



Craig S. Gerhart
County Executive

COUNTY OF PRINCE WILLIAM

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May 30, 2006

TO: Board of County Supervisors

FROM: Stephen K. Griffin, AICP
Director of Planning

THRU: Craig S. Gerhart
County Executive

RE: Initiation of a Comprehensive Plan Amendment for Parks and Open Space
All Magisterial Districts

I. Background is as follows:

- A. Comprehensive Plan Amendments (CPAs) – Under the Code of Virginia, the Board of County Supervisors can initiate amendments to the adopted Comprehensive Plan.
- B. Board of County Supervisors' Work Session – On December 14, 2004, in response to the report "Conserving the Washington-Baltimore Region's Green Network: The Time to Act is Now" the Board formalized the County Parks and Open Space Project to be undertaken by the Planning Office.
- C. Findings Report - The Planning Office collected data, researched best practices and prepared analysis with the help of other agencies including the Prince William County Park Authority, Office of Information Technology, and the Department of Public, Works Watershed Management Division.
- D. Citizen Input – The Planning Office held three citizen information forums in October 2005 throughout the county, met with various stakeholder groups, reviewed the 2002 Park Authority Needs Assessment and conducted an on-line survey.
- E. Work Sessions - The Planning Office presented its findings to the Park Authority Board, Planning Commission and Board of County Supervisors during work sessions held in February, March and April.



II. Current Situation is as follows:

- A. Proposed Amendments – The proposed amendments (see Attachment A) provide definitions for open space and include improved open space policies. Furthermore, the two goals of the current Parks and Open Space chapter, which are providing a park system that meets the needs of the county and meeting the established level of service for parks and facilities, were combined into one. A new goal for open space was added, that states “provide an open space system that preserves natural and cultural resources for the use and enjoyment of the residents of Prince William County”. Based on these goals the policies and action strategies of the Comprehensive Plan are proposed to be amended to address three major issues as follows:
1. Continue – The County should continue to meet active recreation needs, but also begin to provide passive recreation opportunities.
 - a) Parks – The parks level of service policy has been refined. The current policy of providing 13.8 acres/1000 people remains; however, credit for some school and home owner association (HOA) lands has been included.
 - b) Facilities – The facilities level of service policy has been amended to take into consideration additional facilities programmed by the park authority as well as facilities provided by federal parks, state parks, HOAs and privately owned recreation facilities.
 - c) Open Space – A new policy and set of strategies has been added regarding open space including a target that 50% of park land be passive recreation or open space.
 2. