Albemarle County Planning Commission
Work Session and Regular Meeting
Draft Minutes July 8, 2025

The Albemarle County Planning Commission held a public meeting on Tuesday, July 8, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.

Members attending were Fred Missel, Chair; Julian Bivins; Corey Clayborne; Karen Firehock; Nathan Moore; Lonnie Murray.

Members absent: Luis Carrazana, Vice Chair.

Other officials present were Michael Barnes, Director of Planning; Ben Holt, Senior Planner II; Rebecca Ragsdale, Planning Manager; Tonya Swartzendruber, Planning Manager; Andy Herrick, County Attorney; and Carolyn Shaffer, Clerk to the Planning Commission.

Call to Order and Establish Quorum

Ms. Shaffer called the roll.

Mr. Missel established a quorum.

Public Comment on matters pending before the Commission but not listed for a Public Hearing on this agenda

Hugh Meagher, White Hall District, said that he was here today to request that the Planning Commission schedule public hearings on the economic development strategic plan (EDSP) as part of the AC44 process. He said that the economic development strategic plan proposed significant changes to the County's zoning, land use, and growth management policy, as well as its regulatory structure, without the benefit of public input. He said that the EDSP was scheduled to be adopted by the Board of Supervisors on August 13, but he urged the County to reconsider this date to allow for broader dissemination of the draft and public hearings. He said that the AC44 was the overarching, long-term plan under which the EDSP would fall, and it set the County's economic development priorities.

Mr. Meagher said that however, the AC44 did not mention defense, biotech, agribusiness, or data centers as the county's economic future. He said that it also did not address the proposed changes to the County's Zoning Ordinances to prepare for the energy-hogging data centers. He said that he believed public servants should not make such radical changes to Albemarle County without public consent. He said that the EDSP had been shaped by consultants, business interests, and large institutions, rather than citizens.

Mr. Meagher said that he was concerned that the lack of transparency and public input in this process was alarming. He said that he wanted to know where the assurances were that the focus on defense, biotech, agribusiness, and data centers would not undermine the County's critical environmental goals. He said that he wanted to know what guardrails had been put in place to ensure that the County's economic development decisions were realistic and sustainable. He said that he and his family liked living here, and he believed they needed to take the time to get it right and not rush into a future they did not want.

Holmes Brown, resident of Stillhouse Creek Road near Batesville, said that he wished to speak on the same topic regarding Albemarle County's economic development strategic plan. He said that this document had the potential to significantly impact Albemarle County's residents over the next few decades, yet it appeared to be largely unknown to the public. He said that there were two primary issues with this document, which were that few people knew of its existence and even fewer people knew of its contents.

Mr. Brown said that he had discovered two online questionnaires seeking public comment, with 53 responses to the first questionnaire about past economic development and future opportunities and 165 responses to the second questionnaire regarding the draft strategy. He said that considering the County's population of 117,000, public comment and involvement on this issue had been virtually nonexistent. He said that secondly, the document's recommendations were a serious concern. He said that the stakeholder engagement summary, which outlined the conclusions, was developed through meetings with 100 stakeholders, including elected officials, economic development leaders, and organizations promoting workforce, education, and entrepreneurial support.

Mr. Brown said that no members of the public were identified as stakeholders in this process. He said that the recommendations were developed through a series of 45-minute to 75-minute meetings with 100 stakeholders. He said that in contrast, 206 members of the public responded electronically, but their voices were not represented in the summary. He said that given these circumstances, he respectfully requested that the Planning Commission delay the accelerated schedule for the plan's approval and instead implement a comprehensive public education and comment prior to further consideration.

Consent Agenda

Mr. Moore motioned that the Planning Commission approve the consent agenda as presented. Mr. Murray seconded the motion, which carried (5-0). (Mr. Clayborne abstained from the vote and Mr. Carrazana was absent.)

Mr. Clayborne said that he abstained from the vote to approve the June 10, 2025, meeting minutes because he was absent from that meeting.

Public Hearing

ZMA2024-08 Brookhill Amendment

Rebecca Ragsdale, Planning Manager, said that she would be presenting the staff's recommendations for this rezoning. She said that this was a focused amendment to the existing Brookhill Neighborhood Model Development. She said that she would review the details about the location and proposed changes. She said that the changes were limited to a request to increase the maximum number of units within the development from 1,550 to 1,850 units. She said that additionally, there were some proffer amendments.

Ms. Ragsdale said that the Brookhill development was located east of Route 29 on Polo Grounds Road, south of Ashwood Boulevard. She said that it was located in the Places 29 Master Plan area, north of the south fork of the Rivanna River. She said that an aerial image of the site showed that it was under development, with portions already constructed. She said that the development

had been approved since 2015. She said that the location proposed for rezoning was indicated on the slide. She said that north of the site was Forest Lakes, to the west was the rural area, and then to the east was the Montgomery Ridge subdivision along Polo Grounds Road.

Ms. Ragsdale said that it was zoned neighborhood model development, as she mentioned. She said that on the zoning map, the white areas represented rural areas, including property south of Polo Grounds Road that was not in the development area. She said that the turquoise colors indicated planned unit development or either. She said that the light green represented R-1 residential. She said that according to the Places 29 Land Use Map, the Brookhill development was indicated NS, which stood for neighborhood service center, which was approved with that rezoning. She said that the Places 29 Master Plan designated it neighborhood density, urban density, and open space and environmental features indicated in green. She said that the Places 29 master plan was one of their older master plans which had not been updated yet.

Ms. Ragsdale said that Brookhill's designation was consistent with the plan's neighborhood service center urban density designations and then the neighborhood density designations. She said that providing for all the green space, as outlined in the Places 29 Master Plan, and recognizing the streams and natural features on the site, with the pattern of green space along the streams. She said that as mentioned, this request was to increase the residential density. She said that there was no proposed change to the nonresidential uses in the code of development, and the amendment was straightforward in this regard, updating their regulating table for the neighborhood model code of development.

Ms. Ragsdale said that the neighborhood model district was the most detailed in terms of regulations, and those were broken down by block for large developments like Brookhill. She said that there was a lot of detail in the regulations; however, the proposed changes did not alter their minimum requirement for nonresidential development, which remained 50,000 square feet or increase their maximum to 130,000 square feet. She said that the focus of the changes was on the blocks designated as neighborhood center or urban density.

Ms. Ragsdale said that regarding the proffer amendment, with the size of this development, an extensive proffer package was approved to protect resources, provide for adequate parks and greenways, cash proffers, schools, and transportation. She said that there was only one minor adjustment to the schools proffers, ensuring that the proffer for the 7-acre elementary school site could be used for additional community amenities. She said that the transportation proffers also required a slight adjustment to the timing of the Ashwood Boulevard connection. She said that they had discussed the affordable housing provisions at length. She said that Places 29 had not been updated in the comprehensive plan, but they had an updated housing policy, Housing Albemarle.

Ms. Ragsdale said that with the proposed revision to the proffers, the applicant was proposing to partially comply with the updated housing policy, providing 20% of the requested 300 new units as affordable housing. She said that they were not proposing to change any of the other terms and conditions that were offered in the previous proffers. She said that the staff report noted that the proposed revisions would make the proposal entirely consistent with the housing policy, which was related to the 60% Area Median Income (AMI) for rent units, as well as addressing the newer policy recommendations for the term of affordability.

Ms. Ragsdale said that staff had recommended approval of this rezoning. She said that it remained consistent with the density and land use recommendations of the Places 29 Master Plan. She said that the proposal had undergone an extensive review by other agencies, focusing on impacts, particularly transportation. She said that the applicant had provided an updated transportation impact analysis, which found that the existing proffers were adequate to address any trips generated by the additional 300 units. She said that staff had also noted the concern about partial consistency with the affordable housing policy.

Mr. Moore said that he wanted to confirm that there were no changes to the commercial square footage, only the residential number of units.

Ms. Ragsdale said that that was correct.

Mr. Moore said that he also had questions about the affordable housing property tax abatement incentive. He said that he was curious about how the 20% affordability requirement at 60% AMI for 30 years would work if applied only to this proposed new portion of an existing model development.

Ms. Ragsdale said that she believed there were two key components: the policy and the programs to implement it. She said that in staff's analysis, they had focused on the policy aspect, but they had not discussed the implementation of one particular tool that was part of the program.

Mr. Clayborne said that he had a clarifying question regarding policy and implementation, specifically with regards to housing. He asked if Housing Albemarle was a policy that was optional, allowing individuals to choose whether to participate or not, or if this was a function of a policy that was adopted prior to this being implemented, so the applicant could decide what they wanted to do with regards to that policy.

Ms. Ragsdale said that she believed that many rezonings that came before the Commission may not fully align with existing policies, particularly when it came to what applicants were proposing. She said that it was not an ordinance.

Mr. Clayborne asked if that meant that they did have the option to select and choose which projects or initiatives they wanted to pursue.

Ms. Ragsdale said that they were starting to see scenarios like this, where it had been approved under the prior proffers, and this was what they had offered under the new policy.

Mr. Clayborne asked if this development were to start from scratch today, would they be able to choose to participate in their Housing Albemarle policy, or if the applicant would be required to follow the policy.

Mr. Barnes said that for a new development, they would be required to meet the Housing Policy. He said that it was difficult to apply the new housing policy to previously approved developments such as this one.

Mr. Clayborne said that he just wanted to clarify that for future developments, they would be required to do all the things in Housing Albemarle and could not choose to partially abide by the policy.

Mr. Barnes said that generally, yes, but they did not have an enforceable ordinance that required developers to follow the policy. He said that to be honest, there may be times when they had extenuating circumstances that affected it, such as in this case when it was about a proffer.

Mr. Clayborne said that he understood now that there was a difference between a policy and an ordinance. He said that he wondered what the point of the policy was if it had no enforceability.

Mr. Barnes said that the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors had the ability to deny these types of rezoning requests.

Mr. Bivins said that the County should consider asking developers to donate the affordable units to the County so the County could hold them in an affordable housing trust. He said that this way, the County could ensure they were being used and would remain affordable in perpetuity. He said that the only reason the Commission was seeing this situation was because it was an exception that the applicant must receive approval for, and otherwise the County would not have any kind of oversight of this development.

Mr. Clayborne said that he believed that in order to ensure compliance, the County had to have some level of control, rather than begging.

Mr. Bivins said that he believed that was why donating properties to a housing trust would allow the County to have an inventory they could maintain as affordable.

Mr. Murray said that he agreed with Mr. Bivins' point.

Mr. Missel opened the public hearing. He asked if the applicant had a presentation.

Ashley Davies, Riverbend Development, said that she was here tonight with Alan Taylor, also from Riverbend, and Scott Collins, from Collins Engineering. She said that she appreciated the Commission's consideration of their request to add 300 additional units to the Brookhill neighborhood. She said that as Ms. Ragsdale had mentioned, this was previously zoned as a neighborhood model district around nine years ago, and it was located within the County's designated growth area. She said that they believed this proposal aligned with the Albemarle County Comprehensive Plan in three key areas.

Ms. Davies that it enabled them to continue preserving rural areas by providing a significant amount of additional housing at various price points within the strategic growth area. She said that Brookhill did an exceptional job of protecting habitat areas and critical environmental spaces on the site. She said that this entire property was 277 acres, and tonight, they were looking at approximately one-tenth of that in this rezoning. She said that they initially provided around $30 million in in-kind and donations, as well as transportation improvements to the County, and the 50-acre high school site, the 7-acre elementary school site. She said that this included transit stops for future transit routes and a $500,000 donation to the County once established.

Ms. Davies said that this site also featured a third of its area in open space with four miles of trails. She said that a key component of the initial rezoning was preserving the salamander habitat and providing tunnels under the road to allow the salamanders to access the vernal pools for mating. She said that they were about a third of the way into the site construction, and one could see on

the slide the areas shown in light yellow, which represented the neighborhood density. She said that at the initial application time, density was not as welcome in Albemarle County, so they were getting closer to the comprehensive plan's desired density.

Ms. Davies said that their original plan would have included over 500 single-family homes with larger lots, but due to changing circumstances, they were now trying to meet the demand for housing while providing a range of price points and lower price points. She said that the next slide showed the entire community at total build-out, and the diagram highlighted the preserved areas, including over 75 acres of green spaces. She said that these areas would provide a more urban density in the neighborhoods, while also featuring wonderful trails, green spaces, and amenities throughout. She said that later this year, the town center would go under construction, bringing the heart of the community to life.

Ms. Davies said that the next slide showed the amenity spaces throughout the neighborhood, demonstrating how the trail network and existing spaces would be accessible from various neighborhood pods, as well as the future ones in the town center area and the school site. She said that residents had expressed a need for more spaces for recreation and community activities, and they were addressing this by adding amenities to the site, which may or may not be part of the school in the future. She said that additionally, the trails were all open to the general public.

Ms. Davies said that the next map provided a sense of the site's build out to date. She said that the areas outlined in pink and the lighter color were already complete and developed. She said that the area in the upper right, marked in yellow, was currently under construction. She said that they planned to start working on the town center later this year. She said that additionally, there were areas currently under design. She said that to give a sense of what had have accomplished so far, the senior living was in place. She said that they had already constructed 762 of the total residential units, as shown on the screen. She said that they also had over 300 units that qualified as affordable units in the first phase of apartments for Brookhill. She said that what was notable about this site was that a significant portion of it was already constructed.

Ms. Davies said that they spent a decade developing their comprehensive code of development for the site, which was extensive. She said that since then, they had been working closely with staff on the affordable units since then. She said that managing a site of this size, with this many units, was a full-time job and required a great deal of complexity. She said that one of the challenges they faced was tracking and complying with the units, auditing, and managing it all. She said that they were proud of what they were providing, and with this new addition, they aimed to increase their offerings to the County. She said that the provided map highlighted the 27-acre area of the site that was the subject of this rezoning.

Ms. Davies said that the additional 300 units would be built in this area, without impacting the green spaces. She said that this proposal offers four key benefits: it was a great location, close to essential amenities for residents, already zoned land where they had invested significant money and resources into the infrastructure and had increased their affordable housing commitment of 20% while also maintaining the rest of the existing proffers. She said that they could see how much of this land is preserved and available to the public, and it was a thoughtfully designed neighborhood. She said that they believe it made sense to align more closely with the comprehensive plan's vision for this site.

Mr. Bivins asked if there was a combined trigger number for Ashwood Boulevard, considering the same developer owned both sections, so they could move traffic onto Ashwood Boulevard in a coordinated manner.

Ms. Davies said that the Ashwood Boulevard connection was entirely tied to the Brookhill rezoning that was approved ten years ago. She said that when the 500th certificate of occupancy (CO) of Brookhill was completed, they would need the connection. She said that they were diligently working towards the completion of the Ashwood/Archer connection; however, there had been some unseen complexities that impacted that. She said that they required approvals from the County, VDOT, and wetland preservation that resulted in an extended timeline and adjustment to that proffer.

Ms. Davies said that the other project was not reliant on that road connection but was planned to be in alignment with the other developments in the area.

Mr. Bivins asked if the school site was specific to an elementary school or if they would have the flexibility to make it a middle school or high school if need be.

Ms. Davies said that she believed both the high school and elementary school site proffers were worded specifically to allow flexibility for the County to use the sites as they saw fit.

Mr. Bivins said that there was a plantation house on this property, as well as a graveyard connected to it. He asked how the developer was approaching the preservation of those historic and cultural resources.

Ms. Davies said that there was a 3.5-acre parcel surrounding the home on this site, inclusive of the graveyard. She said that this property was retained by the family who previously owned the entire site, so the developer of Brookhill had no ownership or control of that property.

Mr. Barnes said that to clarify, the proffers related to the school site had language that allowed for the development of a public park in case the County decided a school was not necessary on the property.

Mr. Bivins said that he hoped the County would never establish another public park. He said that they already had 500 acres of parks that were inaccessible to most people in the development area.

Mr. Murray said that one of the significant challenges they had faced with affordable units was that they often struggled to match residents to those spaces before the time period expired. He said that as a result, he was curious to know the developer's thought process when considering how to strike a balance between increasing the percentage of affordable use units and extending the time period during which those units remained affordable.

Ms. Davies said that one thing she would like to mention is that with the existing apartments at Brookhill, they had not had any trouble in finding tenants for the affordable units. She said that in fact, they were consistently well-leased and remain leased. She said that this indicated a high demand for that affordable housing. She said that unlike the existing proffers for the for-sale units, which would instantly go to market rate, the affordable units at Brookhill provided a more stable and affordable option. She said that as a company, Riverbend had been actively seeking solutions

to address affordability, and they had explored various approaches across different sites. She said that at Brookhill, they were primarily considering rental as the affordable solution.

Ms. Davies said that at Victorian Heights, they had successfully implemented the Piedmont Community Land Trust model, which had enabled residents to achieve permanent home ownership and affordability. She said that they planned to replicate that model at the Archer North site and potentially elsewhere. She said that each site presented a unique assessment, and she believed that by examining the different approaches in this area, they could develop a patchwork of solutions to address affordability.

Mr. Missel asked if the developer had considered extending the affordability period beyond the ten years required, in addition to increasing the percentage of affordable units.

Ms. Davies said that they had not considered it yet, but it could be something to discuss.

Mr. Murray said that the County's landscaping policy only really applied to trees, but the developer for this site had invested a lot of money into preserving nice greenways on the property. He asked if they had any plans to remove invasive species within the green space.

Ms. Davies said that it was certainly of interest to her. She said that Mr. Collins and his team may be able to discuss that point in more detail. She said that she did not think they would be planting any invasive or harmful species in their developments, and they certainly would remove any if they were told to. She said that another thing they were working on was not just having the trails available, but also workout stations along the trails.

Mr. Moore said that he appreciated the other Commissioners' questions and comments about addressing affordable housing. He asked how they were going to squeeze 300 more units in such a small geographic area. He asked if they would be building taller buildings or making them smaller apartments.

Ms. Davies said that they had initially planned to have commercial and office space located on the floors above the first floor town center, but they decided to pursue more residential units instead once it was determined there was a lack of demand for office space.

Mr. Missel asked if the additional residential space would result in a change in the percentage of mixed-use and commercial retail components in this development.

Ms. Davies said that the commercial percentage would remain the same as originally intended. She said that the only change was that the office space was being replaced. She said that therefore, they were still looking at the same amount of ground floor commercial space, which aligned with their original zoning.

Ms. Firehock asked if there were any plans to make the rooftops available as leisure space for the residents and visitors. She said that the views from this location would be magnificent.

Ms. Davies said that they would look into the feasibility of doing that.

Mr. Missel asked what the AMI was for the 301 affordable units.

Ms. Davies said that they were 80% AMI.

Mr. Missel asked if mitigating the residual impacts of the increased number of units had been analyzed with regards to the Ashwood Boulevard connector road.

Ms. Davies said that the proffers were not planned with that level of precision. She said that they had had their traffic engineer review it, but at the time, it was about picking a number to make sure they met the necessary timing requirements of the proffer. She said that it was adjusted to give a bit more runway.

Mr. Missel asked if the potential community open space on the 7-acre school site would be maintained by the developer.

Ms. Davies said that they would. She said that one significant advantage of this proposal was that they could build it out as a community park space, and they would be responsible for maintaining it until the County decided it wanted it. She said that this would take it off the County's responsibility until that time. She said that it would remain a public amenity available to anyone.

Mr. Murray said that he would like to add one more point regarding the office space. He asked if they had considered the possibility that market changes may lead to a new demand for office space. He said that perhaps it would be beneficial to make some of these spaces flexible, allowing them to be converted back into office space if the need arose.

Ms. Davies said that one of the benefits of the code of development was that it allowed for the preservation of those uses without removing them. She said that they could, in the future, potentially convert any of those spaces into office space if they so desired.

Mr. Missel asked if any members of the public wished to speak on this item.

Lindsay Hill said that she currently lived in Brookhill, where she had been a resident for approximately four years. She said that she moved to Charlottesville in 2021 as a graduate student in biology. She said that during her time here, she was working full-time while pursuing her master's part-time. She said that she completed her master's in public health at UVA in 2023, focusing on housing affordability in relation to communicable disease in Charlottesville and surrounding counties in Virginia. She said that she moved to the Brookhill community in 2021, and it was initially affordable for her.

Ms. Hill said that it was a financially viable option at the time, as she was making below the AMI threshold then. She said that the first three years of renewal were manageable, with her rent increasing to around $1,500 per month. She said that when she was up for a 12-month lease renewal, her rent would have jumped to $2,100 per month for a one-bedroom apartment, just for her and her small dog. She said that fortunately, they offered alternative lease options with longer terms, which only increased her rent by $100. She said that since then, her rent had increased by $100 to $150 every lease renewal. She said that she was curious to know the basis for the AMI household number, as she recalled a point where she was considering moving back in with her parents due to financial concerns.

Ms. Hill said that she was from Richmond, Virginia, and living in Charlottesville was far from home. She said that thankfully, she was able to secure a higher-paying job, which had been a blessing;

however, she was aware that many of her friends who moved out of the apartment complex were not as fortunate, and they were priced out of the Brookhill community. She said that she was grateful that the Commission was discussing affordable housing, as it directly related to her concerns.

Ms. Hill said that she was the youngest person and only minority at the community meeting, and probably had less of an investment since she rented and did not own, although she would like to own at some point. She said that housing affordability had always been important to her, as mother worked for Virginia Housing, and she believed that stable and affordable housing was essential for her to stay in Charlottesville. She said that however, if she was unable to buy or continue to rent here, she could not stay in this community.

Ms. Shaffer said that there was one speaker signed up online.

Carolyn Cartwright said that she resided at Brookhill villas. She said that she had lived there for about two years and was employed at UVA. She said that she was very excited about the community and everything it had to offer, including the retail space, so she was glad to see that that would be coming up. She said that she understood the need for affordable housing, but she had concerns about the neighborhood. She said that since the plots had been filled and the houses had been sold, she had noticed a problem with parking in the area. She said that she was concerned about how the increased number of units would affect parking.

Ms. Cartwright said that considering the amenities available and the current amenities that seemed to be degrading, for example, the concrete was starting to chip away in the sidewalks, and the fire pit was deteriorating. She said that she believed additional amenities for youth in the area would become increasingly important. She said that she was aware of the lighting concerns regarding light pollution, but she believed additional lighting to ensure safety for individuals walking through the neighborhood would be crucial.

Ms. Cartwright said that these things would become increasingly important as the population grew. She said that she was a bit confused about the 60 affordable units available, considering the price they had paid for their house, and she worried that the affordable housing may affect their property value and the investment they had made. She said that these were just some of the concerns she had, and she thought they should be considered as they moved forward with this project.

Mr. Missel closed the public hearing and the matter rested with the Commission.

Mr. Murray said that he respected the design of this community. He said that it was a good model and he would like to see more of this type of mix of green space and mixed-use buildings. He said that he was glad to see more density in this area.

Ms. Firehock asked if they knew where the additional parking would be, or if the developer felt there was adequate parking already existing in the development.

Ms. Davies said that they had planned 1,100 parking spaces for the future town center area, which was more than sufficient to accommodate the uses they had planned.

Ms. Firehock asked if Ms. Davies had a response to the public comment about the parking issues right now.

Ms. Davies said that the resident who spoke was located in the northern section of the site, which was a considerable distance from the town center. She said that although it was walkable, it was not directly adjacent. She said that the units they were placing within the pink area on the map would have ample parking available, with large parking fields directly adjacent to them. She said that this meant that residents would not need to drive to the town center and park in the neighborhood, reducing the potential impact on their section of the neighborhood.

Ms. Firehock asked if Ms. Davies could address the other comment made regarding increasing rents.

Ms. Davies said that she believed that rents had increased across the board in Albemarle County over the past few years, and the area median income was also rising. She said that as a result, rents had gone up slightly, but they were still lower than the 80% area median income threshold. She said that she would greatly appreciate the opportunity to connect with that speaker after the meeting. She said that she may qualify for one of the units being transferred to the Piedmont Land Trust in the next month or two. She said that if she was interested in becoming a homeowner, this could be a fantastic option that still allowed her to remain in the immediate area.

Ms. Firehock asked if someone was living in an affordable unit, and meanwhile the general regional rent prices were becoming more expensive, did they raise the rate by the same percent on someone in an affordable unit as the market rate units?

Ms. Davies said no. She said that the market rate units were moving at a totally different pace than the affordable units. She said that to qualify as an affordable unit, it had to stay below the 80% AMI, which was constantly being audited with the County. She said that even though the rate may stay below, that could still be unaffordable to some people.

Mr. Murray said that he had mentioned this previously, but he believed this was where part of the challenge lay. He said that they had two distinct economies, comprising individuals who derived their income from investments and those who relied on wages. He said that the 80% AMI for wage employees was significantly different from that of investment residents. He said that he was not sure if this disparity would be something they could consider in the future, as it highlighted the differences between these two populations. He said that they wanted to attract more wage employees to their community and that should be considered in these calculations.

Mr. Clayborne said that he had always been a strong supporter of the project and appreciated the applicant's efforts to reach for the higher allowable density. He said that they had a similar conversation throughout the AC44 process, where they discussed the limitations of their land and the need to make the most of what they had. He said that given their constraints, they must work with what they had. He said that his frustration lay in the County’s inability to effectively increase housing supply with the tools they currently had.

