Albemarle County Planning Commission
Regular Meeting and Presentation
Draft Minutes November 18, 2025

The Albemarle County Planning Commission held a public meeting on Tuesday, November 18, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.

Members attending were Fred Missel, Chair; Luis Carrazana, Vice-Chair; Julian Bivins; Corey Clayborne; Nathan Moore; Lonnie Murray.

Members absent: Karen Firehock.

Other officials present were Michael Barnes, Director of Planning; Kevin McDermott; Syd Shoaf; Lea Brumfield; Rebecca Ragsdale; Francis MacCall; Jodie Filardo; Bart Svoboda; Andrea Ruege, County Attorney; and Carolyn Shaffer, Clerk to the Planning Commissions.

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 on this agenda

There were none.

Consent Agenda

Mr. Clayborne motioned that the Planning Commission approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Mr. Murray seconded the motion, which carried unanimously (6-0). (Ms. Firehock was absent.)

Public Hearing

SP-2025-00004 Northridge Preschool

Syd Shoaf, Senior Planner II, said that he would be giving staff's presentation for the Special Use Permit SP-2025-00004 Northridge Preschool. He said that this request sought to amend an existing special use permit to increase the total enrollment and hours of operation for a preschool. He said that the subject property, located at 5100 Dickerson Road, spanned approximately 9.92 acres and was situated approximately 1.5 miles south of the County line with Greene County, just north of the Route 29 Development Area.

Mr. Shoaf said that the property was zoned Rural Areas and was designated as such in the Comprehensive Plan. He said that the surrounding properties were also zoned for Rural Areas and included other religious assembly uses and single-family residences. He said that the subject property was home to the Northridge Community Church of Nazarene, which had been first approved by a special use permit in 2000, and the preschool had been established in 2003. He said that an active special use permit, approved in 2006, allowed for a maximum enrollment of 80 students.

Mr. Shoaf said that the applicants requested to increase the student enrollment to 100 students and extend the hours of operation from 7:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. He said that the special use permit application had been reviewed under the factors for consideration outlined in the Zoning Ordinance. He said that staff believed that the proposed special use permit would not negatively impact adjacent parcels, alter the character of the nearby area, or conflict with the Rural Area Zoning District, and concluded that the proposed permit was consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Shoaf said that three conditions were recommended for the application, two related to the applicant's proposal and the third being a carryover from the previously approved special use permit. He said that the intent of the latter condition was to preserve the existing woodland on the property. He said that in sum, there were three positive aspects to the proposal: it aligned with the review criteria for special use permits in the Zoning Ordinance, provided a preschool and daycare option for community members, and did not anticipate detrimental impacts to adjoining properties. He said that staff found no concerns and recommended approval of the special use permit with the conditions as outlined in the staff report.

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

Debbie Swanson, Director of the Northridge Preschool, said that she would like to take a moment to provide an overview of their preschool and the purpose of their request. She said that their preschool was a religious-exempt child day center serving children from three to six years of age. She said that they strived to create a safe and nurturing environment that supported children's social, emotional, cognitive, physical, and kindergarten readiness needs.

Ms. Swanson said that they were requesting approval for an addendum to their current special use permit, which would allow them to increase their student enrollment from 80 to 100 students and extend their hours from 7:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. She said that this extension was essential for them to meet the growing demand from local families, ensuring compliance with County planning and safety standards, and ensuring their long-term operations aligned with the County's developmental goals.

Ms. Swanson said that just this past week, Dr. Jason Grant from Albemarle County Public Schools (ACPS) had announced that they had recently added classrooms, and she was pleased to see the growing recognition of the need for high-quality early education in their area. She said that parents often reported challenges in finding accessible quality childcare, with long wait lists for local programs. She said that they aimed to address this need by providing a reliable and quality program that supported school readiness with strong early literacy and pre-math foundations.

Ms. Swanson said that ACPS had also noted that research had shown that 90% of brain development occurred before age five, making early education crucial for a child's life foundation. She said that they wanted to partner with the County to ensure that as many children as possible had access to a quality program. She said that community stability was vital, and they had carefully designed their operations to minimize the impact on the neighborhood. She said that they had staggered their drop-off and pickup times and scheduled outdoor play times so they would not disturb neighbors.

Ms. Swanson said that safety was their top priority, with fenced outdoor playgrounds and strict supervision. She said that approving this request would bring several community benefits, including increased access to early education, support for local employers and the workforce, and a positive economic impact through their employment of staff and welcoming new members. She

said that they believed that their preschool was an essential part of the County's family-friendly infrastructure, and they were committed to serving the community.

Mr. Missel asked if Commissioners had any questions for the applicant.

Mr. Bivins said that he did not think the preschool would be disturbing any of their neighbors, considering there were only three churches in the area. He said that he also noticed on the church's website that they already offered a full-day program from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. He asked if the request before the Commission this evening was meant to bring that program into compliance.

Ms. Swanson said that that was correct.

Mr. Bivins said that that made sense. He said that he further was trying to understand the classroom setup. He said that based on the information provided, the census never exceeded 10 children per day in each classroom, so they would always be at 80 students. He said that he did not understand the request to increase enrollment to 100 students unless some of the existing classrooms would accommodate more than 10 students.

Ms. Swanson said that if they increased enrollment, they hoped to utilize more of the building.

