



## MIDDLEBURG TOWN COUNCIL SPECIAL WORK SESSION

Monday, May 7, 2018



PRESENT: Mayor Betsy A. Davis  
Councilmember Kevin Hazard  
Councilmember Philip Miller  
Councilmember Peter Leonard-Morgan  
Councilmember Trowbridge "Bridge" Littleton  
Councilmember Mark T. Snyder

Chair Phyllis Randall, Loudoun County  
Supervisor Tony Buffington, Blue Ridge District, Loudoun County  
Mayor Kwasi Fraser, Town of Purcellville  
Mayor Robert L. Vance, Town of Hillsboro  
Mayor Scott Ramsey, Town of Round Hill  
Vice Mayor Nedim Ogelman, Town of Purcellville (arrived late)

Eric Combs, Chairman of Middleburg Planning Commission  
Mimi D. Stein, Member of the Middleburg Planning Commission  
Rachel Minchew, Member of the Middleburg Planning Commission

STAFF: Martha Mason Semmes, Town Administrator  
Tim Hemstreet, County Administrator  
Rhonda S. North, MMC, Town Clerk  
William M. Moore, Town Planner

ABSENT: Vice Mayor Darlene Kirk  
Councilmember J. Kevin Daly

The Town Council of the Town of Middleburg, Virginia held a special meeting on Monday, May 7, 2018 in the Town Hall Council Chambers, located at 10 W. Marshall Street. The purpose of the meeting was for the Middleburg Mayor and Town Council and the mayors of the other small towns in Loudoun County to learn more about and voice their concerns regarding Envision Loudoun, Loudoun County's Comprehensive Plan update process. Mayor Davis called the special meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

### **Discussion - Envision Loudoun**

Mayor Davis thanked everyone for attending the session. She explained that the Council wanted to have a casual gathering to discuss the County's Comprehensive Plan. Ms. Davis noted that Councilmember Littleton would be taking the lead as he had been following the update process closely.

Councilmember Littleton acknowledged the importance of the County's Comprehensive Plan. He noted the nine public input sessions that had been held, eight of which were well attended with approximately one hundred people. Mr. Littleton advised that the one on the rural policy area was very well attended, with over two hundred fifty people being present. He opined that this spoke to the passion the people in the rural policy area had for what they called "home" and their way of life.

Councilmember Littleton reported that the Middleburg Town Council, as well as its Planning Commission, had held some discussions regarding the County's Comprehensive Plan update process. He noted that some members attended the Envision Loudoun Stakeholders Committee meetings. Mr. Littleton opined that the plan was now at a watershed point, with the last public input sessions to be held soon, at which point, it would be turned over to the County Planning Commission. He noted that it would then be sent to the Board of Supervisors, who would make sure it met their vision for Loudoun County and would then adopt it. Mr. Littleton opined that the residents would then have to live under the plan for twenty years.

Chair Randall noted that the County would review the plan once every five years.

Councilmember Littleton opined that this was a great time to chat with the County representatives about the input, thoughts on the plan and what the residents in the rural area wanted to see preserved for the next twenty to sixty years. He noted that of the seven towns in Loudoun County, six were located within the rural policy area. Mr. Littleton advised that the members all felt passionately about this and suggested there be open discussion on where the plan update was, how it got there and how everyone could better engage in the future.

Mayor Vance opined that the towns have become more united through the Coalition of Loudoun Towns committee and suggested this needed to occur more. He further suggested the need for a unified voice in dealing with issues. He acknowledged the importance of the County's Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Vance advised that because the rural policy area was "not in play", he had not focused on the update a lot; however, he believed it was important to understand the remainder of the process, where the opportunities might be and where things could slip through that were not anticipated. He noted that he heard a suggestion during a meeting – that being that the only roads that would be four lanes in western Loudoun County would be Routes 15 and 7. Mr. Vance advised that this would have a big impact on all of the towns if the language was changed within the document. He suggested the need to protect the ridge lines at all costs. Mr. Vance advised that this was what he was interested in hearing more about.

Mayor Fraser reported that Purcellville was in the process of re-writing their Comprehensive Plan. He advised that two items stood out for them – water and transportation. Mr. Fraser questioned the County's approach to those, the methods they would be using and whether there were any synergies that could be used to partner with or assist them with their update.

Councilmember Littleton reported that Middleburg was also going through an update to its Comprehensive Plan, with its Planning Commission leading the effort. He opined that one of the big questions was where Loudoun County stood on what they wanted to do with the transition policy area. Mr. Littleton noted that the by-right development in this area was ten thousand units, with seven thousand having been built. He opined that the draft plan would allow for up to another one thousand five hundred units to be added. Mr. Littleton questioned where the Supervisors were on that issue. He reminded the County representatives that the purpose of the transition area was to keep dense urban development from getting into this area.

Councilmember Snyder echoed Councilmember Littleton's point and noted that the transition area was the pathway to Middleburg. He advised that if the transition area was choked off, it would choke the town.

Chair Randall provided some background information as to how the plan got to its present point. She noted that when the current Board came into office, their Comprehensive Plan had not been looked at for approximately sixteen years. Ms. Randall reported that during their first meeting, the Board gave the staff direction to look at the charter plan. She advised that they wanted a

couple of things to occur, the biggest of which was to have robust community involvement. Ms. Randall explained that the Board was told that the last time the plan was updated, there was not a lot of community involvement, which concerned them. She reported that the Board put together a Stakeholders Committee, with nine members being appointed by each member. Ms. Randall advised that their job was to reach out to the community and bring information back to them. She explained that because of this, they needed no special expertise. Ms. Randall advised that she spoke with her representative at least twice a month. She explained that the other twenty-one members represented groups/industries in Loudoun County, such as the Chamber of Commerce. Ms. Randall advised that first and foremost, their mission was to talk to the members of the community to determine their needs and wants. She reported that what people said was that they were concerned about multi-modal transportation and expressed a desire for more bike paths, green spaces and walking paths. Ms. Randall further reported that they also said they wanted diverse and more affordable housing. She advised that this surprised her as she expected it would just be about traffic.

Chair Randall noted that Supervisor Buffington came to her one day and asked whether western Loudoun County could be completely exempted from the Comprehensive Plan, to which she responded that it could not and explained there may be things in western Loudoun that they would want to protect. She noted that there were areas that could be developed by-right, some of which could be developed as high density. Ms. Randall suggested the need to look at them. She opined that the Board of Supervisors should have thought to put someone from COLT on the Stakeholders Committee; however, they did not.

Chair Randall reminded those present that comprehensive plans dealt with land use and noted that zoning fell below that. She suggested that when talking about the transition area, they were talking about zoning. Ms. Randall advised that the Board had not seen a single application for residential housing in western Loudoun. She noted that when she heard comments about people encroaching in the rural area, she questioned where it was coming from since the Supervisors had not approved or received a single application. Ms. Randall opined that this occurred because of the message from the current Board that they did not want to build in the west. She noted that this was for many reasons – one of which was that this was where the County’s tourism resources were located. Ms. Randall advised that she loved all of Loudoun County; however, she acknowledged that people did not come there to tour eastern Loudoun. She reiterated that a lot of the County’s tourism resources, such as wineries, breweries and the equestrian communities, were in western Loudoun. Ms. Randall reiterated that she and Supervisors Buffington and Higgins issued a robust statement that they did not want to see development in the west. She opined that the transitional area was different and noted that they have received a lot of push to put residences there. Ms. Randall advised those present that they were speaking to the three or four members of the Board who have taken a hard stance that the transition area lines should not be moved. She expressed concern that if they were moved once, they would be moved again and again in the future. Ms. Randall stressed that she and Supervisor Buffington have taken the position that the lines should not be moved.

Chair Randall advised that many numbers have come out as to the amount of housing that was needed in Loudoun County. She reported that the County conducted a study that found that if it was to have affordable housing, more housing would have to be constructed. Ms. Randall reminded those present that the Metro was coming to Loudoun County and suggested that the area to place housing density was around mass transit facilities, not in the west.

Chair Randall opined that regardless of the number used, the Board was settling around the need for approximately fifteen thousand more homes. She advised that they were looking at land use first in determining where to place the diverse housing. Ms. Randall opined that much of it would be located around the Metro; although, she acknowledged that it would not be built out

until 2040-2050. She advised that beyond the Metro area, the housing would go into infill areas in the suburban policy area. Ms. Randall suggested that if there were areas with large plots of land, the County would consider mixed used development there. She reported that the delta after that was approximately thirteen hundred houses. Ms. Randall advised that as to the talk about placing those in the transition area, what had been discussed but not decided, was nine to thirteen hundred village type homes and noted that this was what would be included in the draft plan. She advised those present that the draft plan was based on the work that had been done over the past two years by the dedicated people on the Stakeholders Committee. Ms. Randall reminded those present that the draft plan would go to the public for review. She stressed that while there could be some changes as a result of the public input, they would be small ones. Ms. Randall reiterated that the draft would then go to the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors for consideration. She advised that they must follow the project through. Ms. Randall further advised that she had stated that she would not commit to doing anything, or not doing anything, beyond what she had already committed to, including not building in the rural part of the County and to building as little as possible to none in the transition area, until the other groups were through their work. She noted that she would not say that no village homes would be built in the transition area; although, this would not be her first intent. Ms. Randall reiterated that her first intent was to put them around the Metro and as infill development in the suburban areas. She advised that if it came down to a thousand or so homes needing to be built in the transition area, while she would prefer they go in the other areas, this would not be a hard “no” for her.

Supervisor Buffington agreed with Chair Randall. He stressed that the plan was a draft one that was available for public comment. Mr. Buffington advised that whatever came out of that would be a recommendation to the County Planning Commission. He reiterated that the Planning Commission would review the draft plan, make comments and make a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors. Mr. Buffington noted that the Board would hold a public hearing before considering adopting the plan. He stressed that it was not too late and asked that people let the Supervisors know if there was something in the draft that they did not like. Mr. Buffington noted that he had spoken with Councilmember Littleton about the feeling that the towns were left out of the process. He acknowledged that the Board probably made a mistake in doing so; however, he explained that what he tried to do from the first day was to leave western Loudoun out of it, as only two of the nine Supervisors, plus the Chair, represented western Loudoun. Mr. Buffington suggested that if after completion of the plan, something needed to be addressed in western Loudoun, he would open it up at that time rather than opening it to the six Supervisors from eastern Loudoun. He explained that he wanted to ensure the rural, historic character of western Loudoun remained. Mr. Buffington noted that one of the things he wanted to do that was a change to the plan was to have a ridge line overlay district to stop development on the Blue Ridge Mountain. He advised that he wanted it to be a beautiful ridge line with trees throughout.

Supervisor Buffington noted that the County had rural commercial zoning that was sprinkled throughout all of Loudoun County, including in the rural, transition and urban districts. He advised that because it was called the same thing regardless of where it occurred, the same regulations applied. Mr. Buffington explained that it allowed unlimited development, even in the rural and transition policy areas. He opined that the name needed to be changed in the rural policy area, or be left alone in the rural policy area but changed in the transition and urban policy areas so there could be different regulations. Mr. Buffington advised that as to the transition policy area, he had always said that he wanted to maintain the protections that were in place and did not want any more housing than was already allowed. He noted that this had been a fight and reminded those present that the Steering Committee came back with a plan for eighteen thousand more houses that was based on the GW Study that identified the number of houses needed to support Loudoun County’s economy. Mr. Buffington advised that they proposed to place those houses in the transition policy area; however, the Supervisors objected and the number of additional houses proposed was reduced to approximately twelve hundred. He noted that after it

was last discussed, he proposed a number to reduce it down even further. Mr. Buffington advised that his goal was to get it down to zero; however, he acknowledged that this would not occur. He opined that there was a lot of support on the Board for maintaining western Loudoun and doing projects within it. Mr. Buffington advised that the Supervisors understood the importance of having a transition policy area. He noted that the urban and suburban areas fed off each other, with people living in the eastern portion but going to the western portion on the weekends to relax. Mr. Buffington acknowledged the tourism dollars that were generated by tourists who came to western Loudoun to enjoy the wineries and breweries. He opined that the Board had been successful and would continue to do so. Mr. Buffington suggested the need for people to share their views with election candidates. He further suggested the need for the eastern Loudoun Supervisors to have accountability for western Loudoun as well.

Supervisor Buffington advised that as to the pathway to Middleburg, he agreed with the comments offered. He noted the existence of the Route 50 Traffic Calming Area and advised that he had tried to assure that there would only be roundabouts past Lena, as the area would no longer appear to be suburban if it had traffic signals. Mr. Buffington opined that roundabouts worked great and cited Gilbert's Corner as an example.

Councilmember Snyder opined that this presupposed the preservation of the transition area.

Chair Randall agreed. She advised however, that she wanted to hear from those present what "preserving the transition area" meant. Ms. Randall explained that to her, it meant not changing the lines even if that meant there would be an additional thousand village homes in the transition policy area. She reiterated her concern that if they were changed once, they would be changed again in the future when there was another Comprehensive Plan update. Ms. Randall opined that there were some zoning protections that could be put in place in the rural and transition policy areas.

Chair Randall opined that the current Board was a fantastic one. She advised that whatever the vote was that came out of the Board, she supported up it until the True North vote. Ms. Randall explained that True North was a data center that would be located in the transition policy area. She noted that her colleagues believed it was a good idea; however, she and Supervisor Buffington did not as they believed it would open the transition area to other applications in the future. Ms. Randall advised that this occurred even before the vote. She reiterated that they were concerned about the True North project for a lot of reasons, including that it would change the transition area. Ms. Randall noted the need for herself and the Supervisors who represented western Loudoun to educate the members who represented eastern Loudoun about why western Loudoun was important to the County overall. She suggested this education needed to be done in a robust way. Ms. Randall opined that this obligation to educate lied not only with the Board but with those who represented the communities in western Loudoun.

Supervisor Buffington opined that the best way to do this was to bring those members to western Loudoun. He noted that he, Chair Randall and Mayor Vance have each done so and advised that he took them to a brewery so they could see western Loudoun. Mr. Buffington suggested the towns could also do this by calling the members and inviting them out for a meeting and showing them their towns. He advised that any help the towns could provide would be helpful to ensure their counterparts, who were not fully accountable for western Loudoun including the transition policy area, were aware of the concerns.

Mayor Fraser noted that data centers were basically central offices. He further noted that County residents saw the need for high-speed internet service. Mr. Fraser advised that as service was extended, more switching would be needed and questioned whether the County was hurting itself when it said "no" to data centers.

Chair Randall noted that the Supervisors had not said “no” to data centers.

Mayor Fraser opined that they had in western Loudoun. He noted that western Loudoun was looking for 25 megabits per second; however, they did not have it. Mr. Fraser suggested that in order to get that kind of service, there was a need for infrastructure investment. He opined that it could be called whatever; however, he noted the need for a central office, with fiber and sonic/fire walls. Mr. Fraser questioned whether the Supervisors were looking five to ten years into the future when there would be a need to expand broadband services. He questioned whether central offices would be necessary.

Supervisor Buffington stressed that he opposed the construction of any data centers in the rural or transition policy areas and suggested that if they wanted to construct them in Purcellville, they could do so. He reported that the Supervisors were working with the Loudoun County Public School System, which was looking at the construction of fiber rings to connect the schools and facilities. Mr. Buffington noted that because they were a school system, they received great rates. He advised that the County was looking to piggyback onto it for the County’s facilities, as well as allowing private providers throughout Loudoun County to tap into it.

Mayor Fraser opined that the County was creating small data centers at each of the schools.

Chair Randall noted that when she attended the VACO conferences, she always participated in the small county discussions. She further noted that one of the counties won an award for connecting to the internet and advised that it was a much more rural county than Loudoun. Ms. Randall advised that when she returned, she asked this question. She advised that to some degree, it was difficult and explained that people in western Loudoun did not want technology, such as cell towers, or more people. Ms. Randall noted that what the county who won the award did was to use monopoles in multiple locations on public facilities. She advised that the speed would not be as fast as desired; however, it would be helpful. Ms. Randall opined that there were things that could be done. She noted that this was something the Board talked about all the time. Ms. Randall reiterated that one of the issues was that the people in western Loudoun did not want more cell towers or people. She suggested there was a solution; although, it may not be as fast as desired. Ms. Randall expressed fear that some brilliant fourteen year old was creating something that would make data centers obsolete in the future and that the County would be stuck with them. She noted that they did not want to put data centers in western Loudoun. Ms. Randall reiterated that there were ways to provide the service; however, it was hard given the constraints of what Loudoun County citizens say they do or do not want.

Mayor Vance reported that Hillsboro had terrible internet service and noted that it was all wireless. He advised that he attended a Loudoun County conference on broadband years ago and opined that no one was interested in doing anything. Mr. Vance noted that they met with someone who explained that he had created a public utility in the state that gave him the right to access any copper line. He advised that he set up a machine in the Verizon office in Hillsboro and was delivering broadband to approximately forty customers. Mr. Vance reiterated that it was being done through copper wire. He opined that this was an elegant solution to the lack of fiber. Mr. Vance advised that the company was extending its service and believed it would be able to serve every home in the zip codes that served Hillsboro. He noted that he would love for the County to get behind this. Mr. Vance reiterated that it used existing infrastructure and was at no cost. He suggested this would address issues with cell towers that did not have line of sight. Mr. Vance advised that before placing cell towers everywhere, he would like to see where this technology could take the small towns.

Supervisor Buffington clarified that he was referring to the large data centers that were being built in eastern Loudoun – not the small ones. He opined that it would be something like a switching station and would be within or a small addition to the schools. Mr. Buffington advised that this was the main effort the County was pursuing. He noted that they had also had success in working with private providers.

Chair Randall noted that the County had also done a good job of stopping legislation that would have hampered their efforts.

Councilmember Littleton noted that the wireless companies were doing this across the nation, in the cloak of darkness, five years before 5G would be a reality.

Supervisor Buffington noted the need to maintain local control, as opposed to having the wireless companies come in and build towers wherever they wanted.

Chair Randall noted that four bills were proposed – all of which were defeated. She advised that some of them made it pretty far. Ms. Randall noted the amount of pushback that occurred against the bills.

Supervisor Buffington noted that the County had a robust lobbying effort at the state and federal levels.

Councilmember Littleton noted that he attended many meetings regarding Envision Loudoun and advised that it was terrifying to watch how it was developing at the beginning. He noted that eventually it came back in a good way. Mr. Littleton advised that the small towns would have preferred greater engagement with them. He acknowledged that small towns' challenge was that they did not have the staff to keep up with three to four hundred pages worth of updates every other Monday and to attend the meetings to engage as the plan was being written. Mr. Littleton advised that while thirteen hundred homes in the transition policy area did not look like many when looking at Loudoun County in total, it was a twenty-five percent increase in looking at what existed in that area. He opined that twenty-five years from now when the next Comprehensive Plan update occurred, it would be more. Mr. Littleton advised that he would appreciate if some kind of routine engagement between staffs on a quarterly basis, and between elected representatives on an annual basis, could be formalized. He suggested these meetings be set on the calendars. Mr. Littleton noted that the same could occur with the planning commissions.

Councilmember Littleton read a portion of the proposed language in the County's draft Comprehensive Plan that talked about collaborating with Loudoun Water and the Health Department to identify alternatives to wastewater, septic and drain field systems, including shared treatment plants and on-site treatment to support clustered development in the rural policy area. He acknowledged that this was a five hundred page document and suggested it could be a mistake. Mr. Littleton noted the ability of the town staffs' to go through this lengthy a document. He reminded those present that Middleburg was also undergoing a re-write of its Comprehensive Plan and opined that it would be nice if all of the entities could better engage.

Middleburg Planning Commission Chair Combs opined that this meeting was very helpful. He noted that the County's current Comprehensive Plan contained affirmative statements about protecting the rural policy area and cooperation amongst the County and the towns. Mr. Combs opined that the substance of the rural policy area plan was not changing; however, he suggested the articulation of it may be. He questioned what was being lost in the process. Mr. Combs questioned what could be done to work around that. He opined that it was silly to advocate for a substantive re-write; however, he questioned where the towns should go if the articulation changed.

Chair Randall confirmed the draft plan was going out for a review and that there would not be an opportunity for a substantive re-write. She opined, however, that the language Councilmember Littleton read was not a substantive re-write. Ms. Randall suggested that it confused things. She noted that she had not dived into the draft yet. Ms. Randall reported that the Stakeholders Committee had had it for approximately a week and noted that her representative had called her with questions. She acknowledged that the towns did not have the staff to review the document; however, she advised that she would personally go through the draft and review it. Ms. Randall suggested the elected officials from the towns do so as well and then get in touch with her, Supervisor Buffington or her Stakeholder's Committee representative. She further suggested that each of the towns could take a chapter for review. Ms. Randall reiterated that there would not be substantive changes or rewrites; however, the County would not do anything that would undermine the goal of having protections for the rural and transitions areas and in working collaboratively. She opined that it was a matter of everyone diving into the document to identify any concerns so it could be discussed.

Supervisor Buffington opined that there was more of an effort to have meetings with the Coalition of Loudoun Towns (COLT) when the current Board of Supervisors first came into office. He noted that it had been awhile since any meetings were held; however, the mechanism was in place. Mr. Buffington noted Councilmember Littleton's comment with regard to water and sewer and asked County Administrator Hemstreet whether he had any comment with regard to it.

County Administrator Hemstreet opined that it was existing language with regard to by-right development that was permitted in the rural policy area. He noted that this development was allowed as cluster development. Mr. Hemstreet opined that the current plan required that there be sufficient infrastructure to support it, as opposed to alternative systems or other systems that would not work in the long-term. He suggested that this was what the language was referencing and advised that he could confirm that.

Mayor Ramsey advised that he was disappointed when Loudoun Water changed their pricing structure several years ago to encourage community systems. He noted that community systems used to pay for the cost of the service; however, they were now heavily subsidized. Mr. Ramsey opined that this encouraged the construction of sub-systems.

County Administrator Hemstreet explained that the reason this occurred was because the County was finding that after fifteen to twenty years, the infrastructure for the alternative community systems was not sufficient. He further explained that the charge was a policy issue. Mr. Hemstreet reiterated that this occurred because of what was historically occurring in the rural areas.

Mayor Ramsey opined that these systems were not economically viable.

County Administrator Hemstreet advised that the Board of Supervisors encouraged this for the reason cited. He opined that it was a legitimate policy issue and explained that there was pressure for the County to pay the costs out of general tax revenues. Mr. Hemstreet acknowledged that other communities have had utility problems and noted that if they had a small number of users, the cost could be a lot for them to absorb.

Mayor Ramsey opined that the systems were an economical hazard. He questioned why the Board would encourage more of them to be built. Mr. Ramsey noted that this could lead to further subsidies. He advised that he would love of the people in Ashburn would pay half of his water bill; however, he was not asking them to do that.

Chair Randall noted that County Administrator Hemstreet discussed what could happen with by-right development. She advised that she and Supervisors Buffington and Higgins have talked about the fact that when people have land, they want to make money off it. Ms. Randall further advised that one of her greatest efforts was to help people monetize their land without building homes on them. She noted that a lot of times, the Board received push back from people when a good use was proposed for a property. Ms. Randall cited the example of a wedding venue that was proposed versus a housing project. She explained that she had learned that she could not just tell people that they could not build houses on their land and walk away. Ms. Randall advised that it was her job to say “we would prefer that not happen, how else can we help you monetize your land”. She noted that while the preference was that it be placed in a conservation easement, it may also mean something else. Ms. Randall advised that people would make money off the land they paid for and suggested the need to help them do so in another way other than building houses. She advised that they frequently encountered push back in western Loudoun and noted the need to remind the citizens that those people could build houses there. Ms. Randall opined that no one would own land and let it sit forever. She cited an example of an application at Lucketts for a gas station and convenience store. Ms. Randall noted that they looked at it further and asked for an entire section devoted just to Loudoun home grown food, as well as solar panels. She advised that it was a lessor use than what was already approved for that location. Ms. Randall explained that when people came to her who were from rural parts of the County, they always wanted her to say “no” to everything and advised that this was not always the answer.

Supervisor Buffington advised that it was a balance. He suggested that the best way to preserve western Loudoun for generations to come was to have a strong, rural economy. Mr. Buffington noted that it must, however, be balanced to ensure quality of life. He advised that a year after coming into office, he sent a letter to the Rural Economic Development Council asking them to look at that balance, and to involve residents, businesses and nonprofits, so they could eventually present a recommendation for adjustments to the regulations so there would be less “no” to everything and so there would still be a strong, rural economy and quality of life.

Chair Randall advised that she brought in some business owners and others to identify what they needed. She noted that what they learned was that one thing that had not been done was to establish a western Loudoun County incubator so there could be a strong rural economy by helping businesses incubate. Ms. Randall advised that their economic development department brought that forward and it was now in place. She explained that they have done this because they did not want to see residential development in the west.

Supervisor Buffington noted that if people could not make money off their property, they would eventually sell it and opined that they would sell it to a developer if they had a lot of land and the farm would be lost forever.

