

The Richlands Town Council held a Public Hearing in the Richlands Council Chambers on February 21, 2017 at 7:00pm., regarding the Town of Richlands Draft Comprehensive Plan with the following present.

Mayor:	Jannis White
Town Manager:	Tim Taylor
Town Clerk:	Connie Allen
Council Members:	Mary Ann Strong, Rick Wood, Rod Cury Larry Johnson
Absent:	Doug Ratliff, Vicki England

Mayor White opened the meeting.

Mayor - Would anyone like to speak at the Public Hearing?

Ginger Branton and Richard Brown were added to the agenda.

Richard – Comprehensive Plan is a living plan, updated every five years. We encourage consensus to get the plan passed.

Ginger - Reference Page 2 – Housing - Improve housing options for the elderly. Improving mobile homes in this area would be an insult, they deserve better than that. Need to be able to get the quality of life in assistant living in relations to Appalachian Citizen – assistant to the town. We are not sure that the Town of Richlands did their research or Brad possibly.

Tim - Solutions are in other parts of the Comprehensive Plan. - 1.3 was the communities input, people's thoughts and remarks.

Ginger - Having no more mobile homes in our town is not the solution.

Ginger - Reference Page 43 – Housing addressed - Young families are leaving the area. Strategy #5 - This is not going to happen unless they have jobs. We need to have wealth in our community, I don't see that happening. The goals are only good if we implement them.

Tim - Understood

Ginger - Reference Page 44 - You talk about this, however; you are not offering anything to retire to.

Reference Page 39 - Vision - I am not sure if I agree with the "Vision" stated in the Plan. "Building on our rich history, ideal location, & "can do" attitude, Richlands will strive to be a premier community in Southwest Virginia". I don't see it happening. There are no businesses in the area.

Ginger - Reference Page 11 - Is this from the public hearings or blessed by the Planning Commission?

Mayor - We are here to discuss.

Ginger - You are the business that is instrumental in doing this.

Ginger - Reference Page 11 - Why is the Chamber of Commerce not mentioned? (Ginger handed out short summary of what the Chamber of Commerce is responsible for in the Town of Richlands). It is embarrassing not to mention what the Chamber of Commerce does for the Town of Richlands. E-commerce would be an appropriate place to add Chamber of Commerce. The picture of "Coal Miners Memorial" is actually Doug Branton's picture, the source is not Visitazewellcounty.org. Coal Miners Memorial was slightly mentioned in the plan. We need to identify the Public Art Tour and CART. No mention of what role CART plays in the community. CART has been in the Richlands Area for past 36 years, 8/10 performance a year. (Ginger handed out a short summary on the role of Richlands Area Citizens for Arts (CART).

Ginger –Reference Page 14 - It is a shame the Walking Tour was not highlighted. Need to showcase the true activities we do. There were no pictures to view the activities. Richlands Annual Town Yard Sale should not be advertised, will not attract businesses, please keep that in mind. Identify attractions that are "GREAT". The James H. Drew was not mentioned. The carnival has been coming to our area for 83 years, will attract 25,000 people. The town benefits from this event and should be listed. We need to list the activities that are Glitz and Glamor!

Rod - We could add the James H. Drew to the Annual Freedom Festival. This is a living document and can be changed.

Ginger - Reference Page 14 - We need to add the LEAD Program. Who will take care of this project if I retire?

Mary Ann - LEAD should be included; if no one takes over when Ginger retires then it can be taken out.

Tim - LEAD and James H. Drew can be added.

Rod - James H. Drew is important part of Greater Richlands

Mary Ann – Ginger, can you write a summary of what you want added? Thanks

Ginger - Reference Page 16 - Elaborate more on the Clinch River and the revenue that could be generated. We don't maximize the Clinch River. We need to be a little more aggressive with the approach we are talking, showcase our community in a different and unique manner.

Ginger - Reference Page 17 - "The presence of mercury in fish tissue has been identified in the Clinch River". - What level? Is there an ordinance about local residents picking up pet waste? What role does the town have with the CRVI? Item No. 2 – "Develop and integrate access points, trails, and campgrounds along the Clinch River". – When?

