

**WORCESTER COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
WORK SESSION
MEETING MINUTES – April 10, 2025**

Meeting Date: April 10, 2025

Time: 1:00 P.M.

Location: Worcester County Government Office Building, Room 1102

Attendance:

Planning Commission

Jerry Barbierri, Chair
Kathy Drew
Marlene Ott
Betty Smith

Staff

Jennifer Keener, Director, DRP
Matt Laick, Deputy Director, DRP
Ben Zito, DRP Specialist III, DRP
Bob Mitchell, Director, EP
Katherine Munson, Planner, EP
Lily Wagner, Planner, EP

I. Call to Order

II. Presentation

As the first item of business, Katherine Munson introduced Dr. Bill Dennison, Vice President for Science Application at the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science. Dr. Dennison presented the science and management of the Coastal Bays and Chesapeake Bay. He noted that the Maryland Coastal Bays Program is celebrating its 25-year anniversary, and UMCES was celebrating 100 years. UMCES was founded by Reginald Truitt of Snow Hill, Maryland; the annual report card grades the bays on various factors. Dr. Dennison noted that the Chesapeake Bay watershed is experiencing systematic failure on the Eastern Shore, and the Coastal Bays are at a tipping point. The goal is to build resilience in the systems to allow them to quickly recover, adapt to change without collapsing, and improve. Threats to resilience include erosion and relative sea level rise; heat stress and poor water quality leading to seagrass loss; increased nutrients leading to algal blooms; and chronic brown tide blooms. There have been improvements in fish diversity, decreases in macroalgae, increases in clams, and scallops for the first time in many years. Dr. Dennison said that there was a workshop scheduled on June 24, 2025, to work with the farming community to find solutions to nutrient contributions. Overall, land protection is the key. He noted that the northern Coastal Bays watershed is not protected in conservation easements. He explained that the Comprehensive Plan can be strategic and can help to build resilience. He pointed to two of the key issues that Worcester County residents identified as important in the Public Engagement Report: Loss of Natural Features – Encourage the preservation of farmland, waterways, and open space, benefitting residents as well as the environment overall; and Sea Level Rise – Concern for the next 10-20 years and the significant issues this could cause if it is not addressed now.

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III. Comprehensive Plan Work Session

As the next item of business, the Planning Commission met with Michael Bayer, Nick Walls and Ainsley Pressl from Wallace Montgomery to discuss the draft Land Use Maps. The Planning Commission reviewed the analysis and draft Land Use Maps at the March 2025 work session meeting. The maps provided for this review were finalized based on the feedback from each of the municipalities. There was also an individual request for an expanded growth area to the west of Berlin that was reviewed.

The Growth Areas that were determined by the Planning Commission at this meeting would feed into the development capacity analysis. Mr. Walls explained the general process again, identifying the density calculations, lot coverage assumptions and other constraints that go into the analysis. He provided several statistics based on the current draft growth areas:

- 3,036 acres are proposed in the draft growth areas.
- The high-end dwelling unit calculation in the growth areas (with existing residential and agricultural zoning) is 3,327 units. The low-end dwelling unit calculation is 455 units. An additional 24 units can be accounted for in the commercial and industrial districts.
- The Maryland Department of Planning recommends using an average estimate of the number of units that can be developed, which would be 1,416 dwelling units. This would serve approximately 3,130 people based upon the current U.S. Census estimates of 2.21 people per household.

These numbers will be modified based upon any changes that the Planning Commission makes to the draft growth area maps later in this discussion. It is important to note that this does not include anticipated development which would naturally occur outside the designated growth areas. It also does not reflect existing infrastructure capacity. Mr. Walls noted that the next step would be to take the dwelling unit estimates and run the models in the Water Resources Element, to be reviewed at the next meeting. He will also provide a breakdown of potential dwelling units based upon each respective growth area for the Planning Commission to review.

The Planning Commission then reviewed the draft growth area maps. Following the discussion, the following recommendations were made:


- Maintain the growth areas surrounding Berlin, Snow Hill and Pocomoke as requested by the municipalities.
- Retain the Showell growth area in its current configuration.
- Retain the Newark area as a potential Village Land Use expansion area.
- Remove the area to the west of MD Route 589 (Racetrack Road) that is currently in the Existing Developed Area Land Use category, with an existing A-2 Agricultural District zoning category. The Planning Commission was concerned about the MD Route 589 road improvements (or lack thereof), and did not think this area was

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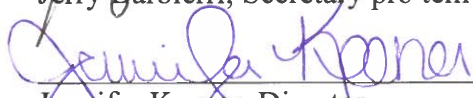
suitable for growth in the next planning cycle. The proposed land use category should be Agricultural.

- The Planning Commission reviewed the requested growth area expansion for properties further west of Berlin that would not be adjacent to the municipal boundary. It was determined that this area should not be included as a growth area.

IV. Adjourn

 5/1/25

Jerry Barbierri, Secretary pro tem

 5/1/2025

Jennifer Keener, Director