Mr. Clayborne said that he had always believed that policy was not just about encouraging change, but rather about taking concrete action. He said that in his opinion, the encouragement they provided was not translating into meaningful results. He said that it may be too early to tell, but it did not seem to be motivating anyone. He said that perhaps they needed to re-examine their

approach. He said that he and his colleagues had discussed some interesting ideas during the conversation, including the possibility of using different levers to incentivize change.

Mr. Clayborne said that for example, they could extend the length of affordability and increase the number of units. He said that given the rising costs and rising AMIs, he would like to push for a 60% affordability target, even if it meant taking on fewer units, because 60% would be more effective in addressing identified demand. He said that by pulling on these levers, they may be able to achieve a more realistic goal. He said that he was still supportive of the project, but his growing frustration stemmed from the County's inability to make progress with the tools they had.

Mr. Missel said that he would send Mr. Clayborne some notes about Dr. Pethia's recent presentation to the Commission about the County's housing program status.

Mr. Moore said that he also missed Dr. Pethia's update, although he recalled seeing a version of it at his Community Advisory Committee (CAC) meeting he had attended not too long ago. He said that when it came to the big-picture issues that preceded them, such as policy and legislative considerations, he thought they needed to consider these factors. He said that this project was a good one, as it added homes above the commercial first floor. He said that staff was satisfied that parking needs were met. He said that the project appeared to preserve trails and other amenities. He said that he thought, similar to what some of his colleagues had said, that while having 80% AMI was a positive step, it was still a challenge for families to reach that higher income threshold, which in their community, was about $100,000 per year.

Mr. Moore said that this meant that even with affordable housing, the rent would still be quite high, around $2,500 per month, which was an unaffordable burden. He said that this frustration was what he thought was driving the need for them to discuss this issue further. He said that their liberal-aligned policies were meant to solve this issue, but they were not really addressing it. He said that as a community and as a Board of Supervisors, they needed to consider the lack of a public option, a concept that had been discussed during the Obamacare conversations years ago. He said that this was not a factor that swayed him regarding this particular project, but he believed it was something they must address as a body and with their Board of Supervisors.

Mr. Missel said that it appeared that there may be a trend of adapting to changing market conditions by revising codes of development. He said that he would like to encourage the development community to maintain a focus on good design, appropriate mixes of uses, and staff monitoring to ensure these standards were met. He said that as they had previously discussed, the initial design vision was likely intended to work well, and if that was shifting, they risked losing an appropriate mix of uses in favor of adapting to changing markets.

Mr. Missel said that he believed this change was warranted, as the density was called for in this area. He said that affordable housing was also a concern. He said that he appreciated the applicant's willingness to consider diverse approaches to achieving affordable goals; thinking creatively about these objectives was valuable and he would encourage other large developers to do the same. He said that the retention of affordability had been discussed in the public hearing, and the applicant had offered to consider a duration for this. He said that he would like to note this for the Board of Supervisors, suggesting they consider a new duration of affordability when reviewing the proposal.

Ms. Firehock said that she would like to make a brief comment for the public record. She said that as a member of the Commission when this proposal was first presented, she recalled it was a greenfield site, designated as a habitat core due to its size. She said that she had voted in favor of it last time because of two key reasons. She said that firstly, the developer's approach to environmental sensitivity, including the preservation of natural passageways, the avoidance of stream disruption, and the salamander tunnels.

Ms. Firehock said that secondly, this development acknowledged that in order to preserve the rural area, they had to accept developing sites such as this one. She said that she would like to see this approach applied to future sites, where developers could balance growth with the need to protect green spaces, maintain stream connectivity, and respect the land. She said that she was glad to see the density be added in height rather than spread out, which was why she could wholeheartedly support this project again.

Mr. Clayborne motioned that the Planning Commission recommend approval ZMA2024-08 Brookhill Amendment, for the reasons stated in the staff report. Mr. Murray seconded the motion which carried (6-0). (Mr. Carrazana was absent.)

Work Session

CPA2021-02 AC44 Comp Plan – Implementation

Tonya Swartzendruber, Planning Manager, said that she was here to discuss the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan. She said that the most exciting aspect of this presentation was that the Commission now had access to a complete rough draft of the plan, which was significantly improved from the 900 pages in the binder on her office shelf. She said that they had also recently received the completed part one, part two, the implementation chapter, and a few appendices. She said that tonight, they would be focusing on the implementation chapter.

Ms. Swartzendruber said that she would discuss the opportunities for input on the other chapters when they talked about the schedule. She said that they had two chapter focus topics to discuss tonight, which were if they got the big moves right, and if the Commission would like staff to explore Comprehensive Plan Amendments process options. She said that regarding implementation, she would like to define implementation as making progress on the recommended actions listed in AC44, which cut across several County departments.

Ms. Swartzendruber said that implementation was also about internal education on how to utilize this document, as well as tracking progress and reporting on accomplishments and their effects. She said that they emphasized implementation in order to turn the vision of AC44 into action, providing accountability and building momentum. She said that currently, they had over 250 actions across nine topics and multiple departments and external entities, so it was essential to prioritize those actionable first steps of implementation.

Ms. Swartzendruber said that prioritizing these recommendations was best practice for most modern comprehensive plans, and given the 20-year planning horizon, prioritizing these recommendations could provide focused implementation over the next five years. She said that prioritizing recommendations also allows the County to effectively allocate limited funding and staff capacity, and better inform the strategic plan, Capital Improvement Program (CIP), and

County budget. She said that as staff, in conjunction with their leadership, they had developed the six "big moves."

Ms. Swartzendruber said that these were drafted, taking into account the themes from public engagement and feedback from the Board. She said that she would go through each one briefly, and there were more detailed descriptions in the text of the chapter. She said that the first big move was aligning regulations to support AC44.

Ms. Firehock asked if the “big moves” referred to priorities or moving things around within the plan.

Ms. Swartzendruber said that to clarify, what they had defined as a big move was a grouping of actions that would have the most significant impact. She said that these actions likely cut across departments, entities, and chapters. She said that the goal behind this big move was to improve the clarity, simplify the ease of use, and update requirements to implement AC44 actions. She said that for example, one of the actions in the Development Area Land Use Chapter was to update the Zoning Ordinance to allow residential uses in commercial zoning districts by right in some locations.

Ms. Swartzendruber said that the second big move or action was to increase affordable housing access by updating zoning and land use regulations to allow for a broader range of housing types, including the missing middle, such as duplexes, small-scale multifamily, and accessory dwelling units, particularly in activity centers. She said that additionally, they could identify and protect at-risk homes, support rehabilitation, and explore subsidies for this effort. She said that working closely with both the County and state Housing Offices would be crucial.

Mr. Missel asked if staff could elaborate on where funding comes into play when partnering with the Housing Office to increase affordable housing access and options.

Mr. Barnes said that the 5-year strategic plan would identify the funding mechanisms that would help the County achieve the 20-year vision of the Comprehensive Plan. He said that the Comprehensive Plan would not identify specific budgetary considerations. He said that the goal of the implementation chapter was to prioritize their goals so that the direction they wanted to go in was clear and they could easily look back in five years and determine if they had met these goals.

Mr. Murray asked if the line on slide 8 that said “identify and protect at-risk homes” could be changed to “identify and protect at-risk homes and communities.”

Ms. Swartzendruber said that that was a fair point and she appreciated the suggestion. She said that moving onto the third big move, this was about investing resources in compact and connected development areas, especially in the activity centers. She said that this was really about encouraging growth and focused investment in urban places. She said that projections indicated that they would need to accommodate 31,000 people over the next 20 years. She said that this equated to roughly 13,000 households.

Ms. Swartzendruber said that the growth management policy (GMP) indicated that this should be happening within the development area, and AC44 recommended that the majority of it happened in the activity centers. She said that this would take advantage of existing infrastructure and more

efficient provision of new and/or upgraded infrastructure services. She said that investment in infrastructure, services, and amenities made a place where people wanted to live, work, and visit.

Mr. Missel said that this goal referenced the financial aspect with regard to public and private investments.

Mr. Barnes said that from a broad perspective, the plan suggested that investment was necessary to build these centers. He said that it did not specifically mention what the investments should entail.

Mr. Missel said that the previous goal was to increase affordable housing availability, and it could just as easily state “increase affordable housing availability through public and private investments.”

Mr. Barnes said that was true.

Mr. Missel said that he would recommend they include something about the financial investment required for the second big move, as well.

Mr. Bivins asked if staff could come up with a better term than “overparked” as it was currently written in the narrative. He said that he believed it was trying to convey that there were more parking spots than necessary, but “overparked” made it sound like the parking lot was crowded, which was the opposite of the issue they had. He said that additionally, without mentioning a specific number, he believed there may be a way to describe how these major goals were connected to the strategic plan and CIP so they understood they were all working together.