Ginger - Reference Page 18 – "CRVI awarded the Scenic Virginia's Scenic Tourism Award in 2015". - Why has this not been made public? Item No. 4 - Are we working with the School System? "According to a representative from DMME, this particular feature is a "low Priority 2" as it is the remains of an abandoned brick structure that is causing erosion". – Where? Per Figure 12 – "Impacts to local water quality are primarily tied to rural land uses like septic systems and livestock". – Will this be identified? Why has the town not been actively involved with CRVI?

Larry - Working on the CRVI – Will be in two phases - Need a spot at Critterville

Ginger - Need property owners to give easements.

Ginger - Reference Page 20 - Why not make a statement about the wet lands? "Most of the developed land is dedicated to single-family residential use, which represents 40.0% of all the developed land ". - Is this not a concern? Please explain the trailer numbers. "Land use that is defined as industrial can include manufacturing, heavy goods storage or solid waste management". – Give the percentage.

Ginger - Reference Page 21 - Figure 19 – "Which shows the Manufacturing only accounts for a small percentage of total employment". - What are we doing to address this? What are we doing with the amount of land we have to develop? (Includes 280 acres) "The median size of a buildable section of forested land is about 0.10 acres". - Is the due to poor planning from town leaders?

Ginger - Reference Page 22 - If you haven't done anything with the usable land for development, why would you think you could with new land available?

Ginger - Reference Page 23 - Special Conservation (C-1) - Is this the Jonah Project? We need to address Tourism Zones - Please consider and I encourage you to stay on top of it.

Rod - We have not addressed the Tourism Zones.

Tim - No decision has been made on zones.

Ginger - Reference Page 24 - No mention of Enterprise Zone and Tourism Zones. What does the trailer next door mean? "The Richlands Zoning Ordinance has not been reviewed recently and in light of ongoing changes in the enabling legislation, should be updated in the very near future". - When and how long?

Ginger - Reference Page 26 - "Tazewell County lost almost 1000 jobs, mostly from manufacturing and retail trade". – Don't understand this paragraph, need to understand our plan.

Ginger – Reference Page 27 - Leisure & Hospitality sectors - Why not mention tourism? Do you have any current information on the County Business Patterns?

Ginger - Reference Page 29 - Why did the town not pursue Sykes?

Ginger - Reference Page 30 - We are the only One-Stop Center in Virginia. What incentives do we have to offer in order to get businesses to relocate to our town? Are we pursuing manufacturing businesses? Key Takeaway - What are you doing to make this happen?

Ginger - Who is the correct go to person when new businesses want to come into Richlands? They need a direct contact for the Town of Richlands.

Tim – This is the mayor and myself at this time.

Ginger - Needs to be in the Comprehensive Plan or we lose ground.

Ginger - Create wealth in the community, attractive place to have a business. Doctors won't stay in our area. Someone needs to wine and dine them and get their business.

Tim - Working on that, not in place yet.

Ginger - Reference Page 31 – Where do we stand on the Pedestrian Walking and Bike Trail? You need to identify correctly in the Comprehensive Plan - Instead of Pedestrian Walkway and Bike Trail it should be Pedestrian Walking and Bike Trail. We need to make the walking trail better than the Creeper Trail in Abingdon. Again, why is the Chamber of Commerce not mentioned?

Ginger - Reference Page 32 - What are we doing to address the problem with outdated equipment for the police department? Negative Statement – “This is a real plus for the Town in that it draws people in, but it does come at some expense”.

Larry - Addressed in last meeting.

Ginger - Reference Page 33 - What are we doing about the snow removal equipment that is worn out and the refurbishment of the Town's sidewalks?

Ginger - Reference Page 35 – Gas Utility - Why has this not happened? Summary - What are the limited resources? “The Town has the necessary infrastructure and utility capacity in place to support efforts at bringing in much needed additional employers” – Who might this be? Key Takeaway - If we are selling power cheaper than we paid for it how will we come out ahead?