Mayor Vance acknowledged that 7,500 homes could be built by-right in western Loudoun. He noted that in Middleburg, there was a good concentration of conservation easements; therefore, the majority of the 7,500 homes were in the northwestern area. Mr. Vance acknowledged that it was difficult and expensive to put land in a conservation easement. He opined that the County had a purchase of development rights program on the books and noted that there had been discussion of a transfer of development rights program. Mr. Vance also noted the development coming to the Metro area. He cited the example of Montgomery County, who was successful in creating a rural protection area that was permanent through a transfer of development rights program. Mr. Vance questioned whether there were any efforts underway to do that in Loudoun County.

Chair Randall advised that there was not to her knowledge; however, she would take that back to the staff to determine whether it was something they could pursue.

Supervisor Buffington agreed they would be open to exploring it. He noted that conservation easements worked; however, they were often not affordable for property owners.

Sally Price, Executive Director of the Land Trust of Virginia, noted that they held easements on approximately 9,000 acres in Loudoun County, involving approximately sixty property owners. She advised that sometimes the process was expensive and other times it was not. Ms. Price noted that they would work with landowners in terms of finding ways to offset the fees. She advised that she would love to see Loudoun County help with an easement program the way Fauquier and Clarke Counties did and noted that she was saddened that it was not a part of their Comprehensive Plan. Ms. Price opined that the County used to have a PDR program. She suggested the infrastructure was in place at one time; therefore, it would not be difficult to put it back into place. She thanked Chair Randall and Supervisor Buffington for being present and asked how she could help them.

Supervisor Buffington noted that there was State assistance in place for the conservation easement program; however, it was not enough to cover the costs for those who would otherwise participate. He advised that something that came out of a recent meeting he had with Save Rural Loudoun was the idea of having local conservation easement start-up funding to cover the remaining costs. Mr. Buffington noted that he had asked the County staff about it and planned to discuss it with Chair Randall and Supervisor Higgins.

Ms. Price advised that they were partnering with the PEC, Northern Virginia Conservation Trust, Appalachian Trail Conservancy and Old Dominion Conservancy, as well of others that did land trust conservancy, in order to communicate better. She noted that when a landowner wanted to do a conservation easement, they contacted the various organizations who did them. Ms. Price advised that each of them had a different approach. She explained that they planned to develop some common marketing tools in order to better get the word out about conservation easements. Ms. Price confirmed there was funding and there were ways to do easements, such as not charging the landowners until they received their State tax money. She noted that PEC also had some money that they were willing to use. Ms. Price advised that she would love for Loudoun County to help fund them as well.

Supervisor Buffington reiterated that this was something they planned to discuss. He thanked Ms. Price for attending the meeting and participating.

Chair Randall opined that there was an impression that Loudoun County was the richest county and Middleburg was the richest town in the country, which was not true. She noted that Middleburg had allowed more low income and affordable housing to be built than any other community in the County. Ms. Randall advised that this development had saved people's lives and noted that she had toured the Windy Hill Foundation facilities with Kim Hart. She commended the Town Council for allowing Middleburg to be the testing ground for what low income and affordable housing could look like in Loudoun County. Ms. Randall noted that she had been focused on getting a diverse housing stock in the County and reported that based on the information provided by Mr. Hart, they now have developments coming on line in eastern Loudoun where half of the development was affordable or work-force housing. She noted that one such development had 97 units alone. Ms. Randall reiterated that this occurred because of the partnership that Middleburg formed with the Windy Hill Foundation. She opined that the percentage of affordable, low-income and work-force housing that existed in Middleburg did not exist anywhere else in Loudoun County and expressed her appreciation to the Council.

Councilmember Snyder noted that it was a partnership between the Town and the Windy Hill Foundation.

Supervisor Buffington advised that the partnership had transferred to the County.

Councilmember Snyder noted that the Council encouraged Mr. Hart to go in that direction.

Chair Randall confirmed he did and noted that low-income housing was approved by Belmont Country Club. She advised that of the 207 homes, 97 were affordable dwelling units, which was amazing. Ms. Randall reiterated that it occurred because of what occurred in Middleburg first.

Supervisor Buffington noted that another such development was planned by the Stoney Springs Hospital.

Chair Randall reiterated that Middleburg set the standard and helped the County understand how to do affordable housing County-wide.

Supervisor Buffington noted that there was information on conservation easements on the County's website.

Vice Mayor Ogelman questioned how the County defined and selected the stakeholders.

Chair Randall explained that they wanted to have a lot of community input; therefore, the first nine people that were selected were representatives that the Supervisors chose to be community liaisons who would report back to them. She reiterated that their jobs were to talk to the community and to get back to the members. Ms. Randall noted that they did not have to have expertise in any one area. She advised that her appointee had a group of people that he spoke with. Ms. Randall explained that after that, the Board tried to have diverse groups represented, such as the PEC, the Chamber of Commerce, the Northern Virginia Community College and the Airport Authority, as well as representatives from the residential, commercial real estate and banking communities. She advised that they reached out to those stakeholders and asked them to appoint an individual to serve on the committee. Ms. Randall noted that they have only had to change out one person. She acknowledged that they should have appointed someone from COLT to serve; however, no one thought of it. Ms. Randall expressed appreciation that Councilmember Littleton had served as a bridge between the County and the towns.

Mayor Fraser noted that the County representatives also indicated that there was an opportunity to provide feedback to the Stakeholders Committee.

Chair Randall explained that the draft was going out from some tweaking, but not for full scale changes at this stage. She stressed that they would not start the process over.

Mayor Fraser advised that in 2006, Purcellville did a water study, which showed that by 2020, the Town would be in dire need of more water sources. He noted that the study stated that there was a potential for Purcellville to tap into the Potomac River to draw water. Mr. Fraser questioned whether the County felt confident in the water sources in and around western Loudoun for up to twenty years into the future.

Chair Randall noted that there was no way for her to answer that question given that she had just been provided that information and did not know of the study. She advised that it was very concerning for her and suggested the need to see the study.

Mayor Fraser agreed to send it to her. He explained that he raised this because Purcellville had put money into their capital budget to bring four wells on line and suggested the need to think about their impact on the surrounding areas. Mr. Fraser questioned whether there was a need for a regional water study.

Supervisor Buffington opined that Mayor Fraser was talking about studies that had already occurred; however, he was not the right person to address it. He suggested the need to talk to Loudoun Water, as they were responsible for providing water to the entire County.

Mayor Fraser questioned whether this fell under the County's capital improvement budget.

Chair Randall reiterated that this fell under Loudoun Water. She noted that they were a member of the Stakeholders Committee. Ms. Randall advised that she would ask them about it.

Supervisor Buffington noted the need to be careful about discussion without research when talking about bringing public water into western Loudoun, as doing so would encourage the developers to spend more time and energy there.

Mayor Fraser acknowledged the need to be careful.

Supervisor Buffington noted the need to address this, as the County could not run out of water. He suggested it was a conversation that needed to occur; however, he wanted it on the record that his position was that he only wanted to bring public water to western Loudoun as a last resort.

Mayor Ramsey noted that the town section of the Comprehensive Plan was not being revised under the Envision Loudoun process and questioned whether the plan was to keep the existing language. He noted that Round Hill had an area management plan that was eighteen years old.

Supervisor Buffington advised that as to inside the town, it would be up to Round Hill as to what they did. He further advised that as to anything outside the town, the County planned to maintain the current plan.

Mayor Ramsey noted that the County's current Comprehensive Plan contained policies for each town for how the County would engage with them.

Councilmember Littleton noted that he read those sections of the plan. He advised that there was language that talked about how the JLMA's (Joint Land Management Areas) did not evolve as intended. Mr. Littleton further advised that there was also a goal to allow them to be places where the towns could grow, as they desired, in cooperation with the County. He noted that he was not saying this was good or bad; however, the JLMA's were going to be different than what they were originally intended to be. Mr. Littleton further noted the great policy statement language in the current plan around the towns and advised that there were three full pages that talked about Middleburg, which had been reduced to six sentences in the proposed one. He noted that there was a lot of discussion during the stakeholders meetings about taking out superfluous language, which he appreciated.

Chair Randall opined that this would not be terrible if the six sentences said "leave them alone".

Councilmember Littleton agreed; however, they did not. He explained that they essentially said that "Middleburg was a small, nice town that would like to have hard borders". Mr. Littleton opined that Middleburg was more than that. He noted that the document contained a half a page on Leesburg and that Hillsboro had four sentences. Mr. Littleton agreed the issue was not the number of sentences, but rather the quality of what was said.

Chair Randall reiterated that if what was said was to “leave them alone”, it would not be terrible. She reminded those present that the comprehensive plan was a land use document, not a zoning one. Ms. Randall suggested that while there were some things that people may want to be done regarding protection, those would occur under zoning – not land use. She further suggested the County was not there yet.

Councilmember Littleton opined that a comprehensive plan was supposed to capture a community’s values. He recommended that each town be allowed to write their own section and opined that they did not have a hand in doing so. Mr. Littleton suggested this only be recommendations for the Supervisors to review.

Chair Randall advised that, speaking only for her, if each town wanted to write a description of itself that would be fine. She suggested, however, that if they wanted to put something in it that would substantially change what was already written, this was not the time to do so as they were not at the place where they wanted to make huge changes.

Mayor Ramsey suggested the removal of the existing policies was a drastic change and noted that they were there to protect the towns. He further noted that these were not just about land use, but were also related to transportation, the citing of public facilities and how the towns and County interacted.

Chair Randall noted that the County did not address what occurred within the towns – the towns did. She suggested that it was possible that the language did not belong in the last plan. Ms. Randall noted that the Supervisors tried to respect what councils did within their own town limits.

Mayor Ramsey clarified that when he said “towns”, he was also referring to the JLMAs. He noted that they had a huge amount of County involvement in the JLMA and only a small amount within the town. Mr. Ramsey advised that he trusted those policies, even though they were out of date, more than if they did not exist. He expressed concern that the towns were not involved in the process, particularly if the County was going to reduce the policies and the document only said “the JMLAs did not work as intended and let’s just rethink that”, without saying anything. Mr. Ramsey opined that if that occurred, there would be no relationship laid out between the towns and the County. He suggested the Envision Loudoun process was ignoring the towns, which the representatives indicated was a good thing; however, he did not want the towns to be ignored. Mr. Ramsey advised that he wanted the towns to be considered when the County was doing its planning and suggested that if they did not have the time under the Envision Loudoun timeline to consider the interests of the towns and write a good plan for them, they should leave the door open to picking up the towns section again or doing a town/JLMA amendment in the foreseeable future in order to give the process the attention he believed it deserved.

Supervisor Buffington advised that he wanted to leave that section as it was and that if language had been removed, he would be opposed to it. He suggested that if the Supervisors wanted to change it, it should occur under a conversation with each town. Mr. Buffington advised that he would encourage the towns to note this in their comments.

Councilmember Snyder advised that he would like to have input in the Comprehensive Plan with regard to Middleburg so he could tell the Supervisors why he believed it was important and why he wanted them to leave it alone.

Supervisor Buffington advised that they were looking for public input regardless of whether it came from a town or an individual.

Chair Randall noted that the County, including the Stakeholders Committee, had been working hard on the plan for two years. She advised that she would have loved to have had this meeting a year ago. Ms. Randall reiterated that they were open to making tweaks and suggested that re-inserting the language may not be a difficult thing; however, she would not say what she would or would not support until she read it and juxtaposed it against the last plan. She advised that she would, however, say that the County was past the time when it would make big, large changes. Ms. Randall reiterated that they would not do so. She advised that they would send the plan out for review; however, they would not make big changes that impacted other parts of the plan. She noted that the Stakeholders Committee was about to have their last meeting. Ms. Randall advised that she would have to read what the towns wanted to be re-inserted to determine whether it would impact other things in the plan.

Chairman Combs reiterated that if the substance of the policy had not changed, the articulation of it should not. He questioned why this was if the proposed draft was based on ten percent of the current plan. Mr. Combs reiterated his suggestion to re-insert the language that was excised.

Chair Randall opined that this sounded very reasonable. She noted, however, that she had not read the language; therefore, she could not make a commitment to do so.

Vice Mayor Ogelman opined that streamlining could sometimes be good and other times it could infuse extra conflict into a situation as people were not articulating what they wanted. He suggested it may be to the County's advantage to include the language. Mr. Ogelman reiterated that he did not always believe that streamlining language was to the benefit of harmony and clear communication.

Chair Randall advised that she did not disagree; however, she had not read the language or juxtaposed it against the current plan. She advised that after doing so, she would get in contact with those present. Ms. Randall reiterated that she would not make a promise on something they had been working on for two years. She opined that what was being said made complete sense; however, she would not make promises before she read something.

Supervisor Buffington reiterated that he would like to see the language remain the same. He suggested that if there were minor changes that the towns thought should be made, he would be open to their discussion. Mr. Buffington noted that he was not aware that the language had changed and advised that he did not know whether it was different. He further noted that he had not heard that there was a problem with the way they currently interacted from any of the mayors. Mr. Buffington questioned whether there was a problem with the way they interacted with regard to the Comprehensive Plan that needed to be corrected.

Mayor Davis reiterated that the towns wished they had a member on the Stakeholders Committee.

Supervisor Buffington agreed. He reiterated his question as to whether there was a major problem with the current Comprehensive Plan and the way the towns and County interacted.

Mayor Davis and Mayor Vance opined that there was not. Mayor Fraser opined that there were opportunities. Mayor Ramsey advised that on the whole, they were satisfied with the existing Comprehensive Plan.

Supervisor Buffington reiterated that he would like to see the language remain as it was, with some tweaks. He noted that the elected officials were elected to represent their towns and were responsible to their citizenry. Mr. Buffington advised that if he had an opinion, he would let them know. He suggested that if anything was proposed for outside of the towns, he always reached out to them for their positions.

Mayor Fraser inquired as to the timeline for the completion of the plan.

Chair Randall reported that the Stakeholders Committee was scheduled to hold two additional meetings. She advised that the draft when then be sent out for public review, not public input, which would begin on May 14<sup>th</sup> or 29<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Randall explained that any tweaks would be inserted and suggested this may be the place where some language could be reinserted. She advised that the plan would then go to their Planning Commission. Ms. Randall noted that during this time, the public could talk to any member of the Board. She advised that the plan would then come to them. Ms. Randall reiterated that they were two years into the plan review and advised that she would love to complete it before the current Board left office. She opined that those present made a good point; however, she did not believe it was a simplistic issue. Ms. Randall reiterated that she would not make any decisions until she read the document. She advised that after doing so, if she believed the language was better left in and did not affect anything else, this would make sense to her.

Councilmember Littleton opined that everyone was in agreement. He questioned what would occur fifteen years from now when those in attendance were all doing something else. Mr. Littleton questioned what would occur when the next Board started the next major re-write and questioned what was meant by the language. He explained that he wanted to make sure this was captured. Mr. Littleton opined that everyone was in agreement that they wanted to make sure it stayed the same and suggested it was just a matter of documenting it.

Chair Randall announced that she would give her State of the County Address on May 23<sup>rd</sup> and invited those present to attend.

Mayor Davis thanked Chair Randall and Supervisor Buffington for attending the meeting. She expressed appreciation for their hard work. Ms. Davis suggested the towns needed to go back and review the proposed and current language and offer their suggestions. She expressed appreciation that Chair Randall and Supervisor Buffington were open to suggestions.

There being no further business, the special meeting was adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

APPROVED:

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Betsy A. Davis, MAYOR

ATTEST:

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Rhonda S. North, MMC, Town Clerk