



Planning Commission Annual Report 2017

Community Development Block Grant

Amherst County applied for \$1,110,634 of CDBG funds for 2017 in Old Town Madison Heights. The County was awarded \$700,000 for the first phase and the remaining funds will be released once the first phase is substantially complete. The Main Street Revitalization project will be conducted in two phases and includes housing rehabilitation, relocation of telephone and power poles that are located in the right-of-way, retaining wall replacement, and drainage improvements along Main Street. Phase 1 of the Main Street Revitalization project will begin in early 2018. This is one of four multi-year projects that were awarded funding in 2017. Multi-year funding projects are those that will receive a contract allocating a portion of the funds for the first year, and after achieving specific performance targets, the project will then be eligible for additional funding.



2017's Numbers

In 2017 the Planning and Zoning Department approved the following¹:

- 355 Zoning permits
- 85 Single family dwelling permits.
- 34 Building addition permits.
- 62 Home occupation permits.
- 113 Accessory structure permits.
- 6 Wireless communication facility permits.
- 17 New sign permits.
- 4 Replacement or modification sign permits.
- 1 Commercial/ 1 Agricultural site plans.
- 0 PC Approved Major subdivisions.

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1. For a complete breakdown of 2017's numbers see Appendix 1.

Train Depot

The Amherst County Visitor Center was completed in 2017 with its grand opening in August. The interior of the restored Train Depot includes a video that showcases Amherst County, brochures from area and regional attractions, and numerous visuals promoting Amherst County locations, events, and history. The visitor center is also now home to the Amherst County Economic Development Authority and the Amherst County Chamber of Commerce. From August 26th to December 31st the visitor center had 679 guests from all over the United States and even residents from Sweden, Germany, and the UK. The new tourism website, visitamherstcounty.org, was launched in 2017, as well as the *Visit Amherst County* Facebook page. The Amherst County Visitor Center hours of operation are Wednesday through Saturday, 9am-5pm, and Sundays 1pm-5pm.



Ordinance Changes

Three changes to the Zoning and Subdivision Ordinance were approved during 2017. In February, the Planning Commission reviewed modifications to the Flood Hazard Overlay District regulations. Also reviewed by the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and the County Attorney, this update ensures compliance with state standards, and was approved by the Board of Supervisors in April.

The Planning Commission recommended an ordinance in July that was approved by the Board of Supervisors in August that clarified how requirements governing subdivision design vary, depending on whether the private streets or forest service roads accessing the subdivision are constructed in accordance with requirements of the Virginia Department of Transportation.

In September, the Planning Commission recommended elimination of a regulation that limited the use of a short-term tourist rental of a dwelling within a platted subdivision. This was heard and approved by the Board of Supervisors in October. Requests will continue to be vetted through the special exception process; however this ordinance change offers the potential for more tourist-friendly activity in Amherst County.

In 2018, the Amherst County Planning Commission will meet on the third Thursday of every month at 7 PM at the Amherst County Administration Building.

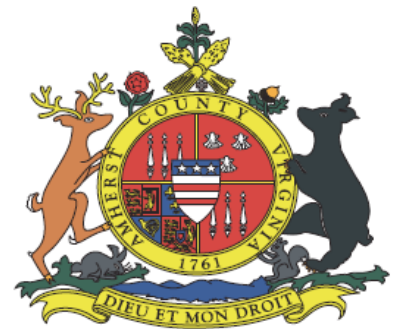
Meet the Planning Commission

Member	Phone Number	Email	District
Michael K. Martineau – Chairman	946-2697	mkmartineau@countyofamherst.com	District 1
Derin S. Foor – V. Chairman	941-7345	dsfoor@countyofamherst.com	District 2
Jim D. Thompson	841-7499	jdthompson@countyofamherst.com	District 3
George J. Brine, Jr.	929-6830	gjbrine@countyofamherst.com	District 4
Beverly C. Jones	929-7617	bcjones@countyofamherst.com	District 5
Catherine L. Gamble	946-5835	clgamble@countyofamherst.com	At-Large
David Pugh (Board Liaison)	509-2038	dwpugh@countyofamherst.com	District 4

Comprehensive Plan

The purpose of the Amherst County Comprehensive Plan is to guide and accomplish a coordinated, adjusted and harmonious development of the County, in accordance with present and probable future needs and resources, and best promote the health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity and general welfare of the residents. State law mandates that a locality's Comprehensive Plan be reviewed and updated every five years. The process to review and update the Plan began in January 2017 by many County departments and agencies. The Plan was presented to the Planning Commission in May 2017, who considered modifications for six months, and held a public hearing in November where they recommended approval to the Board of Supervisors.

Highlighted modifications include changes to the Economic Development Section to address the closure of Central Virginia Training Center, objectives dealing with business friendly policies and procedures, references to the 2016 Economic Development Strategic Plan, policies to address business growth, funding plans, creation of business sites and buildings, job creation, removal of irrelevant goals, objectives and strategies; additions to Cultural Resources and the Natural Heritage Resources Section that promote Sweet Briar College and the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts and identify and support conservation practices that protect rare, threatened, or endangered plant and animal species, unique or exemplary natural communities, and significant geological formations; the Future Land Use Map was modified to reflect a change in a growth boundary near the Town of Amherst and the Land Use Section was updated to support tourism and agriculture, promote parks, clarify objectives and strategies, support Planned Unit Developments, retirement communities and the redevelopment of the Central Virginia Training Center.



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Special Exceptions, Site Plans & Rezoning

Ten special exceptions were recommended to the Board of Supervisors by the Planning Commission in 2017, and all but one were approved by the Board of Supervisors in the following month. In January the Planning Commission heard a request for a two-family dwelling that had the outward appearance of a single-family dwelling in the RMU-1 Residential Mixed Use District. In February, a request for boarding and grooming in the A-1 Agricultural District was recommended for approval. An event venue with short-term tourist rental of a dwelling in the A-1 Agricultural Residential District was heard in April. A request was approved to allow used automobile sales in the B-2 General Commercial District in May, and in June Sweet Briar requested two signs in the A-1 Agricultural Residential District. Also recommended for approval in June was an automobile repair, sales, towing, recovery, and storage use in the B-2 General Commercial District. Another request for boarding and grooming in the A-1 Agricultural Residential District was reviewed in July. In August, a day care center was approved in the A-1 Agricultural Residential District. Finally in November, two separate short-term tourist rentals of dwellings in the A-1 Agricultural Residential District were approved.

Two site plans were also approved by the Planning Commission in 2017. A site plan for a retail and restaurant establishment in the B-2 General Commercial District was approved in March. The Little Caesar's and Sprint completed construction in late 2017, and opened its doors in December. In December the Planning Commission approved a site plan for a barn to store historic items at the headquarters of the Virginia Canals and Navigations Society. The barn will store boats and other artifacts from all over the state to preserve the history of Virginia's canals.

The rezoning of Phelps Road School from P-1 Public Lands District to R-3 Multi-Family Residential District was recommended for approval by the Planning Commission in December 2017. The structure has been vacant for 26 years with a recent streak of noncompliance with the statewide building code. Amherst County approved a redevelopment Performance Agreement with an experienced historic rehabilitation developer, Waukeshaw Development to bring new vitality to the building and community. The former Phelps Road School is a historic property of significance to the Amherst community and Waukeshaw wants to invest at least \$5,000,000 to redevelop, restore, and convert the building into 30+ market-rate apartments while maintaining the historic character of the building.



Route 29 Business Beautification Committee

The purpose of the Route 29 Business Beautification Committee is to beautify the roadways of Amherst County so as to instill pride and appreciation of the citizenry in the attractiveness of their community. This Committee consists of nine voting members, whom were selected in 2017. These include three business owners in the corridor, two citizens, two County staff members, one Planning Commission member, and one Economic Development Authority member. The Committee compiled and ranked a list of initiatives designed to improve the functionality and aesthetic value of the corridor. In 2017, the Committee enlisted the Virginia Department of Transportation to remove debris and clean the curbing and gutters along six miles of the Route 29 Business Corridor. The Committee also received \$15,000 from the County for the placement of banners on utility poles along the corridor. The application process and installation is due to commence in 2018.



What's New?

Business Friendliness Initiative

In August 2017, the Board of Supervisors discussed the matter of the County's reputation for being unfriendly to business, and solicited proposals from the Planning Commission to change County ordinances, processes, policies or procedures to improve the business environment for both existing and new businesses in Amherst County. The Planning Commission compiled a list of thoughts and ideas, and intend to fully coordinate with stakeholders, agencies such as the Economic Development Authority and staff to implement strategies that will have the greatest and quickest impact.

New Software

The Planning and Zoning and Building Safety and Inspections Departments began the process to vet and select a new permitting software in May 2017. Several candidates were reviewed and tested, and iWorQ Software Solutions and Professional Services was ultimately selected in November 2017. Based out of Utah, a representative was able to visit and tour Amherst County to train staff on the program in December 2017. The software will allow permits to be issued and cases to be tracked quickly and effectively, and intends to go live in January 2018.



Broadband Update

In October 2017, the Board of Supervisors reinstated themselves as the Amherst County Broadband Authority. An unsolicited Public Private Educational Assistance (PPEA) proposal was submitted, and the Authority intends to evaluate and accept competing proposals for a specified period of time. Because Amherst County is both a suburban and rural locality many portions of the County remain without viable internet service. The intent of the partnership is to bring coverage to at least 95% of the County.

"Access to reliable broadband is an economic imperative that will ensure that all of our children can keep pace with new technology as they learn, our businesses can sell globally, our entrepreneurs can compete and our workforce can prepare for the jobs of the 21st century."

Gov. Terry McAuliffe

New Faces

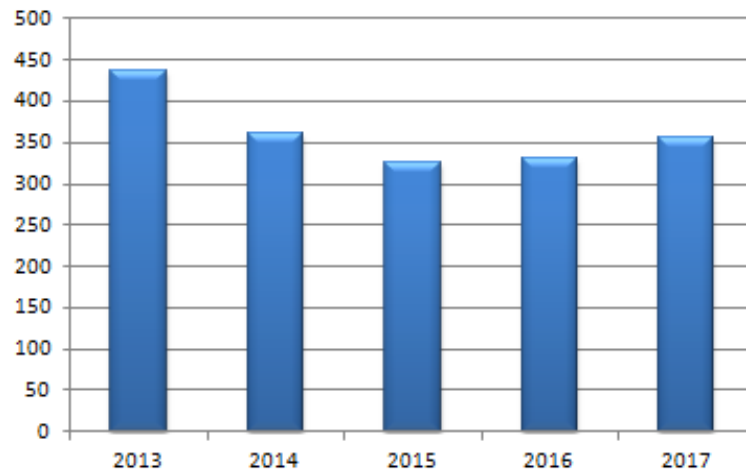
In September 2017, a new Assistant Zoning Administrator and Planner was hired to join the Planning and Zoning Department. Dylan Bishop is a Lynchburg native who holds a Bachelor's Degree from Virginia Commonwealth University in Urban Planning and Regional Studies. Dylan, who is 25, graduated in 2015 and had previously been working for the City of Lynchburg as a Seasonal Planner. Dylan will review site plans, subdivision plats, zoning permits, and will coordinate the Developmental Review Committee, as well as manage activities associated with erosion and sediment control. She is due to complete multiple training and certification programs in 2018.

Also in September 2017, a new Planning Commission member was appointed by the Board of Supervisors as an at-large member. Catherine (Leslie) Gamble comes from a real estate background in Northern Virginia, and is looking forward to enjoying her land and horses here in Amherst County while making a difference by being involved in the community. She is due to complete Planning Commission training in 2018.

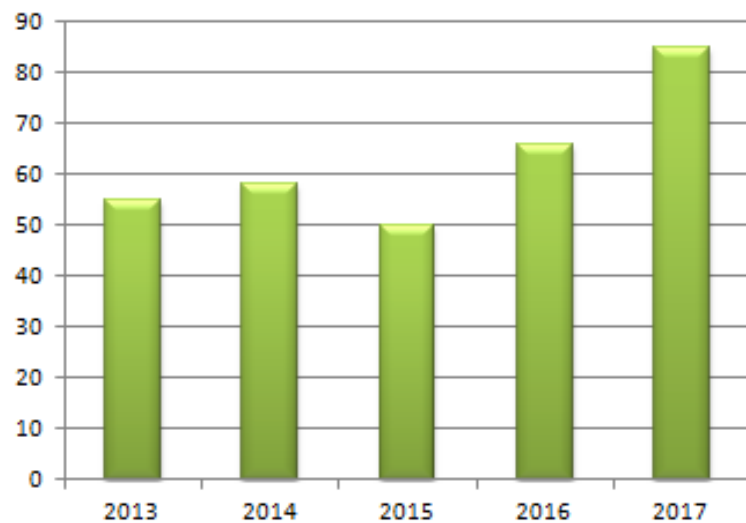
What to Look For in 2018

- The Planning and Zoning and Building Inspection and Safety Departments will be merging into the Community Development Department in early 2018.
- Online applications and ability to accept credit card payments through the iWorQ Community Development Software.
- Broadband PPEA proposals, selection, and commencement.
- Utility pole banners along Route 29 Business and continued efforts by the Route 29 Business Beautification Committee to improve aesthetics, functionality, and outreach.
- Enactment of Business Friendliness collaboration and initiatives.
- Sign Ordinance and other Ordinance changes/updates.
- Riveredge Park improvements and continued efforts to expand.

