



County of Surry Virginia
Planning Commission Meeting Minutes
September 22, 2025

MEETING CONVENED: The meeting of the Surry County Planning Commission was called to order at 6 PM on Monday, September 22, 2025, in the Surry County General District Court, 45 School Street, Surry, VA, by Dr. Giron Wooden, Jr., Chair.

ATTENDANCE: The following members responded present to Roll Call:

Dr. Giron Wooden, Jr., Chair
Mr. Thomas Hardy, Vice Chair
Mr. Eddie Brock
Mr. Theodore Lunsford
Mr. Earl Newby, Sr.
Mr. Breyon Pierce
Mr. David Coggin
Ms. Dianne Cheek
Ms. Carmen D. Judkins

Absent:

Mr. Stephen Berryman
Mr. William Seward, IV

Staff Presents

Mr. Horace Wade, III, Director of Planning and Community Development
Ms. Regina Hilton, Administrative Assistant
Ms. Haley Keene, Senior Planner
Ms. Lola Perkins, County Attorney

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: All

ADOPTING OF AGENDA: Chair Wooden entertained a motion to adopt the meeting's agenda. It was moved by Mr. Pierce and seconded by Ms. Judkins.

In favor: (9) Wooden, Brock, Newby, Hardy, Lunsford, Cheek, Judkins, Coggin, Pierce
Opposed: 0
Abstain: 0

APPROVAL OF CONSENT ITEMS:

Chair Wooden asked the Commissioners for the disposition of the minutes for July 28, 2025. A motion to approve the consent items was made by Mr. Hardy and seconded by Mr. Newby.

In favor: (9) Wooden, Brock, Newby, Hardy, Lunsford, Cheek, Judkins, Coggin, Pierce

Opposed: 0

Abstain: 0

2025 PLANNING COMMISSIONS MEETING SCHEDULE:

Mr. Wade said that the only calendar change for the Planning Commission meeting scheduled for the week of Thanksgiving was to move the date up one week to the 17th. Chair Wooden asked for a motion to move the meeting date to November 17, 2025. Mr. Newby made a motion that the Commission move their November 24th meeting date to November 17, 2025. The motion was seconded by Ms. Judkins. Ms. Cheek asked would the change of the meeting date affects the October deadline. Mr. Wade said that it would not.

In favor: (9) Wooden, Brock, Newby, Hardy, Lunsford, Cheek, Judkins, Coggin, Pierce

Opposed: 0

Abstain: 0

OLD BUSINESS: None

PUBLIC COMMENTS: None

COMMITTEE UPDATES:

Mr. Wade:

- Two items for tonight's discussion are the updates for the Comprehensive Plan and the subdivision subcommittee. Each Commissioner received the draft Comprehensive Plan update calendar.
- The first initial subcommittee meeting with the Comprehensive Plan group will be in the upcoming week, September 24th, to discuss the future-land use maps. Staff are currently working with our consultants (Summit) for data updates.
- There are changes from the census that are relevant to 2020. They were approved by the Board of Supervisors. The information was a few years old upon approval. There are future land use areas that the subcommittees should see.
- Friday, September 26th, there will be technical updates, and Monday the updates will be coming back from the consultants. Then, the first draft back from Summit will be posted to the county website on October 22nd.
- October 27th is the Planning Commission work session for the Comprehensive Plan, where we will look at the plan itself, which is the same document that will be going before the public.

- November 3rd will be the community open house meeting for that draft, and on December 1st, there will be comments from the public and the County.
- A Planning Commission meeting will be held on December 15th to disperse public comments/reviews and to submit a list of changes. Comments to the Planning Commissioners on that date will then be shared with the Consultants to discuss changes for updating the plans.
- January 9th, we will have a final draft of the plan that will be ready for the Planning Commission's January meeting.
- We will be ready to review everything in detail and schedule a public hearing for the February meeting. Then we would like to have the Board of Supervisors schedule a public hearing on March 5th.
- The Subdivision subcommittee is actively working behind the scenes, looking at our current subdivision ordinance as well as what the generous updates were before July 1st. Some items should have been changed. The subdivision subcommittee will review changes to the current code and then collaborate with legal staff to ensure they can be legally implemented. Staff would like to have a nice draft to go before the subdivision subcommittee, allowing them to work out some final details before presenting it to the whole body. Initially, staff thought it would take four months, but now we are looking at over six months.

Mr. Hardy asked if it would line up with the new state codes. Ms. Perkins said the part of the issue is that the subdivision ordinance has not been updated since 2016. She said that she would guarantee that the General Assembly has made changes since 2016, beyond the changes just implemented before they went into effect on July 1st. Ms. Perkins said that she must backtrack to make sure that they capture all the changes.

Ms. Cheek asked if additional resources and help are needed. As a Commission, "We can recommend to the Board of Supervisors that you need contractual help for review. This has ended up being bigger than what you thought." Mr. Wade said that he won't speak for Ms. Perkins but for his staff, "He has two new staff members, and at this point, it's just having to set aside time to review the work to see what was done in the past." He is playing catch-up, trying to figure out what happened in the past and then seeing what things have changed (in the state code). Also, he is working with Ms. Perkins to identify what needs to be reviewed in our code section. When Mr. Wade first arrived, the focus was on solar projects. There are several ordinances he would love to take care of and update right now.

Mr. Wade said that staff worked on the short-term rentals and hired additional consultants to help. It was more of a focused study, and it's different than subdivisions. This is the Commission's purview because it goes to the Board of Supervisors for their final vote. When the Subdivision ordinance is amended, it is first reviewed, and a recommendation is made before it goes to the Board of Supervisors.

Ms. Perkins said that she does have an outside council budget and engages in the services, when necessary, whether it is because of a need for a level of expertise or because her schedule can't handle it. She did not anticipate the subdivision ordinances, when requesting her budget for outside counsel. Ms. Perkins said she is okay right now and if she needs to engage in those services, she would be happy to do so. She has a little bit of trepidation of paying someone going all the back to 2016. There is a cost involved, and outside counsel fees are quite exorbitant per hour. She tries to use those funds very cautiously and very judiciously.

Chair Wooden asked if it would be correct to say, "If Staff runs into the situation stated, it would then a conversation to be had with the County Administrator, who then will have conversations with the Board

of Supervisors?" Ms. Perkins said if it's outside of the budget cycle, then that is correct. Unfortunately, the Commission doesn't have a pool of money that would be transferred to either Mr. Wade or herself.

Mr. Coggin asked, "As far as the new subdivisions' information, presented two months ago, when we met in July, the notes say it would be two months, four months max. Now it's six. What about the person wanting to do an application for a subdivision? Are they still being governed based on what we have now?" Ms. Perkins said she thought it would be yes. It depends if we have an existing ordinance or some language in our ordinance that is contrary to what Virginia Code currently allows. Then that portion of the ordinance is completely unenforceable. She said, "If it's a portion of the ordinance where we have been given flexibility, or certain requirements, or not put in certain requirements, then it would be governed by the application and by what's in our ordinance." Ms. Perkins said we would want to get this in place as soon as possible in case another application comes down the pike.

Mr. Coggin asked, at our first steering committee meeting, "We had a couple of topics, and one was how big is large or how large is large? He said the definition is very critical to subdivisions being created in the County in the next six months. Do we have to wait until we've gotten the whole ordinance complete, or are we able to amend a couple of hot issues?" Mr. Coggin said he felt it would be helpful for people coming in to apply. "Do we have to wait the six months, or could the steering committee go ahead and make recommendations for next month's meeting?"

Ms. Perkins said, technically, from a legal standpoint, "Yes, you do not have to do a complete overhaul." She said that is not typically best practice, especially when we know and have an understanding, as we do in this case, that a more comprehensive overhaul is needed. The other risk you run into is that if you make a change to one section, there could be ramifications to other sections.

Mr. Coggin said that he thought the bylaws said that we can have a chairman for that committee. He asked if we could elect a chairman? Then, the committee could meet to determine if there are issues that need to be addressed within six months, and proceed with the steering committee to tackle them immediately. Ms. Perkins said calling a subcommittee meeting would be a decision for the Planning Commission. If there's a vote to schedule a subcommittee meeting, then that's something that Mr. Wade will schedule. In terms of a chair for that subcommittee, she did not recall in past history whether there has been a chair for the subcommittees.

Mr. Coggin asked if a motion should be made for the Planning Commissioners to approve another steering committee meeting before six months, to plan. Ms. Perkin thought it would be helpful to have a motion. Mr. Wade suggested having a body of two or three appointed Commissioners, and within that subcommittee, holding a subcommittee meeting on the matter. Mr. Wade said that it would be just a matter of looking at a timeframe and what we should accomplish at the meeting.

Mr. Coggin said, without making a motion, could we set a date in the next two weeks for a meeting to discuss whether there are critical areas that should be addressed now, versus six months from now. Chair Wooden said that he will confer with Mr. Wade to discuss setting a meeting date for the subdivision subcommittee, and Mr. Wade can correspond with its members. Chair Wooden said, "As you know, Mr. Wade has the schedule tonight for the Comprehensive Plan. So, it will take some time, and a vote isn't needed. That's just something that he can do as PC Secretary.

Mr. Coggin asked if it could be done before our next Planning Commission meeting. Mr. Wade said the next Planning Commission meeting, based on the Comprehensive Plan Draft Update, is a work session. We will be discussing the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Wade said that he anticipates it will happen before the next meeting, as we will be discussing the Comprehensive Plan then.

Chair Wooden said he would ask the members of the subdivision subcommittee to communicate with Mr. Wade about their discussion preferences, ensuring a productive meeting.

NEW BUSINESS – PUBLIC HEARING (6:30 P.M.)

Conditional Use Permit No. 2025-02

The Applicant, Tree of Life Church, seeks a conditional use permit for a religious assembly, as permitted in Article III, Section 3-302, Permitted Uses (A) of the Surry County Zoning Ordinance and subject to the additional regulations in Article IV, Supplementary Regulations for Civic Uses, Section 4-606 Religious assembly, which requires a Conditional Use Permit for establishing a new place of religious assembly. The subject property, 42-60B, is a 2-acre parcel zoned A-R, Agricultural-Rural, located on White Marsh Road (SR 617), approximately 1.85 miles south of Colonial Trail East (SR 10), and directly southwest of 15550 White Marsh Road.

Ms. Haley Keene:

- Presented tonight is Conditional Use Permit number 2025-02. The applicant Tree of Life Church seeks a conditional use permit for Religious Assembly as permitted in Article III, Section 3-302, Permitted Uses of the Surry County Zoning Ordinance and subject to the additional regulations in Article IV, Supplementary Regulations for Civic Uses Section 4-606 religious assembly, which requires a conditional use permit for establishing a new place of religious assembly.
- The applicant property, Tax Map 42-60B, is a two-acre parcel zoned AR, Agricultural Rural, located on White Marsh Road, SR 617, approximately 1.85 miles south of Colonial Trail East, SR 10, and directly southwest of 15550 White Marsh Road.
- On the presentation map, the applicant property is shown in green, and the four yellow parcels are parcels with a primary residential use, and all other parcels are shaded blue.
- As far as environmental concerns with the site, the applicant had an RPA delineation done, and the site does not appear to contain RPA features, but the site does contain extensive wetlands.
- The proposed site layout will require a 32-foot variance before the submittal of a site plan application. The reason is that the site design includes a parking lot that's 10 feet from the right-of-way of White Marsh Road.
- **The draft condition area - Landscaping.** The Applicant will be required to preserve a strip of mature woodland on the edges of the parcel. There is an existing buffer yard, required by the zoning ordinance, between the church site and the residential use that abuts it. There is also a strip of planting needed to be established between the parking area and the right-of-way. It will require a landscaped area between the church and the right-of-way.
- At least one deciduous tree shall be installed for every 10 parking spaces provided. There are 25 parking spaces. There could be a total of two trees required. This condition is included to ensure that there isn't any light pollution or light trespass onto adjoining properties in this rural area.
- **Limitation on Occupancy:** The maximum occupancy of the church shall be limited to 100 people. With the current plan, the church is supposed to seat 50 people.
- **The surface of the parking area:** The parking areas will have a dust-free surface, and at minimum, the entrance drives will be paved.
- Also required by the ordinance, CUP considerations per the zoning ordinance, Section 1-502, traffic congestion. Per the attached applicant's letter, traffic will peak on Sundays, which would not coincide with the normal peak traffic times for White Marsh Road.

- The applicant states that the church isn't expected to generate a noise nuisance. The parking area will be covered with a dust-free surface. The parking spots at minimum, according to the zoning ordinance, must be an all-weather surfaced area and the entrance and the lot must be paved. All open areas will be secured with lawn or landscaping drainage.
- The applicant states that most of the site will drain to the forest of wetlands, which is on the rear of the property, away from the road. There's no expectation that this use will cause any problems with water quality, air quality, odor, fumes, or vibrations.
- According to the applicant, the church is expected to have most of their activity on Sundays. The site design will conform to Surry County's ordinances and will be subject to zoning permit review. It will go through the normal site plan process prior to construction. The site will be accessed by White Marsh Road.
- According to the Supplementary Regulations for Religious Assembly, the site will require a buffer yard between the church and the Residential Use next to it.
- Zoning district for religious assembly is a by-right Permitted Use in the AR zoning district. But Section 4-606 is a supplementary regulations specifically for Religious Assembly Use, which require people seeking Religious Assembly Use to have a Conditional Use Permit, regardless of location.
- The application is in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan. It will not increase residential density, public utilities, and will need wooded or vegetated buffering.
- **Strength:** The strength of this application is that it is a low-impact use and conforms to the Comprehensive Plan. The only weakness that is identified and analyzed is that the site does contain those significant wetlands, and the applicant will require a variance on the front setback line.

Ms. Cheek asked if there is a limit of just 50 occupancies. Ms. Keene said it was not the occupancy limit that is in the Concept Plan. It is what the applicant designed for the Church building. It was put in the draft conditions that 100 people is the occupancy limit for that site.

Mr. Coggin asked if there were additional people; could the applicant return before the Commission to request a revision? Ms. Keene said that it was correct. Ms. Cheek noted that she felt the parking requirement was interesting. Maybe the applicant would need a Variance to allow enough parking. She believes it is a tight lot. Allowing the church and not allowing the parking would be a problem.

PUBLIC HEARING OPEN:

Mr. William Frank Judkins – Surry District. Mr. Jenkins and his wife own the land across the street from the proposed site. They have no objections, and they think it would be good for the neighborhood.

Mr. Roy Lane, 15550 White Marsh Road. Mr. Lane is the property owner that would be adjacent to the Church. Based on what was presented tonight and his prior knowledge of the Church and their operation, he has no problem having it next to his property.

PUBLIC HEARING CLOSED:

Chair Wooden entertained a motion for Conditional Use Permit 2025-02. Mr. Pierce moved that the Commission approve Conditional Use Permit 2025-02. It was seconded by Mr. Newby. Chair Wooden stated that it has been properly moved and seconded that the Commission recommend the Board of Supervisors approve Conditional Use Permit 2025-02.

In favor: (9) Wooden, Brock, Newby, Hardy, Lunsford, Cheek, Judkins, Coggin, Pierce

Opposed: 0

Abstain: 0

ADJOURNMENT:

Chair Wooden entertained a motion to adjourn at 6:45 PM until the October 27, 2025, meeting. It was moved by Mr. Newby and seconded by Mr. Pierce. All those in favor signify by saying Aye.

Commissioners: Aye