Ms. Swartzendruber said that she could appreciate that this topic may require a bit more consideration in the narrative and presentation. She said that they did touch on it somewhat.

Mr. Bivins said that he was not trying to rewrite it. He said that they may consider including a sentence that mentioned that all of these connections would eventually tie back to this, that, and the other points.

Mr. Moore said that he would trust that County staff would be filing all documentation on time as needed. He asked if they had considered approaching this with a broad-scale upzoning goal, rather than vaguely and slowly encouraging things to develop in centers to hopefully provide enough for their citizens some day in the future.

Mr. Barnes said that when Mr. Moore mentioned up-zoning, he believed they had been discussing ways to add extra density capacity in the development areas with both the Commission and the Board. He said that they had gained a better understanding of the strategy behind the activity centers, which was part of their overall approach.

Mr. Barnes said that they had been working towards that direction, as it was a great place to add density. He said that there were opportunities to do so in some of their lower-scale density residential zoning districts. He said that however, there was some hesitation and uncertainty about allowing for increased density in those areas, similar to the City's approach. He said that this plan aimed to reflect that understanding.

Mr. Moore said that he could understand if he was an outlier.

Ms. Firehock said that she had served on the Commission for eight years, and she felt like every year she had suggested that they just go ahead and match the zoning of the County with what was outlined in the Comprehensive Plan. She said that she was not suggesting they do what Charlottesville just did, but she had served on Charlottesville's Planning Commission in the past and was there when they did a major rezoning of the City to get the density and uses in the places, they wanted them to be.

Ms. Firehock said that she understood the reason why the County did not pursue that same approach because the Board of Supervisors and some staff believed that the County would get more through rezonings and proffers. She said that over the years, their ability to get proffers had declined. She said that they used to have a requirement for cash proffers to be used for transportation, parks, or whatever the growth impacts were determined to be. She said that they did not really have that anymore and it looked like they were waiting for their scraps, hoping a park or bike trail would be proffered.

Ms. Firehock said that she heard from many people about the amount of money and time it cost to go through this process. She said that she agreed with Mr. Moore that they should just zone the County to be what they wanted, so that it would be easier to do. She said that they should put parks where they wanted them instead of hoping for scrap parks. She said that Mr. Bivins had made the point earlier that they had been given many parks and nature trails, but their location within private residential developments made them inaccessible to the public, or even to residents of neighboring developments. She said that again, she agreed with Mr. Moore but was doubtful they would see that upzoning happen in the near term.

Mr. Murray said that Crozet was ahead of the curve in providing the missing middle housing, but there was a frustration now that no other development areas had followed suit.

Ms. Firehock said that Avon Street Extended and Route 29 North were both coming along in terms of that type of missing middle density. She said that she believed those areas were much denser than what Crozet currently had.

Mr. Bivins said that he would like to clarify that over the years he had served on the Commission, a majority of denser housing projects had not been developed in Crozet. He said that he was certain people in Crozet felt they had been subject to many housing developments, but those were single family homes. He said that the areas where the most units had been developed were in areas like Pantops and Route 29 North. He said that their community needed to focus on achieving an intentional variety of housing types within their limited space, rather than consider density only as single-family houses and suburbia.

Mr. Bivins said that additionally, they should consider the fact that developers may not pursue denser housing developments if it required going through the rezoning process. He said that the additional density may not be worth the time and money it would take to get a rezoning approved in the County.

Mr. Moore said that he was wondering if they enabled a new zoning map where density was allowed by right, they did not have to be held back by discretionary review of everything.

Mr. Barnes said that regardless of whether they electively rezone the community, within this Comprehensive Plan staff was trying to reduce the number of activity centers and put them on a hierarchy. He said that regardless of how they would color in a new map, they tried to indicate the centers that could be made into walkable areas and build out from there. He said that the community's vision had been to create something urban and walkable, and this plan was about creating the placement to do that.

Mr. Bivins said that he wanted to add that the fastest-growing demographic in their area were residents who were 55 years old and older. He said that the walkable aspect was not relevant to that population.

Ms. Firehock said that she disagreed; old people were walking down the road in her area of the County all the time.

Mr. Murray said that he believed the "overparked" areas of the County should be emphasized as a higher priority in the plan in terms of redevelopment and providing incentives to transform those places into better spaces.

Ms. Swartzendruber said that they had been discussing that as part of their future area planning process. She said that the next two big moves were closely related to economic development. She said that the fourth topic was specifically focused on supporting agricultural and forestry uses in the rural area, which aligned directly with the economic development strategic plan that had been shared with them about a month ago. She said that the focus was on maintaining agricultural and forest-based businesses while also protecting environmentally sensitive areas.

Mr. Murray said that other areas of AC44 were very specific and included measurable goals, with clear pathways to get from point A to point B. He said that he believed there needed to be a rural area plan, and this fourth big move likely would be more impactful if it was about the rural area plan. He said that he believed they should have objective goals when they discussed metrics. He said that for example, they could track how well their local agricultural products were reaching the market or assess the performance of their farmers' markets. He said that they should also evaluate their access to local food within their activity centers. He said that he thought this was a worthwhile goal.

Mr. Bivins said that there had been a dramatic decrease in family farms, according to U.S. Department of Agriculture census data. He said that he would like the County to critically analyze if this was a place that should be focused on small farms, because that was the area that was a common good rather than large, corporate farms.

Mr. Murray said that for disclosure, he worked for the UVA Health System. He said that he wanted to note that UVA's cafeterias were buying food from local farms to offer in their cafeterias. He said that this was a very impactful program and made clear sense to support, as it was directly providing fresh food to people in their community. He said that clear, measurable, objectives and goals were important. He said that additionally, they should use their Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to assess how many County streams were lacking buffers, the County's tree canopy coverage, and sensitive species counts, and how they had changed over time.

Mr. Missel said that he would like the Commission to consider whether these big moves were accurately addressing their goals, as well as if other big moves were missing that may need to be included.

Mr. Moore said that he felt this fourth big move was simply saying to maintain the status quo, which was valid to include in a plan, but he was unsure if it was the right step for their community. He said that he agreed there were things they could do to support an agricultural economy, but he was not convinced they had a vibrant agricultural economy. He said that they had some successful farms, but their average farm in this County had an average loss of $16,000 per year. He said that he questioned whether supporting agriculture was necessary to include in all the County's plans, considering it was unclear whether they were really doing it already or if they should be doing it at all. He said that if they wanted to support agriculture, they should look for ways to support young farmers to attain land and maintain productive farm operations.

Mr. Barnes said that the economic development strategic plan was undergirding this item, and there was indeed an identified value in supporting agriculture in their County.

Mr. Bivins said that the economic development strategic plan was not being reviewed by the Planning Commission.

Ms. Firehock said the Commission had been briefed on its existence, but they were not part of the development of the economic development strategic plan.

Mr. Barnes said that the economic development strategic planning work had begun recently and was still underway. He said that the goal of Planning staff was to wrap up their work on the Comprehensive Plan before trying to work on other planning efforts.

Mr. Bivins said that he just wanted the public to understand that the Planning Commission was not involved in the economic development strategic plan.

Mr. Missel said that he believed the Commission's work was related to how the Comprehensive Plan created the framework for good economic development.

Mr. Bivins said that the Comprehensive Plan needed to include signals to land developers so that they could decide how to invest in the County and what they needed to do to achieve their development.

Ms. Swartzendruber said that she would like to move on to big move number five, which focuses on expanding economic opportunity. She said that this aligned with the economic development strategic plan, through the lens of the future land use and development effects they could have as a department and as a County. She said that the goal was to establish a foundation for land use policy and thoughtful land use management.

Ms. Swartzendruber said that the final big move she would like to address was the importance of mitigating and preparing for the impacts of climate change, with the goal of protecting public health, safety, and quality of life. She said that they could reduce local greenhouse emissions, their natural systems could provide high-impact climate protection, and they could proactively invest in infrastructure upgrades.

Mr. Bivins said that he believed the County needed to address how they would deal with climate migration that may result in people coming to their area as a result of a crisis.

Mr. Murray said that he was recalling a specific campground that came before the Commission to request additional campsites near a body of water. He said that the Planning Commission acknowledged how risky it was to have those campsites there, but they approved the application. He said that since then, the campground had two serious rescue operations for people about to be washed down the river. He said that considering the deadly floods happening in other places like Texas, he thought the County should take a step back and think more sensitively about the uses they allowed or potentially restricted near the banks of rivers.

Mr. Bivins said that in addition to flooding, they had dealt with some serious wildfires in their area. He said that there were many areas of the County that were difficult to reach in the case of a fire.

Mr. Murray said that he hoped the County would consider a fire risk map overlay.

Ms. Firehock said that she had previously sent a fire ignition density map to the Board of Supervisors approximately five years ago.

Mr. Bivins said that yes, it did exist. He said that lifestyle changes may be necessary to address these environmental safety issues.

Mr. Missel asked if they should consider, in addition to related chapters and guiding principles, related partnerships in the City and County, such as Resilient Together.

Ms. Swartzendruber said that that was a great idea.

Mr. Clayborne said that he was glad that Mr. Missel had mentioned resiliency, as he believed it was a key concept to consider. He said that he thought it was essential to take a more holistic view of this issue, looking beyond just greenhouse emissions. He said that what they were seeing now was a more comprehensive approach, encompassing carbon, material specifications, and the overall impact on the community. He said that while the Planning Commission may not be able to dictate specific policies, he believed they could shape a culture that prioritized sustainability and circular economy principles.

Mr. Clayborne said that he had also been considering regenerative design, which involved examining a project's impact on the community and the environment in a more holistic manner. He said that this approach could lead to better site design and building design within their limits as a Planning Commission. He said that he would like to explore how their policies and documents could guide this conversation and encourage a more sustainable approach to project development.

Mr. Moore said that his only comment on this was that while he appreciated the emphasis on greenhouse gas emissions and natural systems as forms of resilience, he believed that investing in explicitly prepared activities was crucial. He said that in his view, this infrastructure upgrade was the most important aspect. He said that he had previously stated that even with zero emissions from their vehicles and buildings, they would still not be adequately prepared. He said that therefore, he wanted to ensure that they prioritized being ready for the future.

Mr. Muray said that he believed the key issue was that there were these correlations, which included the impact of climate change on local communities. He said that while it was often assumed that climate change was a global issue that could not be addressed through local efforts, he wanted to highlight that many of the same factors contributing to increasing temperatures also exacerbated the heat island effect, which had a significant impact on their local communities. He said that while they could not prevent massive storms from occurring, they could take steps to prevent people from building in floodplains, thereby reducing the risk of damage and harm to their communities.

Ms. Firehock said that they certainly could, and their County was progressive in that aspect.

Ms. Swartzendruber said that next, she would discuss tracking and reporting. She said that internally, they had been discussing what metrics to track and how to track them. She said that they had agreed to track progress on the big moves they had just discussed. She said that they had also started to develop specific metrics that would provide a comprehensive picture of their progress. She said that their definition of a metric was to show trends and patterns, rather than establishing a target goal. She said that those would be established as part of their strategic planning.

Ms. Swartzendruber said that using the big move #3, which addressed anticipated growth in development areas and activity centers, the specific metrics they may use included increasing the percentage of housing units in development areas within a 15-minute walk of a park, decreasing the number of fatal and severe crashes for cyclists and pedestrians, and the presence of shared use paths and dedicated bike lanes. She said that these metrics would be reported as part of the PC's annual planning report, along with the activities they were accomplishing as part of the implementation.

Ms. Swartzendruber said that the development areas report, detailed in the growth management policy, or part two, would be a periodic evaluation, every five years at a minimum, that assessed transportation levels of service, existing safety issues, and the plan's projected outcomes, including environmental stewardship, water and sewer service, and the feasibility of these services. She said that these were all things they would evaluate every five years, and there was a whole list of those factors in part two that they could review.

Mr. Missel asked if they had an action plan for the outcome of the reporting, such as deciding whether to reassess, implement, or change something as a response to the outcomes.

Ms. Firehock said that an adaptive management approach may be something to consider.

Mr. Barnes said that in five years, when they were re-evaluating the comprehensive plan and reviewing their trend lines, he believed that it would be when they would be able to assess whether their plan was meeting its goals and the actions they had taken over the previous five years were effective. He said that it would be an opportunity to determine what they needed to be doing differently, and they would have some data to support their decisions.

Ms. Firehock said that interim benchmarks could be useful. She said that their County won a planning award for the metrics developed to track the last comprehensive plan.

Mr. Missel said that he thought there may be an opportunity if they were tracking into reporting, as there could be a chance to reassess the situation. He said that he was not certain what level that would be applicable to here.

Ms. Firehock said that if they saw a trend going in the wrong direction, they should not have to wait five years to confirm that.

Mr. Missel said that he thought that there may be ongoing reassessment that could help inform the work that was currently being done.

Mr. Bivins said that the budget would drive this. He said that given that they were about to join a Regional Transit Authority (RTA), that was something that would influence how they realized transportation goals in their Comprehensive Plan. He said that those regional planning efforts would inform and be part of managing this Comprehensive Plan's work.

Ms. Swartzendruber said that they would next take a look at how the AC44 relates to their strategic plan. She said that they had been working closely with the County Office of Performance and Strategic Planning to coordinate and determine how AC44 and the strategic plan intersect. She said that the big moves they established could inform the goals and objectives of the next strategic plan, which would be updated in the coming years, and in the next five years of the Capital Improvement Plan and County budget.

Ms. Swartzendruber said that they also updated the names of topics and definitions, so they were now using the same nomenclature in both documents, and the connections across the documents were clear. She said that as mentioned in the tracking and reporting discussion, AC44 would measure trends and patterns with metrics and specific targets for performance indicators, which would continue to be established as part of the strategic plan effort. She said that currently, staff was working on incorporating all the good feedback and comments they had received from the Planning Commission, the Board of Supervisors, and the public to complete the drafts of each chapter.

Ms. Swartzendruber said that they were aiming for an August release of the draft document, which meant roughly two and a half weeks after that, they would schedule a community check-in, allowing the public to come, provide feedback, ask questions, and then roughly a week after that, they would return to the Planning Commission to gather comments on any part of the document, including parts one and two that may not have been directly available for comment. She said that one question staff would like to ask the Planning Commission was: would they like to take public comment during that work session on August 26, 2025?

Mr. Missel said that it was important to begin with a summary of what the County had done already in terms of engagement and transparency. He said that he wanted to ensure the public had the ability to comment, but they may need to limit it due to time constraints.

Mr. Bivins said that the Community Advisory Committees were effective in gathering input from community members that the Planning Commission and Board may otherwise not hear from. He said that if it was possible to use the CACs to gather public input on the draft, he believed that would be the best avenue for receiving feedback without unduly burdening staff.

Ms. Firehock said that to clarify, the CACs only covered the development areas.

Mr. Missel said that the Commission would think through how to incorporate public comment into review of the draft document.

Mr. Barnes said that there would also be a formal public hearing before they adopted the plan as well.

Ms. Swartzendruber said that on August 26, the Planning Commission would have the opportunity to review the proposed changes. She said that they were currently finalizing the date for the Board review, which would take place in early September. She said that following that, they would move into the full document public hearing, where they would make their final edits and present the revised document to the Planning Commission on September 23. She said that their goal was to earn the recommendation for adoption from the Commission and then move on to the Board for consideration and potential adoption on October 15.

Ms. Swartzendruber said that just to remind the public, they had performed extensive engagement as part of this process, and all of those resources were available on the County website. She said that they would be creating a phase four section soon, and this was also a place where people could sign up for emails and newsletters as they became available. She said that on the final slide were the two questions they would like for people to discuss and provide feedback on. She said that before she turned it over to the Commission for discussion, she would like Mr. Barnes to elaborate on the Comprehensive Plan Amendments process.

Mr. Barnes said that in 2018, the County made a decision to not allow amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and Future Land Use Map (FLUM), which were something that previously allowed private sector entities could request. He said that there was some consideration about reinstating that flexibility, so that the County could at least assess potential developments in that capacity. He said that their intent would be to bring back a process for that.

Ms. Firehock said that she had been unaware that they had eliminated it.

Mr. Barnes said that currently, the only way that proposals like this were brought to the staff, Commission, or Board for review was either through a staff member or a Board member initiating the request. He said that as a property owner, the most effective approach was to reach out to a Board member and have them put the proposal on the agenda for review.

Mr. Missel asked if it could only happen twice per year.

Mr. Barnes said that previously, it was limited to twice a year, when it was a citizen-initiated measure. He said that staff would revisit the process, as circumstances had changed since then. He said that it was possible that they may consider implementing it more frequently. He said that he wanted to bring this to the Commission's attention, as it had been a topic of discussion at the staff level.

Mr. Murray said that he recalled certain proposals brought forward to the Board in the past, such as significant expansions to the development area that were proposed by certain developers. He said that he saw it as a positive thing that they did not receive those proposals anymore, because they ultimately undermined the work of their planning. He said that spending time on ad hoc changes to the development areas was unnecessary. He said that minor changes possibly could

be acceptable, but significant changes to the Comprehensive Plan were inappropriate for that process.

Mr. Murray said that for reference, they had a stream health initiative that began in 2017, acknowledging issues with the Water Protection Ordinance (WPO) that had existed since 2014, and they still had not passed those initiatives. He said that he would expect expansion of the development area to take much more time than passing a new WPO. He said that there needed to be some nuance to those kinds of issues

Mr. Missel said that in his own perspective, he was open to having an amendment process, but he believed it should be somewhat formalized. He said that he did not think there was a perfect plan, and he believed they should be realistic about its limitations. He said that if they created a Comprehensive Plan and assumed it would remain perfect for 20 years, he thought that was being overly optimistic.

Mr. Missel said that there needed to be a method for amending the plan as circumstances changed, including climate change and other factors that were constantly evolving. He said that this should be a careful and intentional process, one that he believed most people would support if they understood its importance. He said that, however, it should not be an administrative process like a site plan; rather, it should be thoughtful and carefully considered, without being overly burdensome.

Mr. Moore said that he believed they were still discussing a process that would require review and approval by the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors. He said that even if someone was proposing a major FLUM or Comprehensive Plan change, there would be a comprehensive review and process. He said that he was amenable to a well-thought-out proposal from a citizen.

Ms. Firehock said that she believed it would require a very high standard to consider.

Mr. Moore said that procedurally, they would typically require a study on that kind of issue in many cases.

Mr. Clayborne said that it was also worth noting that they had a backstop in place. He said that according to law, they were required to revisit this plan every five years. He said that although the document was planning for 20 years, the conversation was effectively restarted every five years, which meant they were likely to be addressing this issue in approximately three and a half years. He said that given that timeline, he believed the gravity of the issue must be extremely high to warrant a FLUM amendment.

Ms. Firehock said that there was an important, defensible reason that something had undergone significant change, then they should not wait to consider an amendment.

Ms. Firehock said that she had three comments, and she would keep them brief. She said that when she read this implementation chapter, she was expecting to see the steps of implementation. She said that however, it appeared to be the strategic priorities chapter. She said that she would suggest labeling it as such, as it would provide a clearer understanding of these top-level priorities and their connections to other important topics in the plan. She said that this would help her, and likely others, better grasp the intent.

Ms. Firehock said that under big moves #3, in the discussion on compact and connected development, they mentioned “inviting” spaces, and she believed the phrase "green and inviting" was essential to their vision, as it was meant to create urban spaces that were compact, walkable, and inviting, with a focus on green spaces and beautiful design. She said that this would help them avoid the negative consequences of creating a concrete jungle and only acknowledge the natural beauty of their rural areas. She said that next, regarding metrics, she would like to see more context provided, as the vehicle miles traveled and population growth metrics could be misleading.

Ms. Firehock said that for instance, even if they achieved improved development that encouraged walkability, general population growth could still lead to increased vehicle miles traveled. She said that she would like there to be more clarity in how they viewed population growth, such as whether they wanted to limit it or continue their focus on ensuring that it occurred in the development area. She said that she would like staff to expand on the importance of considering population growth, whether it was positive or negative, and its impact. She said that she assumed that reducing vehicle miles traveled was a key objective, but it was not clearly explained in the metrics.

Ms. Firehock said that she had some other metrics she would like to be included. She said that they already had a map of their important forest blocks in the County. She said that they had modeled the most critical habitats, so one potential metric could be the percentage of protected habitat cores or forest blocks. She said that on the urban side, a possible metric could be the percentage of tree canopy in development areas, which would require some simple mapping to do. She said that this was particularly relevant when considering climate resiliency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. She said that by preserving and planting large, leafy trees that sequestered carbon, they could also create more pleasant environments.

Ms. Firehock said that she would like to see a percentage of tree canopy in development areas to ensure that these areas did not become completely devoid of green spaces. She said that she also thought it would be beneficial to track acres of parkland per capita, as this was a metric studied by the Trust for Public Lands. She said that she believed they could come up with some additional green-focused benchmarks, considering all that they had discussed. She said that she was happy to work with staff on that.

Mr. Moore said that he wanted to start by acknowledging the effort that had gone into synthesizing the presented ideas and the thought that had been put into them. He said that he believed that, overall, in terms of big moves, he thought all of six of them were good moves. He said that he wanted to ensure they addressed fundamental human needs. He said that the six suggestions addressed two of the four core human needs well, particularly in the areas of physical safety and economic security. He said that however, he thought there was a gap in addressing the other two core human needs, which were often associated with the private sphere but were actually supported by public infrastructure.

Mr. Moore said that these needs included the need for belonging, to be heard, and to be understood, as well as the need to experience beauty and transcendence, particularly in the company of others. He said that the big moves did not address these two very important human needs. He said that for him, arts and parks were crucial in strengthening the social fabric and cultural life of their community. He said that making this a focus would be beneficial, particularly given the current, widespread fraying of social connections and the prevalence of depression and

loneliness. He said that their community should be one that prioritized belonging and beauty in life.

Mr. Moore said that big moves #2 and #5 addressed affordable housing access and options, as well as economic opportunity, but they were limited to making zoning and land use changes in order for private investors and developers to create their own visions. He said that he thought these were key areas where public investment would be essential. He said that managing land use alone would not be sufficient to drive these changes, and that robust public investment in housing and economic development would be necessary. He said that considering this approach as part of their descriptions in this plan seemed like the right path forward.

Mr. Clayborne said that he wanted to thank staff for their hard work. He said that he echoed his fellow Commissioners on this matter. He said that starting with question one, he did think that overall, they got the big moves right. He said that one thing that caught his attention was the way they approached this process, in which they used two lenses: climate and equity. He said that he thought climate was well-represented, particularly with #6. He said that, however, equity was somewhat absent and should be more explicit. He said that the guiding principles, which included climate and equity, then the four related chapters which were green and resilient, welcoming and equitable, connected and accessible, and thriving and prosperous.

Mr. Clayborne said that he would recommend that the language used in these six big moves be clear and unambiguous, so there was no misunderstanding about their relationship to the four guiding principles. He said that there should be a clear thread of how everything tied together. He said that this was the first time they had looked at this as a whole after working on individual sections for multiple years. He said that he had also noted that there were 250 steps or actions across nine disciplines. He said that his rhetorical question was whether they should try to prioritize and consolidate these actions and potentially eliminate some.

Mr. Clayborne said that he was not sure what the magic number was, but 250 was a flag for him. He said that he commended the efforts made in community engagement; however, he wondered if the number of people touched was worth the effort. He said that perhaps they could adopt a rolling clock strategy, where they collected data at regular intervals, rather than waiting until the next comprehensive plan process to do all of their engagement events.

Mr. Murray said that to reiterate, staff had heard some of the metrics he previously discussed, and he agreed with Ms. Firehock that they needed more data to measure their environmental services. He said that he thought it was essential to consider metrics like stream buffers and agriculture to explore whether they should be part of a broader section focused on rural areas. He said that alternatively, they could break it down into separate sections, such as a rural area economic section or one that encompassed both environmental services and rural tourism.

Mr. Murray said that he recalled that when he participated in the Blue Ridge Marathon, the organizers provided an economic impact report, which calculated the event's economic benefit to be $1.7 million. He said that he thought the County should strive to obtain similar reports for other outdoor activities and events. He said that by doing so, they could better understand the economic benefits of these activities and make more informed decisions. He said that in the context of the Comprehensive Plan, he believed a new needs assessment was warranted. He said that the best metric for measuring their success would be to compare their achievements against this

assessment, ensuring they were meeting the community's needs for community gathering spaces.

Mr. Bivins said that in his view, part of what he was hearing here was that there were multiple agencies between jurisdictions that produced reports like this. He said that although he was not certain that the County would typically receive this information, he could say where that information was. He said that the conversation seemed to be centered around what the Planning Commission's work would look like after the Comprehensive Plan was completed, as the Comprehensive Plan had consumed a significant amount of their effort. He said that he was wondering what that effort would look like in a post-Comprehensive Plan time.

Mr. Bivins said that he was not trying to describe what that looked like, but he was suggesting that he thought they would miss the Comprehensive Plan next year. He said that he was wondering what would inform the work of the Planning Commission. He said that in the second paragraph of this chapter, they began to use terms that could be confusing to someone unfamiliar with local government planning processes. He said that they began referring to “developers,” when they really were referring specifically to real estate developers. He said that additionally, they mentioned “districts,” but form-based code did not pertain to districts. He said that since this was meant to be a comprehensive document, he felt it was important to be specific and clear in their language.

