



## MEETING NOTES STEERING COMMITTEE JUNE 19, 2019 NOTES

Attendees: Michael Lauer, Audra Miller, Amanda Clement, Boyce Young, Joshua Coffey, Key Bartow, Dawn Poe, Beth Williams Holly, Tracy Walden-Stafford, Lisa Safely, Michele Henderson, and Keith Spitznogle

Michael updated schedule. Explained have a Steering Committee meeting in September to go over process and procedures. Recommendations to P&Z will come mid to late September.

Michael explained that every PD is unique zoning district with their own rules and regulations. This creates significant enforcement challenges due to the lack of consistency between approvals. Committee comment – staff is like a property manager for multiple HOAs.

**Cluster and Conservation Subdivisions.** Cluster development is more suburban, including smaller lots and some open space. Conservation subdivisions are more aggressive about protecting open space. Michael showed several different types of conservation subdivisions that preserved wetlands and agricultural land. The Committee recommended requiring bigger buffers for subdivisions abutting agricultural land. Michael highlighted that a lower percentage of lots typically have access to open space in cluster subdivisions than within conservation subdivisions. The number of lots yielded by cluster subdivisions is about the same as for conventional subdivision.

### Discussion and Recommendations:

- **Location:** Conservation subdivision should be allowed anywhere the density matches underlying zoning district. Question do conservation subdivisions allow a mix of unit types (e.g., attached units)? The Committee agreed that conservation and cluster subdivisions should allow a mix of unit types.
- **Cluster subdivision:** This is only appropriate in low-density suburban and mixed-use areas. This does not require a mix of unit types or uses, but may allow for such mixes.
- **What is the best approval process?** Why use the PD if we have the design standards in place for these two development types? Consensus is to allow for by-right approval **IF** standards are adequate. This would reduce the number of PD applications and approvals by relying on the subdivision process. Steering Committee question: what incentivizes developers to use cluster or conservation subdivision? Response: they enable more efficient use of property, reduce infrastructure costs, and produce more valuable lots due to open space frontage. Standards should address
  - Maintenance of rural character
  - Open space retention/use/maintenance
  - Density
  - Amenities
  - Access to open space
- Conservation and cluster subdivisions should use PD process if standards are not all met. Steering Committee expressed concern about flexibility, explaining that if we have good cluster and conservation subdivision standards, there is no reason for developer to apply for PD. Consensus



was to allow hybrid approach (e.g., by right if standards met, PD for modified standards if purposes and allowed densities are achieved).

- **Mandatory preservation** areas include: floodways, wetlands, stream buffers, which may comprise no more than 50% of required open space.
- **Required open space:** 50% for conservation subdivision 40% for cluster, but 40% may be reduced somewhat upon review.
- **Density.** Steering Committee does not want to assume that 3 units per acre density applies to wetlands areas. Development should be based on net density after removal of mandatory preservation areas. The Committee will consider yield plan approach that would base densities on yield from conventional subdivision with 15,000 square foot lots. Committee supported providing density bonuses for extra open space conservation. Additional discussion to follow provision of detailed examples.
- **Allowed uses in open space:** preservation areas, passive recreation, buffers, limited active recreation, and agriculture. Note that greater buffers needed between development and agriculture.
- **Percent of lots abutting open spaces:** 80% for conservation and 60% for cluster subdivisions. Michael to evaluate need to reduce standard for cluster subdivision.
- **Mix of Unit Types:** Should we allow a mix of dwelling types (patio homes, single family detached, zero lot line, etc.)? Committee agreed that different housing types will be okay, but density is key along with design standards. Concern about zero lot line development providing adequate access in alleys for trash trucks. Michael explained access must be provided. When a Committee member raised a concern about mix of houses causing a deterioration of housing values, Michael explained that research shows that a greater mix of unit types increases property values over time and improves resiliency to recessions as long there are good design standards in place.
- **Green Infrastructure/LID:** Do we want to mandate a green infrastructure? Yes. Wetlands may be used for stormwater management
- **Secondary Access.** Committee agreed to apply IDO standards for secondary access (30 units or more have emergency access and more than 100 must have two full access)
- **Buffers.** Subdivision buffers should be based on the height of development and its proximity to external streets. For example, a 50' buffer is not enough for four-story apartment building. Committee member suggested the use of a height setback ratio as the standard instead of just saying it has to be a fixed width. Greater buffers are required next to adjacent farm/agricultural area. Johnny Mercer Blvd. was cited as an example of a good street buffer.

**Short Term Vacation Rentals.** Michael provided a brief description of the potential negative impacts of short-term vacation rentals and the conditions under which each problem arises.

#### **Discussion and Recommendations:**

- Committee Question: Should not covenants limit/restrict it? Covenants are not universally applicable or consistently enforced. They also fail to address potential loss of revenues from hotel/motel taxes. Michael pointed out that picking a random week in October yielded more than 100 Airbnb properties available in Bryan County (129 units).
- After a discussion of the impacts and possible strategies to address STVR, Steering Committee suggested returning to the discussion when there was more time to address each potential regulatory tool individually.



**Development on Lots smaller than 15,000 square feet.** Committee previously agreed to allow smaller lots through conservation and cluster subdivisions at applicable zoning district densities. Are we going to provide some other options for higher density development to promote affordability and different housing needs, such as empty nester housing? Michael explained that water and sewer utility rates go up if densities are too low.

- Should we continue using PD to allow creation of small lots, establish a new zoning district, or authorize in the R-3 district within the Comprehensive Plan’s mixed-use character areas?
- The Comprehensive Plan and the homebuilders are concerned about affordability. Committee question: what does affordability means? That has not been defined. Committee question what does a house have to sell for development to pay for itself? Comment was made \$375k price point needed for it to pay for itself. Michael explained that median-priced residential seldom generates enough revenues to pay for capital and service costs, so communities rely on commercial and industrial development to make up the shortfall. Residential development failing to pay for itself is not a reason to preclude affordable housing. To achieve affordability, smaller lots, higher densities and a mix of housing types are needed. Steering Committee member pointed out that affordable housing can be found, but it may not be new, single-family or even in Bryan County.
- Higher density/smaller lot development may be confined to certain districts and character areas. It is not always a viable option to require higher density units to be within a commercial, mixed-use development because there may not be sufficient demand for the commercial, many developers do not know how to do mixed-use development, and qualified developers may have difficulty finding willing lenders.
- More discussion needed.

**Accessory Structures.** Should accessory structure size be based on lot size and setbacks? Committee agreed but said that some size and height limits should apply even on larger lots.

**Private Road Lengths.** Michael explained that the maximum length for a private street in a minor subdivision is 300’ to make sure emergency vehicles have safe and reliable access. Michael said we would present potential amendments to the 300’ length limitation that allows greater lengths under limited circumstances.