Mary Ann - Appreciate you being so thorough.

Ginger – Reference Page 37 – 2.83 – Do you feel this is something you should not take into consideration, the future of Richlands would be elderly? Appalachian Agency for Senior Citizens.

Ginger - Reference Page 38 - Figure 23 - What covered the change? Key Takeaway - In what way are you working with local, regional and state partners?

Ginger - Reference Page 40 – More staff needed

Ginger - Reference Page 41 – 3.3 - “When it becomes too burdensome to undertake a project in one locality, a developer can move just down the road to where the development atmosphere is friendlier, either in a nearby town or in a unincorporated portion of Tazewell County or some other nearby county”. Can you tell me if this happens a lot? Objective:” An increase in the amount of vacant land and existing retail, commercial, and industrial buildings being actively marketed”. – Who is doing this? Is the data available for Tazewell County lands and concurrent loss of business and industry in the Town of Richlands? Strategy#2 - Will this happen? Please explain “floating” zones? Section Housing is the last item on the wish list.

Tim - Second part of page 45 – Strategy #1

Ginger - Who will move this forward?

Tim - Grants and community support. Once the Comprehensive Plan is adopted, will go forward and council will decide.

Ginger - We face challenges but we have to stretch ourselves or we won't get anything.

Ginger - Reference Page 45 - What are you doing to connect with other communities? What about Tourism Zones?

Ginger - Reference Page 46 - Strategy #5 – Why not include the Chamber? Strategy #6 - Chamber has hosted numerous opportunities – LEAD Program Strategy #7 - Who will do this? Strategy #8 -Is there any connection with state or regional people?

Ginger - Reference Page 47 - How do we plan to make these improvements with a declining tax base? People want to live and die in this area.

Rod - I feel the same, my life is here in Richlands. I take it very seriously and want to live here forever. Section Housing – Moving toward completing the last point on the check list. We are the only ones in the state to complete, has been six long years. We appreciate your support.

Ginger – Reference Page 52 - Grants for Signage - We need more appropriate signs, welcoming people to our town.

Tim - I will talk to them about it. This is n the hands of VDOT.

Ginger - Reference Page 49 - Goal - How can you make this happen with all the low income and poverty level?

Ginger - Reference Page 54 - No one is visiting Richmond; Richlands doesn't have a representative. Bill Shelton is retiring soon, he is the only one we know, we will lose those relationships and we will get nothing.

Rod - You are right! Networking is important – Moorefield can help us with some of those projects.

Tim - The schedule is listed on page 59.

Mary Ann - Your heart and soul is in Richlands, thank you for all your time and efforts. I wish there were more people concerned as much as you are about Richlands. There is not a lot to bring our kids and family back to. Ginger, thank you for all you do.

Mayor – Does anyone want to add anything? You are welcome to take the brochures.

Mary Ann - Richard will you have approvals by March meeting?

Ginger - Reference Page 55 - Will this be done?

Craig - VDOT has not responded one way or the other.

Tim – Timing and ordinance – Meet code of requirements.

Ginger - Let this become a working document. The Town Council goes forward with the plan, embrace and be proud of it.

Mary Ann – Well said.

Mayor - We realize the importance and will make our best effort to carry forward.

Rod - Craig, when you get the additions and edits added to the comprehensive plan, can you please send to Tim. We would like to have the updated version available for the March meeting. The Chamber of Commerce needs to be included along with other department heads. Thank you.

Mayor - Is there anyone else that would like to comment?

Mayor – Do I have a motion to adjourn the meeting regarding the Town of Richlands Draft Comprehensive Plan?

Rod - I make the motion to close the public hearing, Tim seconded the motion.

Mayor - We have a motion and a second, any further discussion? All those in favor of the motion say yes. All those that oppose say no. Motion carries 4/0.

Mayor - Public Meeting Adjourned.

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Jannis White, Mayor

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Connie Allen, Clerk