Mr. Bivins said that furthermore, the Comprehensive Plan should provide bureaucratic predictability. He said that someone using the County’s system should be able to clearly see the path forward in the process. He said that they needed to be able to handle every level of development in the County, so their planning process and bureaucracy needed to be accessible regardless of who engaged.

Mr. Murray said that he recalled sitting down with a developer some time ago to discuss improvements to protecting water quality. He said that the developer told him that he did not care what regulations they had as long as they were consistent.

Mr. Bivins said that he was questioning how they created a connected Albemarle County. He said that he did not want there to be so much tension between rural and developed Albemarle; wherever someone parked their car, they should have the same passion for this place, and no one should feel like they were unwelcome or that it was difficult to live here. He said that he hoped the Comprehensive Plan would create a way to talk about the place they wanted to create, rather than the ways they wanted to divide different parts of it.

Ms. Firehock said that there was one element that she did not think was explicitly mentioned but was relevant to the big moves chapter. She said that given their aging population, she was concerned that their affordable housing options were limited. She said that the Colonnades and other facilities were available, but they came with an exorbitant monthly rent that was unaffordable for many, including herself. She said that she would never be able to afford to live there in retirement. She said that she was reminded of this when Mr. Bivins mentioned big developers, who often catered to a wealthier demographic.

Ms. Firehock said that the reality was that most people could not afford those types of facilities; they were too expensive. She said that she had conducted a survey for an elderly friend who needed a place to live, and the only affordable option she found was in Roanoke. She said that

her friend would have to leave all of her friends and family behind to live there, relying on Social Security and limited resources. She said that this highlighted the importance of helping people age in place and remain in their homes, which was not only cost-effective but also beneficial for their mental health and community ties.

Ms. Firehock said that in the context of transportation, the services provided by JAUNT, such as pickups and drop-offs to UVA Health and grocery stores, were crucial for people who needed to access these services. She said that it was essential to consider how they could support their aging population in a way that was affordable, accessible, and promoted community well-being. She said that the point she wanted to make was that she thought they needed to address this issue because she did not want this County to become a place where only people who were wealthy could age there. She said that she wanted to request that staff consider how to include explicit language related to the County's responsibility to their aged residents and their needs in the Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Murray said that there were other models of care in the community that he would like to bring to attention. He said that for example, Innisfree Village was a notable example of a care community that successfully met the needs of individuals with developmental disabilities. He said that this model allowed people to age in place and live out their lives with the support of volunteers. He said that several such communities existed in Albemarle County, but they did not fit neatly into their planning because they were a very specific use. He said that his wife worked at Innisfree, so he had a personal understanding of this issue. He said that he would like to see the County allow those uses by-right rather than requiring special exceptions. He said that he believed that by doing so, they could avoid the difficulties that some of these communities had faced, such as navigating complex regulations and consider on-site retirement options for their volunteers, who eventually reached the same age as the residents.

Mr. Missel said that he would try to summarize some of the major points he had heard from other Commissioners. He said that Ms. Firehock had suggested retitling the implementation chapter to be called the strategic prioritization plan. He said that he personally thought that implementation was more fitting, and part of the plan was strategic prioritization, but this chapter was the way to implement it.

Mr. Missel said that with big moves, he thought they were captured well. He said that regarding metrics, he would agree with his colleagues that the "green" aspect was important to factor in. He said that he believed this was a vast simplification of a master plan, and he believed this was a step forward in streamlining and simplifying their process. He said that this plan was a great resource because it was connected to so many other initiatives and documents in the County, so he thought it was important to promote it. He said that thinking through the Comprehensive Plan Amendments process, they had the study, prioritize, investment, promotion, measurement, and then the reporting. He said that then, they had adjust, reassess, and engage.

Mr. Missel said that they certainly should celebrate the completion of this document, but it was an ongoing thing. He said that community engagement should undoubtedly be an ongoing part of it as well. He said that he wanted to encourage everyone to consider what that may entail, although he was unsure at this time.

Committee Reports

Ms. Firehock said that the Historic Preservation Committee met and was working on a speaker series, with a different topic each month. She said that the events would likely be held in this room. She said that unfortunately, she was unable to share the variety of topics lined up, as she had been locked out of her County email for the past three weeks. She said that she would send the information about these free events when she could. She said that the goal was to bring history to life, and there was co-sponsorship from a local business. She thought this would be a valuable opportunity for historic preservationists and the general public alike.

Mr. Missel said that he had recently noticed many of the historic markers around the County and was wondering if there was a way to provide simpler information for markers, like a QR code or something similar.

Ms. Firehock said that the Historic Preservation Committee would be developing a historic marker nomination process. She said that additionally, they would be considering forgotten areas of the County where historic sites had gone unrecognized or underrepresented. She said that they were waiting for the Comprehensive Plan to be completed before initiating this new program.

Mr. Murray said that the Crozet CAC met on June 11, during which they held a community meeting about Windy Knoll, a proposed development in Crozet. He said that the community provided valuable feedback, with one of the main concerns being stormwater management. He said that given the neighboring community's existing issues with stormwater, addressing this was a significant consideration, along with other issues such as screening.

Mr. Murray said that the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Tech Committee met, which reviewed a transportation demand management study to gather data on alternative transportation usage. He said that they planned to use streetlight data to inform their analysis, as well as Strava data. He said that he was excited about this initiative, as it would provide actual pedestrian data, a topic he had discussed previously. He said that additionally, they heard from Charlottesville Area Transit (CAT) about their initiative to accommodate electric buses. He said that however, this required additional space to charge the buses. He said that also, Move Safely Blue Ridge presented their goal to reduce total fatalities by half by 2045, and they discussed various principles to achieve this, including engineering enforcement, spot improvements, and systemic improvements.

Mr. Moore said that the Rio 29 CAC met recently, during which they discussed their watch list of ongoing construction projects. He said that for those who regularly drove on Rio or the parkway, it was worth noting that the Belvedere green-T and Charlottesville Area Technical Education Center (CATEC) roundabout were scheduled to begin construction this fall, with completion expected two years later. He said that this would likely cause some disruptions in the area, but it was still a ways off.

Mr. Moore said that Matt Wertman from Albemarle County Public Schools presented on their capital projects, which were currently in the process of being implemented. He said that specifically, Center II on Lambs Lane Campus was now being redubbed as Ace Academy. He said that they had a discussion about this and had asked why the new location would not provide more space so they could get students out of trailers. He said that the response was that there was not a budget for it.

Mr. Moore said that additionally, Mountain View Upper Elementary, located on the south end of their development area, was also expected to come online. He said that he would like to share a personal observation regarding the data presented by Mr. Wertman. He said that currently, they had 60 classrooms in trailers across the County. He said that at any given time, there were approximately 1,200 students in trailers throughout the County. He said that even if the trailers were not outright miserable, they were inefficient and known to be a subpar learning environment.

Ms. Firehock said that she hoped their local tax increases would provide revenues for new school construction.

Mr. Bivins said that he hoped that in the future the state would allow localities to hold a referendum on a 1% sales tax to dedicate to school construction, so that if the referendum passed in Albemarle, they could get that tax revenue from the 1% sales tax instead of property taxes.

Review of Board of Supervisors Meeting: June 18, 2025

Mr. Barnes said that June 18 was a lengthy Board meeting that took place in the evening. He said that there were items that he believed would be of interest to the Commission. He said that firstly, the Field School had their extended deadline for their SUP was unanimously approved. He said that secondly, the Planning Commission had received a salary increase this year, rising from $7,685 to $7,996, resulting in an additional $231 for the upcoming fiscal year.

New Business

Mr. Barnes asked if the Planning Commission would consider canceling the July 22, 2025, and adjourn to the August 12, 2025, meeting, as they had no imminent public hearings scheduled.
Mr. Bivins motioned that the Planning Commission cancel the July 22, 2025, Planning Commission meeting. Ms. Firehock seconded the motion, which carried (6-0). (Mr. Carrazana was absent.)

Mr. Missel motioned that the Planning Commission cancel the August 12, 2025, Planning Commission meeting. Mr. Moore seconded the motion, which carried (6-0). (Mr. Carrazana was absent.)

Old Business

There was none.

Items for follow-up

There were none.

Adjournment

At 9:12 p.m., the Commission adjourned to August 26, 2025, Albemarle County Planning Commission meeting, 6:00 p.m.

Michael Barnes, Director of Planning

(Recorded by Carolyn S. Shaffer, Clerk to Planning Commission & Planning Boards; transcribed by Golden Transcription Services)

Approved by Planning Commission
Date:
Initials: