

Rural Planning Caucus of Virginia

THE RURAL REVIEW
SUMMER 1985

1985 RURAL PLANNING CAUCUS FALL CONFERENCE OCTOBER 24-25, 1985

In our Spring 1985 issue of the Rural Review, we reported that our fall conference would again be held at Bernard's Landing in Franklin County. Recently the Conference Center at Bernard's Landing was closed so we were forced to find a new location.

The Conference Committee is pleased to announce the 1985 Rural Planning Caucus Fall Conference will be held at Windmill Point Marine Resort located in Tidewater Virginia where the Rappahannock River meets the Chesapeake Bay. Facilities at this scenic resort include conference rooms for up to 150 people, an outdoor swimming pool, tennis courts, a beach, golf course, marina, jogging and bicycle areas. Even in late October, the weather should be warm enough to enjoy these!

Topics for this year's conference are timely and exciting. Mobile homes and the proposed intervention by the State in local government regulation of them, will be a major agenda item to make sure all members are informed before the start of the 1986 General Assembly. The new hazardous waste regulations and the criteria for the siting of hazardous waste facilities is another agenda topic. Mr. Richard Burton, Director of the State Water Control Board will speak on Environmental Protection Agency mandates and their effect on local government. We'll also have an interesting presentation on growth and population forecasts as they relate to economic development. A case study from Southside Virginia will be examined and you'll be able to ask questions of those involved and determine how this type of exercise might help

your community in its quest for development.

As a service to all of us in local government, the agenda includes a session in Stress Management. The program will be done by professionals in this field and will be geared toward those of us in public life. We think this will be useful to one and all. The conference packets with registration information will be mailed shortly. Mark your calendars and make your plans to attend NOW!

COUNTIES DODGE GENERAL ASSEMBLY BULLET

Did you know that a bill to allow mobile homes in the agricultural areas under the same regulations as any other proposed residential structure passed the Virginia House of Delegates relatively easily and was dangerously close to Senate passage.

The legislation was House Bill #1676 backed by some very powerful patrons such as the Speaker of the House, Mr. Philpott, and Delegate Parker, along with Senators Miller and Holland.

Its development was the product of a very well conceived and expensive lobbying effort on the part of the Manufactured Home Builders Association.

What is wrong with this Bill?

(a) This bill would place the General Assembly in the position of dictating specific permitted uses in local Zoning Ordinances..."No locally adopted Zoning Ordinance or regulation shall disallow the location of a proposed residential structure in an agricultural zone, solely because the proposed structure

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GENERAL ASSEMBLY (Continued)

is a mobile home"...The General Assembly has not seen fit to mandate that all counties adopt zoning ordinances. If it is the position of the General Assembly that zoning is not mandated then it seems contradictory for the General Assembly to consider mandating specific uses in local ordinances it has never mandated.

One of the few decisions left to the County Boards of Supervisors is what types of activities should be permitted uses in their County's Zoning Districts.

Enactment of this legislation would be paramount to the General Assembly playing pin the tale on the donkey with the county's local zoning map.

(b) This bill exempts cities placing the entire mandate on the counties. A clear attempt to muster enough votes to pass this bill.

Why is it desirable to dot the rural countryside with mobile homes, but, not desirable to place them in neighborhoods with other mobile homes and other forms of low income housing where urban public services are already available.

Don't cities have housing shortages? Why not put the housing where the people are?

Low income people need jobs, training programs, public assistance agencies and other support services. Are they more likely to find these in an agricultural area of a rural county or in a city?

(c) This legislation considers mobile homes in the same light as site built homes. They are cheaper, they are built under different codes and they bear no physical resemblance to site built or double wide prefabricated housing.

Mobile homes are not the same as conventional housing and should not be considered as such.

(d) This bill pretends to offer the advantage of taxing mobile homes as

real estate. The fact is this is no advantage. The increase in local revenue would be minimal and in no way comparable to the revenue from a site built home.

(e) This bill ignores the fact that low income or low cost housing requires public services. The vast majority of agriculturally zoned property in rural areas does not require the counties to expend local tax dollars for public services.

What would the influx of low cost mobile homes do to county tax coffers if they bring with them children to educate, demands for public assistance, and the various other related public services.

(f) This bill presumes a need for this type of housing in all counties in Virginia.

All counties now have the option to allow mobile homes in areas and under conditions most beneficial to the county's specific needs and growth patterns.

Many counties currently have low income housing projects.

Many counties have Farmer Home Administration Housing units and low interest loans.

Many localities currently allow mobile homes in agricultural areas as permitted uses or with Conditional Use Permits.

The fact is that currently the counties in Virginia are dealing with the need for low income or low cost housing in the manner in which they feel is best for their county and they should be allowed to continue to do so.

(g) This bill presumes that localities having mobile home plants will benefit economically by creating new jobs.

More likely the affected counties would simply do some creative zoning and work around the mandate in agricultural districts.

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FIFTH PLANNING DISTRICT COMMISSION DEVELOPS MICRO-COMPUTER BASED GIS

In January of 1983, the Fifth Planning District Commission convened a meeting of representatives from the eight member governments to discuss the types of computer services they would find most advantageous. The representatives were asked to serve as the Commission's Computer Advisory Committee. Faculty members from the Virginia Tech planning department were invited to discuss various computer applications. At this first meeting, it was determined that the most advantageous computer applications would be: computer mapping; computer research capabilities; computer support for economic development programs; statistical/survey analysis; and detailed land use and social-economic analysis.

The Commission staff then contacted the Geography Department at Virginia Tech to review available computer mapping programs and to discuss the concept of a regional data base and mapping system.

The Advisory Committee discussed developing a Geographic Information System (GIS) data base during the second meeting. The issues raised at the meeting included: (1) the types of data to be included, (2) the geographic scale, (3) the process for updating information, (4) the desired complexity of the mapping system, and (5) whether a demonstration project should be established.

The Committee felt that it would be valuable to determine what other regional planning organizations were doing regarding the development of geographic information systems using micro-computers. The Commission staff presented their findings to the Advisory Committee in the spring of 1984. Following the presentation, visits were made to planning organizations in Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Tennessee to examine the various planning-related uses of micro-computers. The Commission staff then prepared a report entitled "An Investigation of Regional Data

Base and Other Computer Service Opportunities for the Fifth Planning District Commission".

This report outlined the process followed by the Computer Advisory Committee in investigating computer service, described the method for implementing the regional data base, addressed computer services which could be provided to local governments, and provided an assessment of the hardware and software needs for implementing a large-scale regional geographic information system. (A copy of this report can be obtained from the Fifth Planning District Commission, P.O. Box 2569, Roanoke, VA 24010.)

In the summer of 1984, the Planning District Commission approved funding for the acquisition of hardware and software to develop a geographic information system. It was decided at that time to complete a demonstration project to investigate the possibilities as well as the limitations of a GIS. The Commission received the software and the hardware by January of 1985. The hardware included: a flatbed digitizer (42" x 60") which permits the conversion of graphic information (e.g., maps) into a computer readable form; and IBM PC-XT; an AYDIN high resolution analog color monitor; an HP 7475a six pen plotter; an OKIDATA 93 dot matrix printer (print width of 132 columns); a Diablo ink jet color printer; and a Hayes 1200 Smartmodem (this device allows the micro-computer to communicate with the Virginia Tech mainframe computer). The software included: A Geographic Information System Software package developed by IRIS International (IRIS has recently merged with AERONCA Electronics, Inc. in Charlotte, NC); d-Base III developed by Ashton-Tate; and Lotus 1-2-3. The cost of the hardware and software was approximately \$23,000.

The Commission selected the Bonsack Community Planning Area within Roanoke County for its demonstration project. The Advisory Committee, in conjunction with the Commission staff, decided that the mapping and analysis system would center on individual parcels (as pro-

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MICRO-COMPUTER (Continued)

vided on tax maps) as opposed to using larger geographic areas or grids.

The Advisory Committee chose 38 data elements for the data base including: parcel i.d.; owner name and address; sewer and water availability; land use designation; zoning designation; previous and current tax assessment; floodplain information; service area designation (e.g., fire service, library service, water service, etc.); traffic zone designation; historical/archaeological site designation; and census tract number. The Roanoke County Planning Department provided personnel to aid in the development of the coding scheme as well as the collection of parcel data. The parcel data were stored in a d-Base III file.

Once the data collection was begun, the staff began to digitize all the land parcels (approximately 1200 parcels) in the Bonsack Planning Area. The data collection, data entry, and digitizing were completed within three months.

The system functions as follows: If the Commission requests the number of parcels of land in the Bonsack area that are zoned for industrial use, the staff can select this attribute from the d-Base, send it to the GIS, and produce a shaded map of the zoned panels. The scale of the map can be adjusted by the computer program to meet the needs of the user of the information. The system can also print summary reports of acreage and other attributes of the property that were coded in the data base file.

Thus far the Commission staff and Computer Advisory Committee members have been very pleased with the results of the Commission's GIS. The staff is currently preparing an evaluation of the results of the demonstration project. In FY'85-86, the Planning District Commission will expand the scope of the system to include other planning areas within Roanoke County and eventually other local governments within the District. Anyone interested in finding out more information should contact Wayne Strickland at the Fifth Planning District Commission (703) 343-4417.

MOBILE HOMES PARK DEVELOPER WINS REZONING ON APPEAL

The Roanoke City Board of Zoning Appeals has ruled on a 3 to 2 vote that a mobile home park can be developed on a 50 acre tract which is zoned for light industrial.

The vote focused on whether the Roanoke City Zoning Ordinance allows mobile home parks in light industrial zones--not on the desirability or the merits of the proposed development.

The Board and the attorney for the nearby residents have called the language in the zoning ordinance confusing and unclear.

City officials are also split on the issue. The City Zoning Administrator's interpretation would permit the mobile home parks in light industrial districts. The City Attorney's office and the City's chief planner disagree.

The City's Chief of Economic Development is concerned with the potential loss of prime industrial land and the effect on the City's industrial development efforts if a trend should develop.

Two mobile home parks in the City are located on land zoned for light industry.

This unpopular decision in the view of both the city and nearby residents, could well wind up in court.

Update

The City of Roanoke has appealed the Board of Zoning Appeals ruling and has decided to hire an outside attorney to handle the matter for the City to avoid any conflict of interest charges. The City will pay legal fees for both this outside attorney and an attorney to represent the Board of Zoning appeals.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY (Continued)

We should not have to go to the time and expense of creating new zoning aimed at protecting our counties from an ill advised mandate.

Who would benefit from this legislation?

The counties, no! The General Assembly, no! The mobile home dealers, yes!

Alert your Board of Supervisors and Planning Commissioners and get them involved in lobbying to keep zoning decisions local legislative decisions.

Remember the issue at hand is allowing counties to continue making their zoning decisions and avoiding yet another General Assembly mandate that weakens local government's effectiveness.

Urge your Delegate and State Senator to oppose this type of legislation when it comes up again.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Sharon Angle
(703) 885-5174

John A. Anzivino, Vice Chairman
(804) 561-3039

Edgar A. Appling
(804) 598-4271

Larry Jennings, Chairman
(703) 434-4455

Kat Imhoff
(804) 296-5823

Jerry Lovelace
(804) 476-2141

Marybeth Marek, Secretary/Treasurer
(804) 798-9219

Ned McElwaine
(703) 473-8248

Elizabeth J. Moran, Newsletter
(804) 786-3791

Wayne Strickland
(703) 343-4417

NEW MEMBERS

The RPCV extends an enthusiastic welcome to the following new members:

Ms. Page Boinest - Danville, VA
Mr. E. Earl Dunklee - Dept. of
Community Development, Gloucester Co.
Mr. C. Warren Green, Jr. - Dept. of
Economic Development, South Boston
Mr. John P. Moore - Senior Planner,
Fauquier County
Mr. Ken Markert - Dept. of Planning and
Zoning, Clarke County
Piedmont Environmental Council -
Warrenton, VA
Mr. Frank Plera - Mathews, VA
Mr. James R. Skove - Thomas Jefferson
Planning District Commission
Mr. Warren Zitzman - Falls Church, VA.

SOMETHING NEW/UNIQUE?

Do you have a new or unique program or project that you would like to share with other Rural Planning Caucus of Virginia members? If so, why not describe it for publication in the Rural Review? Send your article to:

Elizabeth J. Moran
Community Services Representative
Department of Economic Development
1000 Washington Building
Richmond, Virginia 23219
(804) 786-3791

HELP THE POLICY COMMITTEE DEVELOP AN
"INVENTORY OF INTEREST" DIRECTORY BY
COMPLETING THE ENCLOSED SURVEY FORM.
RETURN THE FORM TO:

WAYNE STRICKLAND
RPCV POLICY COMMITTEE
P. O. BOX 2569
ROANOKE, VA 24010

RETURN TO:
ELIZABETH J. MORAN
COMMUNITY SERVICES REPRESENTATIVE
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
1000 WASHINGTON BUILDING
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA 23219

TELEPHONE _____

MAILING ADDRESS _____

AGENCY/FIRM NAME _____

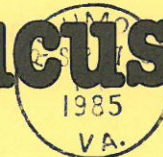
NAME _____ TITLE _____

HELP US KEEP THE RURAL PLANNING CAUCUS MAILING LIST UP-TO-DATE BY USING THIS
FORM TO NOTIFY US OF A CHANGE IN ADDRESS OR JOB OR TO CORRECT INFORMATION ON
YOUR EXISTING MAILING LABEL.

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P.O. Box A
Amelia, Virginia 23002

Mr. Jerry Lovelace
County Planner
Post Office Box 786
Halifax, Virginia 24558

POLICY COMMITTEE TO DEVELOP AN "INVENTORY OF INTERESTS" DIRECTORY

The Policy Committee of the RPCV would like to establish an "inventory of interests" among Caucus members. The central purpose of the inventory is to provide the Policy Committee, and the Executive Board, a better understanding of the issues/topics of most concern to our members. With this knowledge, the Committee will be able to direct its research activities in a more effective manner. The final product of the inventory survey will be a directory which crossmatches members with particular projects. The directory should provide a means of guiding members to others who have already grappled with a particular problem. Please take a moment to fill in the short questionnaire below and return it to:

Wayne Strickland
RPCV Policy Committee
P.O. Box 2569
Roanoke, VA 24010

NAME _____ Title _____

JURISDICTION/ORGANIZATION _____

TYPES OF STUDIES/ISSUES THAT YOU, OR YOUR DEPARTMENT, ARE PRESENTLY INVOLVED IN.

CONTROVERSIAL PROJECTS THAT YOU, OR YOUR DEPARTMENT, HAVE BEEN INVOLVED WITH.

SIGNIFICANT PUBLICATIONS PUBLISHED BY YOUR ORGANIZATION.

PLEASE COMMENT ON YOUR, OR YOUR DEPARTMENT'S, WORK IN THESE AREAS.

HOUSING (for example, mobile homes, housing for the elderly, etc.)

COMPUTERS

AGLAND PRESERVATION

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

TRANSPORTATION

PUBLIC FACILITIES (for example, capital improvement planning)

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES (for example, watershed planning, mining, etc.)

PROGRAM BUDGETING REVIEW

COMPREHENSIVE PLANS (for example, guidelines for amending plans)

TYPES OF DATA WHICH ARE COLLECTED AND MAINTAINED ON A REGULAR BASIS

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH FROM THE POLICY COMMITTEE

Rural Planning Caucus of Virginia

PLACE
STAMP
HERE

Wayne Strickland
RPCV Policy Committee
P.O. Box 2569
Roanoke, VA 24010