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**Roanoke Rapids City Council**

**April 22, 2014**

A joint special meeting of the Roanoke Rapids City Council and the Roanoke Rapids Area Planning Board was held on the above date at 5:30 p.m. at the Lloyd Andrews City Meeting Hall.

 Emery G. Doughtie, Mayor

 Carl Ferebee, Mayor Pro Tem

 Ernest C. Bobbitt)

 Suetta S. Scarbrough)

 Carol H. Cowen)

 Wayne Smith)

 Greg Browning, Chairman

 Tillman Long, Vice Chairman

 James W. Miller)

 Robert Lee Moore, Jr.)

 Terry Campbell)

 Leigh Etheridge)

 Henry B. Ford)

 Joseph Scherer, MPA, MS, City Manager

 Lisa B. Vincent, MMC, City Clerk

 Kelly Lasky, Planning & Development Director

 T. Dale Holland, AICP, Principal, Holland Consulting Planners, Inc.

 Christina Caudle, Main Street/Development Director

 Sherry Hux, RABA Board Member

 Allen Purser, Chamber President/CEO

 Lauren Doughtie, Mayor’s Assistant

 Lance Martin, rrspin.com

 Roger Bell, Roanoke Rapids Daily Herald

Mayor Doughtie called the special meeting of the Roanoke Rapids City Council to order.

Chairman Browning called the special meeting of the Roanoke Rapids Area Planning Board to order.

Mayor Doughtie provided the invocation.

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Planning & Development Director Lasky stated this process started almost a year ago after conversations with Holland Consulting Planners about the need for the City to update the current plan which was adopted in 1989. She stated this has been in her plans since she joined the City, and found the opportunity through a Community Transformation Grant Program to obtain funding for the update.

Planning & Development Director Lasky stated this plan is still in draft form and is available on the City’s website and in the Planning Department for review. She pointed out that the next step will be to formally present the draft to the Planning Board next month for a recommendation to Council in June.

Planning & Development Director Lasky stated Mr. Dale Holland with Holland Consulting Planners, Inc. has been diligently working with the City and staff to create a plan that will guide the decision making process in the future. She pointed out that comment sheets are available for the group’s use to provide staff with feedback.

Mr. Dale Holland stated he appreciates the opportunity to meet regarding the draft Comprehensive Land Use and Community Health Plan. He thanked Ms. Lasky and staff for assistance in getting this document put together. He stated he will walk everyone through an overview of the draft plan.

Mr. Holland stated to be effective this plan cannot be a static document. He stated you need to look at the whole process as a start of planning and not the end of planning. He stated if the document is not used, it will become the plan on the proverbial shelf and all of the time and money spent will be wasted.

Mr. Holland pointed out that North Carolina General Statutes require that any action on zoning regulations has to include a statement that the intended action is consistent with the comprehensive land use plan. He stated this document is for day to day decision making. He pointed out that it is also of great value in the preparation of grant applications. Mr. Holland stated this should be an on-going process. He stated it does not stop with the adoption of this plan.

Mr. Holland, with the aid of PowerPoint, presented an overview of the draft Comprehensive Land Use and Community Health Plan.

Mr. Holland stated this plan establishes goals and implementing actions for issues that will affect Roanoke Rapids during the planning period. He stated these goals and implementing actions will assist officials in making long-range decisions in such areas as provision of utilities and other public services, thoroughfare planning, development of economic development strategies, and intergovernmental coordination. He stated the goals and specific implementing actions are provided for each of the following six areas of concern:

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 1. Land Use Design

 2. Economic Development

 3. Community Services

 4. Health and Wellness

 5. Transportation

 6. Environmental Considerations

Mr. Holland pointed out that there are seven sections in this plan but the real heart and soul of the document is found in Section 6 “Future Land Use” and Section 7 “Goals and Implementing Actions”. He stated this is where the roadway for the future is laid out.

Mr. Holland indicated that there is a population problem in the county. He stated Halifax County is the only county within the Upper Coastal Plain Region forecasted to lose population. He stated there has to be some stimulus activity to try to turn that around.

Mr. Holland reviewed the following future land use categories*: (1) Commercial; (2) Mixed Use; (3) Office/Institutional; (4) Industry; (5) Residential* and *(6) Conservation*.

Mr. Holland stated healthcare is one of the things assessed. He highlighted the following table:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Neighborhood\* | Access to Full Service Grocery | Access to Recreation | Access to Active Transportation | CrimePrevention |
| 1 | Bunker Hill | 🞅 | 🞅 | 🞉 | ● |
| 2 | South Rosemary | ● | 🞅 | 🞉 | ● |
| 3 | Chaloner Park | 🞉 | 🞉 | 🞉 | 🞉 |
| 4 | Hodgestown | ● | 🞅 | ● | ● |
| 5 | Chockoyotte Park | 🞅 | 🞅 | ● | ● |

 Legend\*\*

 Low Priority 🞅

 Moderate Priority 🞉

 High Priority ●

 \*The location of each neighborhood is delineated on Map 23, Health Disparate Neighborhoods.

 \*\*General indication of relative importance for issue to be addressed.

Mr. Holland stated this is a good example of how this plan can be used for grant applications. He stated this kind of data helps support grant applications.

Mr. Holland pointed out that the largest combined land use acreage is residential acreage (37.5%). He stated we need to see more non-residential development to balance this out. He pointed out that 16-17% is public right-of-way.

Mr. Holland also discussed brownfield sites and indicated that there are many properties in Roanoke Rapids that have been identified as potential brownfield sites.

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Mr. Holland stated the Steering Committee was told to limit the goals to 10 key goals. He reviewed the following goals:

* Goal 1: Maintain water, sewer, and drainage systems adequate to serve the needs of the City’s planning area.
* Goal 2: Continue to focus on improvement of the Roanoke Rapids Town Center.
* Goal 3: Support infill development as an action essential to the continued development of Roanoke Rapids.
* Goal 4: Maintain an efficient transportation system to serve the City’s planning area.
* Goal 5: Protect Roanoke Rapids’ existing residential areas.
* Goal 6: Develop the West Point Stevens Mill Site.
* Goal 7: Support an environment which is “friendly” to business/industrial development.
* Goal 8: Develop the Entertainment Overlay District.
* Goal 9: Preserve the City’s environmental quality.
* Goal 10: Preserve the City’s Historic District.

Mr. Holland pointed out that there is a stronger focus on economic development in this document.

Mr. Holland stated the last section of the plan talks about the day to day implementation and the recommendation that at least once a year, the Planning Board and City Council have a joint meeting to discuss planning issues facing Roanoke Rapids.

At the conclusion of the presentation, Mr. Holland opened the floor for questions and comments.

Planning Board Member Moore asked if Strategy 4.1 “Multimodal streets” refers to mass transit.

Mr. Holland stated no. He explained that it refers to making the streets more pedestrian friendly.

Mayor Doughtie asked Mr. Holland if he would be the key contact person regarding brownfield sites. He specifically mentioned the West Point Stevens Mill property and the fact that it could have a huge impact on us if that project could be developed to full capacity. He asked Mr. Holland if he would be in a position to guide us in dealing with brownfield issues.

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Mr. Holland explained that there are many steps to go through in dealing with brownfield sites. He stated there are other folks that would be better equipped to help with this. He stated he would probably steer the City in the wrong direction. Mr. Holland stated he can provide planning direction and input but the City would need to have guidance from people that have a broader capability. He stated he feels the mill property will have to be cleaned up before making it a marketable property. Mr. Holland stated he is not an economic development director and his expertise is not in economic development planning but there are a lot of brownfield sites in the State and the ones that seem to have activity are the ones that have been cleaned up. He stated there are funds available to help with that but it is not a quick process.

Mayor Doughtie stated it has probably been 10 years since the School System started the process of cleaning up another mill site. He stated it was a long process but he believes it was successful.

Mr. Holland stated it is his understanding that the school’s brownfield site has largely been cleaned up but there are still 11 known brownfield sites in the City.

Planning Board Member Miller asked which area is defined as the “Roanoke Rapids Town Center”.

Mr. Holland stated Roanoke Avenue, uptown and downtown.

Planning Board Member Miller asked if this would be new development or restoration.

Mr. Holland stated there would need to be a specific redevelopment plan for the area for the renovation of what is there. He stated there is a lot on the Avenue that is of value that will not require a lot of capital investment. Mr. Holland stated Roanoke Rapids, unlike many areas, has a nice tree canopy. He stated when a town loses its central business district, it loses its soul. He stated Roanoke Rapids did not start on I-95 or Premier Boulevard. He stated it started here on the Avenue where the fabric of your history is. Mr. Holland stated he does not know if this is the case with Roanoke Rapids but in most cases, the highest per acre property tax value will be in the central business district. He stated the City has an interest in protecting that public investment.

Planning Board Member Miller asked if there are funds available for demolition of non-useable properties.

Mr. Holland stated no. He stated there used to be CDBG funding for residential properties and dilapidated commercial structures but about a year ago, the CDBG program in North Carolina was completely restructured. He stated we continue to see a diminishment of funding at both the State and Federal levels.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked about the table showing the targeted neighborhoods regarding wellness. He stated he too was a member of the Planning Board back in 1989, and feels the

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Planning Board and everyone that worked on this plan has done a great job but he is concerned about designating some areas as a moderate or low priority. He stated if we are going to use this plan to obtain grant funding, we need to show the needs as a high priority.

Planning Board Member Moore agreed, stating that wellness should be a priority. He stated our population is declining and it is not just because people are moving away. He stated it is due to health issues and the death rate.

Mr. Holland stated it is a combination of things such as young people moving away and the population not replenishing, as well as the death rate. He pointed out that Halifax County is on the edge of the northeastern North Carolina region that has a poverty level that just about equals a lot of the isolated areas of the western part of the State near the Tennessee border.

Mayor Doughtie thanked Mr. Holland for his presentation and also thanked the Planning Board and others for their attendance.

Mayor Doughtie called for a motion to adjourn the special meeting of the Roanoke Rapids City Council.

Motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee, seconded by Councilwoman Scarbrough and unanimously carried to adjourn.

Chairman Browning called for a motion to adjourn the special meeting of the Roanoke Rapids Area Planning Board.

Motion was made by Vice Chairman Long, seconded by Board Member Etheridge and unanimously carried to adjourn.

 

 5/5/14