Mr. Bivins said that he would recommend to the applicant that they clearly state that to the Board of Supervisors when this item was presented to them. He said that it was not immediately evident to him in the materials provided this evening, which made him question why this request was being made at all. He said that Ms. Swanson's answer was helpful and important to note.

Ms. Swanson said that that was good to know, and she thanked Mr. Bivins for the suggestion.

Mr. Bivins said that an additional concern he wanted to bring up was the fact that the applicant asserted that they served a diverse population of County children but had not presented any evidence to confirm it. He asked that they consider that as part of their presentation of this request, especially since their main goal was to help the entire community.

Mr. Clayborne said that as a father with two young kids and two working parents, he appreciated the importance of these types of proposals, especially offering a program extending from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. He said that he was curious to know what drove the 100-student cap for this program. He asked if it was related to the capacity of the facility itself or if it was more about their growth projections.

Ms. Swanson said that it was a limitation of the current facility itself. She said that in order to accommodate more students than what they were requesting here, it would require extensive renovations. She said that the actual space itself could allow them to add 10 children per available classroom, for a total of 20 additional children.

Mr. Bivins said that he had one final suggestion related to the space constraints for this program. He said that there was another church across the street that could potentially be used for additional classroom capacity, so he would ask the applicant to consider collaborating with that church in order to fully meet the community's needs.

Ms. Swanson said that it was a great idea.

Mr. Missel asked if any members of the public wished to speak on this item. Seeing none, he closed the public hearing and the matter rested with the Commission.

Mr. Moore said that this proposal was fine and very straightforward. He said that he would like to bring to the attention of the Board of Supervisors for future consideration the extent to which they had privatized preschools, which should be a public good. He said that while he acknowledged that private preschools like this one were excellent institutions, research had consistently shown that early childhood education was crucial for brain development, social readiness, and learning outcomes.

Mr. Moore said that the County had not invested their tax resources into providing early childhood education programs. He said that they had Bright Stars, but that was a very limited program. He said that there were extensive waiting lists for preschool programs everywhere, and he would like to see their community move in a more progressive direction, treating their children as a public investment and a public good, and allocating sufficient resources to support this critical need.

Mr. Bivins said that there was also an economic benefit to what Mr. Moore had suggested. He said that there were economic advantages to offering a full suite of opportunities to people coming to the community. He said that this was not a partisan issue, but rather a matter of doing what was good for the community, particularly for the children and families who would benefit from these opportunities.

Mr. Murray motioned that the Planning Commission recommend approval of SP-2025-00004 Northridge Preschool, with the conditions stated in the staff report. Mr. Carrazana seconded the motion, which carried unanimously (6-0).

Presentation

ZTA202200002 Zoning Modernization Phase Updates

Lea Brumfield, Senior Planner II, said that she was pleased to present an update on the Zoning Modernization project. She said that AC44 was recently adopted, and staff was now working diligently to incorporate it into the Ordinance. She said that today's presentation would be an information-sharing update on how that was coming about. She said that to begin, she would briefly review the project goals, which had been simplified into four objectives. She said that these objectives were: to rewrite the Ordinance for clarity and ease of use, to streamline administrative processes for efficiency and staff and legislative body time, to align the ordinance with the AC44 Comprehensive Plan, and to update the Ordinance to meet modern best practices.

Ms. Brumfield said that the first phase of the project, the foundation phase, was now complete. She said that in this phase, the team had worked with the Berkeley Group, a local governmental consulting agency, to consult with staff, the development community, and stakeholders through interviews. She said that they also conducted two-on-two sessions with Planning Commission members and reviewed the Zoning Ordinance against best practices and the project goals. She said that this resulted in a lengthy Zoning Ordinance evaluation document.

Ms. Brumfield said that their team then drafted new articles of the Ordinance, establishing a consistent language pattern, tone, and format structure. She said that they also condensed and simplified administrative processes where possible, involving each Community Development team involved in the application. She said that at the end of the drafting process, the four new articles were presented to their legislative bodies and approved by the Board of Supervisors. She said that those four articles were available on the Engage Albemarle website.

Ms. Brumfield said that to recap, the four articles drafted in this phase were: Article 1, General Provisions, which established the authority of the Ordinance; Article 2, which established the authority of each individual body involved in administering the Ordinance; Article 3, which outlined

the applications and permits that could be applied for and the processes for each; and Article 10, which outlined nonconformities. She said that the revised sections, resulting from the changes and reorganization made, all followed a similar basic structure.

Ms. Brumfield said that this provided excellent logical consistency, starting with the intent or purpose of the section, followed by modifications or waivers, and then specific details for each individual topic. She said that as needed, different sections may have additional regulations added or subsets of sections, but the overall regulatory architecture remained consistent. She said that they had applied this Ordinance architecture to the proposed revisions for the Rio 29 Form-Based Code, which would be presented to the Commission in January.

Ms. Brumfield said that the zoning modernization team had a strong overlap with the Rio 29 Form-Based Code work. She said that the Ordinance followed the same tone, language style, and structure that had been previously outlined. She said that she had condensed sections from the draft article from phase one and the draft form-based code to highlight the similarities. She said that although the numbering scheme was different, the form-based code was following the existing numbering format. She said that when they transitioned to the new overall format, the numbers would simply be changed without significant changes to the form-based code itself.

