

**WORCESTER COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
WORK SESSION
MEETING MINUTES – March 13, 2025**

Meeting Date: March 13, 2025

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
Katherine Munson, Planner, EP
Lily Wagner, Planner, EP

I. Call to Order

II. Comprehensive Plan Work Session

As the first item of business, the Planning Commission met with Michael Bayer, Nick Walls and Ainsley Pressl from Wallace Montgomery to discuss the methodology associated with the development capacity analysis that will inform the Land Use chapter and the Water Resources Element (WRE).

Mr. Walls explained that the first step was holding a meeting/ mapping exercise with the municipalities to determine their requested growth area boundaries. Data from the 2024 Maryland Department of Planning land use tool and the 2006 Worcester County Growth Area boundaries were used as the starting point. They are waiting for final written feedback from the municipalities before beginning the analysis.

Mr. Walls elaborated upon the process, which will involve taking the identified growth areas and comparing it to the existing underlying zoning and density to determine the number of housing units that may be reasonably expected to be developed on a given parcel. Commercial, industrial and institutionally zoned land will utilize lot coverage estimates. He noted that the analysis will subtract approximately 25% of the land area for environmental and infrastructure constraints (roads, stormwater management, utilities, etc.). A minimum and maximum number of dwelling units will be calculated, as well as the average. Their methodology will use the average to estimate the total number of dwelling units that could reasonably be expected to be constructed. Then the total population growth that could be accommodated is determined based upon the number of units and the average household size in the county.

The analysis will also provide input into the Water Resources Element. The county is aware that while the analysis may show a potential number of developable units, there may be limitations to that number due to limited sewer availability as the primary constraining factor.

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The consultant explained that the Planning Commission will revisit the growth area boundaries, and when it is brought back, they will have the analysis completed. They expect to present the WRE in April, as well as land use maps in April or May. They will provide a written explanation of the development capacity analysis methodology, which will likely be added to an appendix of the plan.


Next, Mr. Bayer explained that his team has been editing the prior chapters based upon feedback received from the Planning Commission and the county staff. DRP has posted updated chapters on the website as they are received, so they are available for public review and comment. Mr. Bayer stated that the Housing Element has received a lot of public feedback, and that DRP also has a housing study going on, data from which can be incorporated into the chapter. He provided a preliminary copy to Maryland Department of Planning for their review, as there are a few areas where guidance has yet to be developed by the state. They generally gave a positive reaction to the draft.

Once all chapters have been developed and revised, a complete draft plan will be assembled. As previously explained, there will be a reconciliation between items that are in different chapters that may overlap.

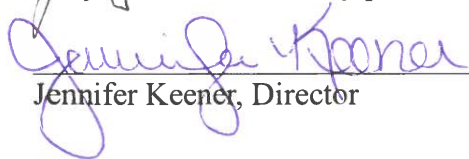
A brief explanation of the Water Resources Element was provided.

The Planning Commission Chair recognized Ron Casio, resident of Berlin and member of the Town of Berlin's Planning Commission to speak. He advised that he and many others do not wish to see growth to the west of Berlin. Staff clarified that the current land use map has significant growth areas to the west of the municipality, including the former Bay Club which was purchased by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources.

III. Adjourn



Jerry Barbierri, Secretary pro tem



Jennifer Keener, Director