**Albemarle County Planning Commission**
**Work Session**
**Draft Minutes June 9, 2026**

The Albemarle County Planning Commission held a public meeting on Tuesday, June 9, 2026, at 6:00 p.m.

Members attending were: Luis Carrazana, Chair; Karen Firehock, Vice-Chair; Nathan Moore; Lonnie Murray; Mary Katherine King; Catherine Brown.

Members absent: Corey Clayborne.

Other officials present were: Michael Barnes, Director of Planning; Bart Svoboda, Deputy Director of Community Development; Tonya Swartzendruber, Planning Manager; James Wilkinson, Principal Planner; Ben Holt, Senior Planner II; David Benish, Development Process Manager; Jenny Tevendale, Deputy County Attorney; and Carolyn Shaffer, Clerk to the Planning Commissions.

### Call to Order and Establish Quorum

Carolyn Shaffer called the roll.

Mr. Carrazana established a quorum.

### Consent Agenda

Mr. Moore motioned that the Planning Commission approved the consent agenda. Ms. Firehock seconded the motion, which carried unanimously (5-0-1). (Ms. King abstained; Mr. Clayborne was absent)

### Work Session

## CPA202100002 AC44 Comp Plan - Work Products

Michael Barnes, Director of Planning, said that they adopted AC44 last October, with its effective date being January 1, 2026. He said that their staff had been working on five key work products, which they would like to delve into further tonight. He said that these products included the Zoning Modernization, Activity Center plans, the Multimodal Transportation Plan, the Rural Area Plan, and the AC44 administration. He said that the latter focused on developing metrics, tracking progress, and connecting their actions in AC44 to their Strategic Plan and budget.

Mr. Barnes said that these five work products were central to their Growth Management Policy, which aimed to accommodate the expected growth of their community, projected to increase by 31,000 people within the next 20 years. He said that most of these new residents were expected to be in the Development Area, and many would be in these

activity centers. He said that the Zoning Modernization update aimed to create regulations that promoted quality growth.

Mr. Barnes said that the activity center plans established a vision and identified opportunities to bring that vision to life. He said that the Multimodal Plan sought to provide supporting transportation to maintain mobility as they grew denser. He said that the Rural Area Plan aimed to protect what was important while reflecting the changing needs of their community. He said that the AC44 administration section would provide accountability and track their progress.

James Wilkinson, Principal Planner, said that to begin, he would like to briefly walk them through the meeting agenda. He said that they would review AC44 priorities and reorient themselves with the updated Comprehensive Plan. He said that then, they would focus on an overview of the five work projects. He said that they would examine deliverables and timelines spanning from the end of this fiscal year through Fiscal Year 29. He said that specifically, they would be focusing on activity center planning, with three priority locations that they had researched and analyzed.

Mr. Wilkinson said that Commissioners had maps in front of them that they would be referring to during this part of the presentation, with the intention of taking a recommendation to the Board later this summer on the first location for the first activity center plan. He said that first, taking a quick look back at AC44 priorities, they had a remarkable high-level plan of action for managing the County's growth and development over the next 20 years. He said that they expected approximately 31,000 new residents by 2044.

Mr. Wilkinson said that this plan continued the County's longstanding Growth Management Policy by focusing development and public investment in Development Areas and maintaining Rural Areas for agriculture, forestry, and conservation. He said that it updated land use categories and the future land use map to guide where housing, businesses, and industry should locate. He said that it introduced activity centers and employment centers to encourage higher density, walkable mixed-use areas that were well-supported by transit and provided access to well-paying jobs.

Mr. Wilkinson said that it included community design guidelines to encourage connectivity, excellence in design, and access to parks and recreation. He said that AC44 built on existing County plans, including the Strategic Plan, Housing Albemarle plan, Climate Action Plan, and Economic Development Strategic Plan. He said that it also identified seven big moves to guide AC44 implementation. He said that furthermore, he would like to mention the strong foundation of community engagement across all four phases of AC44's development. He said that the County had used a wide range of approaches to engage community members, resulting in over 2,700 participants.

Mr. Wilkinson said that this brought them to the five work projects they would be discussing in turn, each with timelines, deliverables, and details. He said that he wanted to note that these five work projects were Community Development Department (CDD)-

led responsibilities. He said that additionally, there were other ongoing AC44-related efforts led by other departments, such as the County's Office of Housing. He said that Dr. Pethia would be presenting an update to the Housing Albemarle policy to the Board in the next few months, and new data and information would also inform discussions on activity center planning.

Mr. Wilkinson said that the five work projects were closely tied to AC44's seven Big Moves, which were outlined on the presentation slide. He said that the seven Big Moves were strategic groupings of key initiatives organized by common themes and spanning multiple policy areas, involving collaboration across County departments and external partners. He said that he would explain how the five work projects were closely tied to the seven big moves and actions. He said that there were 378 actions across AC44's nine topic chapters, and the seven big moves guided and prioritized those actions.

Mr. Wilkinson said that the five work projects directly addressed all seven of those Big Moves and prioritized actions. He said that the presentation graphic illustrated the primary and secondary connections between the Big Moves and the five work projects. He said that it was also worth noting that the fifth work project, AC44 administration, connected to all seven of the Big Moves. He said that he had provided an overview of timelines and deliverables for each of the five work projects between now and FY 29. He said that all of these activities would require coordination and collaboration among County departments, as well as with County leadership, external partners such as Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) on transportation planning, and the broader community.

Mr. Wilkinson said that the first work project was zoning modernization, or ZMOD, which was the comprehensive ongoing update to their 40-year-old Zoning Ordinance to make the regulations clearer, more consistent, and better aligned with the community's vision for the future. He said that they were currently streamlining the current Ordinance and updating the format. He said that next fiscal year, they would receive ongoing community feedback, and in Fiscal Years 27 and 28, they would draft the final Phase 2 and Phase 3 Zoning Ordinance.

Mr. Wilkinson said that the second work project was Multimodal Transportation Planning. He said that the first action in AC44's Transportation Chapter was to develop a Multimodal Transportation Plan, a comprehensive forward-thinking look at transportation across the entire County, examining current systems, needs, and deficiencies, and how the system could best serve its purpose in the future. He said that it included all modes of transportation and all users, from freight trucks to mothers pushing strollers.

Mr. Wilkinson said that the multimodal planning process was rooted in land use planning, tying together desired future development patterns with transit, walking, biking, and roadway networks to serve those uses. He said that this plan built upon AC44's goals and objectives through in-depth analysis. He said that the outcomes listed on the slide outlined a geographically specific vision of future transportation networks, a prioritized list of projects and policies, programs, and strategy recommendations. He said that this was the

first time the county had undertaken a comprehensive multimodal transportation planning effort.

Mr. Wilkinson said that a significant portion of the work involved integrating existing transportation studies and recommendations from other plans, such as master plans and small area plans, into this Countywide plan. He said that the plan would not start from scratch but would offer a new and holistic perspective. He said that currently, they were scoping the effort, identifying process steps, timelines, and key touch points for engagement. He said that staff would present to the planning commission as this effort progressed, with a planned presentation in late summer.

Mr. Wilkinson said that the third work project was Rural Area priorities and the Rural Area Plan. He said that the shorter-term priorities fell under Zoning Modernization. He said that the four priorities included revising regulations for special events on historic and heritage properties, investigating the feasibility of additional permitted uses for registered historic properties, exploring ways to enable small and appropriately scaled agriculture-related businesses and support services, and considering modifications to expand opportunities for diverse revenue streams for agribusinesses.

Mr. Wilkinson said that looking ahead to Fiscal Year 27, a detailed existing conditions analysis would identify key Rural Area resources, including important areas for terrestrial and aquatic biodiversity, active agricultural lands, historical resources, and drinking water watersheds, as well as other key resources that may be identified during future public outreach. He said that this analysis would result in identifying rural resource conservation areas as priority conservation targets and laying the foundation for the Rural Area Plan.

Mr. Wilkinson said that future work would outline methods for integrating non-residential land uses that support the Rural Area economy, including local agriculture and forestry, recreation, agritourism, and other revenue-generating uses in line with AC44's Big Move, while maintaining rural character and conserving priority resources.

Mr. Wilkinson said that the next work project was AC44 Administration. He said that across all work projects, CDD would coordinate with the County's performance management staff to develop and use a set of project metrics, including the Land Use Build-out Analysis, to track the progress of integrating AC44 actions into the Strategic Plan's goals and in line with AC44's Big Moves. He said that CDD would also develop regular project summaries and reports, engage regularly with County leadership, and collaborate with other County departments as part of AC44 administration activities.

Mr. Wilkinson said that the fifth work project was Activity Center Plans. He said that activity center plans were expected to accommodate a significant proportion of the County's future growth and economic development. He said that they encouraged high-density, walkable mixed-use areas across Development Areas. He said that the concept of activity centers was not new, as the neighborhood model principles had been in place since 2001, but what was new about AC44 was its targeted focus. He said that in contrast

to the 2015 Comprehensive Plan, which had over 50 activity centers and employment centers, AC44 had 22 activity centers and eight employment centers.

Mr. Wilkinson said that additionally, the master plan recommendations would be incorporated into the next generation of planning activities, including activity center planning. He said that the provided map highlighted the activity centers and employment centers. He said that they could see that there were several clusters, including the southern neighborhoods to the south, Pantops to the east, and Crozet to the west, and there were also clusters along the Route 29 corridor, both north and south.

Mr. Wilkinson said that regional centers had the most intense commercial and residential uses, with a large mixed-use core. He said that community centers and local centers were smaller and provided services to surrounding neighborhoods. He said that employment centers were clusters of Office, R&D, Flex, and Light Industrial uses, aiming to expand employment opportunities for area residents with good-paying jobs. He said that the last item on the slide emphasized the importance of activity center planning in effective multimodal transportation planning.

Mr. Wilkinson said that since land use and transportation were interdependent, they needed an effective multimodal transportation system to enable dense and mixed-use activity centers. He said that in terms of timelines and activities for the activity center plans, they would start with the first activity center plan in the upcoming fiscal year, followed by the second and third activity center projects in Fiscal Years 28 and 29. He said that activity center plans would also support an expanded housing supply and affordable housing opportunities, prioritize catalyst projects, and address infrastructure needs.

Mr. Wilkinson said that each plan would provide a detailed look at a defined study area, incorporating collaboration with property owners and community stakeholders, and would result in a list of County-led investments, catalyst projects, tools, and actions needed to achieve desired outcomes. He said that the key questions to be addressed on this topic included what factors drive development, where are the best public investment opportunities, what features and amenities are needed to attract quality projects, what constraints there were on achieving activity center goals, what are the timeframes for opportunities, what policies and other tools were needed to make activity centers a reality, and where could County actions and leadership have the greatest impact.

Mr. Wilkinson said that the outcomes of the activity center plans would assist and inform strategic public and private investment and decision-making in the Development Areas, provide new opportunities for jobs, multimodal transit, affordable housing, parks and green space, environmental protection, climate action, include enhanced collaboration across County departments, external partners, and the community, as well as measurable progress towards AC44 Big Moves and Strategic Plan goals.

Mr. Wilkinson said that he would discuss at a high level the four stages of the activity center planning process. He said that currently, they were in the project design stage,

where they were working on selecting the first location for the first activity center plan, project scoping and timelines, and background research. He said that the next phase, analysis and engagement, would involve existing conditions, opportunities, and constraints summary. He said that the third phase, investments and tools, would include a catalyst projects inventory, as well as public investments and tools strategies. He said that the final phase, activity center plan and implementation strategy development, would result in a detailed implementation strategy, including timelines, partners, and next steps.

Mr. Carrazana said that he would go through each of the work projects in order. He asked if Commissioners had any questions on the Zoning Modernization.

Mr. Moore said that regarding Zoning Modernization, the zoning map was available online for reference, and there was also the Future Land Use Map (FLUM), an overlay that informed future zoning or zoning changes. He said that he was wondering if part of the Zoning Modernization may include a broader update to the zoning map to align it more closely with the FLUM at some point in the future.

Mr. Barnes said that there were three phases to the Zoning Modernization project. He said that the first phase was to create an outline for the new Ordinance and clarifying the language, and that was now complete. He said that currently, they were taking the remainder of the Ordinance and reorganizing it. He said that regarding Mr. Moore's question of aligning it with the FLUM and Growth Management Policy, that would be part of Phase 3 of the Zoning Modernization project. He said that in part, the Activity Center planning process was meant to identify opportunities for increased density of housing and commercial development in these various Development Area locations.

Mr. Barnes said that this tied back to the vision for their Zoning Ordinance, so Phase 3 of the Modernization would include reviewing standards of good development and whether their current districts were conducive to meeting their goals. He said that as they worked through that, the questions of how this interacted with the zoning map and considering a potential comprehensive rezoning would inevitably be discussed. He said that however, they needed to first deal with the outdated Ordinance, and then they could consider what districts needed to be combined, eliminated, or added.

Mr. Moore said that he appreciated the updates being made to the Zoning Ordinance for clarification and simplification. He said that he was thinking that in terms of simplifying their process, it would make sense to change the zoning to be aligned with the FLUM, since it was intended to guide future development.

Mr. Barnes said that they would investigate the possibility of doing that as they worked through the activity center planning process. He said that prior to the master plans, it could be difficult to contextualize proposals in terms of the neighborhood they were located in. He said that it had been very helpful to have the master plans align with the FLUM, and the activity center plans would identify where they could accommodate more density and intensity of uses in those areas. He said that activity center plans offered an

opportunity to potentially change zoning to make things more straightforward, but he could not say for certain that they would make any changes at this point.

Ms. Brown said that she had a question regarding their discussion a few weeks ago about the zoning language updates and this topic. She said that she was wondering whether there were any plans or examples from other counties or cities that were considered innovative or leading in this new common language. She said that, considering this in the context of activity centers, she was wondering if there were precedents or examples that could help frame or situate the concept they were discussing in a way that others could better understand and find more tangible.

Mr. Barnes said yes, that would be part of the third phase of the Zoning Modernization. He said that the Ordinance was difficult to work with, especially because it had been amended numerous times over 40 years. He said that he agreed that there was a need to identify good examples they could learn from and incorporate into the Albemarle County Zoning Ordinance.

Mr. Wilkinson said that regarding the activity center planning and referencing precedents from other localities, he would note that in Prince William County, Virginia, as well as Cities like Winchester and Counties around Richmond, and some along the coast, there were other localities that had implemented similar efforts that they could draw upon for reference.

Mr. Carrazana said that as they approached the end of 2026, he would like to know if staff felt they were on track to complete the Zoning Modernization Phase 1 and if they planned to start Phase 2 during FY 27, which would begin next month.

Mr. Barnes said that according to their schedule, they were making good progress on the phases of the Zoning Modernization project and were expected to complete them on time.

Ms. King asked if the AC44 Administration's metrics of development would include needs assessments and other types of things. She said that there was a previous needs assessment that raised a lot of questions about meeting the theoretical maximum buildout, due to the projects in the development pipeline versus their available land area.

Ms. King said that she was glad they would be analyzing their Geographic Information System (GIS) data when they began working on the Rural Area Plan. She said that there was a lot of good analysis in the Development Area for that, but they should get a good handle on how much land mass in the Development Area was still available for development, what worked and what did not, and how that related to the needs assessment in a more thoughtful way than the last time they did it.

Mr. Barnes said that Dr. Pethia was working on the Housing Albemarle policy update, which would provide a clearer view of how much housing they currently had and how much was needed in the community. He said that in terms of future buildout and how much capacity there was in the Development Area, the potentially developable land was

defined as parcels where the value of the land was greater than the value of the improvements.

Mr. Barnes said that the theoretical maximum buildout was based on the recommended density in the Comprehensive Plan and the necessary infrastructure to support the development, which allowed them to estimate the maximum number of units. He said that this was analyzed along with the number of units they currently had in the development pipeline to better understand if they had enough capacity to meet what was needed to support the projected 31,000 new residents in the next 20 years.

Mr. Barnes said that they confirmed through the buildout analysis that there was enough capacity, and the activity center plans were intended to go further and encourage development without expanding the Development Area. He said that with regard to the Rural Area, the GIS analysis would focus more on a sensitivity analysis and identify key resources that required protection, and identifying some areas that could be suitable for commercial development in line with their Comprehensive Plan goals.

Ms. King said that she was speaking more about development in general in the Development Area. She said that her concern was that the analyses that had been previously presented were hypothetical and considering what developers might do, but the County had no control over the actions of developers. She said that if a space on a parcel was not marketable as developable, it did not matter if the County designated it as an activity center. She said that she was interested in the administrative section of this work would include further analysis of that theoretical buildout analysis and how they could utilize real numbers.

Mr. Barnes said that when planning for the future, this work was almost entirely theoretical. He said that however, there were some practical things they could do, including the activity center planning. He said that pragmatic collaboration with these property owners and developers should result in the best possible solution.

Mr. Carrazana said that they should finish their discussion on the Zoning Modernization before moving onto the topic of Activity Center Planning. He said that if there were no further questions on the Zoning Modernization, they could move to the next topic.

Mr. Wilkinson said that the next topic was the Multimodal Transportation Planning work project.

Mr. Murray said that he would like to know what the County was doing to provide staff with the necessary tools to gather the data needed for quality analysis on the Multimodal Transportation Plan. He said that he was wondering if they currently had a County license for Strava Metro or Streetlight, or other technologies that could be used to analyze existing pedestrian and multimodal traffic. He said that he believed it was essential to have the right tools to conduct this type of analysis, so they could see the level of detail.

Mr. Murray said that it was frustrating to him that often projects came before them, and they only discussed traffic counts of cars, essentially pretending that pedestrian data did not exist. He said that it was crucial to include pedestrian data in all of their project analyses. He said that another important consideration was the recent discussion at the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Tech Committee meeting about several projects involving multimodal transportation.

Mr. Murray said that he had asked how the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission (TJPDC) reached out to engage walkers, runners, cyclists, and other users in a consistent manner in their processes. He said that the answer was that it was left to each locality to reach out to those citizens. He said that it seemed there was a lack of consistency and methodology in reaching out to these user groups. He strongly recommended that they establish a committee, similar to Roanoke's, comprising citizens who could provide input on cycling, running, walking, and outdoor recreation.

Mr. Murray said that they lacked this in Albemarle County, and it would be valuable when discussing where people engaged in these activities. He said that when he was recently at the Blue Ridge Marathon in Roanoke, he learned that a major determining factor in Wells Fargo locating to Roanoke was the City's outdoor recreation programs. He said that this highlighted the importance of quality of life in attracting major employers and sustaining economic development.

Mr. Murray said that finally, he wanted to emphasize the need to include Rural Areas in their Multimodal Transportation Planning. He said that there were at least a dozen highly used areas by cyclists, runners, and walkers in the Rural Area, and this data was readily available through citizen groups, Strava, and other sources. He said that it should not take much effort to compile that data, and it was important to have that list of important recreational areas.

Mr. Carrazana said that the Multimodal Transportation Plan should be created in collaboration with the University of Virginia (UVA) and the City. He said that both of these peers had a wealth of data and knowledge that would be crucial to developing the County's Multimodal Transportation Plan.

Mr. Barnes said that yes, one of the main goals of the Multimodal Transportation Plan was to support and improve current and future transportation between the City, the County, and University of Virginia (UVA). He said that staff was still developing the details of these plans, and the reason they would be focusing on activity center planning today was because it was the most developed plan so far.

Mr. Carrazana said that now was the time to start having those conversations between their peer localities so they could inform how they would develop the Multimodal Transportation Plan. He said that a majority of traffic was traveling toward the University because it was one of the primary employment centers, but there were other connecting points that could be addressed with the activity centers, as noted in AC44. He said that this would inform the Multimodal Transportation Plan.

Ms. Brown asked if staff had an advisory committee composed of different transportation users that they could work with on this issue.

Mr. Barnes said that on a regional level, they primarily worked with the Metropolitan Planning Organization on transportation issues.

Ms. Brown said that she was considering bicyclists in particular, where some people were biking recreationally or for fitness and others used bicycles for commuting, as well as electric scooters. She said that Ivy Road, between the University, the City, and the County, had seen multiple fatal accidents involving cyclists. She said that there was a wide range of reasons people were traveling there, and she thought the different types of users should be represented and give input into the Multimodal Transportation Plan.

Ms. Firehock asked if staff envisioned Smart Scale projects and other transportation funding requests as a result of the Multimodal Transportation Planning efforts.

Mr. Barnes said yes, they did. He said that staff was asked to prioritize their current transportation projects, which they presented to the Board last week. He said that the Multimodal Transportation Plan and Activity Center plans could inform a clearer strategy for how to prioritize projects and how to achieve them. He said that costs and feasibility of construction were also important factors, which they hoped to define as part of these planning efforts.

Ms. Firehock said that there also may be smaller projects or ideas that emerged from this effort that, although they may not be something that would be requested for Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) funding, could still be valuable additions to the overall County plan. She said that these might be things that a developer could propose as a way to enhance a proposal, such as a trail connection or a crosswalk that directly served the area, rather than something like a bus stop that was not yet included in a bus route.

Mr. Barnes said that a significant amount of their infrastructure was built by the private sector, and that should certainly be acknowledged. He said that to answer Ms. Firehock's earlier question, they did anticipate that some of this would identify Smart Scale projects, other large-scale projects for grant funding or revenue-sharing opportunities, and smaller projects that did not require VDOT processes to fund and complete. He said that they hoped to coordinate those better and support activity center plans. He said that they had to first create a place that was walkable, which the activity centers should achieve, and then they could connect them to the surrounding neighborhoods. He said that this was an intentional effort to focus their resources, increase density, and provide supportive transportation uses.