Ms. Brumfield said that now that phase one was completed, phase two would begin and focus mainly on format modernization. She said that this phase aimed to modernize the format, with a focus on language and a small amount of content. She said that by completing this phase, the team would have rewritten the ordinance for clarity and ease of use. She said that at the end of phase two, they anticipated adoption of a fully rewritten Ordinance with clearer language, a more logical and navigable format, and simpler administrative processes. She said that however, phase two did not include the majority of substantive regulatory changes, which would be addressed in phase three.

Ms. Brumfield said that phase two did include rewriting and reorganizing the Ordinance for clarity and ease of use. She said that one example was reorganizing their lists of uses across districts into tables that spanned multiple districts and were easier to review. She said that staff had been working on these tables for the past two to three months. She said that the example on the screen was for format review only and was not yet completed, but it illustrated an easier-to-read view of the information, with increased clarity on whether a use was by right, required administrative review, or was only permitted as an accessory use.

Ms. Brumfield said that the new format also included cleaner, consistent naming of uses across districts. She said that furthermore, staff had been reorganizing and rewriting language in the current Ordinance for clarity and ease of use. She said that for example, supplemental regulations were being reorganized into performance use standards and grouped to make them simpler to access, performance use standards for residential uses, for instance, would be under Division 7.3, whereas all recreational use standards would be grouped under Division 7.4.

Ms. Brumfield said that while they were reorganizing the sections, they were rewriting the language for clarity and brevity, without substantially changing the regulations themselves. She said that for example, the current language, a paragraph of text became a list of steps, which was much clearer and easier to follow. She said that these kinds of updates would be applied to the entire Ordinance, intended to be adopted at the culmination of phase two of this project, providing a fresh slate for the ordinance. She said that additionally, phase two would likely include some smaller regulatory changes.

Ms. Brumfield said that the next slide highlighted a few of the types they were considering rolling into this phase. She said that these changes included codifications of regular practice, straightforward adoption of industry standard regulations, and other updates. She said that however, these changes were not finalized in their plan and would be discussed in more detail in a later work session. She said that phase three of the Zoning Modernization project was the regulatory modernization phase. She said that this phase aligned the Zoning Ordinance with AC44 and updated regulations for modern best practices.

Ms. Brumfield said that the newly adopted AC44 Comprehensive Plan was a weighty and important document. She said that staff had engaged the public extensively throughout this process, and the culmination of that work included numerous actions and goals for the community as a whole, spanning every department across the County government. She said that however, one of the direct ways to implement the Comp Plan was through the Zoning Ordinance. She said that the Zoning Modernization team was working closely with the AC44 team to determine how these goals and actions would be implemented, and which priorities would take priority in the Zoning Modernization project.

Ms. Brumfield said that one of the big moves listed in the Implementation Chapter of the Comp Plan was to align regulations with AC44. She said that specific changes that might be prioritized in this project included increasing permissions for missing middle housing, allowing mixed-use districts in previously commercial-only districts, and allowing additional Rural Area-conducive businesses to operate with administrative approval and performance standards. She said that bigger, larger changes like these were being considered.

Ms. Brumfield said that Zoning staff was working closely with AC44 staff to prioritize the dozens of AC44 Zoning Ordinance recommended actions into a list of short, medium, and long-term actions. She said that this prioritization list would be presented for approval by the Board of Supervisors, at which point Zoning Modernization would implement those changes in phase three. She said that it should be noted that the AC44 team was also working on other initiatives to address the Comprehensive Plan goals and actions not within the Zoning Modernization project; they were working closely with those staff members to ensure their initiatives meshed well and moved forward concurrently.

Ms. Brumfield said that they currently had a target date of early spring 2026 to receive approval on those implementation plans and start moving forward with the regulatory changes. She said that phase three would incorporate several initiatives that staff, developers and Commissioners had been discussing for years, including updating parking regulations to best practices, simplifying and codifying sign regulations, and establishing minimum sizes and standards for tree wells and landscaping. She said that these changes would be informed by the best planning practices across Virginia and the planning field in general.

Ms. Brumfield said that she would review the timeline for these project phases. She said that the Planning Commission had been provided with handouts that were also available on the Engage site, which would provide more information on this project. She said that the project had two phases currently underway, with the first phase focused on rewriting without substantive changes, aiming for adoption in fall 2026. She said that however, while they were rewriting, they were also reviewing and refining the regulations and filing them for further work as progress was made through phase three, the regulation modernization phase.

Ms. Brumfield said that for example, they were reviewing the uses lists and reformatting them into their preferred table layout, rewriting the language associated with those uses into clear language; they intended to adopt the newly formatted use tables in fall 2026. She said that while they drafted

the new Ordinance, they would identify changes that required regulatory updates. She said that this was how they were working on the two phases simultaneously. She said that once they received direction on prioritization, the staff-level review would guide the work with topic-based focus groups, leading to their newly drafted substantive changes to the Ordinance.

Ms. Brumfield said that their goal for incorporating regulatory changes into the clean, formatted Ordinance was around early 2028. She said that the staggered approach to their milestones allowed for a faster delivery of the new Ordinance, providing overall clarity and user-friendliness at a more convenient pace for those who wanted to start projects quickly, while allowing necessary time for research and engagement on topics that required more in-depth discussions and engagement. She said that in her previous experience with zoning text amendments, it involved an iterative process.

