jones recognized Ms. Bowyer, County Attorney, for her dedication and hard work on the Wireless Facilities Ordinance.

There was some discussion regarding the status of the Madison Heights Zoning process.

5. ADJOURNMENT

Planning Commission Recommendations:

Motion: Jones

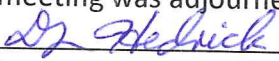
Motion to adjourn.

Second: Foor

The motion carried by a 5-0 vote.

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 7:53 pm.

/ss/2.22.12


Chairman