

Minutes of a regular meeting of the Marion Planning Commission held in the Municipal Building at 5:15 p. m. on January 9, 2012

INVOCATION: Mr. Hicks rendered the invocation.

CALL TO ORDER: Vice-Chairman Ramsey called the meeting to order.

VISITORS: Mr. Michael Armbrister, Mount Rogers Planning District Commission.

PRESENT: Vice-Chairman Bob Ramsey, Larry Carter, Alice Freeman, Dan Surface, Jim Barker, Ben Reedy (arriving late), Town Engineer Cecil Hicks, Deputy Clerk Anita Catron, Town Attorney Mark Fenyk (arriving late).

DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM: The meeting was called to order, and with 5 voting members present, the Commission has a quorum.

MINUTES: With all members present in agreement, the minutes of the last meeting held December 12, 2011, were approved as written and distributed, with one amendment.

REPORT OF SECRETARY: No Report

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEES: No Report

REPORT OF SPECIAL COMMITTEES: No Report

NEW BUSINESS: Mr. Hicks introduced Mr. Armbrister. He began the review of the Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Armbrister started with information from the two public meetings in December. Most people were concerned with the Quality of Life, Lack of Leadership, Economy and Education. He also informed Commissioners the two online surveys were very successful. There were 84 respondents to the Comprehensive Plan Survey. This was a successful online survey. There were 7 respondents to the Main Street Business Survey.

According to information from these surveys, thirty percent were not residents of Smyth County. However they either worked here or visited often. There is concern about the quality of life for young families and area jobs. Unemployment is a major issue.

REVIEW OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: Mr. Armbrister presented each Commission Member with an updated draft copy of the first 7 Chapters of the Comprehensive Plan. He noted this is an update, not a rewrite of the Comprehensive Plan.

Chapter 1 – The Purpose & Legal Basis: Is a guide for Community Development.

Chapter 2 – Population: Shows the increase or decrease of population.

Chapter 3 – Housing: Housing Availability.

Chapter 4 – Economy: Labor Force and Unemployment, the growth and decline of Retail & Manufacturing.

Chapter 5-Transportation: Primary travel routes and means of transportation available.

Chapter 6-Community Services & Facilities: Schools, Healthcare Facilities, and Recreation.

Chapter 7 – Existing Land Use: Current Land Use and Development. This chapter also deals with Zoning and Flood Constraints.

As each chapter was reviewed, questions and comments were expressed.

Chapter 2-Population: As a key note of interest, Mr. Armbrister stated the town population had decreased by approximately six percent between 2000-2006. Almost all this decline was in the white population. Most other racial groups saw an increase or no change. Every age group lost population except the age group 50-64 year olds. This is unusual.

Chapter 3-Housing: Mr. Surface asked in what value range of housing, has the most decline occurred? Mrs. Freeman questioned the amount of abandoned real estate. Discussion Ensued.

Chapter 4-Economy: Mr. Ramsey stated that between 2005-2010 there were 1,899 service jobs and 1,754 manufacturing jobs lost. Discussion Ensued.

Mr. Armbrister requested that everyone read the updated chapters of the Comprehensive Plan and make any changes or suggestions for the next meeting.

Mr. Armbrister stated the population decline was a great concern, and if there is no community development, this will continue. He would like to suggest the Town of Marion and Smyth County work together to look at areas for development.

Mr. Armbrister asked if there were any other questions or comments.

Mrs. Freeman requested Mr. Armbrister to address the issue of how Marion can better prepare for the Emory & Henry College Doctor of Physical Therapy Program. Mrs. Freeman stated that as a community we are not preparing for this great opportunity. They must have instructors, sports staff & housing. She feels this is something we need to work on.

Mrs. Freeman would like to know if there is a way to find out how many people work in Smyth County but do not live here. Mr. Armbrister has statistics for people that live in Smyth County but work elsewhere, and feels that we lose their shopping money and contributions. Discussion ensued. Mr. Armbrister stated that he has asked for this information from the Census Bureau. They did collect this information however Mr. Armbrister has not received the information.

Mrs. Freeman inquired about the poverty level for a woman and one child. Discussion ensued as to how this level was determined.

Mr. Carter stated he has lived in this area all his life and thinks the information that has been collected should alarm everyone.

Mr. Surface would like to know a solution to get people to take an interest and voice their opinions about what they would like to see accomplished.

Mr. Ramsey feels that a lot of people that work here choose to live elsewhere, because they feel we have nothing here for their families to do and nothing after school for the children. A lot of these are people with good paying jobs .Mr. Armbrister stated these are issues with young families also.

With no more questions Mr. Armbrister requested a Special Committee meeting to be set to discuss the Land Use Map. Mr. Hicks is to set this meeting up within the next two weeks.

Mr. Surface expressed his thanks to Mr. Armbrister for the progress this far on the Comprehensive Plan Update.

The next Planning Commission meeting will be February 13, 2012.

Upon motion of Mr. Carter, seconded by Mr. Barker and a vote of 5 AYES and 0 NOES, the meeting was adjourned.

---

Chairman

---

Secretary