

## RAPPAHANNOCK-RAPIDAN WORKFORCE AFFORDABLE HOUSING COMMITTEE

### Meeting Notes

April 20, 2007

In attendance: Norma Dunwody (Culpeper Chamber of Commerce), Mike Collins (Town of Orange), Kimberley Fogle (Fauquier County), Tony Hooper (Fauquier County), Jean Kane (Madison County), Debbie Kendall (Orange County), Alan Knewstep (Rural Development), Mickey Rhoades (Town of Warrenton), Carl Sachs (Culpeper), Jeffrey Walker (RRRC), Cathy Zielinski (RRRC)

Mr. Hooper called the meeting to order at 2:00 pm.

### **Panel Discussion: Planners' perspectives on workforce housing issues**

Mr. Hooper welcomed the County and Town Planners and Community Development representatives present, and introduced the discussion. He asked the local planners to explain the local condition of workforce housing and their thoughts about strategies for increasing workforce affordable housing. The following is a summary of some of the key ideas and common themes that emerged from the discussion.

- In general, there has been awareness of a problem of lack of workforce housing for a long time, but also resistance to doing anything about it. It has been difficult even to start the conversation. New comprehensive plan revisions, required by Virginia Code every five years, must address affordable housing. There seems to have been movement in the last year or two.
- Jean Kane pointed out the contradiction of trying to stop growth by refusing to plan for it, which only creates sprawl and diminishes more of the rural character and open spaces.
- In Orange, workforce (affordable?) housing is now included as a goal in the Comp Plan; being addressed through development, zoning and proffers. Developers are encouraged to include affordable housing. There is a joint planning effort underway between the Town and County of Orange - "Rural Preservation Plan". The County would concentrate growth around the Town; town would double in size.
  - There is a task force looking at transfer of development rights (TDR) as an important strategy. It will take some time and effort to accomplish this, but there is now legal authority from the State. Town of Orange is beginning a zoning revision, which will take this into account.
  - Orange has keyed its definition of workforce housing to school system salaries.
  - Mike Collins said 12 units per acre is the goal for the Town. There should not be subsidized affordable or workforce housing outside of the town.

- Warrenton is working with a developer on a project that will incorporate mixed use, mixed income and green design
- Fauquier County worked on a project that had proffered 10 affordable units in return for rezoning, higher density, but once construction was underway, units were lost for various reasons, e.g., wetland requirements. Developer could not afford to produce affordable units. Now considering cash proffer instead.
- Town of Orange will consider proffer of good design and quality construction.
- In assessing supply of workforce affordable housing, the standard should be quality housing, “in community”. There may be poorly constructed, poor condition properties in remote areas that are in the affordable housing price definition, but that type of housing does not accomplish the goal of workforce housing.
- Lack of infrastructure restricts higher density. Culpeper County Comp Plan provides for water and sewer in Town of Culpeper, Clevenger’s Corner, Elkwood/Brandy Station. Clevenger’s Corner developer has proffered cash, land for school, utilities, and some affordable units.
- Developers seem not to be keyed in to demographic trends. Population is aging, demand for smaller homes, smaller lots is likely. Over age 85 is the fastest growing segment of the population. The Metropolitan Institute projects that demand for single family homes will continue to drop. What is the public role in planning for that increase? How do you market smaller properties?
  - Mixed income / use communities that attract older and younger residents.
  - There is a need for quality of life amenities to attract populations to higher density/lower cost communities
  - Rural Development can finance condos, but first requires that a certain percentage of units are sold to non-investors.
- Zoning and proffers can accomplish some improvements, but there is a need for political will to address the public perception that all density is bad. This is an education problem.
- Creating good jobs is also part of the solution to making housing more affordable to the workforce.
- There was a suggestion for the Committee and R-R Regional Commission to prepare a written guide for small towns on how to build density and still maintain small town character.

Alan Knewstep reported that Rural Development is consolidating some of its operations. The Charlottesville sub office will be shut down. Staff will move to the Culpeper sub-office.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:30 pm.