

**WORCESTER COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
WORK SESSION
MEETING MINUTES – December 19, 2024**

Meeting Date: December 19, 2024

Time: 1:00 P.M.

Location: Worcester County Government Office Building, Room 1102

Attendance:

Planning Commission

Jerry Barbierri, Chair

Phyllis Wimbrow, Vice Chair

Kathy Drew

Marlene Ott

Betty Smith

Ken Church

Staff

Jennifer Keener, Director, DRP

Matt Laick, Deputy Director, DRP

Bob Mitchell, Director, EP

Brian Soper, NR Administrator

Katherine Munson, NR Planner

Lily Wagner, NR Planner

I. Call to Order

II. Comprehensive Plan Work Session

As the first item of business, the Planning Commission met with Michael Bayer, Cassie Williams and Angela Fleck from Wallace Montgomery to discuss the draft Natural Resources and Sensitive Areas Element of the proposed Worcester County Comprehensive Plan.

Ms. Williams is an environmental scientist with Wallace Montgomery. She is focusing on the Natural Resources and Sensitive Areas chapter. She identified the main goals listed in the chapter, along with possible action items below each one. She noted that these were to be used as a starting point, and that the Planning Commission will eventually go through them to see what is actionable, reasonable, and feasible.

During the discussion, the Planning Commission made the following comments and/or recommendations:

- The Planning Commission had some discussion on the electrification requirement for buildings over 35,000 square feet, which is a state law that will impact buildings using fossil fuels, including many of the hotels and condominium buildings in Ocean City. While not directly referenced in this section, a note will be made to add language where appropriate. An education component for energy use is encouraged.
- The Planning Commission requested that the St. Martin's River be added to the Physiography section.
- Clarifying the difference in NRCS data set for the soil survey and percentages versus County data set and percentages. Worcester County uses County data for septic, MALPF,

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and other programs. The consultant will work with staff to sort through which data set to use.

- It was acknowledged that the surface mining section will be updated based on new data received.
- Mr. Mitchell explained that the updates to the Critical Area maps are in progress, and he anticipated adoption ahead of the comprehensive plan. He said that the County is losing 300 acres of Critical Area, but there will still be significant wetlands, with many converting from tidal to non-tidal wetlands.
- The Planning Commission concurred with the recommendation to have the County consider applying for participation in the Community Rating System (CRS) as part of the floodplain management goals.
- The Planning Commission discussed the need to modify the Coastal Bays section, as it included vague terminology, as well as include information on the Ocean Pines wastewater treatment plant that fronts on the Assawoman Bay.
- Clarification was requested on the endangered species section. References to island creation efforts to protect certain species was recommended.
- Clarifying some of the timing of the Forestry regulations.

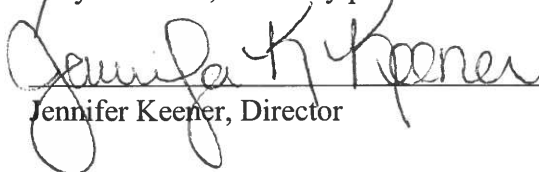
Mr. Bayer then requested that if there were any additional comments or edits that the Planning Commission found, to please forward along, so they can revise the draft early in 2025. He then explained that they were in the process of working with staff to create a map to share with the municipalities to start the discussion on land use and growth area boundaries using GIS. Once input is received on their projected growth boundaries, then the data will be input into the Water Resources Element. In the upcoming months, the Transportation chapter will be reviewed in February, and the Economic Development and Tourism chapter in January.

Mr. Bayer noted that all the current chapters are working drafts; as major changes are made to a respective chapter, it will be shared with the Planning Commission and updated on the County's website.

III. Adjourn



Jerry Barbierri, Secretary pro tem



Jennifer Keener, Director