Ms. Brumfield said that by building this iteration into their project timeline, they were allowing continuous progress and project learning throughout that iteration, which should create efficiency in their use of staff time and hopefully legislative body time as well. She said that they would be working on a broad public information sharing engagement strategy, with general information shared in Albemarle County news, social media, and both the general County website and their Engage site. She said that they would keep the general public informed on progress, while emphasizing understanding the hows and whys of rewriting the Zoning Ordinance and how it was applied.

Ms. Brumfield said that one of the things they were looking forward to was a lunch and learn series, with an official name still to be determined. She said that they would take suggestions for the name. She said that following the robust general public engagement of the Comprehensive Plan, which provided them with County-level broad goals, the Zoning Modernization project was focusing on targeted engagement, working with topic experts to write the Ordinance, to inform staff as they wrote the ordinance, as outlined in the broad goals of the Comprehensive Plan.

Ms. Brumfield hey were working closely with their Communications and Public Engagement (CAPE) team to build topic-focused focus groups, and they would be helping them throughout this process with their engagement efforts across the board. She said that they would also have numerous legislative work sessions to answer questions and receive feedback throughout. She said that from a bird's eye view, she would review the next steps for this work.

Ms. Brumfield said that staff will continue to work on permitted uses tables, general formatting and language rewrites, and the overall reorganization of the Ordinance. She said that their project engagement and education will be ongoing throughout, and they will be working to determine which of the AC44 regulatory changes and best planning practices will be encompassed in this project, with a target timeline of figuring that out around February or March of 2026. She said that they will be working on topic-based discussions and legislative topic review throughout the project, starting probably in the spring or summer of 2026, and just for awareness, they were looking at an update similar to this one in about a year, in November 2026.

Ms. Brumfield said that they would have other meetings in the interim, but she wanted to ask everyone to mark their calendars. She said that as they moved forward, she was very excited to bring forward what she believed would be an amazing new Ordinance and a great step for the County.

Mr. Murray said that he wanted to address the call-out for streamlined administrative processes. He said that it was possible that by streamlining, they could inadvertently create loopholes in their regulations. He asked how streamlining would be balanced with addressing community needs,

such as environmental regulations. He said that he would also like to know how they planned to ensure the right stakeholders were part of the process.

Ms. Brumfield said that the streamlining that they were discussing had already been largely incorporated into the Ordinance drafts. She said that this process was primarily administrative, as it simplified the application process by consolidating different types of applications into a single application type. She said that for example, their Civic Access and EPNL project, which was currently being worked out, had already been implemented and was available to the public as part of their regular process.

Ms. Brumfield said that in their draft Article 3, their development community was excited about the proposed change to condense their site plan processes into a generalized site plan. She said that this would skip the initial review for simpler processes. She said that for those involving intensive grading or Architectural Review Board (ARB) reviews, the initial review was still required. She said that for more straightforward projects, the same reviews would happen in a single site plan review, eliminating the need for two separate applications and review processes. She said that this change effectively cut the process in half for many applications, saving staff time without compromising the quality of the review.

Mr. Murray said that he appreciated the great clarification. He said that on page 10, there appeared to be a suggestion that they would differentiate rural and urban uses as they went through this. He asked if that was a true statement that they would be breaking out some rural uses further than they currently were.

Ms. Brumfield said that currently, on page 10 what they had was just lists of uses, and in many cases, the same use was listed in the Rural Area and residential districts because they were treated the same across all districts, such as single-family homes. She said that they were treated the same in all the different districts. She said that the RA list here was essentially a copy of the list they currently had, presented in a table format.

Mr. Murray said that he would encourage breaking out specific uses, such as agricultural processing plants. He asked if they currently had that as a classification.

Ms. Brumfield said that yes, she believed the classification was currently called fruit and produce packing plants.

Mr. Murray said that he thought anytime they could break things out like that, it would be beneficial. He said that he was thinking about how there were certain areas in their Rural Area that were zoned Industrial, and they probably should be classified as something else. He said that if there was an opportunity to look at that and create a clearer, more specialized classification of some of those properties, that would be a positive thing.

Ms. Brumfield said that she was unsure of the exact timing of it, but the Long-Range Planning Team was going to be working on a Rural Area Plan, so she thought that would be encompassed in that work. She said that parts of that would overlap with the Zoning Modernization project as well but definitely would be talked about a lot with the Rural Area Plan.

Mr. Murray said that that was great and answered the other question he had.

Mr. Clayborne asked for more information about community engagement with this project. He asked if they had specific goals in terms of improving community outreach and whether there were lessons learned from the AC44 community engagement work that could inform their outreach methods with this Zoning Modernization project.

Ms. Brumfield said that one of the key differences lay in the application of the target for this project. She said that the AC44 initiative was a broad target, aiming to engage every voice in the community, as it was a Comprehensive Plan covering the widest possible range of topics. She said that in contrast, the topics they were currently working on were more focused. She said that she did not think that a 2,000-person survey on the optimal size of tree wells for plants in their streetscapes would be an effective use of their time. She said that she believed staff could achieve their goals with expert-level, topic-focused groups, where they would be sharing information and gathering insights. She said that she also believed they could work with their CAPE team to determine the best way to implement those lessons there.

Mr. Bivins asked if staff anticipated developing Form-Based Codes beyond just the Rio 29 Form-Based Code.

Mr. Barnes said that as they worked on the Rio 29 Form-Based Code, staff was trying to make it something that could be replicable. He said that whether or not it would actually be replicable would be a decision they would have to make.

Mr. Bivins said that there was no use going through the exercise if it was not encouraging people to use the Code by the end. He said that when looking at the 29 Code, it seemed like it was good in theory but would not actually be able to happen. He said that it was important to encourage what they expected to happen there. He said that one of the Supervisors often talked about doing an arts overlay district in the Jack Jouett District but finding the way to accomplish that was the challenge. He said that he wanted to emphasize that they should be thoughtful in terms of what they were encouraging down the road, as opposed to the exercise of creating Form-Based Code.

Mr. Bivins said that he wanted to also address the topic experts they would be engaging as part of this Zoning Modernization process. He asked if staff could elaborate on that a bit more.

Ms. Brumfield said that they would be working with the Communications team on that. She said that she thought they would be providing expert advice on how to group people and how to find the best range of voices they wanted for relevant feedback.

Mr. Bivins said that he mostly wanted to clarify that they would be experts from within the County organization and outside of it.

Ms. Brumfield said that yes, staff had a fantastic breadth of knowledge they could provide, but they would be looking for that information outside of County staff as well.

Mr. Bivins said that he saw mention of a Monticello historic district in the staff presentation, and he would like to address that topic. He said that they did not currently have a Monticello historic district; they had a Southern Rural Historic District. He said that Monticello also relied on their viewshed being protected but acknowledged that that was not a County-designated feature. He said that he wanted to request staff to be disciplined in their approach to addressing Monticello in the context of this work. He said that Monticello was run through a nonprofit organization, meaning they were tax-exempt save for some ancillary tourism, food, and sales taxes.

Mr. Bivins asked staff to maintain the County's power to create the development and the environment that they wanted their residents to live in, as opposed to what the Monticello organization may want the County to be in order to support their monument to Thomas Jefferson. He said that to reiterate, he would like for staff to be clear in their reference to the Southern Rural Historic District and to not mention Monticello in those terms.

Mr. Carrazana said that he appreciated Ms. Brumfield's presentation and the level of detail she had provided. He said that staff was well-versed in the Commission's focus on increasing density in their discussions during the AC44 process and emphasizing the importance of not leaving density on the table over the past decade. He said that his question was, how were they approaching this process in terms of density?

Mr. Carrazana said that this was an opportunity to implement meaningful strategies, considering how to avoid missing out on opportunities and instead encourage density, adaptive reuse, and infill. He said that some of those key terms were mentioned in staff report, but he would like to know how they planned to put teeth behind these concepts to ensure they did not lose opportunities for densification. He said that he would like to know how they planned to achieve density by going up and not out.

Ms. Brumfield said that that was the focus of what they would be working on in phase three. She said that the key question was how to turn those goals into actual reality. She said that they would need to start discussing concrete steps to achieve those goals, rather than just setting ambitious objectives. She said that this would help them move from a visionary approach to a more practical and actionable plan. She said that as a result, density would likely be one of the primary goals that emerged from their work in the spring.

Ms. Brumfield said that they had all been hearing about density over and over again, and it made sense given the context and especially since it was a best planning practice. She said that in terms of their timeline, it would be between early and late 2026 when they had those conversations, and this would be the stage where they would be generating ideas and having conversations about that.

Mr. Carrazana said that the Commission had previously discussed the concept of opening the doors for density and how to achieve it. He said that clearly, incentives were necessary. He said that he also believed that they needed to incorporate partners into the discussion. He said that they must determine how the County could partner with developers, private entities, and other organizations. He said that they were currently in an opportunity where Albemarle County was poised to become home to major companies.

Mr. Carrazana said that he thought it was essential to explore how these companies could partner with them to open up opportunities for higher density, infill projects, and adaptive reuse. He said that with more, larger partners at the table in the next few years, they would have a stronger foundation for developing the infrastructure they needed and achieving the desired density throughout the span of AC44.

Mr. Barnes said that part of the Zoning Ordinance would address this issue. He said that regulations could be put in place to allow for density. He said that he believed that Mr. Carrazana was referring to other incentives that facilitated density, such as partnerships or measures that encouraged certain developments.

Mr. Carrazana said that the issues that consistently arose were related to schools, transportation, and road improvements, and public infrastructure in general. He said that these were the primary limitations to development in certain areas. He said that this was a recurring theme. He said that to move forward, they needed to bring partners to the table, get ahead of the development, and have the necessary infrastructure in place. He said that this would enable them to build larger structures, such as a 12-story building, in a particular location. He said that without addressing these issues, they would continue to face the same problems. He said that to overcome this, partnerships could be a key factor. He said that incentivizing development and increasing density

in a specific site would achieve those goals; however, certain conditions must be met before they could reach that point.

Mr. Barnes said that he agreed completely. He said that he thought that the point being made was that Zoning Ordinances could be created to allow for certain regulations, but the real challenge lay in implementing those regulations and achieving the desired outcome. He said that it was not just about having the regulations in place; they needed to consider how to effectively implement them and work together as a community to achieve the desired results.

Mr. Carrazana said that in the Zoning Ordinance, they could begin providing incentives, such as increasing density in a specific area. He said that however, infrastructure ultimately limited the ability for that to occur. He said that he understood that this was outside the Zoning Ordinance, but that was where their economic development and partnerships came into play. He said that ideally, these incentives should not be siloed to individual areas but rather worked together towards the same goal.

Mr. Moore said that he would echo that a bit. He said that one of the things he noticed when he first joined this Commission was how frequently they tended to be reactive to proposals before the Commission rather than proactive in preparing for potential growth areas and make conscious efforts to identify specific areas suitable for future growth and development in the County. He said that on another note, he wanted to clarify that the acronym mentioned in the staff report, ACN, stood for Albemarle County News.

Mr. Brumfield said that yes, that was the newsletter from CAPE.

Mr. Moore said that he had hoped it was some new sort of news outlet he had not heard of yet. He said that as for the name of the lunch and learn series, he might suggest "Zone Out" or "Comfort Zone," but he acknowledged that these were just corny puns. He said that regarding the actual modernization of the Zoning Ordinance, he appreciated the format work, and the examples staff had provided to show the change from blocks of text into an outline format. He said that this new format was easy to understand, and he commended them on that.

Mr. Moore said that when discussing the regulatory phase and phase three, he had a question. He said that he was curious to know more about when the Commission would have the opportunity to see the progress and priorities. He said that one thing that caught his attention was the mention of "missing middle" in the housing section. He said that at the same time, he recalled that during the Comprehensive Plan discussions, there was no color coding for the vast swaths of land around 29 North. He said that seeing that made him feel that the Commission should give their input sooner rather than later.

Ms. Brumfield said that to clarify, the missing middle concept would be incorporated into multiple districts, including residential and mixed-use areas. She said that this would be more of an identification of a type they had not encouraged in their Ordinance rather than a distinct kind of district. She said that as far as when the Planning Commission would be involved, staff was just discussing a potential information work session to bring in prioritization information and the additional plans. She said that Mr. Barnes' team and the Zoning Modernization team would come back to the Commission around March of next year. She said that then, as they approached the topics, they would bring individual items back. She said that the work sessions would be more focused on broader conversations, whereas previously, some zoning text amendments had been more focused on individual words on the page. She said that going forward, they would be looking at higher-level aspects.

Mr. Moore asked if there was any appetite for coordinating with the City of Charlottesville to align the County's urban ring districts with the City's adjacent districts.

Mr. Barnes said that they were in somewhat of a new frontier with this work. He said that there was a lot of work going on in both jurisdictions and he was unsure at this stage what that sort of coordination would entail. He said that he appreciated the question but would ask the Commission to give staff some time and space to consider the potential different avenues for implementing AC44 actions. He said that they had a lot of variables to integrate with each other and they all had their own characteristics to be accounted for. He said that they still needed to determine the method and the pace of implementation.

Mr. Moore said that he understood and appreciated that. He said that looking at this issue through a different lens, he believed it was essential to think about the way they approached zoning in a way that served people, rather than just focusing on density. He said that it was not just about increasing the number of homes in a given area, but also about affordability. He said that he wanted to emphasize the importance of jobs with dignity, not just flexible economic development. He said that by keeping this perspective in mind, they could ensure that their zoning policies not only incorporated the technical aspects but also prioritized the needs of the community.

Mr. Carrazana said that the limiting factor they often heard regarding density was the inability to increase floor height due to changes in construction methodologies and materials. He said that there were code implications as buildings become more complex, with additional elevators and architectural features, the structure itself changes. He said that podium parking and other design elements also require consideration.

Mr. Carrazana said that what they had heard was that the cost implications limited their options. He said that infill projects could also be more expensive, depending on the approach and materials used. He said that this was where partnerships with industry, universities, and other organizations became crucial. He said that by workforce and low-income housing options, they could address the gaps in projects. He said that for example, when an international pharmaceutical company planned to build its largest manufacturing plant in the world in Albemarle County, they should consider where the employees would live, their use of schools, and use of roads.

Mr. Carrazana said that this conversation should also involve the University of Virginia (UVA), which had already begun implementing workforce and affordable housing initiatives. He believed there were opportunities for UVA to partner further in this area. He said that to incentivize higher density, they needed to explore economic development opportunities, such as funding for workforce and affordable housing. He said that if they could align their resources and leverage their available levers, they may be able to move the needle on affordability and density.

Mr. Carrazana said that they really needed to think outside the box, as they were not moving the needle on affordable housing or density. He said that in fact, it was going in the opposite direction and would continue to do so because they had high-paying jobs that were coming in.

Mr. Clayborne asked if staff would be looking at overlay districts throughout this process.

Ms. Brumfield said that they had discussed making overlay districts as part of their activity center initiative, but she was unsure if this project would be a good fit for overlay districts due to the timeline, phasing, and immense staff time required. She said that it would likely be a standalone project, given its complexity. She said that she believed it was essential for bringing the Comprehensive Plan to life, but she was not certain it would be incorporated into this particular timeline.

Mr. Clayborne said that it may be something that County executive staff and elected officials considered in terms of prioritization. He said that he was thinking about whether they should have technology overlay centers for data centers or solar installations. He said that they should consider whether or not to try to control the location of these developments. He said that they had previously discussed wildfires and other natural disasters and how the County may need to reassess its resiliency. He said that they should consider whether this would shift priorities as they went through this exercise.

Mr. Clayborne said that as he had been reflecting on their schedule, he was also curious about the adoption of regulations in the spring of 2028. He said that they were required by law to update the Comprehensive Plan every five years, so he was wondering how this project's schedule would impact the next Comp Plan revision, which was expected to begin around that time.

Ms. Brumfield said that she would try not to speak out of turn, as the Comp Plan was not within her purview, but the Comprehensive Plan they recently adopted was AC44 and the larger Comprehensive Plan should guide them for the next 20 years, up until 2044. She said that she thought that they would be implementing smaller changes, such as the Rural Area Plan, small area plans, and activity centers during the five-year timeframe.

Ms. Brumfield said that the five-year review process involved reviewing the Comprehensive Plan and making necessary adjustments. She said that she believed that all teams were working closely together, bringing conversation points to every meeting and exploring what the future held.

Mr. Bivins said that he had heard a few points that he thought should be discussed jointly by the Commission and the Board of Supervisors. He said that he was not enthusiastic about aligning their plans with the City because they did not have common goals, and until they did, the benefits yielded would be minimal. He said that however, he did believe the activity centers could be the launchpad for the form-based codes. He said that it would be helpful for the Commission, community, and for staff to have that.

Mr. Bivins said that he recently read that the Commonwealth would be very slow in putting transportation funding into their community, so they must look into potential public-private partnerships to collect those substantial amounts of funding. He said that he thought they should look into the webs of opportunities surrounding the activity centers, with Route 29 North having the most mobility in that sense. He said that the other areas that could be considered would require major transportation changes to improve them, and although it was possible, the associated price tag was beyond what the County' was willing to put towards those types of projects.

Mr. Bivins said that he was concerned that the Board and Commission could not have informal meetings to really brainstorm ideas because the public nature of their meetings prevented them from being completely honest and relaxed in sharing their thoughts. He said that some of the issues they were trying to address with this work would be difficult to truly hash out in a public session. He said that there remained the major issue of generating revenue to solve their infrastructure needs, and additionally, the Commission could not fact-check statements from businesses, so they could not truly ascertain whether something was financially unfeasible or not and they simply had to take other people's word for it.

Mr. Bivins said that he was interested in crafting ways for the County to avoid having returns on investment be the governing issue for their community's development, and he thought that should be a joint conversation between the Board and Commission and staff. He said that they had to break the paradigm and shape the opinions of those who were so resistant to change or paying

more in property taxes. He said that people did not care how poor the infrastructure was so long as their taxes remained stable. He said that they must change that narrative and the Planning Commission needed to be part of that. He said that the changes were necessary for the County to recapture some of the economic wholeness of the community.

Mr. Missel said that he was not trying to summarize or conclude the conversation, but he would offer some of his own thoughts to their discussion. He said that he wanted to express his gratitude for staff's explanation of the timelines, which had been particularly helpful in understanding the process. He said that he understood this was all tied to zoning modernization and that was referenced in some way throughout all of the seven steps presented by staff.

Mr. Missel said that they also mentioned implementation and accountability. He said that however, he felt like he was missing the broader view of how they could achieve everything outlined in terms of initiatives in the AC44 plan, how they prioritized them, and what was the resource and time allocation necessary to do so. He said that this may be a topic outside of tonight's discussion, but he was wondering what the plan was for that.

Jodie Filardo, Director of Community Development, said that staff and the County Executive's Office were diligently working to organize the chapters full of action steps into a logical framework, grouping them into reasonable categories. She said that once staff has made progress on this, the plan was to take it to the County Executive's Office, where they would review and assess how each action step would impact the various County departments. She said that once the County Executives felt confident in the plan, they would bring it to the Board for adoption of priorities.

Ms. Filardo said that they were likely several months away from this coming forward unfolding, as it would take time to go through the hundreds of action steps, some of which were short-term requirements that must precede other actions. She said that some of these steps were related to zoning modernization, so they want to address those concurrently. She said that staff was actively working to integrate all the information, which would then be presented to the County Executives and ultimately to the Board for their approval.

Mr. Missel said that he understood the logistics of sorting through all the Comp Plan's actions and priorities in terms of timing and coordination with other plans and schedules.

Ms. Filardo said that there were numerous interconnected elements at play, and they were working to integrate them into a cohesive plan. She said that as many of the Commissioners had noted during this process, the initial objectives were not well-defined. She said that their goal moving forward was to translate these objectives into clear steps, with criteria for deadlines, deliverables, and what constituted completion. She said that as they progressed, these elements would be refined and bundled into work programs by year, which would then be funded. She said that currently, there was significant effort being invested behind the scenes to bring all of these components together.

Mr. Missel said that he would like to encourage staff that, if and when they reached points in this logistical process in which they were unsure if they were making a call on something where the Planning Commission or community feedback may need to inform them, they should pause and check in before moving forward. He said that he also thought that it would be very important for the Board to have the Planning Commission's input when those objectives and priorities were outlined because so many were related to land use and planning issues. He said that he would wholeheartedly advocate for the Planning Commission to be involved in the review of priorities as they were formulated.

Ms. Filardo said that she appreciated the feedback and it was so noted.

Mr. Missel said that looking at the draft regulatory changes section in the timeline provided, he thought that 2028 seemed like a long time away. He said that however, as they had discussed, the complexity of this process became clear. He said that as Ms. Filardo had mentioned, some of the necessary steps would take time before they reached the next necessary point in the process. He said that as a result, many topics would be discussed over the two and a half years.

Mr. Missel said that he thought it was important to clarify that this process would take time to work through. He said that also, it was important to meet with working groups, which had been mentioned multiple times in this document. He said that they were shaping the physical future of their County with this, and it was a heavy lift. He said that ensuring that people understood that may help them populate the working groups and enhance the opportunities for public input. He asked that staff keep that in mind as they explained this to the public. He said that finally, he wanted to highlight the importance of partnerships.

Mr. Missel said that he recalled their conversation years ago about Housing Albemarle, exploring incentives and working through a process with the development community, the Planning Commissioners, and the Board of Supervisors. He said that organizing those kinds of work sessions could be a significant undertaking. He said that he firmly believed that identifying the various stakeholders, including the development community, the state, the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP), and others, and bringing them to the table to help identify opportunities was crucial.

Mr. Murray said that he wanted to bring up one thing regarding form-based code, which was mentioned in terms of a potential expansion in the future. He said that he hoped that as they considered expanding form-based code or reviewing their regulations in general, they could think about how to align them with the spirit and ideas of their Comprehensive Plan. He said that for instance, they should incorporate more sustainability elements, particularly those that did not significantly increase costs.

Mr. Murray said that one thing that had been frustrating for him was how they designed parking islands, specifically how they kept stormwater out of them instead of collecting it. He said that it did not cost much more to design them as "inlets" rather than "outlets." He said that he hoped that when they discussed landscaping, they could consider a broader range of perspectives. He said that for example, some people's approach to landscaping may not be sustainability-focused; they may have antiquated ideas as to what solutions were appropriate for their local landscape.

Mr. Murray said that this approach raised questions about whose voices they included in the conversations about landscaping, parking lot designs, and other planning and development practices. He said that they could improve their overall climate outcomes without requiring much more than a change in perspective.

Mr. Missel thanked staff for bringing this item to the Commission this evening.

Committee Reports

Mr. Missel said that he would like to mention a couple of items from the recent all-Community Advisory Committee (CAC) meeting he attended. He said that it was particularly interesting, as it focused on the community well-being profile, the Orange Dot Report, and community health assessment map. He said that if they had not had a chance to review those yet, he highly recommended it. He said that there was a 5th and Avon CAC meeting on Thursday this week, and one of the topics would be the return of filling the floodplain, which was expected to be a smaller area, approximately a quarter of an acre.

Mr. Missel said that it was helpful for him to re-review the minutes from their April meeting, and he was surprised to see that the conversation lasted for almost two hours. He said that there was a lot of information associated with that particular item, and the Board ultimately voted three to three, leading to it coming back this time.

Mr. Murray said that the Crozet CAC met on November 12, and they also had a review of the all-CAC meeting.

Reivew of Board of Supervisors Meeting: October 30, 2025, and November 5, 2025

Michael Barnes, Director of Planning, said that he would like to introduce Andrea Reuge, who was substituting for Jennifer Tevendale, who was currently in Portugal. He said that he wanted to thank her for being here. He said that Mr. Missel had mentioned the Woolen Mills floodplain fill-in project, which was scheduled for the Planning Commission's agenda on December 16, 2025. He said that the all-CAC meeting took place on October 30, 2025, and included a presentation on community health and wellbeing, which was an interesting discussion.

Mr. Barnes said that the Board had their regular meeting on November 5, 2025, and although none of their items had been reviewed by the Planning Commission, the Board did review two special exceptions related to Rivanna Futures. He said that one was for a stepback waiver and one for building height to go from 65 feet to 140 feet. He said that Planning staff gave two additional presentations, one being the Transportation Quarterly Report and the other on MicroCAT operations and future expansion potential.

New Business

Michael Barnes, Director of Planning said that for the Commission's next meeting, staff had initially thought they could have a work session but with some things being moved around they now had no need. He said that therefore, they did not need the 4:00 p.m. work session next week, so the meeting would start at 6:00 p.m. He said that additionally, Mr. Clayborne, Mr. Missel, and Mr. Murray would be absent next week, meaning only four Planning Commissioners would be present to hold a quorum. He said that he just wanted to mention this because if someone else could not make it, they would have to cancel the meeting.

Mr. Clayborne asked Mr. Barnes if there was an update on replacements for the Commissioners leaving in the new year.

Mr. Barnes said that he did not have any specific insights. He said that he would need to discuss it more with the County Executive's Office to figure out the specifics.

Mr. Clayborne said that he would like to have the opportunity to celebrate and honor their members before they left the Commission to pursue their new ventures, perhaps at their December meeting. He said that furthermore, he wanted to thank Ms. Filardo for being such a tremendous asset to the County and to the Commission, as she would be retiring in the coming months. He said that he wished her to have a healthy and prosperous new chapter.

Mr. Bivins said that he wanted to note that they had received the Rivanna Water and Stream Health Report, and it was very helpful to get that real data as opposed to emotional opinions. He said that he wanted to publicly thank the Rivanna Conservation Alliance for that extremely important document.

Mr. Murray said that in addition to providing hard data, the report was important leverage to get funding for related initiatives in Albemarle. He said that with people dedicated to performing

fieldwork and documenting when streams were impaired, it allowed them to apply for grants and receive funding for stream restoration projects.

Old Business

There was none.

Items for follow-up

There were none.

Adjournment

At 7:40 p.m., the Commission adjourned to November 25, 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: