

Planning Commission Work Session

October 28, 2025 5:00 PM to 7:00 PM

Hybrid Meeting – City Space Conference Room

Commissioners Present: Chairman Schwarz, Commissioner Joy, Commissioner d’Oronzio, Commissioner Stolzenberg, Commissioner Roettger, Commissioner Yoder, Commissioner Mitchell, Commissioner Solla-Yates

Staff Present: Patrick Cory, Missy Creasy, Tori Kanellopoulos, Brennen Duncan, Remy Trail, Dannan O’Connell, Matt Alfele, Kristal Riddervold, Ose Akinlotan, Jason McIlwee, Donald Schragar, Steven Gaines

Chairman Schwarz called the Planning Commission Work Session to order at 5:02 PM

1. Environmental Regulations and Policy Review Project

Staff Presentation

Tori Kanellopoulos, Staff Report – This evening we have a work session on the environmental regulations and policy review project. I am joined by many colleagues in Public Works, Utilities, Parks, Office of Sustainability, and NDS to help answer questions that you might have this evening.

Next slide

I will start with the project objectives. That is what we are looking to achieve with this project. We will talk about the background, why we are doing this project, and why at this time. I will talk about some of the related city plans and programs: both that have been adopted and that are happening concurrently. I will go through each of the 6 project topics at a high level and some of the key takeaways that we have identified to date. We will open it up for your feedback on the draft project phasing and topics. What we are looking for at this work session, now that we have completed an internal review of existing conditions and current policies and regulations, is your feedback and Council’s direction on the proposed phasing of project topics. We want to make sure that we are going in the right direction and see if anything is missing at this point. There will be future opportunities for input as we dive deeper into more specific topics. This is looking at the overall project scope.

Next Slide – Project Objectives

Objectives for the project include:

- balancing community and comprehensive plan priorities of housing choice and affordability with protecting the natural and built environments.
- increasing community resilience especially to the risks identified in the community vulnerability assessment, such as flooding and extreme heat.
- ensuring alignment between regulations and across the different topics.
- making sure prioritization and implementation are done equitably.

Potential project outcomes include:

- updates to the city codes including the Development Code.
- updated policies for the Comprehensive Plan.
- updated programs and policies.

- Coordination across the various plans and programs.

Next Slide – Project Background

Why are we doing it now? It is relevant to both the Comprehensive Plan and the Development Code. Comprehensive Plan priorities include implementing zoning changes that support housing choice and affordability. Protect the natural environment, mitigate the effects of climate change, and increase walkability. Implementing the climate action plan and preserving and enhancing the natural environment. From a development code perspective, there have been some challenges with implementation, especially for some of the smaller infill sites that have less room for required infrastructure and for other improvements. There are some other identified challenges and opportunities to look at including mitigating and preparing for the impacts of climate change, planning for infrastructure replacement and upgrades, and that coordination across the different plans and policies.

Next Slide – Project Background

The top half of this slide may look familiar. This was from the NDS work plan for FY26. Since the work plan presentation, NDS has been coordinating across various departments to document existing conditions, policies, regulations, key takeaways, and areas for collaboration across all the project topics. NDS has met with staff from the Office of Sustainability, Public Works, Utilities, and Parks. Additional departments will be involved at key points, including the City Manager's Office, City Attorney's Office, Communications, and Emergency Management. We held an internal project kickoff meeting in August.

Next Slide – Adopted and Ongoing Related Plans and Programs

The project scoping that we have been doing has included looking at the adopted and ongoing related plans and programs and incorporating relevant initiatives. Resources from these plans and programs include maps and data, community & development, developer input, and staff technical expertise. We also want to make sure that we are being consistent across all of these. I did want to highlight in the climate action plan: actions include updating recommendations and coordinating on land use and transportation. For the flood resilience plan that was adopted in 2023, we have recently received a community flood preparedness fund grant to look at updating the flood plain management program. Utilities has been working on stormwater modeling with the Moores Creek watershed complete and Meadow Creek and Rivanna River in progress.

Next Slide – Concurrent Related Plans and Programs

These are additional related plans and programs that are going on right now. We will share recommendations and knowledge across the different teams as these move forward. These are the main ones that we are tracking along with our other ones that we will be paying attention to incorporating as relevant including the Regional Solid Waste Plan update and the regional water supply update. As the community recently pointed out, incorporating our recent initiative to join the biofilic cities network. I want to highlight the fund preparedness fund grant and the urban forest management plan, which will be important to inform tree canopy and preservation requirements and street tree requirements. This project will inform updates to the Comprehensive Plan policies, which we will be reviewing next year.

Next Slide – Stormwater Management: Recommended Areas of Study

I will go through each of the 6 project topics in order of the proposed project phasing. These recommended areas of study were put together based on our review of existing conditions and current regulations within input across departments, Comprehensive Plan policies & recommendations, state code requirements, constraints, and related city plans and programs as we just reviewed. While NDS is leading the coordination for this project, the work that I am going to go through and describe is being completed by multiple staff across many departments. I want to recognize their work and collaboration and how this effort spans across many staff.

For stormwater management, we have identified looking at stormwater requirements. One thing that we have heard input on is that for by-right infill development, smaller lots that require stormwater management may not be large enough to fit by-right housing that is allowed and development lot coverage but also fit onsite stormwater management. Developers can buy offsite nutrient credits to meet water quality requirements, which benefits larger watersheds, but not necessarily our local waterways. That might be something we can better incentivize and encourage. We will also look at stormwater management infrastructure needs including those identified in the flood resilience plan and through community input.

Next Slide – Floodplain Management: Recommended Area of Study

For floodplain management, we would look at the city's floodplain management program. That will be part of that grant the city received in looking at floodplain development regulations. The city currently complies with FEMA's minimum requirements for the National Flood Insurance Program and cannot go below those standards without risking compliance. The city can adopt higher standards, which would need to be balanced with other city policies and goals. Changes must be justified on the grounds of protecting life and property from flood risk and balancing allowed higher density that is allowed by-right with protecting the natural and built environment.

Next Slide – Tree Canopy: Recommended Areas of Study

For the tree canopy, we would like to look at the city's requirements for tree canopy, street trees, and tree preservation. There have been comments from the development community about fitting in required trees to meet canopy requirements on smaller infill sites. Those canopy percentages are set by each zoning district. There are maximum percentage limits that are set by state code. We have also looked at the need for improved guidance for tree protection and preservation including during construction. That would be led by the Parks Department. We are looking at the preservation incentives, which do not seem sufficient for developers to choose tree preservation versus planting new trees. We will also have updated data and recommendations from the urban forest management plan looking at tree canopy and the urban heat island effect and how those vary by each neighborhood. Canopy coverages range from 21 percent in 10th & Page to 67 percent in Barracks-Rugby. All this work will include coordination with Tree Commission and build on work done by community partner organizations such as RELEAF Charlottesville and the Tree Stewards.

Next Slide – Stream Buffers: Recommended Areas of Study

For stream buffers, we would look at the water protection ordinance and regulations for stream buffers. There are 3 waterways that have a regulated stream buffer, which are the Rivanna River, Meadow Creek, and Moores Creek. Those buffers must be 100 feet on each side of the stream and must be maintained and incorporated into development design. If we made updates to those buffers or looked at other streams that should have buffers, there would be a data driven rationale behind it. We would also need to consider administration, enforcement, property impacts, and development impacts. We can also look at incentives and voluntary measures that protect streams since there are many streams on private property and property that might never develop. That could be a good opportunity to encourage more protection even if it is not required.

Next Slide – Critical Slopes: Recommended Areas of Study

Critical slopes are defined as 25 percent grade or greater area of 6,000 square feet or more and within 200 feet of a waterway as shown on the critical slopes map. Generally, they are not allowed to be disturbed. There is a special exception process for that request. We have looked at developing more objective and clear criteria for that review process. The Comprehensive Plan also only has one recommendation related to critical slopes and their value is clearly defined. That could be a good opportunity for a Comprehensive Plan policy update.

Next Slide – Energy Efficiency: Recommended Areas of Study

There are several initiatives happening related to energy efficiency including The Office of Sustainability leading the development of high-performance building standards. There are a variety of existing tax incentives

for certain energy efficient buildings. There may be more challenges with changes at the federal level for tax incentives that could slow that uptake. Virginia localities cannot require energy efficiency requirements for development that are more stringent than the building code. They can have higher standards for projects that need legislative review and can offer incentives and model best practices. The city is working with a consultant on an EV charging plan in anticipation of increased demand for EV charging in the city and regionally. That is another opportunity for coordination.

Next Slide – Summary of Potential Project Outcomes

Final outcomes will depend on data and findings, best practices, staff technical expertise, Commission input, Council direction, and community input where needed. For all these topics, we would expect increased community resilience, equitable prioritization, implementation, and relative updates to the Comp Plan where needed. I have most of these in previous sections. They would be focused on code and policy updates, such as updated stormwater management requirements and updated floodplain management program, and tree canopy and preservation requirements.

Next Slide – Draft Project Phasing

This is the proposed grouping and phasing of topics starting with stormwater management, floodplain management, and tree canopy together with stream buffers fitting in as staff capacity allows. The proposed phasing is based on input from staff alignment with related plans and programs and the impact on Comprehensive Plan implementation including the Development Code. The first phase of topics is especially important for addressing challenges with infill developing and with tracking parallel initiatives such as the community flood preparedness fund grant and the urban forest management plan. A lot of these topics overlap and are interconnected and can be addressed at the same time. We can make revisions based on the feedback we hear from you and from City Council.

Next Slide – Planning Commission Discussion and Feedback

1. Do the recommended areas of study in Attachment 1 capture the key areas of needed study for the 6 topics identified for this project?
2. Are there additional topics or supporting information that should be included?

Next Slide – Next Steps

- Anticipated to be approximately a 2-year process moving parallel with related plans and programs.
- City Council work session on November 17, 2025.
- Scope more detailed work plans by topic, based on topic-grouping phasing.
- Establish staff internal stakeholder groups/technical committees.
 - Technical expertise: data and best practices, develop and review draft recommendations.
 - Participate in Planning Commission and City Council work sessions and community engagement.
- Develop public engagement plan.

Planning Commission Discussion, Questions, and Feedback

Commissioner Mitchell – We put a lot of focus on water that comes from the sky. We are quiet about droughts. We are quiet about the fires that happen when we have a lack of water. There is value in giving a little more thought to what we do when we don't get water. There have been many years since I have been in Charlottesville that we have had water issues. Last year, there were a lot of local fires because of the lack of water. I am wondering if we should give some thought to investment in drought mitigation, things like groundwater recharging systems. What I would like us to do if we could is put together a drought management

plan like they do in California. Every municipality in California has a drought management system. I would ask that we give more thought to too little water.

Commissioner Joy – Was this topic in the pipeline? Are you going to bring it up at LUPEC or any of the 3-party meetings? I am curious what kind of interface you have had with UVA people at Environmental Resources or Sustainability to see if there is some alignment with the University and County.

Ms. Kanellopoulos – We have been doing more internal scoping. We would like to do regional collaboration and engagement as we move forward. We have also been working with the Office of Sustainability and coordinating on resilient together. That could be another good opportunity for regional coordination.

Commissioner Joy – Can I send your slides to my colleagues? I was thinking about the prioritization and the work plans. It would be great if there was a cohesiveness to where people are focusing first.

Commissioner Mitchell – There was also a question about other groups that we might want to work with. The Weldon Cooper Center is another group that we ought to be working closely with.

Chairman Schwarz – You guys are not looking for any sort of policy direction at this point. We are just looking for topics that might be missing.

Ms. Kanellopoulos – That is correct. Basically, if we are going in the right direction, if anything is missing. If there are clarifying questions or information that would be helpful for you to have at this point, we are happy to answer questions. We have a lot of expertise here. I know that some of the current regulations can be very detailed and convoluted. We are happy to answer those types of questions.

Commissioner d’Oronzio – With some of these topics, there is a sense of what we are thinking in the particulars. For example, what sort of thought do we have about our floodplain issues? Where are we pointing to this? Do we still want stricter guidelines? Is the present guideline about the 1-foot rise anywhere in the city the appropriate one? How do we balance that for density? Have we started thinking and having those conversations? In my industry the way The National Flood Insurance Program is described is that it is bad. Does it make sense to self-insure for construction there? Can we meet and do better? By definition, the city is better funded than the National Flood Insurance Program. What are we thinking of how we are going to approach some of these? It seems that a lot of these things are dovetailing on infill lots. What is possible on stormwater control on a 6000-square-foot lot? Is there a next level of how we are going to integrate these things? What happens in what order? How do we start this analysis?

Kristal Riddervold, Office of Sustainability – All the things you just said are the same things that we have said out loud in staff meetings. On the grant-supported floodplain program management, our goal is to start with ‘the lay of the land, baseline assessment.’ What are we doing? What are we not doing? Where are there some gaps? What are some best practices in comparable communities? How is that relevant or not? We don’t know what we don’t know about whether we should change things, or we shouldn’t. That is the entry point of that project. What are the roles and responsibilities? Maybe we are saying we have a best of class program and maybe not. If we don’t, where are the gaps? What are some strategies to fill those? What are some policy options for the city to consider? Floodplains, as defined by the floodplain maps, are only one universe of flooding. There is also the opportunity to talk about floodplains and stormwater management. That is where a lot of the coordination on these different topics and lumping them together by some themes are going to be efficient, hopefully.

Commissioner d'Oronzio – It seemed that it might be a great benefit to grasp early on, what are the point and shoot solutions available? What can we go to City Council? These 3 things in order accomplish this. We know that we can do this. Are we looking for the fastest implementation?

Ms. Riddervold – I think we are still trying to tease apart the best opportunities. Are they programmatic or are they policy? We still have not finalized a scope of work. This conversation is helpful. I would offer an invite. If somebody says floodplains, what are the questions that come to mind? Now is the time to throw those in the hopper, not when we come with what we think we should do.

Commissioner d'Oronzio – With floodplains, it is 7 percent of the city's land. How much of it is otherwise developable and buildable? What do we have to do in terms of guarding the floodplain for what it is, what it is used for, and what utility we can get out of the dirt that is on it? If everything is density related, we might as well ask that question. Can we go our own way if we elect to opt out of the National Flood Insurance Program? There are methods of doing it. As far as I can tell, no locality has done it right. I view that as building houses on floodplains.

Commissioner Solla-Yates – I would love more information on stormwater. I would love a whole work session just on that topic. That would be spectacular.

With the items for number 2, capital spending. We can throw money at some of this. If there is high value and low money, let's throw the money. If you do or when you, please tell us.

With wildfire prevention, we have not had a bad wildfire so far. I would like that on the list. I expect the fire department would feel the same way.

There are several people who have worked on this that I would like to mention. Kay Slaughter wrote the critical slopes ordinance that we had. It was the first in the state. Everybody else copied it because it was way ahead of its time. I think that she had a nightmare scenario in mind that she was trying to prevent. I don't know what that was. That might be helpful to know. Karen Firehock was a former planning commissioner. She is now on the Albemarle County Planning Commission. She did a lot of work updating our Comprehensive Plan during her time. Diane Dale served on our steering committee for the Comprehensive Plan. She was frustrated that we did not get to it. We kept pushing it back. She has thought about this problem for years. The Nature Conservancy does this work every day and would be a good resource for us.

Commissioner Stolzenberg – One thing that I would like you to think about, as you approach many of the different objectives here, how to best utilize the public right-of-way. At this point, we have rigid standards for what goes into the right-of-way and limited use of it. I am looking at the open data portal, green infrastructure stormwater, and public infrastructure map. I think there is one bio-swale in the right-of-way that I can find. It is the one on 5th Street across from Tonsler Park. That one was built over 10 years ago but is not well maintained. I am not sure that there is a process to maintain it. I don't know if there was any effort to keep inundation tolerant plants in there. That would filter the water. When you have one swale, it is hard to have a process to do that. Ideally, we could have many swales. When we are talking about stormwater management, tree canopy, and our transportation plan & traffic calming, making smarter use of the right-of-way for a lot of this infrastructure is going to be important to doing it well. It is also difficult and will require thinking through what the standards should be, whether for public or private development of this infrastructure and when & how it can be accepted and maintained by the city. You see other cities that have done a good job of this.

Some of this has touched on climate change. Adopting to climate change is important here. My hope is that it will also be central to every piece of this as you think through it, and not just thinking about the specific costs and benefits of each individual program or requirement, but it fits into that larger whole, citywide, regionwide,

and globally. I appreciate that you put the regional context into your earlier presentation. It is critical. The hardest thing about this whole effort is going to be all about balancing it. You are going to get a lot of pressure from the public and even some appointed or elected officials. It is easy to focus on one thing and take one side. It is a spectrum. We need to be landing somewhere in the middle, somewhere that takes all those costs and benefits and trade-offs into account and lands somewhere that adequately addresses all of them. I do not envy you in trying to thread that needle. I hope you will keep sight of that. It is a tricky needle to thread. We must be balancing it in every part of this process.

Commissioner d’Oronzio – It came up on infill development. We must coordinate this infill development with the possibility of where we are using stormwater. How do we fund the offsite credits for some people? Maybe there is a way that the city can provide some assistance in upfronting some of that cost to be taken out on the sale on the back end. These smaller infills are smaller operations doing them. At the same time, we are looking at the development code. We are looking at the building code that we don’t have any power over. For all those things to come together in a sensible way, we cannot be pinging people for stormwater fees. Threading that needle is going to be tricky. That is coming from every possible direction on that.

Commissioner Yoder – On question 1, one area that is closely related to many of these topics is resilience. I wonder if there would be a way to incorporate thinking about resilience in terms of our infrastructure, how it responds to different kinds of environmental disasters or effects of climate change. There is some interesting research on one of the predictive factors of making it through a natural disaster well is your community. We all know that the way our neighborhoods are built can impact how many friends you have that are neighbors. How many neighbors you know impacts how well you do in a disaster. Maybe there are things we can take back to the zoning code from a look at resilience. The main disaster that I think is power outages in the wintertime. What happens if power goes out? In my mind, I can walk to that store and get some groceries. Do people have access to things they need in certain situations? Is our zoning code making it harder for people to get things that they need in a disaster?

Environmental issues are not limited to borders. There are a lot of regional things at play. We live in a watershed with how many jurisdictions. I don’t know. I would suggest that, as you are cataloging things, doing existing condition studies, if it is reasonable to take inventory on a regional level, I would encourage you to do it. For example, thinking about tree canopy issues, there is a balance between us wanting infill in the city and preserving our tree canopy. If infill development turns into green field development in the county, the tree canopy hit is much greater than if you must clear a site in the city. What does that look like? There is ground cover data. Does it come within the boundary of the city but comes in more of a grid? That is an idea looking at general trends with population growth and tree canopies. I want to echo Commissioner Stolzenberg’s comment about the public right-of-way. Thinking about trees and the biofilic cities, where you put things matters. A backyard tree is good and benefits everyone. The sidewalk tree really benefits a lot of people who walk there. How do we get more things close to where people are and will benefit from those things?

Commissioner d’Oronzio – With regards to the resilience, the Planning District has done some work on that recently on the regional level. One of the more interesting things about that is the perception of leadership on how resilient they are or aren’t. Sometimes when you look at that and you look at the dispassionate responses, are you kidding? Some of it is self-diluting in some respects. I can dig up what their work has last year for the most part. Apparently, we use the word ‘resilience’ a lot in the commission packets. That is worth chasing. I agree with how this plays into the resilience piece.

Commissioner Roettger – It is all great. With the Tree Commission, I like seeing all that. We have been talking a lot about that. When you get to the community engagement part, I like the word ‘resilience,’ even though it is overused. It could be human, systems. With talking to people and thinking about money, priorities, and neighborhoods, I looked at the 81 pages. I wonder if there is a way to make some graphics that group these

things. There are maybe scales to each of them like block scale or street scale versus regional scale in some way where people are not overwhelmed. This works well with everyone in here. If it goes out to neighborhood associations or people that have not thought through how these things intersect. There could be something to make it digestible like a page of all the things that we are thinking about at these different scales. That was what I was getting out of it. It is wonderful. If housing is an issue, what are the biggest hurdles? Some of the things are important but maybe on a longer track in the way you will prioritize all this. I am thinking of the community engagement part.

Chairman Schwarz – I want to echo the efficiency of the right-of-way and revisiting our Standards & Design Manual as necessary. Are we working with the Fire Department in thinking specifically about trees? I am sure it probably comes into play with other components of this. Even our best plans can be wrecked by fire regulations are out of our control and making sure that they are a partner in all of this. Are we looking at redefining what a steep slope is? I know there was talk about manmade versus natural. Is the 200 feet from a waterway the right number?

There was an introduction of the different staff who attended the work session. The following city staff attended the work session and provided input on their role with the environmental regulations and the policy review project, the purpose of this work session:

- Dannan O’Connell, City Planner
- Don Shrager, Stormwater Utility Administrator
- Jason McIlwee, Deputy Director of Utilities
- Matt Alfele, Development Planning Manager
- Ose Akinlotan, Long Range Planning Manager
- Kristel Riddervold, Office of Sustainability Director
- Steven Gaines, Urban Forester
- Brennen Duncan, City Engineer

Commissioner Stolzenberg – I wonder how we could structure incentives around credits or onsite treatment and whether we can give zoning bonuses for doing onsite treatment, whether there is any way to incentivize upstream credits versus downstream credits. You do sometimes see them getting it from Ivy Creek. It would feed into the Rivanna River. It does help with our local water quality. I don’t know if there is a good lever to pull to help with that.

With the utilities capacity and a capacity study, it would be helpful to everyone, to the city, to developers, and to the public, for the results of that to be made public, to know where there is maybe spare capacity. We could potentially tailor regulations to be looser when we have places where we have a lot of excess capacity and tighter in places where we are running out of capacity and to focus infrastructure upgrades on places where we need it most. I would love to see that made public. I would like to see the locations of underground utilities. I know there is a map, and people can request snippets of the map. We don’t post it publicly.

When we talk about trees in the right-of-way, the thing that we hear all the time is that ‘we cannot do that because there are underground utilities there.’ I have seen a couple of these snippet maps. There are some corners where you could do a bump-out with a tree. The utilities are clustered to the other side of the street. It would be great to try to identify potential locations for trees, for deep paving, and for bioswales across the city more systematically. The only way I think you could do that would be with the map. Maybe we do that internally within the city, so you don’t have to give it to the public.

On the groups of phasing, it seems to me that stream buffers and critical slopes are in separate phases. They feel like one thing. They are all about protecting the waterways. The critical slopes are defined as being near the waterways. Critical slopes were before we had the state stormwater standards. That was how we prevented erosion into our waterways, made sure slopes were stabilized. Every time we have a hearing where we have this discretionary review of critical slopes, we say, ‘what would be some good conditions to apply?’ Mr. Duncan says that we must make them do all these things for stormwater management by state regulations. Our goal in 2023 was to maybe try to differentiate places where we don’t want to be ever developed, such as stream buffers. With slopes, we need to be careful about development and apply appropriate oversight and erosion sediment control to make sure that it is done right. Originally, we needed a discretionary review because that was the only way to impose those conditions. I think the plan back in 2023 was looking at seeing what is obsolete from having the state terminal requirements in place and what needs to be done today. I thought that we would be moving towards stream buffers and away from critical slopes rather than tweaking critical slopes at the margin.

Commissioner Joy – Both of these are about public outreach. I was thinking as you begin to draft how to engage the public, one area that could be an exciting opportunity is to engage with some of the city schools and some of our youngest residents in the city. I feel that you will have an excited audience there around these topics. You could help cultivate the ground up the support for these environmental issues. You will have a lot of fans within the schools. That would also be an interesting way to pressure parents.

On the topic of public appearances, I had the same issue when we were looking at the zoning and the phasing. I understand that resources are finite. We must prioritize them. I feel that the graphics that we present are loaded. I would suggest that instead of stacking it and saying that this was based on input from the staff, you may have people who feel strongly certain communities think critical slopes are critical. There are developments that are about to happen. The whole challenge that we have is around energy and that we need to decarbonize quickly. Having good infrastructure is critical because we don’t have to worry about stormwater if we are not making as much carbon. If there is a way to shift to a prioritization matrix or something that they are all equally important. Some have more risk and some have more complexity. They are presented in a way that we are trying to prioritize the ones with the highest risk and maybe the lowest complexity. Shift it away from these that were subjectively ranked depending on who is looking at them. I wonder if there is a way optically to adjust the graphic when it goes public.

Commissioner Solla-Yates – At issue, this relates to Commissioner Joy’s point. What might be helpful to understand is feasibility. There are some areas that we are not going to see infill development. We might see some in 2 years. Prioritizing those more feasible locations for review will be helpful and may get at the neighborhood and specific concerns. We are putting substantial public resources and services in high land cost. Maybe we want some revenue and some housing back. There are areas where we do want development.

Commissioner Stolzenberg – With all these other studies in play, we probably want to be making decisions based on the best possible data. That might mean having to wait for the study to be complete before we make decisions based on it. I think back to the 2022 canopy study. I have done some research into the data underneath that. I was trying to understand the root of the 5 percent of the city’s land area in canopy loss the study was claiming. Comparing the aggregate acreage of that versus the aggregate acreage of development or invasive species clearing, I could not get it. I have concluded that it is methodologically flawed. I know we are doing a new study with a different vendor that is hopefully close to completion and will hopefully be a lot better. I don’t know what the timing is on when we should expect results of that. It seems like something that would be good to have before start to dig into some of the tree stuff. You can do other parts of the tree stuff without thinking of that broader picture. Do we have a timeline on that?

Mr. Gaines – Things were significantly delayed with the grant. That is now just getting back on track. We will start making more headway quickly at this point. The reports that we were trying to generate have been

generated. There is probably going to be significant surveying to see public opinion about what is important and then recompiling some of the information.

Ms. Riddervold – There might have been some differences between the methodology in the different canopy assessment years. One of the things we tasked the consultant with was to do an ‘apples-to-apples.’ Weed intervention might have been part of one of the data sets. It does not mean that we are trending upward. It may not be as precipitous as that last snapshot was telling us.

Commissioner Roettger – I don’t know if it would be worth doing outreach to small builders. Maybe it is being able to walk in during advertised office hours. There might be an opportunity in advocating for single lots that want to double or triple. I am thinking about being more encouraging working with whoever might be interested.

Commissioner Stolzenberg – Beyond the high-level phasing of all the major different pieces, the more we can find easy wins and implement them immediately rather than preparing a package, the better. I was looking back at that work session where we reviewed the Development Review Manual. We had that discussion about when stormwater management requirements apply and trying to figure out when they apply. The manual originally set the line between minor and major at 6 units. We rolled it back to two based on the idea that stormwater management requirements would trigger for 3 units. It sounds like that is not the case. Bumping up the unit count but also putting in a 6000-square-foot threshold will allow some of those smaller developments to get through without a major development plan. Some of the minor development plans will still be detailed.

Ms. Kanellopoulos – It has been helpful feedback. How would you like to be kept updated? Thinking about previous work sessions you have had technical topics, what has worked well that we can keep in mind from a timing or format standpoint and how we share information? Is it helpful to show up with a longer presentation that goes into these topics? Is it better to have plenty of time for discussion?

Commissioner Mitchell – Detailed documentation taking us through what drove you to the conclusions you got to would be helpful with a short presentation. We can speak to that.

Commissioner Stolzenberg – Make commissioners do the reading. I appreciate what you did with this one. I did not realize that was what was happening. I was not sure if we were going to go back in the presentation. Having those discussion topic slides like that is helpful for prompting things. For a complicated topic, having a few points during the presentation where we stop and chat. The tricky part is that we are going to go off topic at the first one. Don’t let us do that. Have a general time at the end so that everyone can get their general comments out.

Mr. Schrager – With capacity studies, we are looking at those across all utilities right now. That will inform our standards update. We are looking at that as we go through this zoning process and what changes we need to make across all our utilities to allow for this increased zoning. We must finish these capacity studies first. With the maps, I will visit that. I am not going to make any promises. With drought management, we do have a drought management plan with the Rivanna that we have worked on. It was just submitted to the DEQ in 2025. It is up to date. We must do that every 10 years as part of our permits. If we need to put any of that into this document, we can work with Tori on what we need to do and what you would like to see there.

Commissioner Stolzenberg – With hydrant location and fire flow test results, I know they must do them every year. I know it is easy to ask for it. For these small projects, it would be best having that in advance.

Mr. Schrager – The hard part about that is we do not do fire flow tests every year on every hydrant. We do inspections. That is different than an actual flow test for fire capacity. That is the reason that we do have that

request come in. We may not even have that flow information for the specific hydrant they are looking for. If we have data that is within the past year, we sent that back to them as long as is within the last year. The fire marshal can accept it. If we need to do a test, we must schedule that. We are happy to speed that process along as fast as possible.

Commissioner Stolzenberg – Even just having outdated tests available will help people make decisions quickly and less manual intervention from you guys.

Mr. Duncan – I have one final comment about stormwater facilities in the right-of-way. That has been a citywide policy for as long as I have been here. We do not want private facilities in our public right-of-way that the city must maintain. We don't have the staff, resources, and expertise. Most of our Parks & Recreation staff are doing the roadside mowing. We don't want them inadvertently mowing down something that is supposed to be planted over a specific species. That is the main reason for that. We have done some city projects where we have done some kind. We have recently reverted to going the route of buying credits. We don't have the space to do it. It is a lot of money to buy eminent domain on somebody's property to put a stormwater facility on that rather than just buying the credits. It is something that I am willing to look at. That is a thread that if you pull on, there is a lot more behind it as far as how much staff would need to do to facilitate allowing that in the right-of-way.

Adjournment

The work session was adjourned at 6:20 PM.

Public Comments

There were no public comments submitted during this work session.