

AT A JOINT WORKSESSION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION AND BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE COUNTY OF JAMES CITY, VIRGINIA, IN THE COUNTY GOVERNMENT CENTER, 101C MOUNTS BAY ROAD, BOARDROOM, AT 7:30 P. M. ON THE TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY OF AUGUST, NINETEEN HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-FOUR.

1. ROLL CALL

Planning Commission:

Mr. Fred Belden, Chairman
 Mr. A. G. Bradshaw
 Mr. Martin Garrett
 Mr. Alexander C. Kuras
 Mr. Elvin H. Jones
 Mr. Gary R. Lenz
 Mr. W. J. Scruggs
 Ms. Sandra Stein
 Mr. Harry Wright

Board of Supervisors:

Mr. Stewart U. Taylor, Chairman
 Mr. William F. Brown
 Mr. Perry M. DePue
 Mr. Jack D. Edwards
 Mr. Thomas D. Mahone

Planning Staff:

Ms. Victoria Gussman, Acting Director of Planning
 Mr. Ralph Rognstad
 Ms. Virginia Faust
 Ms. Missy Holland, Intern

2. MOBILE HOME STUDY

Ms. Gussman opened the meeting, stating that mobile homes were an emotionally charged subject with many people having strong opinions regarding mobile homes. The staff, she said, has attempted to look at them objectively and in a non-judgemental way, which she hoped was reflected in the report.

Ms. Gussman said the purpose of the study was to identify the problems that might exist regarding mobile homes and to clarify those problems for the Commission and for the Board. An attempt was made to sort out issues pertaining to mobile homes and then offer some alternative management strategies.

Ms. Gussman spoke briefly about the goals and housing policy of the County referring to both the Housing Element and the Land Use Element of the Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Ralph Rognstad was introduced to present the report. He in turn introduced Ms. Holland, Planning Department summer intern who worked on the report.

Ms. Holland was responsible for mapping all the mobile homes in the County. She found that most of the mobile homes on individual lots are in the upper two-thirds of the County.

Ms. Holland also surveyed fifty recent special use permit and conditional use permit applicants to determine the demographics and perceptions of mobile home dwellers. Twenty-seven of the surveys were returned. Surveys were also sent to 25 area realtors of which 18 were returned. The intention of this survey was to determine how realtors perceived the impact of mobile homes on adjoining properties. Also surveyed were the managers of the five largest mobile home parks concerning vacancy rate, turnover, and why people chose James City County. Summaries of the responses appear in the Mobile Home Study.

Mr. Rognstad highlighted the report. His comments included that, according to the survey, people in mobile homes on individual lots have lived in the County an average of 19.5 years but not all of that time in a mobile home. If these responses are representative, it cannot be assumed that mobile home dwellers have moved to James City County because other jurisdictions do not permit mobile homes. Only two of the 27 who responded to the survey were renters. It was pointed out that the non-respondants (23 surveys) may have been renters.

Mr. Carlyle Ford, Commissioner of Revenue, gave statistics on the growth in mobile home parks between 1982 and 1984 and stated that recent growth has been greater in mobile home parks than on private property.

Mr. Taylor expressed support for mobile homes. He felt that screening and regulating aesthetics was causing higher prices which he considered discrimination against poor people. He favored mobile homes being treated the same as other housing and saw no reason why an individual should not be permitted to put a mobile home on his own property.

Mr. Garrett asked Mr. Taylor how he could justify devaluing a neighbor's land by permitting someone to do something to his land that would be detrimental to the adjacent property.

Mr. Brown said that substandard housing decreased by 50% between 1970-1980, due partly to the utility systems installed and to the availability of mobile homes. He raised the question of what to do with old mobile homes and the need for a minimum housing code. Old parks with dirt streets and dilapidated housing are a problem, not the newer parks.

Mr. Garrett informed the Board and reminded Commission members of the mobile home subdivision district in the revised Zoning Ordinance that will soon be proposed before the Board of Supervisors. He said, if we permit mobile home subdivisions we may be signalling industry that James City County is a nice place to build a factory for low skill, low wage work. We have never argued that homeowners are expected to pay their way, he said, but the combination of the economic base and the homeowner ought to pay its way. Nevertheless, he is in favor of allowing mobile home subdivisions.

Mr. Mahone felt a mobile home subdivision was attractive because it would not have dirt streets, it would have a playground, paved parking, controls, screening, etc. It was his understanding that these sites, with mobile home, would cost \$50,000-\$60,000, which is what a stick built house would cost, and would be a step up from apartment living and more economical.

Mr. Mahone further stated that the County needs to pass a regulation such as Isle of Wight passed recently, which does not allow in the County mobile homes manufactured earlier than 1976. He talked about mobile homes which have been abandoned or are in disrepair, and about those that are not skirted but fall under the grandfather clause.

Mr. Brown related that it took him six months to get the Health Department to act on a mobile home that had no running water, a broken down privy, no sewage, and no electricity. He is not in favor of excluding mobile homes from the A-1 district, but is in favor of something that would approximate a minimum housing code. He said we need good ordinances to apply to all housing types. The County needs to focus on the problems, whatever they are, and fix them up.

Mr. DePue said that he may be ready to support a minimum housing code but the County must be ready to meet the dilemma of where to put displaced persons. The County may have to be in the position of having to loan money or make grants or low interest loans. Mr. DePue said he could not look at the tax contribution alone. He favored the proposed revisions to the zoning map as a step in the right direction because they reduce negative impacts on subdivisions.

Mr. Brown questioned why the Board of Supervisors issued special use permits for mobile homes and stated he felt they should be issued either administratively or by the Planning Commission. The Board, he said, has neither the time nor the knowledge, and the process would be more competently handled the the Planning Commission.

On this subject, Mr. DePue said he would be interested in it being a Planning Commission matter, if possible to do so; Mr. Taylor said the Board of Supervisors could change the ordinance.

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Mr. Rognstad continued with the report with a comparison of housing types on the peninsula in 1980. James City County had considerably more mobile homes as a proportion of housing than the other jurisdictions, and there is probably a further increase since 1980.

Mr. Taylor said we have more rural area than the other jurisdictions, so we would expect more mobile homes on individual lots.

Ms. Stein suggested that the other jurisdictions are wrong in not permitting mobile homes.

Mr. Edwards responded that jurisdictions that prevent mobile homes on individual lots are probably doing the wrong thing but our concern is what effect this disparity is having on what happens here. The question is, if we are getting all of the mobile homes on individual lots, is it affecting our County in an undesirable way. Other jurisdictions do not intend to change, he said.

Mr. Brown said he has not seen recent interest in development of new mobile home parks.

Mr. Edwards related a conversation with a developer which indicated there was too much public resistance.

Ms. Stein was informed by a developer that he could provide the same price housing in a single family subdivision as in a mobile home subdivision because of the costs involved in a mobile home subdivision, and financially he would do better in the single family subdivision.

Mr. Lenz said this was true because it requires a large initial investment to establish a mobile home park.

Mr. Garrett pointed out that mobile homes would not help low income people because low income people cannot afford new housing of the cheapest that could be provided. Low income people can only afford housing that is filtered down.

Mr. Oliver stated that he felt one of the most important sentences in the study was: "In general, any type of scattered development is a poor land use practice." He challenged the Commission to think about that sentence. Also, he said tax dollars cannot be made up on volume. He pointed out several things to be considered, i.e. are mobile homes part of a housing strategy or part of a social strategy, or an economic strategy or something in-between. He suggested that both the tax implications and the land use implications be looked at.

In further discussion, Mr. Belden asked that the Board not require the Planning Commission to issue special use permits for mobile homes.

Mr. Scruggs said he thought mobile homes should be reviewed administratively.

Mr. DePue said he would like to have an appeal process to the Board, thereby handling the exceptions instead of all the cases.

Mr. Belden pointed out that the public would have an opportunity to address this at the public forums in September.

There was a brief discussion regarding a moratorium on mobile homes but Mr. Belden said the Commission needed time to talk about the subject. It was also determined that the Planning Commission would want to handle mobile homes because they are a land use issue. A moratorium is not recommended by the County Attorney; rather, the revocation of mobile homes as a permitted use would be the way to accomplish this.

Mr. Lenz said we need a comprehensive management strategy for the application and use of mobile homes to include construction inspection and safety standards. He did not know if a moratorium was necessary.

Mr. Jones favored bringing dilapidated homes up to standard. He did not object to mobile homes on individual lots if proper protection is provided to adjacent property.

Mr. Kuras observed that we require building inspections of other housing, why not mobile homes?

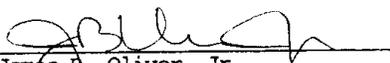
Mr. Taylor offered thanks to the Planning Commission

3. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

Stewart U. Taylor, Chairman
Board of Supervisors

Fred Belden, Chairman
Planning Commission



James B. Oliver, Jr.
Clerk to the Board of Supervisors

Victoria B. Gussman, Acting
Secretary to the Planning Commission

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