Mr. Moore said that the chair of his Community Advisory Committee (CAC) had expressed curiosity about what happened in a fiscal year in terms of how the planning processes connected with each other. He asked how they developed them alongside each other and link them together.

Mr. Barnes said that they did not have all the answers, but they were intentionally timing transportation planning for an area with development of the activity center and linking it to other areas in the community. He said that they hoped to create a cohesive system throughout the Development Area and the greater County.

Ms. Brown said that she was enthusiastic about the Multimodal Transportation Plan. She said that at the first Community Advisory Committee (CAC) meeting she joined, someone spoke about the ongoing projects, and she was astounded at the large number. She said that she was unsure if citizens were aware of the depth of work happening right now, and she would be glad to promote awareness throughout the County to people that did not attend the CAC meetings.

Mr. Barnes said that there were a lot of projects happening and a lot of money involved. He said that tempering expectations and prioritizing the projects was critical.

Mr. Murray said that considering the activity center plans, he thought a key aspect was that effective multimodal transportation involved connectivity between live, work, and play. He said that for example, when examining the Places 29, Airport Road, and Ashwood Boulevard area, he noticed that there was no identified employment center in that area. He said that this did not mean that there were no employers in the area, but rather that they needed to consider the lack of employment opportunities when discussing live, work, and play.

Mr. Murray said that they needed to think about the connectivity between different areas. He said that they needed to conduct "on the ground" truthing, where they considered questions like: if someone lived in this area, how did they walk to recreation, employment, and grocery stores, and what were the impediments that got in their way? He said that he had long thought that they should conduct a community event where they randomly selected two points on a map and attempted to walk from one point to the other, identifying the obstacles that prevented them from getting there.

Mr. Murray said that it was important to think in that way so they did not build fragments of infrastructure that did not connect. He said that this was a long-standing complaint that he had heard for years, dating back to the early days of the Hollymead Town Center. He said that when examining the heat map on resources like Strava, they could see areas where pedestrians were highly concentrated, and there were dark areas in between that were not as well-used. He said that these areas were the ones they needed to focus on, as they revealed the "black holes" or impossible barriers that prevented people from getting from point A to point B. He said that identifying and addressing these barriers, he thought, was a crucial part of this effort.

Mr. Wilkinson said that the final work project to discuss was the Rural Area priorities and the Rural Area Plan. He said that then, they would review the three potential locations for the first Activity Center Plan.

Mr. Murray said that as part of the Rural Area Plan, biodiversity hotspots should be included as a metric for preserving specific areas with significant and rare species. He said that in addition to historic resources and large forest blocks, he thought a stream health analysis was necessary. He said that this would involve examining the number of streams lacking adequate buffers, which could be identified using GIS. He said that by correlating this data with known impaired streams, they could identify areas that required additional resources, such as those provided by the Soil Water Conservation District or other programs.

Mr. Murray said that he also recommended analyzing farmland to map prime agricultural soils and identify areas currently engaged in agriculture through the Land Use Valuation program. He said that this would provide a comprehensive understanding of agriculture in Albemarle County, which was currently absent. He said that he suggested they develop a plan for sustainable outdoor recreation, similar to what Roanoke and Loudoun County had done. He said that he proposed taking an inventory of community cultural resources, including community centers, Ruritan clubs, and country stores, to better understand the fabric of their communities.

Mr. Murray said that finally, as they continued with Zoning Modernization, he thought it would be beneficial to revisit the classification of Rural Areas in their maps and assign more specific zoning classifications to reflect their particular characteristics and allow them to plan better. He said that there was multimodal transportation in the Rural Area, and that should be acknowledged in their planning efforts. He said that in Batesville, many residents traveled by foot or bicycle to their community centers and the country store. He said that it was essential that they could access those resources quickly when it snowed or there was other bad weather.

Mr. Moore said that he wanted to add to Mr. Murray's point about understanding the rural economy and its components, such as the types of farms, their products, and land use valuations. He said that this information would enable them to assess the extent to which these factors supported the rural economy and agricultural economy. He said that additionally, it would be beneficial to consider potential Rural Area locations for future Development Area expansion. He said that if they were creating a long-term plan, that should be a component of it.

Mr. Murray said that he thought if they classified the areas of high importance for preservation, such as historic resources and natural resources, subtracting those out left them with areas of lower value. He said that this gave them a basis for future expansion if it were necessary in the future.

Mr. Moore said that it seemed like a decent methodology to begin that approach. He said that he did not see it acknowledged at all so far yet.

Mr. Murray said that the concern had been that if they designated an area for expansion, then it would immediately create speculation on a massive level for those areas, instantly

making it unaffordable. He said that this was the opposite of the thought behind a Development Area expansion, so they should be careful to avoid that.

Ms. King said that she agreed with Mr. Moore, and they should consider exploring alternative zoning options for those areas beyond the County's current designations. She said that they could find a middle ground that allowed parcels of at least half an acre, which would help preserve rural components and environmental factors, but not forcing developers to go into a protected Rural Areas and prevent further sprawl. She said that right now, they were missing opportunities for desirable housing products.

Mr. Murray said that they had discussed clustering in rural areas for years. He said that he thought there was an opportunity to explore alternative approaches; it seemed reasonable to discuss how they could use clustering or other methods to balance preservation tracts with smaller homes or trailer parks. He said that when he thought about large farm estates with 21 acres and multiple million-dollar homes, he believed it was detrimental to conservation and affordability. He said that perhaps there was a middle ground where they could find a balance where they benefited affordability and conservation.

Mr. Murray said that he might be open to the idea that the impact of two to three manufactured homes was equivalent to the impact of one of these large mansions. He said that if they could determine the specific impact and explore potential bonus density or other incentives that would provide both conservation and affordability benefits.

Mr. Barnes said that these five products were intended to be the way that staff dealt with these longstanding problems. He said that they had a lot of work to do on Development Area and transportation planning, which was why they intended to work on the Rural Area Plan in a few years. He said that when they began work on the Rural Area Plan itself, they could further delve into the issue of how to use the Rural Area to advance initiatives other than preserving resources that were stated in the Comp Plan. He said that staff's approach was to complete some analysis during FY27, including biodiversity, historic resources, watersheds, and agriculture. He said that this would provide a basis for potential future development that was sensitive to the resources they had identified for protection. He said that the community should certainly have this conversation, but it likely would not take place until next year or the following year.

Ms. Firehock said that other communities had successfully implemented this type of planning. She said that as she had mentioned earlier, there were other great examples of exactly this kind of planning, which served as a precedent for their own efforts. She said that they were not starting from scratch but rather building upon existing best practices.

Mr. Carrazana said that they could move onto their discussion of Activity Centers.

Ben Holt, Senior Planner II, said that he would be presenting the next segment of their discussion on activity center planning locations. He said that the Long-Range Planning

team had conducted extensive research and analysis for six major activity center clusters across the Development Areas. He said that they drew on existing master plans, recent rezoning activity, area VDOT projects, property ownership patterns, GIS analysis, online planning resources, and internal staff discussions.

