

PRESENT: C. Bragg, Chairman
R. Harris, Vice Chairman
L. Howdyshell
R. Thomas
B. Schindler
K. Leonard

J. Hensley, Planner II
E. Goodloe, Planner I
D. Wolfe, Director of Community Development

ABSENT:

VIRGINIA: At the Called Meeting of the Augusta County Planning Commission held on Tuesday, November 14, 2023 at 4:00 p.m. in the County Administration Conference Room, Augusta County Government Center, Verona, Virginia.

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The Planning Commission reviewed the request made by New Leaf Energy, Inc to be moved from Old Business to the first item on the agenda before the public hearings. The Planning Commission also discussed the five (5) proposed ordinance amendments for the night's public hearing.

Staff also gave the Planning Commission the review of the twelve (12) Solar Policies in the Comprehensive Plan, and stated that they would be going over the policies during December's Staff Briefing for the Planning Commission.

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Chairman

Secretary

PRESENT: C. Bragg, Chairman
R. Harris, Vice Chairman
L. Howdyshell
R. Thomas
B. Schindler
K. Leonard

J. Hensley, Planner II
E. Goodloe, Planner I
D. Wolfe, Director of Community Development

ABSENT:

VIRGINIA: At the Regular Meeting of the Augusta County Planning Commission held on Tuesday, November 14, 2023 at 7:00 p.m. in the Board Room, Augusta County Government Center, Verona, Virginia.

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DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM

Mrs. Carolyn Bragg stated that there was a quorum.

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MINUTES

Mr. Randy Harris moved to approve the minutes of the called and regular meeting held on October 10, 2023.

Mr. William Schindler seconded the motion, which carried unanimously, 6-0.

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Mrs. Bragg stated that before they began, there was a request to change the order of agenda items for the previously tabled Wayne Ave Solar 2 request to be moved to the front, and she asked if there was a motion for the request.

Mr. Howdyshell made the motion to move the item under old business to be heard before public hearings.

Mr. Harris seconded the motion, which carried unanimously, 6-0.

Mrs. Bragg stated that they were going to start with Old Business.

Ms. Julia Hensley introduced the item on the agenda as a substantial accord determination for New Leaf Energy Inc. requesting to construct a small solar energy system. The name of this application is Wayne Ave Solar 2.

Ms. Hensley stated that the request was for a substantial accord determination pursuant to Virginia State Code Section 15.2-2232 for the New Leaf Energy, Inc. Special Use Permit request to construct and operate a small solar energy system (3 megawatts) on property owned by Ellen B. Fitzgerald and Laura B. Fitzgerald (TMP 084 101C) located within the field to the north of the house at 147 Wayne Avenue, and south of the railroad that parallels Wayne Avenue in Stuarts Draft in the South River Magisterial District.

Ms. Hensley displayed the following visuals: an aerial map showing the property included in the request outlined in red; a zoning map of the property indicating that the parcel is currently zoned General Agriculture; the Future Land Use Map of the property showing that, according to the Augusta County Comprehensive Plan, the parcel in question is planned for Industrial; the map of the Planning Policy Areas for the property showing that the parcel is located within the Urban Service Area of the Comprehensive Plan; and the site plan from the applicant.

Mrs. Bragg reiterated that they had the public hearing during their last meeting, and it was closed, so there would not be a public hearing on this. Mrs. Bragg explained that it would be a discussion with Commissioners then a vote. She asked if the commissioners had any questions concerning the request.

Seeing none, Mrs. Bragg stated that she had one question for the applicant. The map presented represented the total property. The solar arrays are on the whole parcel, but were only going to be covering 6 acres. Mrs. Bragg wanted to know what the rest of the parcel was going to be.

Mr. Quentin Wood stated that approximately six (6) acres would be under panel; twenty-three (23) acres would be fenced. Between the panels, they are required to have fifteen feet (15') of spacing by the Fire Department. Around the outside of fence would be the access roads and landscaping.

Mrs. Bragg asked if that was an accurate depiction of the panels on the site plan.

