

**Meeting Notes**  
**York 2040 Committee**

Wednesday, September 7, 2022 – 5:00 p.m.

Senior Center of York

5314 George Washington Memorial Highway, Yorktown, Virginia

Members Present: Mark Bellamy, Gregory “Skip” Brooks, Chad Green, Michel S. King, Rick Moberg, Eugene Seiter, Cowles “Buddy” Spencer, Richard Myer

Staff Present: Susan Kassel, Director of Planning and Development Services; Timothy Cross, AICP, Deputy Director of Planning and Development Services; Earl Anderson, AICP, Senior Planner; Amy Parker, Senior Planner; Cathy Tartabini, Planning Assistant; Richard Hill, Deputy County Attorney; Jeanne M. Sgroi, Management Analyst

Members Absent: Sheila Myers, Leigh Houghland, Jacob Rizzio

Others Present: Stephen P. Kopczynski, Fire Chief/Director of Fire and Life Safety; Kevin Smith, York County Public Library Director; Douglas Holroyd

Call to Order

Chairman King called the meeting to order at approximately 5:00 p.m.

Opening Remarks

Chairman King welcomed everyone.

Approval of Meeting Notes

On motion of Mr. Spencer, seconded by Mr. Seiter, the meeting notes for July 6, 2022, were unanimously approved.

Committee Discussion of Draft Public Facilities Element of the Comprehensive Plan

Chairman King stated that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss portions of the draft Public Facilities element of the Comprehensive (Comp) Plan that were distributed to the Committee members last week. He explained that this element is particularly lengthy and covers a variety of topics; therefore, the document that was distributed covers only the sections pertaining to Detention and Law Enforcement, Fire and Life Safety, Government Offices, and Libraries, which he said are the topics of tonight’s meeting. He called on Mr. Anderson to introduce the guest speakers and give a brief overview of the document.

Mr. Anderson stated that the Public Facilities element covers all public facilities in the County but that tonight’s discussion would focus on public safety, government offices, and libraries. He introduced Library Director Kevin Smith and Fire Chief Stephen Kopczynski. Mr. Anderson stated that he had also invited Major Ron Montgomery to speak on behalf of the Sheriff’s Office and that he might be arriving later. He explained that they are the subject matter experts for their respective sections of the document. Mr. Anderson added that the October meeting would be dedicated to a review of the Parks and Recreation, Tourism, and the Schools sections of the draft Public Facilities element. He explained that because of the length and scope of the element, staff felt that it contained too much material to cover in a single meeting and decided to divide it into two meetings.

Chairman King stated that as in previous meetings, he would like to go through the document section by section, and he asked Committee members to provide any comments or questions they may have.

Mr. Myer suggested adding a few sentences at the end of the "Introduction" section on Page 1 to state that the County reviews its facility construction and expansion needs annually and that each year the Board of Supervisors reviews and approves the Capital Improvement Program, which the Planning Commission certifies as being in conformance with the goals and objectives of the Comp Plan. He stated that this information is included in the "Goals, Objectives, and Strategies" section of the document but felt it would be a good idea to also reference it in the Introduction, which more people are likely to read.

Mr. Myer expressed concern about Table 1, stating that it gives the impression that the ratio of law enforcement officers to the population in the County is low and he was not certain that is something that should be highlighted. Mr. Anderson responded that the table is included because the Sheriff's Office has a specific concern about the low ratio compared to other localities. Chairman King asked Mr. Anderson if the reason for the low ratio has to do with recruiting or budget constraints. Mr. Anderson attributed it to a number of factors, adding that officers often get hired and trained and then leave after a few years to work for another locality where they can earn more money. Mr. Green commented that in the last budget the Board of Supervisors created more deputy positions, bringing the total to more than one hundred. Mr. Anderson added that the data in the chart is for 2020, which is the most recent year for which this data is available from the Virginia State Police. Mr. Seiter commented that the fact that the County has a low crime rate even with a low ratio of law enforcement officers to residents reflects well on the effectiveness of the Sheriff's Office.

Chairman King recommended that the Committee postpone the discussion of detention and law enforcement until Major Montgomery arrives and proceed with its review of the Fire and Life Safety section of the document. He asked Chief Kopczynski if he wanted to offer any remarks. Chief Kopczynski gave a brief overview of the organization and operations of the Department of Fire and Life Safety. He stated that the County has six fire stations, the newest of which opened in December 1991, and is building a seventh station on Mooretown Road next to Ewell Industrial Park. He stated that the seventh station is would bridge the gap between the Hubbard Lane and Skimino Stations. Chief Kopczynski stated that although the majority of his employees work out of the fire stations, fire and rescue, including Emergency Medical Services (EMS), are just one of his department's many areas of responsibility, which include fire prevention education, fire inspections, building and development plan review, special operations, logistics, and maintaining supplies and equipment. He stated that the administrative offices are located in the Public Safety Building, which also houses the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) located in a multi-use classroom that the department hopes to change to a permanent EOC once the Sheriff's Office relocates to its new building. Mr. Anderson added that the Fire and Life Safety Department is also responsible for animal control. Chief Kopczynski said that is correct and added that it is involved with various regional and federal support teams.

Chairman King thanked Chief Kopczynski for his thorough presentation and asked if the new fire station is needed to reduce response times in the upper County. Chief Kopczynski responded that around 2003 the County identified a need to fill the gap between the two existing upper County fire stations in a densely developed area with several hotels and a hospital. He explained that the County was able to retrofit the former Crossroads Youth Home and add bay space to convert it into a fire station. Mr. Green added that since the building was previously used as a residential facility for youths, it already had sleeping quarters, eating facilities, and a big day room and was well-suited for a fire station. Chairman King commented that this is a good example of adaptive reuse.

Chief Kopczynski commented that the County operates a CBRNE hazardous materials training facility, which is located behind the Seaford Fire Station on Back Creek Road and is discussed on Page 6 of the draft element. He said that every hazardous materials response team in Virginia is required to travel to this facility to be certified. He stated that one of the benefits of having this facility is that the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) has contracts with hotels in the County to house regional

teams that send their staffs to the facility from outside the area, many of whom are also likely to eat their meals at County restaurants, which helps County businesses.

Mr. Seiter stated that he is the Parish Administrator for his church and that the Fire Department has provided tremendous assistance to the church with regard to lockboxes, alarm systems, and other safety measures.

Mr. Spencer asked Chief Kopczynski why fire trucks accompany ambulances on every call. Chief Kopczynski responded that all career firefighters in York County are cross-trained in emergency medical care and that everyone responding to a medical call has a role and everybody knows what equipment they are responsible for. He explained that serious medical situations may require the application of multiple procedures and that the additional assistance provided by members from the fire engine often accelerates the patient care and treatment process as well as reducing the time it takes the patient to reach the hospital. He stated that this allows the crew to get to service calls more quickly so they are available for the next call. Chief Kopczynski added that although fire trucks cannot be used to transport patients, they carry much of the same equipment as ambulances, and he noted that sometimes the closest ambulance might be committed to another incident, in which case the closest fire engine would respond to provide patient care and treatment until the next available ambulance arrives.

Mr. Myer suggested that a sentence or two be added to the introductory section on Page 4 to introduce the concept of the County's coordination with VDEM, which is discussed more fully later on in the document. Mr. Anderson responded that he would come up with some language about the department's various activities at the regional, state, and national levels.

Mr. Hill asked if the document addresses fire and life safety staffing levels. Chief Kopczynski responded that although there are no specific numbers as there are for law enforcement, there is a national standard and staffing is addressed in the "Goals, Objectives, and Strategies" section. Mr. Anderson added that there is also language earlier in the document that supports the need for more personnel.

Mr. Myer suggested adding website addresses on Page 7 to help readers locate information about the various Fire and Life Safety programs listed. Mr. Anderson responded that web addresses often change and that it is better to just reference the York County website and people can search that site. Mr. Myer responded that citizens searching the Internet for York County information are often directed to the website for a York County in another state. Mr. Cross stated that the Comp Plan is not a promotional publication and is not the document where people are likely to look for such information.

With regard to staffing, Mr. Seiter commented that he has noticed that the Fire Department does not have volunteers. Chief Kopczynski responded that they have a few volunteers but that training requirements present a challenge. Mr. Green asked about federal grant programs. Chief Kopczynski responded that the CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) program was started with federal grants and is a program that trains the public in ways that they can be better prepared to help themselves, their families, and their neighborhoods in the event of major storms and other disasters. He stated that the CERT program has generated a large number of the department's volunteers, and he added that the COVID-19 pandemic put a hiatus on this training but it is expected to resume in the near future.

Mr. Anderson recommended that the Committee proceed with its discussion of detention and law enforcement rather than continue to wait for Major Montgomery. Chairman King agreed, and he opened the floor for comments and questions on that section of the draft document.

Mr. Brooks noted that the years in the title of Figure 1 do not match the accompanying text. Mr. Anderson said he would correct it. Mr. Spencer asked if the chart is showing that Poquoson had an 18.2% increase

in crime. Mr. Anderson said that is correct. Mr. Spencer responded that he found that interesting given that Poquoson was named safest community in Virginia two years in a row.

There being no further comments on the Detention and Law Enforcement section, Chairman King opened the floor for comments on the Government Offices section of the document. There were none.

Chairman King called on Kevin Smith to give an overview of the York County library system and the services it offers. Mr. Smith began by stating that even in the digital age, the libraries in York County still provide traditional library services, and he noted that books constitute 75% of their circulation. He said the library is a place for people to come and learn, and he described it as part of the educational eco-system. He stated that homeschooling has increased since the pandemic, so the library has enhanced its services for homeschoolers, and he added that he sees more and more adult learners who are working on getting advanced degrees. Mr. Smith stated that the libraries provide internet service for those who can't afford to have it in their homes. He also mentioned enhanced services for pre-kindergartners, residents of nursing homes and retirement communities, and teleworkers.

Mr. Anderson asked Mr. Smith to talk about the Yorktown Library expansion that is currently under construction. Mr. Smith stated that the expanded library, which he hopes will be open by December, will be twice the size of the original libraries and will have multiple meeting spaces, including a large lecture hall with a stage that can be used for cultural arts programs and music. He added that there will be an entire wing dedicated to children's activities and a technology-centered "Makerspace" where people can learn new technology.

Chairman King thanked Mr. Smith and asked the Committee for comments on the Libraries section of the draft document. Mr. Hill noted that there is an incomplete sentence on Page 10, Line 6. Mr. Anderson commented that the library is open not just to York County residents but to any Virginia resident, with no special limits on the number of items that can be checked out. Mr. Smith added that since this is a military community with a lot of military members who are here temporarily, the library issues temporary library cards to military families that have some restrictions. Mr. Green asked if other libraries typically issue library cards to nonresidents, to which Mr. Smith responded that most of the libraries in Virginia do, although some charge a nominal nonresident fee.

Mr. Myer suggested that the WRL acronym for the Williamsburg Regional Library, which appears elsewhere in the document, be included in parentheses on Page 9, Line 41. He also recommended that language be added to Page 11 between Lines 3 and 7 noting that the libraries provide access to citizens to file taxes and fill out online government forms. He added that it sounds like the libraries provide facilities for tutoring as well as homeschooling and research, which he felt might be worth mentioning in the document.

Chairman King opened the floor for comments on the "Planning Issues for the Future" section of the document. Mr. Seiter noted the reference on Page 11 to the citizen survey and the expressed desire for more bike paths and sidewalks, and he stated that this is true in just about every community. He stated that addressing this issue is a lot more difficult than most people imagine but that if the County is able to do so it would solve a lot of problems. Chairman King responded that the County is working on this issue and, in fact, is now building a sidewalk in front of the Yorktown Library that will extend past the Nelson's Grant development and all the way to the Villas at Yorktown. Mr. Anderson added that there is also a planned sidewalk on Hampton Highway to the Tabb Library. Mr. Moberg commented that several years ago Lakeside Drive was widened to include shoulders that can accommodate bicycles, and now the residents place their trash and recycling totes in the shoulder. Chairman King stated that he supports bike paths but has noticed that a lot of bicyclists do not follow the rules of the road.

Mr. Myer noted the discussion of the need for a logistical warehouse-type facility on Page 12, Lines 36 through 41, and stated that it begs the question as to what the County is doing to address this need. Chief Kopczynski responded that his department has not requested funding for such a facility because capital improvement funding is limited and the facility is not as high a priority as other facility and equipment needs, such as Fire Station 7, fire apparatus, and equipment replacements. Mr. Anderson explained that including this in the Comp Plan provides the justification for future funding requests. Chairman King added that in order for such a facility to be built, it needs to be included in the Plan.

Chairman King asked for comments on the “Goals, Objectives, and Strategies” section of the document. Mr. Seiter suggested that having a first-rate public education system be included in the overall goal for Public Facilities on Page 15.

Mr. Myer suggested adding the words “security, safety, and accessibility” to Strategy #3 under General Objective #1 to describe the desired building standards for County facilities. Chairman King asked Mr. Anderson to add some specifics to the strategy.

Mr. Myer asked Chief Kopczynski if Strategy #3 under Public Safety Objective #1 should be revised to include some mention of the need to train for new and emerging technologies such as electric vehicles. Chief Kopczynski responded that some language can be added to reflect that, and he added that the Department of Fire and Life Safety is always training to address whatever changes arise, whether they have to do with technology, building construction materials, furnishings, and other things that affect the intensity of a fire.

With regard to Government Offices, Mr. Spencer asked about the status of County staff teleworking from home. Mr. Anderson responded there are only a select few who are working from home, while the rest are back in their offices. Chairman King asked if the staff had an ongoing telework program prior to the pandemic. Mr. Anderson responded that some employees had the option of working from home, but telecommuting was not widespread. Chairman King added that a lot of County employees meet with the general public and therefore need to be in the office. Mr. Brooks asked if a new Administration building, if one were to be built, would be located on the same site as the current building. Mr. Anderson responded that it could potentially be built on the same site utilizing the large parking lot behind the building.

Chairman King asked Mr. Smith if he had reviewed the goals, objectives, and strategies for libraries. Mr. Smith responded that he had and that they are consistent with the library system’s five-year strategic plan. With regard to the recommendation about the possibility of establishing a storefront library in the upper County, he explained that the idea came up a couple of years ago, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, as a way to fill some of the vacant retail space in the upper County. He stated that he knows of other localities that have revitalized failing shopping centers by filling vacant retail space with a storefront library but that he does not consider this to be a high priority for York County. Mr. Anderson added that he and Mr. Smith decided to include this recommendation in the Plan to ensure that the library needs of upper County residents are addressed, even though they currently receive high-quality service from the Williamsburg Regional Library System, with which the County has a partnership. Chairman King stated that he thinks it should stay in the Plan since it keeps the County’s options open for the future until something more permanent can be done. Mr. Smith added that storefront libraries are typically small facilities that serve to augment the existing system and are not necessarily full-fledged branch libraries.

Chairman King asked about the book-sharing boxes he has seen in other communities where people can borrow books or share books with others. Mr. Smith responded that this program is called the Little Free Library and that the boxes they can be good in residential neighborhoods to keep people engaged. He said they work well for communities that don’t have access to a library. Mr. Cross noted that there is one at the Public Safety Building.

Mr. Green asked if the Comp Plan should include a recommendation about looking for more opportunities to partner with other localities in providing regional library service as a way to improve cost-effectiveness. Mr. Smith responded that he did not think a regional approach would save money and that the County would lose its local identity to a regional library authority that would be an entity unto itself. He stated that with the current structure, the Board of Supervisors governs the library budget, whereas with a regional system, localities would be billed for library service. Chairman King added that the County would likely lose control of service delivery for its citizens to a regional governing board. Mr. Smith stated that regional libraries work best in small communities that cannot afford a library of their own.

#### Citizen Comments

Doug Holroyd stated that he was recently in Ontario, Canada when Rogers Communications lost its servers because of a mistake that occurred during the implementation of a new software upgrade. He stated that as a result, the 911 system and banking and ATM systems were lost for about a day and a half, and most businesses and restaurants shut down because they could not complete sales transactions. He said this incident raises the question as to whether the County is doing enough to ensure that Wi-Fi and server systems are robust enough to ensure that the 911 system and emergency shelters are able to operate during an emergency situation. He explained that he is concerned about citizens' ability to report a fire or traffic accident if they are not able to make a phone call or the dispatcher is not able to receive a call.

Mr. Anderson responded that this issue might be better addressed elsewhere in the Plan rather than in the Public Facilities element. He noted that the County has multiple public shelters with backup power where people can go during an emergency and that in recent years the Board of Supervisors has been requiring emergency generators as a condition of approval for gas stations and convenience stores that require a Special Use Permit. Mr. Holroyd responded that his concern is about emergency services. Chief Kopczynski stated that the County's Emergency 911 Center is one of the most prepared centers in Virginia and that there are likely a lot of redundancies built into the system. He said that the County does not control private entities such as Verizon and Cox, but he said they invest a lot of money in capabilities such as emergency generators at tower sites. He said the County's 911 Center is probably as prepared as it can be, but he added that it is inevitable that there will be a loss of communication during a disaster. Chief Kopczynski said that if communication is down, citizens are advised to go to the nearest fire station where there is usually at least one staff member working during disasters. He added that since Tropical Storm Isabel, the County has invested heavily in providing emergency generators at public facilities. Mr. Bellamy added that the County is continuing to work on this issue and is in very preliminary discussions with the YMCA about using its building as an emergency shelter and acquiring a backup generator with state funds.

On the topic of libraries, Mr. Holroyd stated that he is President of the Kiwanis Club of Williamsburg, which has invested a lot in the James City County Library in Norge. He stated that the library has a wonderful kids' studio that offers interactive communications and learning that is extremely popular and successful. He opined that this is the type of program the County should consider as it thinks about the future of libraries. He also noted that the WRL has plans to build a new library to replace the downtown library and he suggested that the County needs to plan for its share of the capital outlay to ensure that the existing partnership with the library system remains in place. Lastly, he noted that the WRL and some other libraries have mobile Wi-Fi hotspots to make the Internet more accessible to people who do not have service in their homes, and he wondered if the York County should consider a similar program as part of its library service to the citizens.

#### Other Business

Chairman King thanked the Committee members for their comments, and he asked Mr. Cross about the next meeting. Mr. Cross responded the next meeting would be October 5, and the Committee will discuss the remaining sections of the Public Facilities element: Schools, Park and Recreation, and Tourism.

Mr. Spencer asked about restrictions on what can be built at the McReynolds Athletic Complex and specifically whether or not a senior center or rec center can be built there. Mr. Anderson recommended that this question be deferred to the next meeting to give Parks and Recreation staff a chance to address it. Mr. Green added that there are restrictions because it is watershed property that the County leases from Newport News Waterworks.

#### Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:32 p.m.