

**WORCESTER COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
WORK SESSION
MEETING MINUTES – September 11, 2025**

Meeting Date: September 11, 2025

Time: 1:00 P.M.

Location: Worcester County Government Office Building, Room 1102

Attendance:

Planning Commission

Jerry Barbierrri, Chair
Phyllis Wimbrow, Vice Chair
Kathy Drew
Marlene Ott
Betty Smith
Mary Knight

Staff

Jennifer Keener, Director, DRP
Matt Laick, Deputy Director, DRP
Bob Mitchell, Director, EP
Lily Wagner, Planner, EP

I. Call to Order

II. Comprehensive Plan Work Session

Water Resource Element

As the first item of business, the Planning Commission met with Michael Bayer from Wallace Montgomery to discuss the revised draft Water Resources Element (WRE). The Planning Commission reviewed the various sections and made suggested edits. They had a discussion on wastewater treatment plant capacity, PFAs (“forever chemicals”), reporting of annual agricultural irrigation data, and reconciling the growth area numbers in the tables to a map.

Fisheries Element

The Planning Commission then reviewed the Fisheries Element, which is required for all jurisdictions that are located on tidal waters. Mr. Bayer stated that he provided the draft copy to Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) for review and feedback and had additional data to be input. Staff and the Planning Commission recommended adding language about the impacts of the off-shore wind project, which includes the operations and maintenance facility in the commercial harbor, as well as updated numbers on the economic impact of various fishing tournaments like the White Marlin Open.

Land Use Element and Maps

Next, the Planning Commission reviewed the Land Use Element. Mr. Bayer explained that the starting point for this chapter was the existing land use chapter from the 2006 Comprehensive Plan. Staff and the Planning Commission discussed various topics including:

- Adding language regarding off-shore wind impacts.

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- How to appropriately balance solar development with agricultural and residential needs.
- The impacts of development in Sussex County, DE and Accomack County, VA on local infrastructure.
- Eliminating the Existing Developed Area (EDA) land use category and replacing it with a true residential classification. Currently, there is no independent residential land use category. The EDA encompasses residential, as well as commercial properties, which should be reclassified as Commercial Centers.
- Eliminating references to the Transfer of Development Rights program. The Planning Commission felt that Worcester County does not have sufficient sewer capacity at this time to truly designate receiving areas. Mr. Bayer stated that some of the Maryland counties that do have such programs have not been as successful in implementation.
- The Planning Commission wanted to keep the discussion on “commercial cinders”, which are commercial properties that have been underutilized or abandoned, and could be utilized for other uses. There was also discussion on whether there was an appropriate supply of commercial zoning, as the current Comprehensive Plan states that there is an oversupply. An analysis needs to be completed on this topic.
- Further inquiry into the industrial land use category is needed. The current Comprehensive Plan states that a light industry location should be developed in the northern county, however it also states that there are sufficient industrial areas. Staff will inquire with the Department of Economic Development on this matter.
- How recommendations in the existing Comprehensive Plan were incorporated into various documents such as the Design Guidelines and Standards for Commercial Uses, the addition of consolidated development rights and rural cluster subdivisions into the Zoning and Subdivision Control Article, and amendments to the Residential Planned Community section of the Zoning Code to discuss the best practices and growth area considerations listed in the plan.
- The Planning Commission discussed the elimination of the E-1 Estate District, which had been proposed in the 2006 Comprehensive Plan, but was not implemented in the 2009 Zoning Code. It was suggested that language be added about its removal.

Staff and Mr. Bayer noted that the Future Land Use Map was not ready for distribution. Mrs. Keener reiterated how the municipalities were given the opportunity to weigh in on the Growth Areas surrounding their municipal boundaries, and the Planning Commission reviewed those areas for consensus in April 2025. That was the basis for the development capacity analysis (“build-out analysis”) that informed the Water Resources Element and Land Use Element. Staff has not yet worked with the consultant to review the map and make suggested edits before presenting to the Planning Commission.

Copies of the April 2025 growth area maps were included in the packet, with the notations as to the action that the Planning Commission took on each area. Also included in the packet were two requests from the public; one that had been reviewed during that meeting, and one received in May 2025. Mr. Mark Cropper was present at the work session and provided

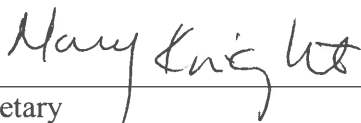
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comments on his request for a growth area on behalf of BLS Realty for property located outside of Ocean Pines, along the southwesterly side of Racetrack Road. He also provided the Planning Commission with a copy of a letter for another property located off Holly Grove Road, that is currently designated Green Infrastructure, and zoned Resource Protection District. His client would like a different zoning designation and didn't want to miss the opportunity for consideration. The Planning Commission discussed the purpose behind the prior designation of the Green Infrastructure category and associated zoning within what is known as the "Holly Grove Swamp".

Overall, no action was taken. The feedback received from staff and the Planning Commission will be incorporated into revised documents for further consideration.

The Planning Commission acknowledged that there will be a joint work session to be held with the Worcester County Commissioners on Tuesday, September 16, 2025, on the Introduction and County Profile chapters of the plan.

III. Adjourn



Mary Knight, Secretary



Jennifer Keener, Director