

# Department of Planning & Community Development



A meeting of the Franklin County Planning Commission was held on Tuesday, June 13, 2023, in the Board of Supervisors Conference Room located at the Franklin County Government Center.

## **THOSE PRESENT:**

Sherrie Mitchell- Chair, Snow Creek District  
Debbie Crawford- Vice Chair, Union Hall District  
David Clements- Rocky Mount District  
David Pendleton- Blackwater District  
C.W. Doss- Blue Ridge District  
Cheryl Ege- Gills Creek District  
Angie McGhee- Boone District

## **OTHERS PRESENT:**

Lisa Cooper- Director, Planning & Community Development  
Stephanie Mathena- Principal Planner  
Chris Dadak- County Attorney  
Megan Fenner- Clerk, Planning Commission  
Beth Simms- Director, Economic Development  
Kevin Tosh- Director, Tourism & Marketing

## **THOSE ABSENT:**

None

The meeting was called to order by Chairwoman Sherrie Mitchell at 6:00 p.m.

The first order of business was the approval of the minutes from the April 11, 2023, meeting. Ms. Cheryl Ege stated she had two changes to the minutes. Page 8, paragraph 4, line 4 it reads, " ...and the B-2 district does not all the use..." Ms. Ege suggested this should read, "...and the B-2 district does not allow the use..." Ms. Ege also suggested that on page 20, paragraph 5, line 10 in reference to Ms. Eliana Ginis's comments it states "She debunked the claim that solar energy will raise energy costs for residents," which implied Ms. Ginis proved otherwise to the Planning Commission. Ms. Ege suggested it should state Ms. Ginis disagreed with the statement. Chairwoman Sherrie Mitchell asked if anyone else had any changes or

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corrections to the April 11, 2023 minutes. There were none.

Ms. Debbie Crawford motioned to approve the April 11, 2023 meeting minutes with the two suggested edits by Ms. Cheryl Ege.

Ms. Ege seconded the motion.

The motion to approve was approved, 7-0-0-0; voting on the motion was as follows:

AYES: McGhee, Ege, Doss, Pendleton, Clements, Crawford, Mitchell  
NAYES: None  
ABSENT: None  
ABSTAIN: None

Chairwoman Mitchell stated the second order of business was the approval of the May 9, 2023 meeting minutes. Chairwoman Mitchell asked if there were any corrections or deletions. Hearing none and seeing none, the May 9, 2023 meeting minutes pass as written.

Chairwoman Sherrie Mitchell advised they would now open the floor to any citizen who wished to address the Planning Commission.

Mr. Matt Pagans approached the Planning Commission. Mr. Pagans introduced himself as a realtor, real estate appraiser, and the first to apply for a special use permit to allow short term rentals. Mr. Pagans advised it's very disheartening for people who are following rules and procedures to see unregistered short-term rentals, or short-term rentals listed in areas where they are prohibited. Mr. Pagans believes instead of creating more rules for those operating in good faith, there should be a focus on those operating unauthorized rentals. Unauthorized rentals are not paying taxes to the county, and are not regulated. Mr. Pagans does not agree that the Planning Commission should impose length of stay policies, or policies that dictate the distance allowed between short-term rentals. However, in regards to extending short-term rentals into other zoning districts, Mr. Pagans stated he is not against options two (2) or three (3) listed in the Planning Commission meeting materials. He believes people should be allowed to do what they want on their own property. Mr. Pagans thinks a lot of the issues in the ordinance should be handled through subdivisions' restricted covenants and not monitored by the government.

Mr. Rick Smith addressed the Planning Commission. Mr. Smith would like the Planning Commission to revisit the subdivision ordinance. Family members of his spent three (3) months and nearly \$1,000 to meet the requirements to purchase a hayfield. Mr. Smith stated he had just closed a deal where it took him two (2) months to purchase a cow pasture due

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to restrictions and regulations. Mr. Smith would like to see the issue go before the Board of Supervisors. Mr. Smith advised the current subdivision ordinances costs citizens a lot of time and money. Mr. Smith also mentioned on the topic of short-term rentals, he and Mr. Matt Pagans disagree on some things, and that's ok. However, Mr. Smith's office is located at Smith Mountain Lake, and whenever anyone comes to him to purchase a home that they would also like to rent out his immediate response is to go to Bedford County. Every transaction that goes to Bedford County is revenue lost by Franklin County. Mr. Smith does not think the county should be so restrictive on short-term rentals.