Mr. Holt said that locations not included in the scoring analysis were the Village of Rivanna, Fontaine Research Park, and County areas along Ivy Road and Crozet. He said that their research indicated that these areas lacked development or redevelopment potential and meaningful County leverage points at this time to make activity center planning productive. He said that the effort identified three priority locations for activity center planning. He said that these areas were the Route 29 North area from Airport Road southward to the vicinity of Ashwood Boulevard, the Route 29 area in the vicinity of Rio Road, and the South Pantops area adjacent to the City of Charlottesville and the Rivanna River.

Mr. Holt said that for reference, the other three locations evaluated included the northern portion of Route 29 from the County line south to Airport Road, as well as the Route 29 area from Dominion Drive to Hydraulic Road, and the southern neighborhoods. He said that these areas did not score as high as the three priority zones they were discussing. He said that to begin, they would examine the Route 29 area from Airport Road to Ashwood Boulevard. He said that he would share some highlights from their research and findings for these three priority areas, and they would solicit the Commissioners' thoughts and feedback during their discussion period.

Mr. Holt said that following this meeting, staff would present their recommendations for the first activity center plan location to the Board in the coming months. He said that the first location, Airport Road, featured significant areas of planned residential development, a County-owned parcel with trail easement potential, undeveloped land in the adjacent rural area between Route 29 and Berkmar Drive, and an extension to Berkmar Drive that could potentially improve north-south connectivity. He said that with the Places 29 Master Plan now more than a decade old, strong private sector interest from multiple landowners and major nearby investments underway at North Point, North Fork, and Rivanna Futures, the area could be ripe for a fresh planning effort to address land use, multimodal connectivity, new housing, and affordable housing.

Mr. Holt said that the County could consider expanding services and facilities in the area, such as a new high school, a recycling facility, County offices, healthcare facilities, Fire and Rescue facilities, and other services that would serve as a northern hub for new residents and businesses in the area, as well as an investment fund for a County-led affordable housing effort. He said that this would be a County-driven effort that did not require coordinating with other nearby localities, which could help speed up the project timeline.

Mr. Holt said that the next activity center was the Route 29 and Rio Road area, which was a long-underperforming commercial corridor with aging buildings, vast surface parking, declining retail, including the Albemarle Square shopping center, the Fashion Square Mall

area, and the Arden 2 property. He said that the 2018 Rio 29 Small Area Plan had aimed to transform the Route 29 Rio Road intersection into a walkable mixed-use urban center. He said that several development and redevelopment factors were at play in this area, including recent developments like the Home Depot and Sheetz gas station, as well as redevelopment potential sites like the putt-putt property and aging housing.

Mr. Holt said that County leadership support and strong multimodal potential made this area an ideal candidate for activity center planning, which could help address multiple priorities. He said that the County could also take the lead in addressing the need for major Parks and Recreation open space facilities in the area, building on the Hillside pocket park, and serving as a catalyst for renewed private sector interests. He said that constraints facing activity center planning in this area included high through-traffic volumes on Rio and Route 29, limited transit resources, uncertain property owner interests, and timelines for redevelopment of Albemarle Square, high demand for County services, including emergency medical services (EMS) calls, Premier Circle transitional housing, high resident turnover in rental housing, and potential for City-County coordination on a longer project timeline without further relationship building.

Mr. Holt said that the third activity center area was South Pantops, which was a fast-growing destination-rich corridor along Route 250 east of the Rivanna River. He said that this location included underutilized Pantops Shopping Center, major institutional anchors like Centara Health and Martha Jefferson Hospital, and significant undeveloped land holdings. He said that the area also held potential for coordinated efforts with the City around Free Bridge and extensive natural and recreational resources along the Rivanna River. He said that it also posed several challenges, including a regional transportation bottleneck at Free Bridge, difficulties and safety concerns crossing Route 250 on foot or by bike, and a high reliance on car commuting.

Mr. Holt said that an activity center plan for South Pantops would focus on redevelopment and reorientation of the Pantops Shopping Center, mixed-use development, multimodal improvements, and catalytic engagement with major property owners. He said that considering a new bridge across the Rivanna River and City-County coordination around the Rivanna River were also key components. He said that they would pause their discussion for now and revisit the details of each study area, considering the pros and cons, and determining which one to prioritize first.

Mr. Moore said that he wanted to ask some broad, process-oriented questions. He said that he would like to better understand the difference between an activity center plan and a small area plan, considering that the Rio 29 Small Area Plan was adopted in 2018.

Mr. Barnes said that all of these activity center plans were different in terms of what they would achieve. He said that they were trying to coordinate how to develop multiple parcels in an area, rather than focusing on an individual parcel. He said that they had already done a lot of planning on the Rio 29 area, and the Form-Based Code would be finalized in the next few months. He said that this activity center plan was meant to leverage the identified opportunities and develop the area in the near term.

Mr. Moore asked if the activity center plan was intended to serve as a vehicle to carry out the small area plan goals.

Mr. Barnes said that activity center plans may not be a one-size-fits-all solution. He said that they would, however, adapt to the specific needs of each area. He said that the intention behind these plans was to identify opportunities in these areas and determine the most suitable investments, both from the private sector and where feasible or necessary in the public sector.

Mr. Moore said that based on their experience with the Rio 29 Small Area Plan, it took about seven years for any movement to happen, and then they got Home Depot, which was not a particularly compelling development for the goals of the Form-Based Code. He asked what lessons they had learned from that experience. He asked if they would be helping the activity center plans come to fruition at a different pace than what they had seen with the Small Area Plan.

Mr. Holt said that they needed to consider different types of catalyst projects. He said that within the notes for these areas, they had discussed opportunities to expand recreation, particularly in the two Route 29 areas. He said that these areas required more cohesive trail networks and greenway trails. He said that he believed there were opportunities for smaller green spaces and parks that could be connected, and those types of projects could make the area more desirable and potentially spur investment in the surrounding area.

Mr. Barnes said that the focus tonight was to discuss these three potential areas that could be further studied for development. He said that they would recommend the first area for study to the Board and begin developing that plan. He said that they were also working with stakeholders in the community to better understand what components were necessary for the plan to be implemented, rather than plans for planners. He said that based on the Commission's feedback, they would further refine what the activity center plan would achieve.

Mr. Moore said that as he reviewed the documents for this meeting, he began to think about the potential for public investment in various projects. He said that he wondered whether pocket parks and greenways, or perhaps a larger-scale hub like the courthouse, could be truly transformative. He said that he was considering whether they could leverage public investment to create a magnet that would have a significant impact. He said that he was thinking about how to accelerate the development of these projects, rather than simply having a well-planned vision.

Ms. Brown said that the Rio 29 area seemed like an easy place to prioritize because it was already surrounded by residential areas. She said that there were vast tracts of underutilized commercial areas and parking lots. She said that the amount of impervious area there was clearly in need of improvement. She said that it would be easy to create a vision just for the parking lots; it could look like a healthy, sustainable, interesting commercial district with some simple moves. She said that it had interesting grade

changes as well, so there was a lot to work with. She said that it was a design challenge for which the public could likely provide a lot of insight.

Ms. Brown said that in Cook County, Illinois, they adopted a requirement that all fill must remain on-site during development, which made for very interesting land forms and plantings. She said that it seemed like Rio was an easy place to start, considering there was already a lot there to build on. She said that Pantops had a lot of infrastructure challenges that needed to be addressed, including the bridge and crossing Route 250 in any mode of transportation. She said that these were very difficult issues that would require a lot more analysis and investment, so she thought that would be the second-most important activity center in her mind.

Mr. Moore said that he agreed with Ms. Brown. He said that the Rio study area was the first one that came to mind for him. He asked if they could potentially extend the study area down toward Greenbrier Drive, near the City limit on the east side of Route 29. He said that it was all highway-zoned and had a lot of parking lots and underutilized spaces.

Mr. Barnes said that staff had been debating how large to make that study area. He said that they wanted to ensure they could handle the area that the first plan would address. He said that there were some reasons to expand the area, particularly with Branchlands and Hillsdale Drive becoming more of a main street for their community.

Mr. Moore said that he agreed that upper Hillsdale was going to become a main street regardless of activity center planning. He said that he would support expanding the study area to encompass that.

Ms. King said that her main question was about the process they had within the County related to the Community Advisory Committees. She said that the structure of those committees spoke specifically to master plan areas, so she was wondering about the thought process behind how that might shift.

Mr. Barnes said that the CACs played a significant role in the master planning for larger neighborhoods. He said that he believed they would continue to be part of the technical advisory group to assist them in smaller areas as they worked. He said that it was also essential to involve the people who lived in the properties located in these study areas. He said that as the County looked for opportunities for development and incentivize density, the CACs were directly impacted, so they needed to be integrated with the process.

Ms. King asked for an example of how they planned to incentivize.

Mr. Barnes said that he believed that incentives could play a significant role. He said that currently, one of the fundamental things they were willing to commit to was that it was about putting this type of density on paper as a potential option for this location. He said that in terms of specific provisions, he was unsure about what they could offer.

Ms. Firehock said that of the three options, the Places 29 and Rio Road area offered the greatest opportunity, particularly with the presence of Fashion Square Mall. She said that the mall's history of bankruptcy and receivership suggested that the area was ripe for redevelopment. She said that they spent a lot of time talking about it with the Form-Based Code, but that tool did not realize what the County hoped it would. She said that there had been a lot of planning already invested there, but it had the greatest opportunity.

Ms. Firehock said that the Airport Road and Ashwood Boulevard area felt like the least-planned area, so there was a counterargument that they should spend more effort up there because they had not invested as much time into planning there. She said that for south Pantops, citizens had repeatedly and consistently asked for pedestrian crossings to get from one side of Route 250 to the other. She said that this had all been discussed, and the public had already expressed what they specifically wanted to see at Pantops.

Ms. Firehock said that there was a more involved planning process for that area that was completed several years ago. She said that they had a lot of fodder for what they should do at Pantops. She said that she understood there were opportunities there because there was a lot of vacant land, but she thought starting with Rio Road made sense based on the amount of work already done there. She said that these were all worthy places to study. She said that furthermore, a UVA professor had done a lot of work to re-imagine the spaces at Rio, and she could provide that to staff to potentially spark some ideas and give them a head start.

Mr. Carrazana said that Airport Road would be his highest priority area. He said that he agreed with Ms. Firehock that they had paid the least attention to that area compared to the other two. He said that he knew Planning staff had spent some time reviewing the Form-Based Code and Small Area Plan, so they should codify the lessons learned and bring them to this work. He said that they could transfer that improved approach to the other two areas. He said that his reasons for prioritizing Airport Road included that they knew development was coming to the area north of the airport, connectivity to that area and UVA, and how they partnered with Economic Development.

Mr. Carrazana said that with the airport, UVA, North Fork, and Rivanna Futures, there were thousands of jobs that would be located in this area. He said that they needed to address how they would connect people to this area and the other areas they would be going to within the County. He said that they knew development would be happening there, and they had paid the least attention to planning there, so he thought the Airport Road area should be their first activity center plan.

Mr. Moore said that Mr. Carrazana had made a convincing argument that this area was as important to study as Rio was.

Mr. Barnes said that he appreciated the conversation the Commission was willing to have. He said that all of these areas had their different aspects that made them important, so it was difficult to compare them.

Mr. Carrazana said that they already knew more about the opportunities for development in the other two areas because they had already created small area plans for them. He said that this was an opportunity to be proactive in their planning for Airport Road, especially since they knew what was coming to the area. He said that they should try to get ahead and plan for the infrastructure that would be needed.

Ms. Firehock said that whenever they did begin planning for that area, she would encourage the County to connect with Historic Preservation staff. She said that there was an African American community that had been pushed out by the airport over time, and although their properties had been diminished by that development, they still were living in that area. She said that they had been promised a historic marker from the airport but that promise had not been kept.

Ms. Firehock said that there needed to be inclusion and understanding of the culture of that area; it was not just a blank slate to be paved. She said that people had lived there since the time of slavery and their descendants continued to reside in the area. She said that the County needed to engage with those citizens and sustain their community's character without further displacing and ignoring them. She said that this was crucial to their planning processes and she wanted to ensure it was at the forefront of staff's work in this area.

Mr. Murray said that with regard to Rio 29, he strongly felt they needed a menu of options to consider for incentives to offer developers. He said that there were also some existing zoning issues that needed to be addressed so that some of their desired outcomes were permitted. He said that they needed to ensure these options were allowed so they could achieve the results they wanted. He said that if they really wanted to make Rio a walkable, dense, useful area, they needed to do the opposite of what had been done for decades and build structured parking instead of vast parking lots.

Mr. Murray said that it should be made clear to prospective developers that it was a priority and the County should be willing to consider incentives like tax increment financing (TIF) to defray the costs of structured parking. He said that Airport Road also had a lot of issues, and it had suffered from a lack of planning at present. He said that he agreed that given the new employment that would be located there, it deserved more attention.

Mr. Murray said that looking beyond large employment, it had been developed with outdated ways of planning and zoning, and they should think creatively of how to encourage other employment opportunities so that people could live, work, and play. He said that when looking at pedestrian heat map data, there were obvious gaps where people could not get from one place to another. He said that there were certainly opportunities in this area where the concept of live, work, and play had been sorely neglected.

Mr. Holt asked Mr. Murray for clarification that he was supporting Airport Road as the primary candidate and Rio Road as the secondary candidate.

Mr. Murray said that yes, that was correct. He said that it was with great trepidation that he supported an area other than Rio Road, but he agreed with Mr. Carrazana that Airport Road needed more.

Mr. Carrazana asked if staff had what they needed from the Commission

Mr. Barnes said that yes, staff greatly appreciated the feedback and additional points to add to staff's analysis.

**Recess**

The Commission took a five-minute recess.

**Presentation**

**Publicly Initiated Comprehensive Plan Amendment Process**

Mr. Carrazana said that he wanted to note that Ms. Brown had to leave and would not be present for the remainder of the meeting.

David Benish, Development Process Manager, said that he would present the information they had provided to the Planning Commission and then they would address any questions or comments they may have. He said that an action item in the updated Comprehensive Plan directed staff to consider establishing an application process for public-initiated Comprehensive Plan amendments (CPA). He said that since the adoption of AC 44, staff had been evaluating the need for a CPA application process, including benchmarking other localities.

Mr. Benish said that in consideration of the public-initiated application process, it was based on two main factors: one, interest from property owners and developers, and their representatives, in having a clear, efficient, and predictable method of presenting proposed plan amendments to the County and the Board of Supervisors; and two, the ability to address warranted modifications in a timelier manner than waiting for the next scheduled comprehensive plan or master plan update.