Mr. Wood answered that it was an accurate depiction of the panels. He explained that the property extends further below than what the illustration was depicting.

Ms. Jessie Robinson explained that under the panels themselves it is six (6) acres, and there is interrow spacing between the panels for the fire department requirement so they

can drive between the rows for an emergency. The interrow area would be planted with native species, grasses, and would be where the sheep are proposed to be located.

Mr. Wood stated that the combined projected acreage of the project is 31.5 acres, and the parcel is 36.5 acres.

Mrs. Bragg asked if the Commissioners had any comments. She stated that she has known the family for a very long time, but the decision she has to make extends past that. She went through the evaluation she made from reviewing the application with the twelve policies. She cited the economy, and noted that the expected revenue to the County over the lifetime of the project is approximately \$192,000. She also noted that per the rural viewshed policy, the impact on the surrounding community was a concern and stated that staff had pointed out their concerns with citing two solar facilities side by side.

Augusta County is the second largest agricultural county in Virginia. Mrs. Bragg stated they could not eliminate the importance of balancing growth areas with the agriculture industry to help maintain the agricultural economy. She said she had looked at the prime farmland that the parcel contained. Per the visual impact policy, there are neighborhoods across the street that would be looking at the facility. The proposed facility is also in an Urban Service Area, meaning the property has water and sewer. The project is also adjacent to a community park, among other considerations. She had concerns of the project meeting the following policies: Policy 1 (Economy), Policy 2 (Rural viewsheds), Policy 3 (Agricultural landscape and economy), Policy 4 Prime farmland and Agricultural and Forestal Districts), Policy 5 (Visual impact), Policy 6 (Balanced land uses), Policy 7 (Compact, interconnected development), Policy 8 (Open space), and Policy 12 (Clustering and colocation). She did not feel that this second project met the Comprehensive Plan or the intent of the Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Kyle Leonard stated that he reiterated the points Mrs. Bragg made. He stated the clustering bothered him, losing farmland, the visual impact, being close to a park, and the community impact. He stated it is in the Urban Service Area. He stated there are many things that made him believe that this project was not in substantial accord with the Comprehensive Plan. He made the motion to deny the request.

Mr. Harris Seconded, which resulted in a tie, 3-3.

Mrs. Bragg stated that the motion died. She stated that they have two options. They can table until the next meeting and have the attorney review the process, or they can move it forward to the BZA with a tied vote and no recommendation from the Commission. She stated their By-Laws stated it would have to be a majority vote for one of the two.

Mr. Howdyshell made the motion to move the request to the BZA with the tie vote and no recommendation.

Mr. Robert Thomas seconded, which carried unanimously, 6-0.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Mrs. Bragg stated that they would go to the public hearings for the evening.

Ms. Julia Hensley introduced the first item as an ordinance to amend Chapter 25 Zoning. Division A. In General. Article VI.B. Wireless Telecommunications Facilities. Section 25-68.5. Uses permitted by special use permit. The amendment adds a clause allowing the Board of Zoning Appeals to reduce or waive the requirement for portions of the fall zone for a wireless tower that lie on publicly owned property.

Mrs. Bragg opened the public hearing asking if anyone wished to speak.

With none to speak, Mrs. Bragg closed the public hearing.

Mr. Howdyshell made the motion to approve the ordinance change.

Mr. Schindler seconded the motion which carried unanimously, 6-0.

Due to some discussion in the number of public hearings advertised, the Commission opted to hear all comments on Article VI Ms. Hensley presented the four (4) ordinances related to the Solar Ordinance and then the public hearing was opened.

Ms. Hensley introduced the next item for public hearing as an ordinance to amend Chapter 25. Zoning. Division A. In General. Article VI.D. Solar Energy Systems. Section 25-70.1. Definitions. Amendment adds the definition of Fenced in Area to define the land area that includes the photovoltaic panels, stormwater facility, and landscaping that will be taken out of land use. Amendment updates the definition for large solar energy systems and small solar energy systems to include everything within the fenced in area that occupies less than or equal to (small solar energy systems) or greater than (large solar energy systems) 25 acres.