Chairwoman Mitchell asked if anyone else would like to address the Planning Commission. Hearing none, and seeing none, Chairwoman Mitchell closed the period for citizen comment.

Ms. Debbie Crawford introduced Ms. Beth Simms, Director of Economic Development, and Mr. Kevin Tosh, Director of Tourism and Marketing. Ms. Crawford invited the two (2) to speak on the economic and tourist applications of short-term rentals. It was decided that the two (2) would speak during the short-term rental work session, rather than adding another item to the agenda.

Chairwoman Mitchell introduced the next item on the agenda, a work session on short-term rentals.

Ms. Stephanie Mathena advised the goal for tonight's work session is to look at where short-term rentals are regulated and how they are regulated, i.e. lot size, by-right, etc. Ms. Mathena stated a final draft will be put together for review after they have finished their work sessions. She then went over the items included in the packet each commissioner received.

Ms. Stephanie Mathena displayed data showing how each short-term rental application was voted on by the Planning Commission from February 2022 to April 2023. Ms. Mathena was hoping to find a pattern and common concerns that were addressed for each case, so that they may address these issues in the ordinance. Over the last fourteen (14) months, the Planning Commission has heard twelve (12) special use applications for short-term rentals. Each of the twelve (12) applications were approved by the Planning Commission. The data did not include how the Board of Supervisors voted, since staff is just focusing on Planning Commission. Nine (9) of the twelve (12) were unanimously approved. Common concerns seen in applications were private roadways, locations in a residential neighborhood, and no onsite property manager. Ms. Mathena asked the Planning Commission to keep this information in mind while rewriting the ordinance. Ms. Mathena

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asked if any of the commissioners had comments or questions they wanted to address before staff began reviewing the ordinance as written.

Ms. Debbie Crawford asked how long it takes staff members to process a special use permit for short-term rentals starting from the receipt of application, through the meeting. Ms. Stephanie Mathena named herself and the four (4) other staff members involved in the short-term rental process. She, herself, spends two (2) hours writing a single staff report, and site visits take at least half a day to complete. Director Lisa Cooper advised that even prior to the application being received by staff, staff spends time with potential applicants to review the process and documentation needed to submit an application. Sometimes this occurs in several sessions, staff spending anywhere from thirty (30) minutes to an hour with potential applicants. Staff can easily spend eight (8) hours of putting together all materials needed to present to the Planning Commission. Staff also prepares and submits the legal ads for publication as required by state regulations, and sends out letters of notification to adjoining property owners of the applications in their area. Director Cooper advised that she would approximate eight (8) to twelve (12) hours of staff's time goes into each application. Ms. Crawford asked how much do the legal ads cost. Ms. Megan Fenner advised it varied, and the more applicants on the agenda the cheaper the cost per ad. As an estimate, applicants by themselves pay approximately \$200 per ad, which makes \$400 in legal ad fees in total.

With no other questions, Ms. Stephanie Mathena moved on to the first topic of conversation. Ms. Mathena presented three suggested options each with different levels of intensity, these options were not the only options the Planning Commission has, and they are not the opinion of staff. The first option is to keep everything as is. Ms. Mathena explained administrative review is viewed as development friendly, since it takes less time and involves less people. Administrative review would be something that is by-right, and it would not involve citizens obtaining a special use permit or coming before the Planning Commission. Staff would handle helping the applicant register their short-term rental and ensure compliance. This style only takes into account facts and their compliance with the ordinance. Total time could be two (2) to four (4) weeks, depending on the inspector's workload. Discretionary reviews are tailored to each application and can be handled based on their individual merits. Time frame for this could be around three (3) months, as it depends on when the applicant begins the process. This review style involves the applicant, staff, Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors.

Ms. Stephanie Mathena went over each suggested option for the Planning Commission:

Option 1:

(a) The following general regulations apply to all short-term rentals:

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(1) Permitted by-right:

(a) Short-term rentals in RPD and PCD districts; no minimum lot size; must be in accordance with the minimum lot sizes for that district, provided in Article III, District Regulations, of this Chapter [Zoning Ordinance].

(2) Permitted by a Special Use Permit:

(a) Short-term rentals in A-1 districts; no minimum lot size; must be in accordance with the minimum lot sizes for that district, provided in Article III, District Regulations, of this Chapter [Zoning Ordinance].

1. Septic tanks and drainfields shall be shown on the concept plan as part of the Special Use Permit application.

Option 2:

(a) For all short-term rentals, the following minimums shall apply:

(1) A-1 district: Minimum lot size of 5 acres.

(a) If less than five (5) acres, applicant may apply for a Special Use Permit.

1. Septic tanks and drainfields shall be shown on the concept plan as part of the Special Use Permit application.

(b) RPD and PCD districts: no minimum lot size; must be in accordance with the minimum lot sizes for that district, provided in Article III, District Regulations, of this Chapter [Zoning Ordinance].

Option 3:

(a) The following general regulations apply to all short-term rentals:

(1) Permitted by-right:

(a) Short-term rentals in A-1, RE, R-1, R-2, RC-1, RMF districts:

1. Minimum lot size of five (5) acres.

(b) Short-term rentals in RPD and PCD districts:

1. No minimum lot size; must be in accordance with the minimum lot sizes for that district, provided in Article III, District Regulations, of this Chapter [Zoning Ordinance].

(2) Permitted by a Special Use Permit:

(a) Short-term rentals in A-1, RE, R-1, R-2, RC-1, RMF districts:

1. Lot size less than five (5) acres.

2. Septic tanks and drainfields shall be shown on the concept plan as part of the Special Use Permit application.

Ms. Debbie Crawford advised she has different opinions on the five (5) acre requirement, and the special use permit requirement. Ms. Cheryl Ege stated the acreage requirement is a good place to start.

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Chairwoman Mitchell asked for confirmation on the specific elements the Board of Supervisors asked the Planning Commission to review. Director Lisa Cooper stated the Board of Supervisors listed minimum lot size, buffering, setbacks. Director Cooper stated that since they were reviewing part of the short-term rental ordinance, this was a good opportunity to review the ordinance in its entirety, as this is a very hot topic in the planning department. Director Cooper encouraged the commissioners to bring up topics in the ordinance that they felt should be addressed or changed.

Ms. Cheryl Ege stated she could have invited citizens to attend tonight's meeting who would say they moved to Franklin County because of the restrictions on short-term rentals. Ms. Ege agreed that these applications are taking a lot of time away from staff. Ms. Ege suggested to make the county's planning website more user friendly, so they may find information and resources online. Ms. Ege stated the simpler the process on the front end, the more efficient it would be for staff. Ms. Ege also suggested to have fillable PDF forms online, so applicants can just type their information and submit.

Director Lisa Cooper advised there are two (2) different views to short-term rentals, and staff hears both of them. There are citizens who call in and want to be able to conduct short-term rentals in residential areas. Director Cooper advised she's spoken with two (2) gentlemen that live in an older small subdivision, and don't want short-term rentals in the A-1, Agricultural District. Chairwoman Mitchell asked if the small lot sizes were an issue for the two (2) gentlemen who oppose short-term rentals in the A-1, Agricultural District. Director Cooper advised she would describe the lots as large lots.

Ms. Cheryl Ege wanted to discuss the voting record document presented by Ms. Stephanie Mathena. Ms. Ege advised they show a consensus when deciding on when a short-term rental is appropriate for the area, as there was only one case on Juniper Road where they were divided. Ms. Ege recalled the application, stating she originally thought the 23-acre lot was an appropriate place for a short-term rental, but once they visited the property and heard from the neighbors the Planning Commission ended up having a 4-3 vote. Ms. Ege thinks the 5-acre minimum by-right would take away the democratic process that allows the neighbors to come before the Planning Commission to express concerns. She was concerned the 5-acre minimum would provide more rights to one landowner, and take away from the rights of others. Chairwoman Sherrie Mitchell asked Ms. Ege if she would feel the same way even with larger lot sizes. Ms. Ege stated she would since there is no way of knowing where the house is located on the property.

Director Lisa Cooper wanted to know how Ms. Cheryl Ege would feel if supplementary regulations were added. For example, in the instance of a private roadway if it were



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required the residents have a road maintenance agreement in order to have a short-term rental. Mr. David Pendleton suggested an example of 5-acre minimum, but you have to have setbacks or buffering that meets another condition. Ms. Ege was concerned that this would create more items for staff to enforce.

Director Lisa Cooper stated that staff has made a big push to get owners of short-term rentals to register and come into compliance. Director Cooper stated that many owners have come into compliance or taking the necessary steps. Soon, staff will be making another push to further enforce short-term rental regulations.

Since the topic was on density and lot sizes, Ms. Stephanie Mathena advised the zoning districts where short-term rental are allowed by right are characteristically the most dense. Ms. Mathena wanted to know if anyone was in favor of just leaving the zoning ordinance the way it stands. Chairwoman Mitchell advised she might be in favor, but would like to hear the arguments for change. Ms. Mathena mentioned that as planners, 5-acres is just the rule of thumb they are taught. The number can be changed to any amount of acreage or changed to distance. The information presented is just to get the conversation started, there is no formula for crafting the correct answers. Ms. Mathena stated that 5-acres is the standard set by Roanoke County, as anything under 5-acres becomes discretionary. Ms. Debbie Crawford wanted to know what requirement Bedford County had. Ms. Mathena stated Bedford County is open, and does not have a minimum lot size.

Ms. Beth Simms advised the Department of Economic Development is currently undergoing a strategic planning process. Ms. Simms advised they have heavily engaged the public and had over 1,100 people engage in their survey. They also met in small groups with over 100 citizens. The number one complaint Ms. Simms has heard is that Franklin County is not development friendly. This does not only apply to short-term rentals, other ordinances were also referenced. There is a perception that multi-family housing and density is not welcome in Franklin County. Ms. Simms mentioned there are a lot of citizens who cannot attend a meeting at 6:00 pm on a Tuesday, and while some do attend, she encouraged the Planning Commission to consider the community as a whole and think about those who cannot speak at these meetings.

Ms. Cheryl Ege stated that one of the reasons she would support leaving the ordinance as is, is due to Economic Development doing a lot of work and Supervisor Lori Smith working on the Westlake-Halesford area with her focus group. Ms. Ege would like to be able to use zoning to drive the business and tourism to certain areas that they have decided are appropriate. Bedford County has been discussing setting up a tourism zone.

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Ms. Beth Simms stated their work may not have much effect on zoning. She personally doesn't understand why everything has to be divided, recalling her time in Sonoma County where the roadside inn was surrounded by both cattle fields and residential homes. Ms. Simms just wanted to emphasize that what they currently have is not viewed as development friendly to some citizens.

Ms. Stephanie Mathena stated she is here to answer questions or help guide discussion. She doesn't want to plant seeds of thought, but rather let the Planning Commission come up with the questions and suggestions. Ms. Mathena stated regardless of if they themselves would short-term rent, they should try to mitigate the issues through zoning, and compromise to find a solution. Short-term rentals are not going away, and there will always be two sides to the argument. If something isn't working, they can go back and revise.

Ms. Debbie Crawford stated she would definitely like to see change. Ms. Crawford stated she would like to see no minimum lot size, short-term rentals not handled by the Planning Commission or Board of Supervisors, and short-term rentals opened up to more zoning districts such as RC-1. Ms. Crawford thinks HOAs should decide if they want to prohibit short-term rentals in their subdivisions. Ms. Crawford stated short-term rentals are not about young people partying and going crazy, they are for families. She recalled family vacations growing up where the whole family had to cram into one hotel room. Short-term rentals allow families to spread out and enjoy their vacation. Ms. Crawford suggested that some people may stay here in short-term rentals because they are interested in buying in the area. Short-term rentals are not just for the lake. They want to visit the Blue Ridge or the Folk Life Festival that takes place in Ferrum.

Ms. Angie McGhee agrees with a lot of what Ms. Debbie Crawford mentioned. Ms. McGhee also agrees with Ms. Cheryl Ege that the process needs to be streamlined better. She would also like to see people be able to apply online. Ms. McGhee stated that she doesn't have an issue with a 5-acre minimum lot size. Ms. McGhee stated that she doesn't have any issues with option two (2) or three (3), and maybe they should address supplementary regulations.

Ms. Debbie Crawford brought up that she feels when applications come before the Planning Commission, the focus shifts away from land use issues. For example, the application on Juniper Road. Ms. Crawford thought a family with several teenagers that purchased the home would generate more road usage than a weekend rental. Ms. Crawford states she tries to look at everything from the perspective of land use. When applications come before the commission, the concerns are over cars on the road, or someone's dog being run over. That's not a land use issue. Ms. Angie McGhee asked if



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option two (2) or three (3) would alleviate that issue.

Chairwoman Mitchell asked Ms. Debbie Crawford if she was for the minimum lot size of 5-acres. Ms. Crawford stated she is not but can compromise. Chairwoman Mitchell state she isn't either, she just wanted to ask. Ms. Cheryl Ege asked if there was not a minimum lot size of 5-acres, what would she suggest? Ms. Crawford suggested not having one at all. Ms. Ege asked if Ms. Crawford would have short-term rentals as a by right usage in an A-1? Ms. Crawford confirmed and also listed R-1, R-2, and RC-1. Chairwoman Mitchell chimed in that she would leave is as is defined in option one (1).

Ms. Cheryl Ege stated she is leaving towards option one (1) as well because they are consistent in their voting record, and there are little to no controversy. Ms. Ege stated she is in favor of the applications coming before the Planning Commission to keep the democratic process.

Director Lisa Cooper urged commissioners not to make a decision based on the work staff has to do. Staff will have to work on the short-term rentals regardless. Ms. Angie McGhee clarified that she wanted to streamline the process to make it more efficient.

Ms. Cheryl Ege stated in discussing changes to the zoning regulations, they have deviated from the initial instruction of the Board of Supervisors. She asked if they should have focus groups to bring citizens into the conversation or leave it as is with possible supplemental regulations.

Ms. Stephanie Mathena asked what everyone meant by supplemental regulations, as they have covered those in previous work sessions. Ms. Stephanie Mathena stated they have covered noise, signage, parking, occupancy, and fire extinguishers. She asked if they were thinking about zoning supplemental regulations.

Ms. Cheryl Ege asked if they have covered buffering. Ms. Stephanie Mathena confirmed in previous work sessions it was decided to leave buffering as a case-by-case basis. Ms. Ege brought up that if there was no Planning Commission hearing, they could not impose the condition that the applicant place buffering around the property.

Ms. Stephanie Mathena stated if they want to think about more supplementary regulations, they have to answer something that is different than a dwelling. They have to explain why the regulation is needed and why the short-term rental differs from someone just using the home as a dwelling.

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Ms. Cheryl Ege asked if someone is using the home as a business, and they are paying a business tax, wouldn't it be different than a dwelling? Ms. Stephanie Mathena stated there is no business tax, only a transient occupancy tax. The owners and operators of short-term rentals are not required to have business licenses. Ms. Ege stated in her mind it's different because you're purchasing the home to make money off of it. Ms. Mathena stated from a land use perspective, someone who owns the home and resides there can throw a party every week and have ten (10) guests, but so can those who rent a short-term rental. Ms. Mathena feels whatever they come up with for a short-term rental, someone who lives there full-time or long-term rents could do the same. Ms. Mathena agreed with Ms. Ege, if someone had a business license and paid business tax, a residence doesn't do that. There are exceptions like large houses that turn into wedding venues.

Ms. Debbie Crawford advised they have a lot of A-1, Agricultural Districts that look like R-1, Residential Suburban Districts. Ms. Crawford suggested to allow short-term rentals in R-1 districts and allow HOAs to restrict them if it's not wanted in their area. Ms. Crawford stated that bed and breakfasts can exist in RC-1, but short-term rentals cannot. She believes that Bedford County has it figured out. She's been to their planning meetings, and they have very little complaints. Ms. Crawford stated she can live with special use permits. While she doesn't think they should focus on tax dollars, short-term rentals would be a very easy source of revenue.

Chairwoman Mitchell requested to revisit the vote history document, and pointed out they are all A-1 zoning. Ms. Stephanie Mathena emphasized these are just applications for special use permits, it is not a list of short-term rentals that have registered. Chairwoman Mitchell stated she agrees with Ms. Cheryl Ege that for the most part they are in agreement, and they have very little controversy. Chairwoman Mitchell wondered how many subdivisions on Franklin County had homeowners' associations. Ms. Mathena stated they would have to spend a lot of time calling around and researching to get an answer. Ms. Ege stated if a subdivision doesn't have one, it takes a lot of work to create one.

Director Lisa Cooper advised sometimes people don't realize there is a restricted covenants until they attempt to do something. Some covenants are expired, as they have to be renewed every so often. Chairwoman Mitchell mentioned that some people purchase their homes specifically because there is no homeowners' association.

Ms. Angie McGhee stated that subdivisions can have a recorded covenants, and not have a homeowners' association. Director Lisa Cooper stated in those instances residents are welcome to enforce the covenants themselves.

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Ms. Debbie Crawford asked if the commission would be against having short-term rentals in RC-1 districts, questioning why bed and breakfasts are allowed there. Ms. Cheryl Ege believed they allow bed and breakfasts because the owner is there as a host and lives on the property. This resolves a lot of concerns people have with short-term rentals. Director Lisa Cooper mentioned that RC-1 typically has smaller lots, and have older structures. The most restrictive districts are the R-1 and R-2. There are some short-term rentals in the R-1 districts that are operating legally, as they were grandfathered in.

Ms. Cheryl Ege asked if they made changes to the ordinance and approved several short-term rentals, if they changed the ordinance again, if those approved in the interim are grandfathered in. Director Lisa Cooper confirmed. Ms. Ege stated that is a downside if they make changes prior to approving the new comprehensive plan.

Ms. Stephanie Mathena advised they could take a look at short-term rentals where the homeowner lives on site full time. It would be difficult to enforce due to being a small agency, but if it's something the Planning Commission is interested in, she could work to gather information. Ms. Mathena stated typically if the owner lives on site, localities will allow a by-right usage. Its comparable to a bed and breakfast, except the person does not have to live in the same house or serve meals. Ms. Cheryl Ege asked if there are additional regulations outside of zoning bed and breakfasts have to follow. Director Cooper and Ms. Mathena stated they have to register with the health department. Ms. Mathena stated there are endless options to what they can do.

Ms. Debbie Crawford thinks if they ignore the issue, and don't make changes to make it easier on citizens, citizens are going to be creative in avoiding following procedure. Ms. Crawford also mentioned that the Board of Supervisors wanted to build a county tourism program function so that tourism becomes a greater economic engine and enhances the quality of life for the community. Ms. Crawford stated if they do not change, they are not meeting that expectation. If short-term rentals are legal, at least the county is able to inspect them and make sure they are safe for people to stay in.

Ms. Cheryl Ege stated according to their voting record, it is not a problem for the Planning Commission to entertain a public hearing because they are mainly in agreement when it is an appropriate property. Ms. Ege believes that if they streamline the process in the beginning for applicants, it would make the whole process quicker.

Director Lisa Cooper supports streamlining the process, but it is not going to solve the complaints they receive. Applicants do not want to go through a three (3) month process. Director Cooper stated that Bedford County does not have the registration fee that Franklin

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County has, and they do not have inspections either.

Ms. Stephanie Mathena stated right now the registration fee is \$200 but hasn't covered the cost of the Granicus software. Director Lisa Cooper stated it has not in years past, but with the recent push staff has made to enforce the registration they will be able to pay for this year. Director Cooper also stated they get complaints on the fees because according to state code, if you are a realtor you still have to go through registration and inspection, but do not have to pay the registration fee.

Ms. Debbie Crawford mentioned a Mr. Kit Darling who runs a rental property management company. Mr. Darling stated that any rentals that come to him, he sends to Bedford County.

Chairwoman Mitchell stated that there are only fourteen (14) people in the room tonight. She is not an expert on the topic, and isn't sure that she wants to be one of the few people who make this decision for the entire county. She would like to see the kind of participation they had when creating the Union Hall Village Plan. Chairwoman Mitchell stated that those who do attend the public hearings to speak do so because usually they are unhappy. However, that is not representative of the county. She also likes the idea of looking at short-term rentals from a land use and planning perspective.

Ms. Stephanie Mathena asked if the Planning Commission would want to press pause on the work session again, in order to ask the Board of Supervisors if they can engage the public. Ms. Angie McGhee thinks they would get a good response, and she likes the idea. Chairwoman Mitchell stated she doesn't see the Planning Commission coming to a consensus tonight. Ms. Mathena would not advise taking the work they have done so far to public hearing. She stated if the Planning Commission wants more examples of regulations, staff could get that, or if they want to engage the public they can work on getting approval from the Board of Supervisors.

Ms. Angie McGhee asked how a survey would work to engage the public. Ms. Stephanie Mathena stated in her experience that staff would draft the survey, bring it to the Planning Commission for approval, get the Board of Supervisors approval. Ms. Mathena wasn't sure how they should distribute the survey. Ms. Beth Simms stated they did not do paper, but rather did a ten (10) question survey online. They received 1,187 responses by advertising the survey online through social media, marketing platforms, news outlets, etc. Director Lisa Cooper stated that she believes IT at one time had the ability to send it out on a large scale, personally she emails all of her email groups. Director Cooper recalled having to tally all the information after the Union Hall Village survey, and it took a lot of time just to go through

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300 surveys.

Ms. Cheryl Ege stated she believes they had a lot of consensuses at their last work session meeting. Ms. Ege asked if there was a way to send forward their current edits. Ms. Stephanie Mathena stated that could either create more work to go through the Board of Supervisors twice, or that could give them the opportunity to take care of what they can for now. Director Lisa Cooper stated they will have to consult the Board of Supervisors first and see how they would like to proceed with a survey. Chairwoman Mitchell suggested that staff ask for permission to do the survey, and point out the work the Planning Commission has achieved thus far. They have make a great deal of progress thus far, but they need more information to proceed.

Director Lisa Cooper suggested she could get approval to address the Board of Supervisors on the July agenda. She will have to do an executive summary, and brief Mr. Steve Sandy on what they have done so far, and ask to give an update to the Board of Supervisors. She would explain the progress they have made thus far, and state the Planning Commission has requested to gather additional information through an online survey.

Ms. Cheryl Ege share Chairwoman Mitchell's concerns on making a recommendation without additional input. Ms. Ege stated they have gone beyond the scope of what the Board of Supervisors has asked them to do. Ms. Ege stated a survey sounds like a good idea, but stated compiling and interpreting the information is going to take a lot of staff time. She asked if maybe creating focus groups would be a better route, or at least presented to the Board of Supervisors as another option. Director Lisa Cooper stated a few years ago that the Board of Supervisors each picked a number of people from their district to create a focus group. This group totaled about 42 people and was ok to manage, and that's where the work on the comprehensive plan came from. Director Cooper stated this is something she believes she can take back to the Board of Supervisors and possibly get it on next month's agenda.

Ms. Stephanie Mathena stated in her experience working with twenty (20) localities across the state, focus groups are more complicated and labor intensive than a survey. Webpages like Survey Monkey will interpret the data and create graphs for staff. Focus groups are great to reach people on a personal level, but she believes in order to get fast facts a survey is the way to go. In focus groups, the answers are open-ended and it's up to staff to interpret.

Ms. Megan Fenner stated her concern over focus groups is sample size. How is the population sample going to be drawn? Picking who gets to participate in focus groups

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leaves a chance for unintentional bias, or at least the citizen view of bias. There's the concern of only selecting one type of resident, when there are many different socioeconomic groups in Franklin County. Ms. Fenner supported distributing a survey.

Ms. Cheryl Ege voiced her concern that there is no way to confirm survey participants are Franklin County residents. Ms. Beth Simms stated that was a question of theirs, and it was just on an honor system for them to answer honestly. Ms. Simms stated what they've heard at the Board of Supervisors meeting mimic what they received on their surveys. The survey gives black and white data to review without bias. Ms. Simms stated there's always an option to hold an in-person meeting to introduce it, but in her experience focus groups were very difficult.

Ms. Megan Fenner advised in instances citizens are not tech savvy, or do not have access to register their short-term rentals online, she offers citizens to come into the office and sit down with them to assist in their registration, or they can call in and she can do it for them over the phone. Ms. Fenner is willing to advertise her office number for people to call in and so the survey over the phone. She also suggested a question such as the participant's zip code, and using terminology like 'property owner' since Franklin County has a lot of part time residents.

Director Lisa Cooper stated for the Union Hall Village, they asked if they were a resident of Union Hall and if that was their primary residence. Director Cooper also suggested to have some paper copies in office, she just does not want to be overburdened with the task of entering data from a mass mailing. Director Cooper advised they are willing to make the survey available to everyone.

Ms. Cheryl Ege stated this sounded reasonable to her.

Ms. Stephanie Mathena asked the Planning Commission if they wanted staff to present the idea of a survey as well as the items they have achieved thus far. Chairwoman Mitchell stated that she just wanted to make sure the Board of Supervisors know the progress they have made, and that they are working on the request. Director Lisa Cooper stated the Board of Supervisors has received one update, and they also receive Friday packets with a lot of information on what the planning office is working on.

Ms. Cheryl Ege stated she believes what they are looking for is to find out if the Board of Supervisors wants the Planning Commission to proceed in discussing the zoning regulations. Ms. Ege believes they have already achieved what the Board of Supervisors instructed them to do.



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Director Lisa Cooper advised that if the Board of Supervisors does not want a survey or the changes made, they will advise so. However, whenever they start the rewrite of the zoning ordinance, these issues will have to be discussed down the line.

Ms. Cheryl Ege stated that would take place with a lot more community input, which she thought was appropriate.

Ms. Debbie Crawford stated she believed the Board of Supervisors instructed them to review the zoning ordinance. Ms. Crawford is ok with proceeding with a survey or focus group, however her concern is that everything they have completed thus far was for A-1 districts. Ms. Stephanie Mathena stated nothing they have completed applies to a specific zoning, and she will make sure whatever is submitted is not limited to one district. The topics covered tonight does apply to zoning districts.

Chairwoman Mitchell stated next up on their agenda is a staff updated.

Ms. Stephanie Mathena stated nothing has changed. A schedule for the comprehensive plan has not been worked out, but staff should have the Westlake Plan and the Union Hall Plan in September or October.

Director Lisa Cooper confirmed that site visits are on July 5<sup>th</sup>, which is not a county holiday. There are two applications to be heard in July: a special use permit and a rezone.

Chairwoman Mitchell asked if there are any other announcements from staff.

Ms. Megan Fenner announced that the Special Use Permit Application and the Zoning Map Amendment Application are now fillable PDFs on the county's webpage.

Chairwoman Mitchell advised that next month is July, and they will be holding annual elections.

Meeting adjourned at 8:18pm.