Albemarle County

Legislation Text

File #: 26-227, **Version:** 1

AGENDA DATE: 5/6/2026

TITLE:
Comprehensive Plan Amendment Request Review Process

SUBJECT/PROPOSAL/REQUEST: Inform the Board of the recommended process for reviewing citizen requests to amend the Comprehensive Plan

ITEM TYPE: Regular Information Item

STAFF CONTACT(S): Richardson, Wall, Herrick, Tevendale, Barnes, McDermott, Swartzendruber, Fritz, Benish

PRESENTER (S): David Benish

LEGAL REVIEW: Yes

REVIEWED BY: Jeffrey B. Richardson

BACKGROUND: An action item in the updated Comprehensive Plan, AC44, directs staff to consider establishing an application process for public-initiated Comprehensive Plan Amendments (CPA). The following Action was included in the Implementation Chapter (P. IMPL-16):

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AMENDMENTS: In addition to a County-initiated review of the Comprehensive Plan, including the five-year review called for by the Code of Virginia, Comprehensive Plan Amendments are currently initiated by County staff or the Board of Supervisors. To offer options to property owners, the County may look at revising the process to include property owner-initiated amendments to AC44. Property owner-initiated amendments to AC44 may not include additions to the Development Areas.

In the past, the County had an application process for CPAs where the public could propose changes to the Plan. Most of the submitted requests were not supported for further study or approved. To more effectively align staff resources with the Board's priorities, in 2018, the Board approved discontinuing the public-initiated CPA application process and adopted a policy requiring that all CPA proposals originate with either the Planning Commission or the Board of Supervisors. Today, when a proposal is initiated by the Commission, the Board adopts a Resolution of Intent (ROI) directing staff to undertake a CPA study and establishes its timing and priority relative to other Community Development Department work program items.

The attached staff report (Attachment A) provides more in-depth background information and discussion of the recommended process for reviewing CPAs and allowing a public-initiated process for the reconsideration of land use designations on the Future Land Use Map (FLUM).

STRATEGIC PLAN: Quality of Life - Encourage a vibrant community with economic and recreational opportunities that serve all community members.

DISCUSSION:

After performing an evaluation, staff does not recommend re-establishing a separate application process for public-initiated CPAs. Staff conclude that such requests should instead proceed through one of two existing pathways:
(A) Continued use of the current “direct contact” process, established by the Board of Supervisors in 2018, whereby individuals bring requests directly to the Planning Commission or the Board of Supervisors and then the Board adopts an ROI; or
(B) individuals can submit Zoning Map Amendment (ZMA) or Special Use Permit (SP) application, with the proposed CPA included as part of the submitted materials.

Staff concludes that utilizing either the existing “Board direct-contact” approach or the established ZMA or SP application processes, specifically for proposals to amend recommendations related to the FLUM , provides the most effective means for evaluating public requests to amend the Comprehensive Plan. This two-option framework addresses the key reasons previously identified for reconsidering a CPA application process - providing an approach that is efficient, familiar, timely, and transparent. It relies on well-understood procedures, enhances public transparency, and offers a clear pathway for considering Comprehensive Plan modifications when appropriate.

The reasoning behind the recommendation and more details about the review process are provided in Attachment A.

BUDGET IMPACT: There is no direct budget impact.

RECOMMENDATION:
This executive summary is intended for information purposes. No action by the Board is required.

ATTACHMENTS:
A - Staff Report: Process for Citizen Requests for CPAs