Mr. Benish said that he would like to highlight some legal parameters regarding Comprehensive Plan amendments and the County's history regarding application processes. He said that the Code of Virginia did not require a locality to have an application process for public-initiated or requested CPAs. He said that furthermore, the Code of Virginia authorized only the Board of Supervisors to initiate amendments to the Comprehensive Plan. He said that citizens could not directly initiate an amendment through an application process.

Mr. Benish said that therefore, that process served solely as a request for the Board to consider such an amendment. He said that any CPA initiated by the Board of Supervisors must go through a public hearing process with the Planning Commission and the Board

of Supervisors. He said that the County had a public application process for CPAs until 2018. He said that their experience was that most applications received through that process were not initiated for further study or approved by the Board. He said that to more effectively align staff resources with work program priorities, the Board approved discontinuing that CPA application process.

Mr. Benish said that the Board then adopted a policy requiring that all CPA proposals originate either with the Planning Commission or the Board of Supervisors; individuals were expected to bring their request directly to the board or the Planning Commission through the various access processes. He said that it was important to note that only the Board could take action. He said that if it came to the Commission, they could make a recommendation, but that recommendation must be sent to the Board for affirmation.

Mr. Benish said that after evaluating possible approaches, including benchmarking other localities, staff did not recommend reestablishing a separate application process; rather, staff concluded that such requests should be processed through one or two existing pathways. He said that this would continue to be the preferred and recommended approach for those requesting CPA amendments. He said that if a formal application process was preferred by the applicant, they could submit a zoning map amendment (ZMA) or special use permit (SUP) application with the proposed CPA included as part of the submittal materials.

Mr. Benish said that this approach mainly recognized existing and already established processes. He said that the basis for this recommendation was their experience up until 2018, which showed that most requests received through a separate application process were not supported by the Board and were considered frivolous. He said that staff believed the same would occur with another application process. He said that they believed that requiring individuals to seek direct Board support through the existing direct contact approach helped prevent frivolous and non-viable proposals and ensured that there was demonstrated Board interest before significant staff resources were committed.

Mr. Benish said that for those seeking a formal application process, the ZMA and SP process approach did provide some advantages, as they were familiar processes that applicants and citizens were aware of. He said that the application requirements provided more detailed information than would normally be obtained from a CPA process, allowing for better evaluation of the impacts and costs. He said that when considering the SP and ZMA process with a CPA embedded, the primary impacts would be on internal review practices and the development of review factors to consider for this type of proposal.

Mr. Benish said that staff comments and recommendations on the CPA component would be provided in the first round of comments on the ZMA, usually about 45 days after the original submittal. He said that the evaluation would determine whether the CPA warranted additional study due to its complexities and scope; this would be a separate study from and before any action could be taken on the ZMA and SP. He said that the third option was that the CPA proposal was unacceptable and did not warrant further evaluation, and a recommendation for denial or modification to the ZMA would be made.

Mr. Benish said that to support staff's early round of comments, they had developed factors or considerations, which were provided in the presentation. He said that the general intent was to determine the scale and impact of a proposed change and assess whether it could move forward without a more comprehensive study. He said that being acceptable to move forward did not automatically mean that the proposal was recommended for approval; rather, it meant that the change could be assessed within the context of the application without a separate study. He said that for projects with a regional impact and broader scale of impacts, a CPA study would likely be necessary.

Mr. Carrazana asked if determining a proposal was acceptable and could move forward would be done by the Board of Supervisors.

Mr. Benish said that what they were saying was that the scope and scale of that change could be assessed through the information provided in the rezoning. He said that if the rezoning moved forward through the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors, the Commission may recommend denial of the proposal based on comprehensive plan issues or not. He said that if the Board agreed with the proposal and approved it, there was a decision that needed to be made: whether an official amendment to the Comprehensive Plan was required or whether the action on the rezoning could take place.

Mr. Carrazana said that it was moving forward for further evaluation.

Mr. Benish said that was right. He said that to move forward, any special permit would be subject to a public hearing, providing an opportunity for Commission and public input. He said that this approach was designed to evaluate the proposal and suggest early actions to the applicant. He said that he had provided a flow chart of the process for reference. He said that to summarize, there was no new separate application process; they would continue to use the direct contact approach with the Board of Supervisors.

Mr. Benish said that ultimately, the Board's decision would be the final one, and this was the preferred and recommended approach. He said that however, if an applicant desired a formal application process, the Zoning Map Amendment and Special Permit application process would be available. He said that he had not mentioned earlier that this process was primarily for amendments to the Future Land Use Map. He said that if someone proposed a change to the Housing policy, a zoning application process was not applicable. He said that the Board of Supervisors reviewed this item on May 6, 2026, and supported moving forward with this concept.

Mr. Moore asked how a proposal that was brought directly to a Supervisor would move forward. He asked if the Supervisor determined it had merit and then it was added to the Board agenda, or if the Supervisor would submit it to staff.

Mr. Benish said that at some point in time, the Board would reach consensus and direct staff to undertake the study. He said that it then would come to staff, and the process mirrored what they did for rezonings. He said that they would formulate the scope of what the Comp Plan amendment would be, the Board would draft a resolution to outline that

scope, and then they would start staff review. He said that depending on the proposal, they would have a community meeting process, site review committee, and ultimately refer it back to the Planning Commission and Board for review and recommendation.

Mr. Moore asked if, hypothetically, a citizen group wanted to request or propose a Comprehensive Plan amendment for a property that did not belong to the group, they would petition their local Supervisor.

Mr. Benish said that yes, that was correct. He said that however, it would require a property owner to be involved. He said that Chestnut Grove and Beaver Hill Mobile Home Park were examples of this process happening now. He said that one advantage of providing additional considerations and factors was to organize staff's review of those proposals when they received them, giving them a more standard format for review of those types of applications.

Mr. Barnes said that for more minor changes, they could potentially just move forward as a rezoning without requiring a CPA. He said that an example was along Berkmar Drive, where some properties were designated as commercial but made sense as residential, so they processed that request as a rezoning application. He said that the applications mentioned by Mr. Benish, however, were inconsistent with the Comp Plan, and it would have been beneficial for staff to have a vehicle for staff to check off some major Comp Plan-related questions before presenting the applications to the Commission and the Board. He said that for simplicity, they did not want to create a separate process, and they believed this was flexible enough.

Mr. Barnes said that its implementation was highly dependent on the types of applications they received. He said that a major question from the Commission and the Board was whether this could lead to expansion of the Development Area, and his answer was that it could be; however, it would always be at the discretion of the Commission and the Board to decide. He said that this issue was true of every application they received, and they must refer to the Comprehensive Plan to guide that, which this process would better allow staff to address in their review.

Mr. Benish said that the objective was to provide early feedback to the applicant so they could decide how to proceed with their application. He said that it was essential to note that if a zoning application was submitted, staff must review it. He said that they could not reject it solely for inconsistency with the Comprehensive Plan. He said that if the applicant chose the B alternative, they must agree to defer further study before they reviewed the zoning map amendment. He said that the Commission could recommend denial pending the completion of that study. He said that it was important to recognize that once an application was submitted for rezoning, they did not control the outcome.

Mr. Murray said that one question he had was, what did the study include? He said that to provide some context, simply because an applicant submitted an application for a proposed use, such as the trailer park application recently proposed, did not necessarily mean that they should automatically approve it without further analysis. He said that as a

County, they should take a step back and ask, was this the best possible location for this use?

Mr. Murray said that whether they decided to increase the use or not, they should consider whether this was the optimal location for that increase. He said that some of these proposals should spark larger conversations within the community about whether a new industrial area, mobile home park, or residential area was the best place for this to occur. He said that he wondered how they were having that larger conversation about planning for the best location.

Mr. Murray said that perhaps the applicant's proposed location was the best option, and it could proceed, but maybe not. He said that maybe there were better locations for expansion, and they should consider those options. He said that he thought about the public's input, which had taken years to gather during the Comprehensive Plan process for AC44. He said that there was a weight behind community engagement in that process. He said that before making any additional changes, he would not want them to be ad hoc or without substantial public input.

Mr. Murray said that there had also been other proposed expansions in the Development Area that had been quite contentious. He said that the input provided was not limited to the district or neighboring properties but rather became a Countywide discussion. He said that by having this avenue for public input, they could take this back to the community at large and ensure that the County as a whole was aware of the conversation surrounding this particular use.

Mr. Murray said that staff had already addressed some of the key issues regarding scope and scale, which he believed was important. He said that it was crucial to know when they needed to engage the community on a larger scale, particularly when they were about to make significant changes that altered a policy that had been in place for 30 years. He said that it was essential to do this in a responsible manner that honored the weight of the Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Barnes said that in some respects, it was challenging to answer that hypothetical question. He said that he believed that a significant change was likely to result in either a staff recommendation to deny the proposal or a recommendation to further investigate the issue, potentially leading to a Comprehensive Plan amendment. He said that on the other hand, if the change was not major, there were instances where smaller issues could be addressed.

Mr. Barnes said that to be flexible and meet reasonable requests without pushing them off until the Comprehensive Plan was revisited, they needed to be able to adapt. He said that he thought that the input they received, as well as staff's reflection, suggested that the focus should be on making the development area more flexible. He said that Mr. Murray's concern that had been articulated was a real possibility with regard to the potential for Development Area expansion or impacts on Rural Areas. He said that in

cases where the issue was highly contentious, he believed it was essential to trust the Planning Commission to push for a larger community discussion.

Mr. Benish said that mechanically, a rezoning and special permit were required at community meetings as per the Zoning Ordinance; a community meeting served as a mandated step. He said that for broader amendments that were introduced separately, they would need to determine the scope and level of input required. He said that in his experience, CPAs typically held community meetings and public engagement sessions with the Commission and Board. He said that generally, the approach had been to maintain the Plan as static, not subject to significant changes. He said that the deference was to maintain the Plan and changes were viewed in the context of why it would be better to make that change as opposed to what was already agreed upon in their policy.

Mr. Murray said that if they were to make a new ordinance, such as the Riparian Buffer Ordinance, he would want to make sure that decisions that had some level of significance should not be passed just once. He said that these issues should be reviewed multiple times before being adopted. He said that it could be easy to not realize the importance of an issue coming before the Planning Commission and the Board.

Mr. Barnes said that one of the lessons learned from the Chestnut Grove project, in particular, was that they did not have an early work session to discuss the issue before moving forward with a public hearing. He said that this was consistent with Mr. Murray's concern about having multiple perspectives on the matter and elevating the discussion earlier in the process, which would benefit both the applicant, staff, and the broader community.

Ms. King said that they were doing the opposite of planning by not talking about where to expand the Development Area. She said that they needed to talk about it now, rather than 15 years from now. She said that Mr. Murray had earlier mentioned speculation of land values when designating parcels for development, but she would argue that identifying those areas now would allow the parcels to sell now at market rate, allowing them to build more quickly. She said that if they kept talking about how they were going to do it without talking about where they would do it, they would be unable to provide for the 31,000 projected new residents in the County in 2040.

Mr. Murray said that the discussion of expanding the Development Area was discussed multiple times during the AC44 process and they decided not to expand it. He said that from his perspective, if they decided the answer was yes, they needed to reevaluate the process from the beginning. He said that instead of saying yes for an individual property, they should be planning for where that development should occur within the County as a whole. He said that he thought that was the next phase of this planning.

Ms. King said that she was not on the Planning Commission at that time but was engaged as a member of her CAC and attended all of the AC44 town hall meetings, where she discussed this issue in depth with staff, Commissioners, Supervisors and other community members.

Mr. Carrazana said that it was a specific section of AC44, for which the Commission gave a recommendation on the direction and that was approved by the Board. He said that he did not think they needed to re-litigate that here. He said that there was a process in place for handling a change that allowed for public comment. He said that some of the lessons learned from Chestnut Grove were beneficial and he was glad that was being recognized. He said that there was an opportunity for public comment, review from the Planning Commission, and decision from the Board of Supervisors. He said that he was in favor of the direction proposed by staff.

Ms. Firehock said that she was in favor of the current proposal, which had already been approved by the Board, as she understood. She said that this was merely for the Commission's information. She said that she would not mention the specific development, as it did not significantly impact the discussion, but she would like to bring up a past situation where a developer had attended a work session and had asked for the Commission's feedback on a general type of development they were thinking about constructing. She said that the Commission's response had been overwhelmingly positive, with the unanimous agreement that this was a fantastic, creative, and great use of land.

Ms. Firehock said that the development was ultimately built, and the developer had been able to run a trial balloon to gauge interest before investing in extensive engineering and other costs. She said that this experience highlighted the potential for this process to work for everyone, as she did not want anyone to waste money or time if possible.

**Committee Reports**

Mr. Murray said that the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Tech meeting recently took place, and one of the most relevant items was the identification of STARS and the project pipeline study locations. He said that the three study locations chosen were US Route 29 at Airport Road, US Route 250 at Free Bridge, and I-64 Exit 118 at US Route 29, all of which were relevant to some of their earlier conversations. He said that he thought it was interesting that two of those directly corresponded to places the Commission discussed earlier in today's meeting.

**Review of Board of Supervisors Meetings: May 20, 2026, and June 3, 2026**

Mr. Barnes said that they had previously discussed the May 20 meeting, so he would move onto the June 3 Board meeting. He said that staff gave a presentation on the Transportation project prioritization, and they would follow up with that with the Commission when they brought back their Multimodal Transportation Plan. He said that there were three public hearing items, the first being a conveyance of easements on Free Bridge Lane. He said that VDOT needed access to a stormwater facility on the road, so the County conveyed that easement back to them with Board approval. He said that the second item was Crozet Fellowship Church, an expansion of that facility, which was approved. He said that the third item was the Parham Circle self-storage building, which also was approved.

**New Business**

Ms. Firehock said that tomorrow she would be attending a meeting here at the County Office Building for the Barnes community meeting presented by Woolley Engineering for a property along Garth Road, Timber Creek Road and Garth Lane. She said that the applicant was proposing an agritourism use of an existing agricultural property. She said that she welcomed her colleagues to join her at this community meeting, and she could forward everyone the developer's materials for the project.

**Old Business**

There was none.

**Items for follow-up**

There were none.

**Adjournment**

At 8:30 p.m., the Commission adjourned to June 23, 2026, Albemarle County Planning Commission meeting, 6:00 p.m.

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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: |