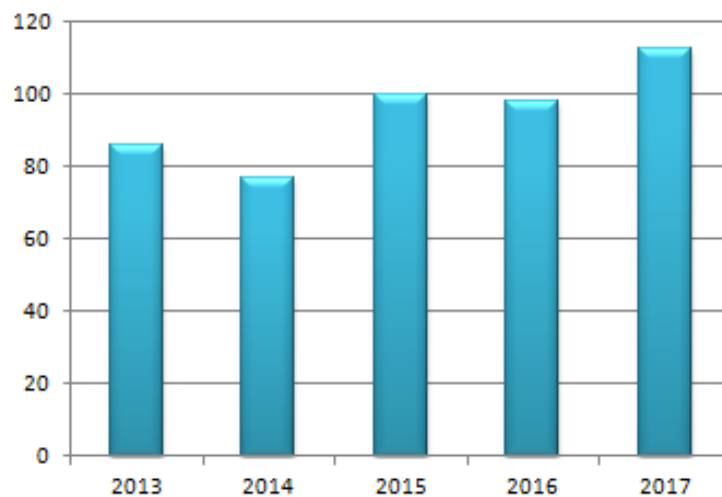
Zoning Permits



Single-Family Dwellings



Accessory Structures



	Jan-17	Feb-17	Mar-17	Apr-17	May-17	Jun-17	Jul-17	Aug-17	Sept-17	Oct-17	Nov-17	Dec-17	Annual-17
PERMIT/PLAN TYPE:													
Parcels of Land: (Comm. Revenue)													
Zoning Permits:	26	15	37	26	27	32	39	38	32	41	25	17	355
Residential uses/structures:													
Single-family	6	5	6	6	5	5	4	9	6	6	4	5	67
Single-family, manufactured	0	1		1	0	1	3	1	1	0	1	0	9
Single-family, manufactured, transportable in two (2) or more sections (Doublewide)	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	2	1	0	0	7
Single-family, attached (townhouses)	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
Dwelling, short-term tourist rental	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	2
Two-family (duplexes)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Multi-family	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Building addition/expansion	1	3	2	0	3	4	5	6	3	4	2	1	34
Home occupations	9	0	13	7	3	6	4	0	4	6	6	4	62
Other	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	5
Commercial uses:								0					
New buildings/stuctures	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Change in use to existing building or property	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mixed-use buildings	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wireless Communication Fclty	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	1	1	1	6
Other (Business Licenses)	0	0	0	2	0	2	2	7	0	0	2	1	16
Industrial uses/structures:	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Institutional uses/structures:	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Accessory structures/uses:													
Storage buildings/sheds	0	2	3	1	2	2	2	2	8	4	1	1	28
Carports/Garages	4	1	4	1	2	2	2	3	2	5	3	1	30
Pools, above-ground and in-ground	0	0	0	1	3	1	2	0	1	1	1	0	10
Agricultural buildings	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	4	1	1	9
Other (Decks, Porch, etc)	3	2	4	4	5	4	4	5	2	2	0	1	36
Signs:													
New signs	2	1	1	0	1	0	5	1	1	2	2	1	17
Replacements/modifications of existing signs	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	0	0	4
Zoning Permits for Special Exceptions:													
Residential	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	2	0	0	6
Commercial	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Industrial	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Institutional	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1

1. For a complete breakdown of 2017's numbers see Appendix 1.

	Jan-17	Feb-17	Mar-17	Apr-17	May-17	Jun-17	Jul-17	Aug-17	Sept-17	Oct-17	Nov-17	Dec-17	Annual-17
Public Sewer Connection (ACSA)													
New Connections (Business)	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
New Connections (Residential)	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	4	0	1	0	0	8
911 Addresses Issued:	2	14	2	3	7	4	8	6	8	4	6	6	70
Complaints/Violations:													
Unpermitted Structures:	1	1	2	2	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	10
Illegal Signs:	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Junk Vehicles:	0	0	1	1	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	6
Nuisance:	0	1	2	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
Misc.	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Business Related:	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	3
Total:	1	2	5	5	2	2	2	1	2	4	0	0	26