

2021



AMHERST

Perfect Slice of Virginia

Planning Commission Annual Report

AMHERST COUNTY
PLANNING COMMISSION

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Riveredge Trail Extension

Work concluded on the latest extension project at Riveredge Park Trail. Approximately 460 feet of asphalt trail were laid, and 390 feet of gravel was added. This project was the first of three phases to extend the path. Future plans include connecting the route to the James River Heritage Trail and is all part of the Board's place making initiative.

The project was funded from a Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation - Recreation Trails Program grant. Hurt and Proffit was granted the contract to perform the engineering work and F&B contractors performed the trail construction.



Figure 1. Riveredge Trail Extension

Broadband Expansion

In August of 2021, the Amherst County Board of Supervisors partnered with the Thomas Jefferson Planning District and Firefly Fiber Broadband to apply for grant funds from the Virginia Telecommunication Initiative (VATI) to expand broadband access to underserved

communities. Preliminary planning for the regional project identified 4,322 locations in Amherst County as unserved, which is defined as areas without access to speeds faster than 25 mbps download or 3 mbps upload. The application included running 548 miles of new fiber optic cable in the County.

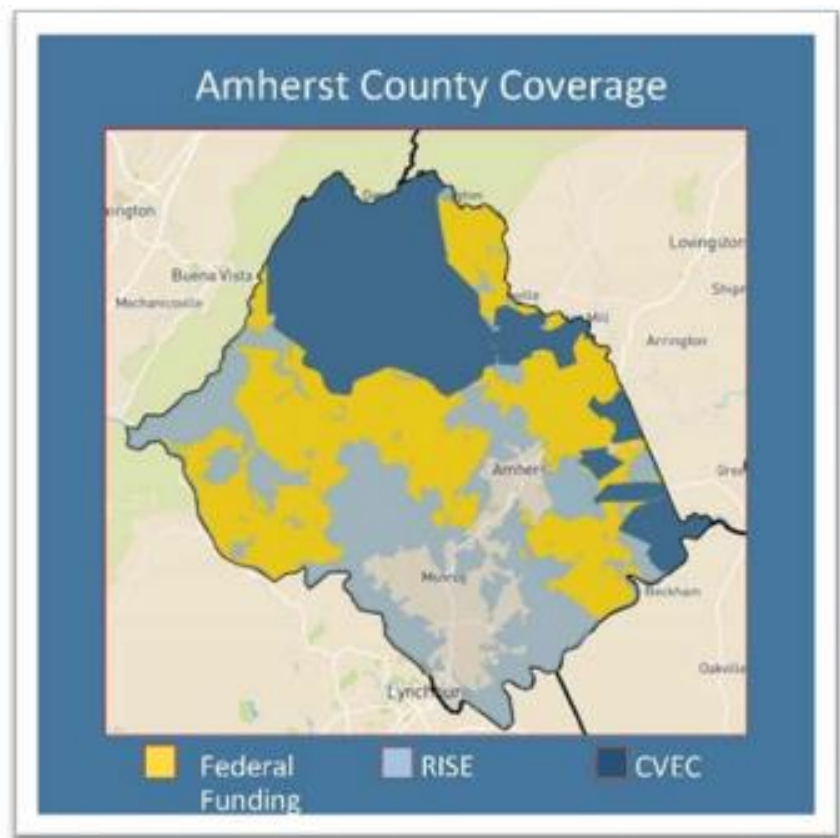


Figure 2. Broadband Coverage Map

In December of 2021, Firefly Fiber Broadband

was awarded \$79 million to place broadband fiber in 13 counties. Amherst County, being one of them, will be awarded \$6 million in grant funds. In addition, the Amherst County Board of Supervisors approved up to \$3,025,400 in American Rescue Plan Acts funds to match the grant. The project is expected to be complete within three years.

Meet the Planning Commission

Member	Email	District
Beverly C. Jones	bcjones@countyofamherst.com	District 5
Derin S. Foor	dsfoor@countyofamherst.com	At-Large
Jim D. Thompson	jdthompson@countyofamherst.com	District 3
Michael D. Bryant	mdbryant@countyofamherst.com	District 4
Michael K. Martineau	mkmartineau@countyofamherst.com	District 1
Catherine L. Gamble	clgamble@countyofamherst.com	District 2
David Pugh (Board Liaison)	dwpugh@countyofamherst.com	District 4

The 2021-2022 Planning Commission Youth Representatives are Fatima Urmani and Emma McPhatter.

Commission Member Spotlight



A message from the Planning Commission Chairman, Mr. Michael Bryant:

“Amherst County is a small rural community that faces challenges that the Planning Commission must deal with. We strive to encourage growth and redevelopment where businesses can thrive while at the same time protect our rural landscape, provide places for recreation and create tourist attractions that will bring investments into our local economy. Our subcommittee The Route 29 Corridor Beautification Committee has worked tirelessly to improve and beautify the main corridor through Amherst County.”

“We have encouraged youth participation in local governance by including two youth representatives on the Planning Commission, helping to bring a fresh and new perspective on how Amherst County is meeting the needs of our youth. One of those needs being internet accessibility, where the County has been working hard to bring in providers that will make internet available to all residences. Our priorities have been to make Amherst County that perfect slice of Virginia by helping to streamlining land development and adjust our ordinances to encourage positive growth. Bringing in more resources, jobs, and better housing for residents resulting in an improved quality of life: creating a community that people not only want to live in but also one that businesses will want to invest in.

Tree Replacement and Pruning

In the fall of 2021, the Route 29 Business Beautification Committee, in partnership with Amherst County Public Works and Community Development, replaced 16 trees on Route 29 Business. In total, two sugar maples were replanted in the grass area near the John Lynch Bridge, 12 red maples were replanted near the ramps of Route 210, and Route 163 and two Yoshino Cherry trees were replanted on the north side of the Route 210 ramp.

Amherst County Public Works handled the transportation of the trees and provided four staff members to help with the planting. Community Development staff members contacted multiple local businesses to track down the trees and assisted with the replanting process.

Community Signs



Figure 3. Lowesville Community Sign

The Lowesville community sign displays a fisherman, a reflection of the area's lakes and active fishing community, while the mountain illustrates the picturesque scenery of Lowesville.

Community signs in the Village of Elon and Lowesville have been installed by part of the Board of Supervisors' place making initiative. They hope that these two signs are the first of many highlighting the different geographic communities of Amherst County. Each sign will reflect two defining features of the area.

The Elon community sign features a mountain to reflect its relationship with Tobacco Row mountains and High



Figure 4. Elon Community Sign

Food Truck Ordinance

In May of 2021, the Amherst County Board of Supervisors adopted the County's first Food Truck & Trailer Ordinance. Food trucks, trailers, and carts have become increasingly popular and had already been seen throughout the County. However, there was no zoning ordinance in place to regulate their operations. The adopted ordinance, which was recommended by the Planning Commission, sets standards and regulations for all food truck, trailer, and cart operations in Amherst County.

Some key points include:

- Food trucks must limit their visit to a location to no more than 72 consecutive hours.
- Equipment required for the business may not expand past ten feet of the truck.
- There must be at least three parking spots available for customers.
- Food trucks that are exempt from a zoning permit include: Meals and Wheels program vehicles, food home delivery services, single-weekend events (birthdays, holidays, anniversaries, festivals, parades) and any other use that is similar to those uses.

Madison Heights Master Plan

Amherst County hired EPR out of Charlottesville, VA to begin the process of master planning several areas of Madison Heights. The purpose of this planning effort is to create a "blueprint" for the County's Board of Supervisors, Planning Commission and future developers that proposes traffic pattern improvements, infrastructure availability and needs (water, sewer, electricity, telephone, fiber, 5G, sidewalks), public services locations (for schools, police, EMS & fire stations, parks and recreation) and zoning modifications and controls that will guide the anticipated growth in this area and position the County to be prepared to fulfill its responsibilities to the public.

More to come in 2022!

Route 29 Business Beautification Mini-Grant Program

In 2019, the Route 29 Business Beautification Committee's launched a matching mini-grant program to help businesses make improvements to the appearance of their properties. Approved applicants are provided a matching grant up to \$1,000.00 after approval from the committee.

The grant remains open for applications, and any business along Route 29 Business is invited to apply. Examples of qualifying improvements could be sign replacement and restoration, landscaping, removal of blight, façade improvement, landscaping and tree planting, fresh paint on a building, curb painting and repairs, parking lot improvements, or fencing to hide unattractive storage of supplies or waste. Businesses can apply for the mini-grant application through the Community Development Department. Completed applications are presented for Committee review at their monthly meeting. Printable applications are also available on the county website.

Zoning Permit Numbers

The Amherst County Planning and Zoning Department reviewed and issued over 100 more zoning permits than in the year 2020. Single-family dwelling permits continue to ascend, with over 30 more dwelling permits being issued in 2021 than in 2020. A highlighted breakdown of zoning permits can be seen below.

Table 1. Number of zoning permits for specific uses

Permit Type	Dwelling	Building Addition	Home Occupation	Accessory Structure	Wireless Communication Facility	Signs	Site Plans	Total
Number of Permits	132	16	74	123	9	12	9	590

A complete list of the total zoning permits reviewed and issued can be seen in Appendix A, Table A1.

Special Exceptions, Site Plans and Rezoning Cases

The Planning Commission reviewed and approved four (4) special exception uses in 2021. Three of the special uses were for a short-term tourist rental. The other special exception involved a change to a previously approved special exception for conditions of a solar farm.

Table 2. Special Exceptions, 2021

Date	Classification	Use	Zoning District	Status
2/25/2021	Residential	Short-Term Tourist Rental	R-1, Limited Residential	Approved
6/21/2021	Commercial	SE Change - Solar Farm	A-1, Agricultural Residential	Approved
10/20/2021	Residential	Short-Term Tourist Rental	A-1, Agricultural Residential	Approved
11/23/2021	Residential	Short-Term Tourist Rental	A-1, Agricultural Residential	Pending

In April of 2021, the Board of Supervisors adopted an ordinance change that now allows County staff to review and approve “by-right” site plans. This change completely eliminated the additional requirements of Planning Commission approval. However, prior to Board approval of the ordinance, the Planning Commission reviewed and approved two sites plans. The first included additional storage buildings for an already existing storage facility and the second was for an office addition at the County’s landfill. The other site plans reviewed and already approved or pending County approval include a new patio home development, senior center and office building for the Monacan Indian Nation, Starbucks Coffee Shop, Cookout drive thru restaurant and Monacan Indian Health Clinic.

Table 3. Site Plans, 2021

Date	Classification	Use	Zoning District	Status
2/10/2021	Business	Storage Buildings	B-2, General Commercial	Pending
3/15/2021	Public	Office Addition	P-1, Public Lands	Approved

4/13/2021	Residential	New Patio Homes	R-3, Multi-Family	Pending
5/10/2021	Business	New Senior Center and Office Building	B-2, General Commercial	Approved
7/13/2021	Business	New Cookout Drive Thru	B-2, General Commercial	Pending
8/17/2021	Business	New Starbucks	B-2, General Commercial	Pending
9/30/2021	Industrial	Building Addition	M-1, Industrial	Approved
10/26/2021	Business	Health Clinic	B-2, General Commercial	Pending

In 2021, the Planning Commission reviewed and approved two rezoning cases. The first case involved a parcel to be rezoned from R-2, General Residential to B-2, General Commercial for the addition of a senior center and office building. The second case was a rezoning from R-2, General Residential to R-3, Multifamily for a new patio home development.

Table 4. Rezoning Cases, 2021

Date	Parcel ID	Use	Rezoning
1/13/2021	148-A-5	New Senior Center and Office Building	R-2, General Residential to B-2, General Commercial
4/16/2021	148I-2-B	New Patio Homes	R-2, General Residential to R-3, Multifamily Residential

Appendix A

Table A1. Zoning Permits, 2021

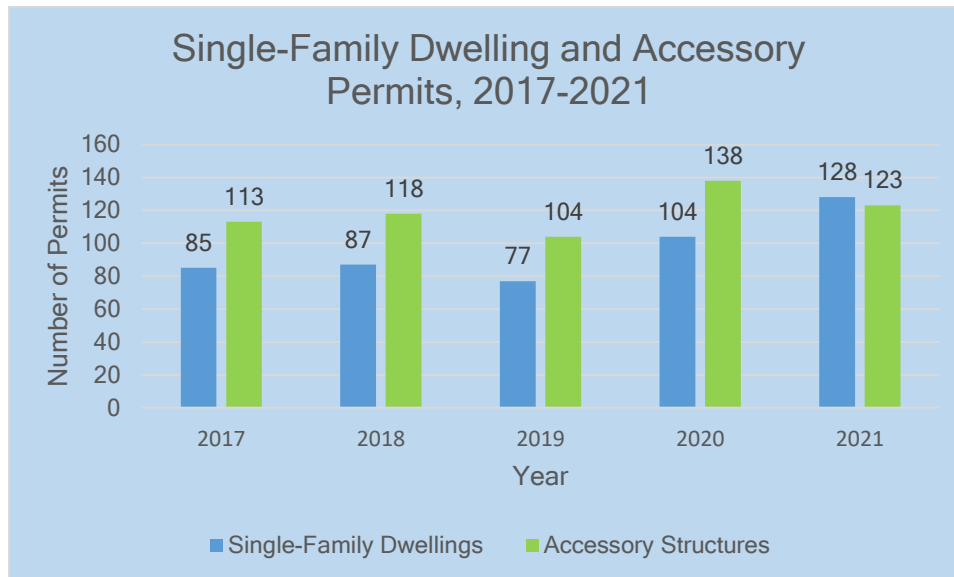
Permit Type / Proposed Use	Total Number of Permits
Accessory Structure - Deck/porch	32
Accessory Structure - Agricultural Building	15
Accessory Structure - Carport/Garage	27
Accessory Structure - Other	9
Accessory Structure - Pool	14
Accessory Structure - Storage/Shed	26
Erosion and Sediment Control Plan	11
Land Disturbance - Commercial	4
Land Disturbance - Residential	43
Resurvey	26
Rezoning	2
Sign - Alter/Modify Existing	4
Sign - New	8
Site Plan - Agricultural	1
Site Plan - Commercial	8
Special Exception - Commercial	2
Special Exception - Residential	4
Subdivision Plat - Administrative	17
Subdivision Plat - Family Division	12
Subdivision Plat - Reconfiguration	37
Variance	1
Wireless Communication Facility	1
Wireless Communication Modifications	8
Camping	4
Short-Term Tourist Rental	4
Home Occupations	74
Institutional Use/Structures	1
Mixed Use Building	1
New Building/Structure (Commercial)	1
Single-Family Dwelling	103
Two-Family, Duplex	4
Zoning - Other (Business Licenses)	32
Zoning Verification	8
Addition/Expansion	16
Zoning - Other	5
Single-Family, Doublewide	8
Single-Family, Manufactured	1
Single-Family, Singlewide	16
Total	590

Appendix B

Chart A1. Zoning Permits, 2017-2021



Chart A2. Single-Family Dwelling and Accessory Permits, 2017-2021



Appendix C

Ordinance Changes



Amherst County Board of Supervisors County Ordinance No. 2021-0004

AN ORDINANCE, NO. 2021-0004

Amending §§ 302, 701, 707, 708, and enacting § 924 of Appendix A - Zoning and Subdivisions, of the Code of the County of Amherst, addressing Truck, Food, Trailer or Cart.

Approved as to form and legality by the Amherst County Attorney

FIRST READING: Board of Supervisors, May 4, 2021
PUBLIC HEARING: Board of Supervisors, May 18, 2021

THE COUNTY OF AMHERST HEREBY ORDAINS:

I. That Sections 302, 701, 707, 708, and § 924 of the Code of Amherst County, 1987, as amended, are amended, reenacted, and recodified as follows:

302. Specific Definitions

...

Truck, Food, trailer or cart. A street vending unit that is self-contained, readily movable and is currently registered with the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles. Designed and equipped to serve food that is made ready for consumption at the point of sale and is able to be removed each day following the end of business.

701. Public Lands District P-1

701.03 Special exceptions (Public Lands District—P-1 zone)

1. Jail and other detention facilities.
2. Landfill or similar uses.
3. Off-site directional signs compliant with the requirements of Section 907.04.
4. Personal wireless service facilities as provided in Section 919.

5. Food trucks, trailers and or carts as provided in Section 924, provided that the Food Truck (Trailer and/or Cart) leaves the property at the close of business each day.

6. Any other use which the ~~planning director~~ Zoning Administrator determines is consistent with the statement of intent for this district and is of the same general character as special exception uses in this district.

707. General Commercial District B-2

707.02 Permitted uses. Within the General Commercial District B-2, the following uses are permitted.

...

78. Food trucks, trailers and or carts as provided in Section 924, provided that the Food Truck (Trailer and/or Cart) does not remain on the property for longer than seventy-two (72) consecutive hours.

79. Any other use which the planning director determines is consistent with the statement of intent for this district and is of the same general character as permitted uses in this district.

708. - Industrial District M-1

708.02. Permitted uses. Within the Industrial District M-1, the following uses are permitted:

...

19. Food trucks, trailers and or carts as provided in Section 924, provided that the Food Truck (Trailer and/or Cart) does not remain on the property for longer than seventy-two (72) consecutive hours.

924. – Food Trucks, Trailers or Carts.

924.01. Intent. The special provisions in this section are designed to cover the uniqueness of food truck operations. These provisions shall help maintain a healthy and equitable atmosphere by minimizing the diverse impacts that effect this operation. All mobile vehicles providing retail sales of food (food trucks, food trailers or food carts) shall comply with this section. This section does not apply to “meals on wheels” program vehicles, mobile ice cream trucks or food home delivery services.

924.02. General Requirements. Food trucks, where permitted, must meet all of the following requirements:

1. The applicant must be the owner of the property or have written permission from the owner or legal representative on which the mobile food vehicle business will be located.
2. No mobile food vehicle shall use flashing or moving lights as part of its operation.
3. All equipment required for the mobile food vehicle business shall be contained within, attached to or within ten (10) feet of the food truck, trailer or cart.
4. All requirements in Section 13-55, Litter receptacles at places frequented by the public, shall be met.

5. A zoning permit shall be obtained by the vendor prior to operations of any mobile food vehicle and must be renewed if the approved use has elapsed over a year.
6. Each food truck, trailer or cart shall provide a copy of a valid Mobile Food Establishment permit issued by the Virginia Department of Health.
7. Food trucks, trailers or carts who operate in Amherst County are required to obtain a peddler's license.
8. Copies of the zoning permit and all applicable permits shall be kept in the food truck, trailer and/or cart at all times.

924.03. Location and access.

1. Food trucks, trailers or carts shall be located at a minimum distance of twenty-five (25) feet from the edge of any means of ingress or egress, exit or emergency access/exit, emergency call box or fire hydrant.
2. Food trucks, trailers and carts shall not be located in any right-of-way, nor obstruct any easement.
3. Food trucks, trailers and carts shall not occupy any parking spaces required to fulfill the minimum requirements in section 602 of the principal use, unless the principal use's hours of operation do not coexist with those of the food truck business.
4. Food trucks, trailers and carts shall have at a minimum three (3) parking spaces for patron use.

924.04. Exempt Food Trucks, Trailers and Carts. The following food truck, trailer and carts are permitted and exempt from the zoning permit process.

1. Meals on Wheels program vehicles
2. Food home delivery services
3. Single weekend events. i.e. birthdays, holidays, anniversaries, fairs, festivals, parades, etc.
4. Any other use which the ~~planning director~~ Zoning Administrator determines is consistent with the statement of intent for this use and is of the same general character as the other exempt uses in this section.

II. This ordinance is in force and effect upon adoption.

Adopted this 18th day of May 2021.



**Amherst County Board of Supervisors
County Ordinance No. 2021-0005**

AN ORDINANCE, NO. 2021-0005

Amending Section 1102 – Procedure for site plan review of Appendix A Zoning and Subdivision,
Article XI – Site Plan Review Requirements to the Code of the County of Amherst, addressing
procedure of site plan review.

Approved as to form and legality by the Amherst County Attorney

**FIRST READING: Board of Supervisors, April 6, 2021
PUBLIC HEARING: Board of Supervisors, April 20, 2021**

THE COUNTY OF AMHERST HEREBY ORDAINS:

I. That Section 1102. – Procedure for site plan review of Appendix A Zoning and Subdivision, Article XI – Site Plan Review Requirements of the Code of Amherst County, 1987, is amended, reenacted, and recodified as follows:

Sec. 1102. – Procedure for site plan review.

When the zoning administrator determines that an application involves development requiring site plan review, the zoning administrator shall notify the applicant that such review is required and shall require the documentation listed in this article. The site plan will be one (1) of three (3) categories; a plot plan, minor site plan or major site plan, as described in this article. If a site plan can be categorized under more than one (1) type of plan, it shall be reviewed under the most stringent requirements. The major and minor site plan review process shall involve review by the development review committee, ~~as well as the planning commission and shall meet all their requirements prior to approval.~~ Site plans that are submitted as a permitted use can be reviewed and considered for approval by staff. Site plans that are non-permitted uses will be considered for approval by the Planning Commission.

II. This ordinance is in force and effect upon adoption.

Adopted this 20th day of April 2021.