Ms. Hensley introduced the next item for public hearing as an ordinance to amend Chapter 25. Zoning. Division A. In General. Article VI.D. Solar Energy Systems. Section 25-70.4. B. and C. Uses permitted by Special Use Permit by the Board of Zoning Appeals. Amendment adds the provision for Small Solar Energy Systems to be prohibited in Planning Policy Areas designated as Urban Service Areas and Community Development Areas within the Comprehensive Plan. Amendment also adds the standard for the proximity of small solar energy systems to not be sited within two miles of an approved or existing small or large energy system.

Ms. Hensley introduced the next item for public hearing as an ordinance to amend Chapter 25. Zoning. Division A. In General. Article VI.D. Solar Energy Systems. Section 25-70.6. Uses permitted by Special Use Permit by the Board of Supervisors. Amendment adds the provision for Large Solar Energy Systems to be prohibited in Planning Policy Areas designated as Urban Service Areas and Community Development Areas within the Comprehensive Plan.

Ms. Hensley introduced the final item for public hearing as an ordinance to amend Chapter 25. Zoning. Division A. In General. Article VI.D. Solar Energy Systems. Section 25-70.8. Location, Appearance and Operation of a Project Site. Amendment adds the standard for the proximity of large solar energy systems to not be sited within two miles of an approved or existing small or large energy system.

Mrs. Bragg opened the public hearing and explained when the person's name was called to speak they could speak on any or all the ordinance amendments; then she would close the public hearing, and the Commission would vote on each amendment separately.

Mr. Phil Martin of 209 Raintree Road, Verona, VA 24482, Executive Director of Augusta Water, spoke in favor of the changes to the solar ordinance. Mr. Martin explained a brief history of the Service Authority, now Augusta Water, which is currently serving 15,000 accounts in Augusta County. They are serving approximately half of the county's population as well as most of the major industrial and commercial establishments. He stated that since the County's first Comprehensive plan was developed, they have worked to support the County's efforts for orderly development by expanding water and/or wastewater service to designated Urban Service Areas and Community Development Areas through water treatment plants, storage, tanks, and pump stations. Due to these reasons, he asked the Planning Commission to approve the revisions to the solar ordinance as presented.

Mr. James Kindig of 3546 Stuarts Draft Highway, Waynesboro, VA 22980 spoke against the amendments to the solar ordinance. He questioned where the need to change the ordinance was.

Mr. Kirk Quillen of 1382 Ladd Road Waynesboro, VA 22980 spoke against the amendments to the solar ordinance on behalf of Waynesboro Nurseries. He expressed his desire to site carefully developed solar on various parts of his properties. He said there are some parcels they would be fine selling and developing the way the County anticipates, and has several parcels for sale and that he hopes the future developer will comply with the vision of Augusta County. He stated that the proposed ordinance disrespects landowners by saying the County's vision is more important than their vision. He asked the Planning Commission to reject the amendments.

Ms. Jenn D'Augustine of 4200 Innslake Drive, Glen Allen, VA 23060, a permitting manager with AES Clean Energy Development (AES), spoke next. AES currently operates 450 solar facilities across the United States, five (5) of which are located in Virginia. Ms. D'Augustine spoke against the proposed amendments to the solar ordinance, citing their prematurity. She stated that the zoning amendment is essentially an amendment to the current solar policy in the Comprehensive Plan. By changing the word "strongly discouraged" to "prohibit", this amendment seeks to make the change outside of the Comprehensive Plan review process. She stated that blanket prohibitions on solar are inconsistent with having a balanced approach to promoting renewable energy and having reasonable safeguards to protect the public. She stated overly restrictive citing rules infringe on private property rights and eliminate fiscal

opportunities for the County that are unique for solar. She said AES would like to collaborate with Commissioners and County citizens during the review of the Comprehensive Plan and share new ideas in their pending application with the citizens. She asked the Commission to deny the proposed ordinance amendments or at the very least defer the decision until later on.

Mr. Philip Fitzgerald of 51 Woodview Court, Stuarts Draft, VA 24477 spoke against the proposed amendments to the solar ordinance. He expressed his disagreement with the two-mile proximity limit and the decrease of what constitutes as a small solar energy system. He said twenty-five acres is too small for a small solar energy system.

Mr. Matt Hooper of 4200 Innslake Drive, Glen Allen, VA 23060, Regional Developer with AES Clean Energy, spoke against the proposed solar ordinances. He stated that the amendments were premature. He stated that AES had a pending application with the County and are actively working on making changes to their project. The property rights of the owners in the AES project and all county citizens would be negatively impacted if the ordinances were passed outside of the County's Comprehensive Plan review process. He asked the Planning Commission to deny the amendments or at least defer action to allow the planning process to properly inform any zoning changes.

Mr. Jared Burden of 3115 Main Street, Harrisonburg, VA 22801, Virginia Policy Advisor for the Center for Infrastructure and Economic Development, which he said he would refer to as the Center. The Center is an organization dedicated to assisting counties in Virginia and other states in crafting balanced solar ordinances and policies. The Center focuses on best practices in solar facility regulation. Mr. Burden stated that decisions for a project should be based on a case by case basis. He said that all of the proposed ordinance amendments limited solar development, but he wanted to specifically comment on the proposed radius restrictions. He explained that the view of the Center was that the County should not tie its own hands with numerical limitations that might cause the County to lose a project that makes sense for a given site. It is similar to density limitation or a solar cap, which he stated are approaches many counties are using. The County has put a ban on a particular land use in parts of the County. He referenced the 2232 review of the State Code of solar projects, and that the provision of proximity would decrease the amount of applications to be reviewed by the Planning Commission.

Mrs. Nancy Sorrells of 3419 Cold Springs, Greenville, VA 24440 spoke both as an individual and on behalf of the Alliance for the Shenandoah Valley against the proposed solar amendments. Ms. Sorrells spoke on the Comprehensive Plan review that is currently taking place. She expressed her concern as to why there were ordinance changes. She explained that the County solar ordinance was one of the most comprehensive in the state, and that the County needed to put a pause on these changes to see how the Comprehensive Plan review plays out.

Mr. Ray Burkholder of 1760 Churchville Ave, Staunton, VA 24401 spoke against the proposed solar amendments. He stated that he agreed with a lot of the comments

previously stated. He explained when you approve solar it is not forever, technology is going to change; we are not losing the land. He stated that he appreciated Mr. Martin's comments but that the county can't service every Community Development Area today with the utilities they have. There are significant infrastructure improvements that still need to be made in many of these areas. He said county staff has been doing a good job assessing these projects. He did not understand what needed to change within the ordinance. Mr. Burkholder believes that in some instances, solar projects should not be sited in Community Development Areas, whereas in others they should. He indicated that staff should continue to review policies and make recommendations as they have been rather than amending the ordinance.

Mr. Skyler Zunk of 210 E. Franklin Street, Richmond, VA 23219 spoke against the proposed solar amendments on behalf of Energy Right, a nonprofit organization based in Virginia. Energy Right strives to educate rural communities and their leaders about clean energy development. He did not think the ordinance amendments were premature, but rather are horrible and should not be considered. It is up to the Planning Commission to look at each project on a case by case basis. He mentioned property rights. He quoted George Washington, stating that the two-mile radius restriction limits the property rights of neighboring property owners. He stated you can't decommission a neighborhood or an industrial park. Solar facilities, however, can be decommissioned and are a long-term nonpermanent use. Solar is coming to Virginia because it is the cheapest way to put electricity on the grid.

Mr. Jack Barber of 169 Windsor Drive, Fishersville, VA 22939 spoke against the proposed solar amendments. He stated that the ordinance amendments are anti-business, anti-comprehensive plan, and anti-economic development. He explained that they are anti-business because having an anti-energy policy discourages businesses from locating here. He said the Comprehensive Plan is fine; it needs some tweaking, but is in the process of being redone. He spoke about the two-mile radius restriction. He stated that there is already a limited amount of solar that can be put in the County at this time, and that there are only so many places solar can go under the current infrastructure. He stated that the visual impact is minimal compared to industrial development in the County. He said it also goes against speed to market.

