

**TOWN OF YOUNGSVILLE
PLANNING BOARD MEETING
Youngsville Community House -- 115 East Main Street
November 6, 2018
6:00 P.M.**

Chairman Donnie Tharrington called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M.

In attendance were Chairman Tharrington; Vice-Chairman Mark Hurt; and Members John Cyrus, Janice Pearce, Scott Anderson, Robert Martin, and Hank Lindwall. Planning, Zoning, and Subdivision Administrator Bob Clark; Senior Planner Andy Thomas; and Town Administrator Roe O'Donnell were unable to attend.

The meeting was opened by welcoming Ms. Sandi Fleming as incoming Board Clerk, and Chairman Tharrington expressed special gratitude to Ms. Kathryn Tucker for her service previously in that capacity. The next order of business was to address Minutes of the Planning Board Meeting held on September 25, 2018.

Without discussion, the following motion was made by Member Scott Anderson, seconded by Member Robert Martin, and passed unanimously:

MOTION: TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 25, 2018, PLANNING BOARD MEETING, AS PRESENTED.

Chairman Tharrington then recognized Mr. Richard Flowe, founder of the N-Focus group, and thanked him for continuing his presentation of proposed Town Plan 2040 – Comprehensive Land Use & Master Plan, initially introduced to the Board on September 25.

Mr. Flowe's overview was recaptured as follows:

State law requirement for such a Plan was raised by Zoning Administrator Bob Clark when he first began to serve the Town back in 2012. No further action was taken, however, until last spring, at which time the Board elected to consult with N-Focus staff and move forward with the initiative to create an official written document specifying actual information and perspective utilized in its support of a resilient, self-sustaining community. The core of Youngsville is the citizens who call it home – residents and businesses relying in good faith upon leadership who not only encourages economic opportunity, maintains infrastructure, balances changing trends, and adheres to environmental mandates, but who also preserves the historic character, resources, and safety they cherish. Census figures verify that major growth has already begun knocking at the Town's door, and this instrument will provide a sound foundation for investment and future development. It need not be an elaborate mound of paper, but, instead, an effective product of common sense. It will be an ongoing project with no date ever of completion; must remain flexibly fluid; and should be re-reviewed, updated, and adjusted on at least a bi-annual basis.

Small-town Planning Boards tend sometimes to see themselves as regulators of the prevailing Zoning Ordinance. Truthfully, it is in fact critical, particularly with regard to the financial aspect of building, that Town Hall have qualified personnel capable of aptly applying existing standards and specifications. The responsibility of the Board itself, on the other hand, is to focus not specifically on the Zoning Ordinance and Map but, rather, on the “big picture” surrounding them both – “Planning” isn’t spelled with a “Z.” The primary function of each Member is to consistently gather details and information necessary to make well-informed decisions. The present can’t be safeguarded without reasonably forecasting the future – therein lies the difference between an Ordinance and a Plan – one sets standards; the other provides a vision. “Lead with the Plan – implement with Zoning” – they’re separate pieces of the puzzle, and they must smoothly fit.

Again, the grassroots of a Plan are the citizens, businesses, property owners, and investors it serves. They play the permanent roles in our area, and their voices are far more vital than that of a temporary developer. Businesses are the base of the Town’s economy, it’s from that economy that opportunity emerges, and it’s opportunity that creates winners. Government grants weed out losers – with a good Plan, there are none. Alternatives to loss are guaranteed assets of wise decision-making.

Of the numerous individual and group interviews conducted by Mr. Flowe and his staff, Downtown businesses proved to be the most informative. These owners are in a position to share both their own thoughts and the opinions expressed by their customers – moreover, it’s quite apparent that many, who aren’t hometown residents, feel a bit vindicated to discover that their input carries weight. When asked what they like most about Youngsville, citizen consensus includes the quaint character and charm of the Town, its family-friendly atmosphere, and the convenience of close-by shops and eateries. Predominantly topping the dislike list is traffic, followed by overall rate of progress and need for improved communication with leadership. The local public’s fundamental wish is for growth, but not at the expense of a small-community environment, and its greatest fear is lack of preparation for the inevitable increase in population headed our way. Priorities, from the people’s point of view, should be expansion plans, traffic resolutions, and retention of Downtown business. Mr. Flowe referenced the Plan’s compiled data pertaining to everything from history, resources, population, housing, economy, employment, education, and recreation to infrastructure, development, transportation, and future trends – and he bookmarked for the Board sections that address each issue emphasized by recent polling.

As millennials seek convenience over status in the neighborhood, the need for pedestrian infrastructure, diverse architecture, and multi-family housing rises. Nowadays, we watch motorists ride past the gas station to charge their cars at the restaurant where they dine – that’s a legible sign that change is imminent. Town leaders can either grab a raft and ride the wave or find themselves tumbling in the surf. It’s imperative that we embrace social media and develop search engine viability that appeals to investors.

With foregoing thoughts in mind, the meeting transitioned to a work session, and discussion shifted to displayed copies of Youngsville's current Zoning Map and an aerial view of its entire ETJ. Mr. Flowe outlined three specific areas, each bordering Franklin County's jurisdiction, that hold for us no annexation potential. Zoning Administrator Bob Clark and Town Administrator Roe O'Donnell have approached County Commissioners with the feasibility of their absorbing those regions while Youngsville extends its zoning boundaries to include comparable territory located to the west of U. S. Highway 1. They've also explored with Franklin County Public Utilities the prospect of water and sewer infrastructure expansion over a promising, and fairly sizeable, stretch of land adjacent to the western right-of-way of U. S. 1.

Despite a solid commercial and industrial conglomerate from which to draw, the aerial view of Town reveals significantly underutilized and wasted space. N-Focus has interposed into this displayed photograph strategic locations for alternate use and new construction – suggestions include, even, Downtown apartments, condominiums, and townhomes. Mr. Flowe also pointed out additional catalyst areas, in vicinities of the intersections of Holden Road, N. C. Highway 96 West, and Park Avenue with U. S. 1 North, where seeds of growth can easily be planted and harvested. Opportunity's there – it simply needs to be carved into reality.

Chairman Tharrington conveyed wholehearted agreement with all suggestions on the table but reiterated that none of them is possible until traffic problems have been alleviated. He reminded Members of the nightmares posed daily by the Holden Road/1-A and Cedar Creek/Tarboro Road intersections and mentioned that, inasmuch as CSX divides the Town, quality railroad crossings are an essential matter of consideration. Mr. Flowe responded that the Board's Special Meeting scheduled for November 20 will include a more in-depth evaluation of these obstacles. "The problem," he stated, "is 'congestion,' not 'traffic.'" There's grave need for an alternate route diverting commercial trucks, but care must be taken not to extinguish the normal flow of personal vehicles through Town. They're a hub of activity on which business thrives – take them away, and Downtown enterprise will die. The Town of Rolesville is a marked example of that kind of fatality.

From DOT's perspective, remedy is an alternate route crossing the northern portion of our ETJ. The Plan's discretion leans toward somewhat of an opposite scenario. Truckers don't object to traveling a couple of miles out of their way to avoid congestion. With the current U. S. 1 Corridor project underway, timing is perfect to devise a route extending from a proposed interchange just south of Holden Road to N. C. 96 East. "Never ask bureaucracy a question and enable an inadequate answer." Adage is that you can't force the horse to drink, but, if you create the incentive for thirst, he'll eventually sample the water, of his own accord. Immediate, direct, one-on-one contact is our best course of action. Making way for high-speed rail is a challenge decades distant – it's making one's way down Main Street that lays claim to today's precedence award.

While noting suggested improvement options, Member Janice Pearce mentioned outside interest of late in renovation of the old Tom Togs building on Nassau Street. Member Hank Lindwall conveyed how impressive areas such as Greenville, South Carolina, have been in preserving art

and character amid a now bustling downtown setting. He also inquired about an anticipated timeline for revitalization. Mr. Flowe replied that he's seen significant transformation in as little as two to two and one-half years, but that, for some, noticeable difference can take as long as seven years.

Hope is that the Planning Board will complete review and approval of Plan 2040 for its submission to the Board of Commissioners on December 13. "Like it or not, local government controls the real estate market" -- and there's always accountability for diligence accompanying that power.

Zoning is notorious for salvaging expectations that, in the end, can't be met. Our antiquated Ordinance will, by June 2019, be converted into a Unified Development Ordinance ("UDO") that, in conjunction with the Town Plan, will reset equations so that expectations are realistic from day one. Collectively, these devices can create value and ensure success -- clarity's really good at erasing blindsides.

Yet another invaluable tool is logic. It teaches us, for instance, that a paved, striped parking lot accommodates far more vehicles than does an unmarked lot, simply because, without organization and direction, people choose to park where they please and, thus, overconsume space. It tells us too that density in a rural subdivision is limited, because septic tanks require larger lots. Common sense offers a valid explanation as to why an existing U-shaped plaza in our Downtown District is flourishing on one side and dying on the other. First, the angle of view for passengers headed eastward is wider than for those traveling westward. Secondly, people driving westward are typically headed to work -- they're stressed by time constraints and pay no attention whatsoever to the shops facing them as they're stalled in traffic -- when headed eastward after work, their thoughts are not as preoccupied, and they tend to zero in on passing scenery. The moral of that story is that the eastern side is booming with business -- the western units, vacant. Tiny detail often makes a huge impact.

Mr. Flowe concluded by distributing drafts of the Comprehensive Plan, asking that the Board step back from regulatory thinking, and requesting that each Member provide feedback at the upcoming Special Meeting on the 20th. He delivered an additional copy to Ms. Fleming for consolidated markup by Zoning Administrator Bob Clark, Town Administrator Roe O'Donnell, and Special Planner Andy Thomas.

With neither public nor further Board comments, and no Around the Town Report, Chairman Tharrington adjourned the meeting at 7:40 P.M.