Mr. Bobby Whitescarver of 164 Whiskey Creek Road, Churchville, VA 24421 spoke against the proposed solar ordinance amendments and asked the Commission not to do anything with any ordinance until after the Comprehensive Plan review process. He stated that he did not agree with the proposed ordinance amendments. He was the former District Conservationist in the County, and has therefore been on almost every farm in the County. He stated that these amendments would deny the rights of all farmers. He asked why the County did not have an amendment that requires every new, large building in the County to have solar panels on top of it.

Mr. Brian Shirley of 358 Elk Mountain Road, Afton, VA 22920 spoke in favor of the proposed solar amendments. He has a vested interest in the character and beauty of the Shenandoah Valley. He explained that the beauty of the area is unique. He stated

what has drawn people to the Valley is its beauty. There has to be some limits in what the County does. He agreed with the two-mile limit.

Ms. Janet Rollings of 615 Elk Mountain Road, Afton, VA 22920 spoke in favor of the proposed solar ordinance amendments. She stated that all the numerous solar projects are targeting the County to get under the wire because of the review of the Comprehensive Plan. These projects are visible. She expressed that these amendments would grant some control over these projects.

Ms. Kristin Donohue of 572 Churchmans Mill Rd, Stuarts Draft, VA 24477 spoke in favor of the proposed solar amendments. She said she believed the proposed amendments would add needed clarity to the ordinances. The land taken out of land use will always take the land within the fenced areas. She stated she was in favor of prohibiting Urban Service Areas and Community Development Areas, and that the residents of the county have different priorities than developers. She also stated her support for the siting of solar facilities to not be within two miles of another solar energy system.

Mr. Wayne Nolde of 210 Cider Mill Road, Mount Sidney, VA 24467 spoke against the proposed solar amendments. Mr. Nolde wanted to know why there is a rush to change the ordinance before the update of the Comprehensive Plan is complete. He stated that the public deserved to know who was behind the ordinance changes. At a recent Community Input Meeting for the Comprehensive Plan, he stated that he was told the Urban Service Area wants to encourage growth and development, but it does not show areas that would be developed in the next twenty (20) years. He agreed that having reserved capacity would be a good idea and that a solar facility would provide that reserve for the next 30 years. He asked the Planning Commission to deny the amendments or at the very least postpone the amendments until after the Comprehensive Plan review.

Dr. Virginia Badgett P.O. Box 103 Greenwood, VA 22943 spoke against the proposed solar amendments. She explained that she had asked the Planning Commission to approve the proposed a 25-acre small scale distributed solar farm on her family's farm. She explained that the Planning Commission and the Board of Zoning Appeals approved the project. The solar ordinances in Augusta County as they currently stand work. She stated that when the small solar energy system is built on their farm, it will improve her farm's financial performance, maintain the mixed-use nature of the farm through solar grazing, and would ensure that the family can maintain ownership of the land and could continue to operate in the future. She went on to explain that the two-mile proximity between solar farms is excessively restrictive, and limits property rights of land owners based on approved projects on neighboring properties. The proposed amendments strip the rights of land owners to make the best decision for their land. She asked the Commission to postpone making any changes to the existing solar ordinances until after the Comprehensive Plan is updated and approved.

Ms. Megan Owen of 330 Shalom Road, Stuarts Draft, VA 24477 spoke in favor of the proposed solar amendments. She explained she grew up in the area and why she

moved back to the area with her family. She asked the Planning Commission to approve the ordinances to protect the beautiful land.

Mrs. Bragg stated that was the last person signed up to speak, and asked if there was anyone else who wanted to speak.

Mr. Kevin Stephenson spoke in favor of the proposed solar amendments. He said he thought the amendments could be stricter. He is an adjacent landowner of a proposed solar facility. He said 25 acres is large scale. The companies are looking for a quick turnaround so they can get the projects done quickly. The residents and landowners nearby are the ones that take on the risk. He supported the proposed proximity restriction of solar facilities.

Ms. Rebecca Glass, owner of the land where the Wayne Ave Solar 2 solar project is proposed, spoke against the ordinances. She wanted to keep the property in her name, stating it is their family's inheritance. The solar facility will help the farm continue to be actively farmed. She indicated that if Commissioners want to help keep farmland actively farming, to do so by allowing solar on her land so she can afford to continue to farm.

Mrs. Bragg asked if there was anyone else to speak. Seeing none, she closed the public hearing.

Mrs. Bragg stated that they would go back and review each amendment.

Ms. Hensley rereviewed the first of the four ordinances by stating the amendment adds the definition of Fenced in Area to define the land area that includes the photovoltaic panels, stormwater facility, and landscaping that will be taken out of land use. Amendment updates the definition for large solar energy systems and small solar energy systems to include everything within the fenced in area that occupies less than or equal to (small energy systems) or greater than (large energy systems) 25 acres.

Mrs. Bragg stated she wanted to clarify the difference between the ordinance and the Comprehensive Plan as there was a lot of discussion on the two during the public hearing. She stated their discussion would be on the ordinances. The Comprehensive Plan is a project currently going on that will take 15 months. Stopping ordinance changes would therefor last for 18 months, and she expressed that she believed it would be hard to stop the business of the County for 18 months.

Mrs. Bragg asked if there were comments from the Commission concerning the first ordinance amendment reviewed.

Mr. Kyle Leonard stated that what started these changes was the need for clarification of the land mass within the proposals. They have not had a small scale come to them that was greater than 25 acres, so history had shown that 25 acres is an adequate size for small scale. It has been shown to them by the companies that come to them that 25

acres is all that is necessary for a small scale facility. This amendment is a clarification and brings the ordinance up to date. Mr. Leonard made the motion to approve the amendment with the caveat that any applications for projects that have been reviewed, completed, and accepted by the County should be grandfathered into the current ordinance.

Mr. Schindler seconded the motion.

Mrs. Bragg wanted to explain the reasoning behind the change in the definitions. She said it is not limiting any projects, and that most of the projects the County receives are less than 25 acres. In regards to the fenced in area definition, she asked if you consider what is under the panels or what is actually taken out of land use.

Mr. Howdyshell stated that he knew that staff needed a guideline to go by. After hearing that most of the projects that staff receive are under 25 acres he supported the definitions. He asked if the solar applications that have been sent back to the applicant for more information would be included in this ordinance change.

Mrs. Hensley stated that the applications that would be grandfathered in are the ones that have completed their review and their payment has been processed.

Mrs. Bragg stated that the motion had been made and properly seconded. The commissioners voted, which carried unanimously, 6-0.

Ms. Hensley rereviewed the second of four ordinance amendments, and stated that the amendment for Section 25-70.4. added the provision for Small Solar Energy Systems to be prohibited in Planning Policy Areas designated as Urban Service Areas and Community Development Areas within the Comprehensive Plan. The amendment also adds the standard for the proximity of solar facilities to not be sited within two miles of an approved or existing small or large energy system.

Mrs. Bragg asked if there were any comments from the Commission.

Mr. Howdyshell stated that each facility needs to be evaluated on its own merits. He stated he could not support the amendment.

Mr. Schindler stated he agreed with Mr. Howdyshell. He explained that when looking at a project on its own merit, there could be a time when it fits perfectly in the area due to the existing surrounding structures. He said he believed we needed a rubric to evaluate the projects.

Mr. Thomas stated he did not believe they needed a policy on proximity. The Comprehensive Plan is not law, so there is some room for interpretation. He did not like this amendment change.

Mr. Howdyshell made the motion to not approve the amendment changes.

Mr. Thomas seconded the motion, which carried 4-2 to not approve the amendment changes to Section 25-70.4.

Ms. Hensley reviewed the third of four ordinance amendments, Section 25-70.6 of County code, stating the amendment added the provision for Large Solar Energy Systems to be prohibited in Planning Policy Areas designated as Urban Service Areas and Community Development Areas within the Comprehensive Plan.

Mrs. Bragg asked if the Commissioners had any comments.

Mr. Thomas restated what he said about the previous proposed ordinance amendment.

Mrs. Bragg supported prohibiting in Urban Service and Community Development Areas because that is where utilities have been focused. She explained that these are the areas where the County expects to have business, industry, and residential development. She thought from the Comprehensive Plan review they that would find that the Urban Service Area is too big and needs to shrink. She explained that this prohibition will protect communities, and prevent neighbor against neighbor. She thought it was an important addition to the ordinance.

Mr. Leonard reiterated that these changes were requested for clarification. We have to have direction for the Commission and staff.

Mrs. Bragg clarified this amendment was for large scale in Urban Service Areas that has a greater impact on the community.

Mr. Thomas stated that he had expressed some frustration with these and that they needed work, but the amendments presented were not what he had in mind. He stated passing a blanket prohibition does not provide clarity, but rather is merely prohibitive. He thought they were putting themselves in the corner. He said while changes are needed, they do not need to be rushed.

Mr. Thomas made a motion to not approve the change to Section 25-70.6.

Mr. Howdyshell seconded the motion, which failed 2-4 to not approve the 25-70.6.

Ms. Hensley reviewed the last ordinance amendment, stating the amendment adds the standard for the proximity of large solar energy systems to not be sited within two miles of an approved or existing small or large solar energy system.

Mrs. Bragg asked if there were any comments from the Commission.

Mr. Howdyshell stated each project needs to stand on its own merit.

Mr. Harris stated that they have looked for clarity and they appreciate the staff.

Mr. Howdysshell moved to not approve the amendment to Section 25-70.8.

Mr. Thomas seconded the motion, which carried, 4-2 to not approve the amendment to Section 27-70.8.

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STAFF REPORTS

Ms. Hensley introduced the first staff report as an update for the Comprehensive Plan and Economic Development Strategic Plan. She said staff held a kickoff meeting with Hill Studio in early September 2023, followed by the Board's worksession on September 27, 2023.

Economic Development Strategic Plan work is underway and Economic Development Stakeholder One on One interviews and Focus Groups are scheduled.

For the Comprehensive Plan, the website has launched and has a short URL that is easy to place on both digital and print items: www.AugustaCountyVA.gov/CompPlan. Community Input Meetings are ongoing throughout the month of November, and the [Comprehensive Plan Survey](#) is live.

11/1/2023 – Clymore Elementary School – 5:00-7:00 pm
11/9/2023 – Riverheads Elementary School – 5:00-7:00 pm
11/15/2023 – Stuarts Draft Elementary School – 5:00-7:00 pm
11/16/2023 – Churchville Elementary School – 6:00-7:30 pm
11/27/2023 – Wilson Elementary School – 5:00-7:00 pm
11/29/2023 – Virtual 12:00-1:00 pm and 7:00-8:00 pm

Following the completion of the Community Input Meetings and aggregation of the collective input from the meetings, a series of 20 focus group sessions will be held in order to provide staff with a robust understanding of the current on-the-ground situation in particular interest areas. These focus groups will be comprised of community members with a wide range of experience in the respective topics. The compilation of focus group participants is currently ongoing.

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| • Land Use | • Public Utilities |
| • Recreation & Natural Resources | • Transportation |
| • Community Facilities & Services | • Cultural & Historic Resources |
| • Agriculture | • Energy (Solar) |
| • Youth | • Housing |

She explained that once background reports, Community Input Meetings, and Focus Group Sessions are complete, Hill Studio will compose a series of summaries to provide insight into community conditions and direction for the future plan. This will include a

detailed review of relevant plans and infrastructure improvements, investigative field visits, economic and demographic statistics, and other relevant information. Staff has their second monthly staff meeting with the consultant, Hill Studio, Friday, November 17.

Mrs. Bragg encouraged the Commissioners to go to the meetings.

Ms. Goodloe reviewed the agenda items with the Commissioners for the December 2023 Board of Zoning Appeals meeting.

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There being no further business to discuss, Mr. Harris made a motion to adjourn.

Mr. Schindler seconded the motion, which carried unanimously, 6-0.

Chairman

Secretary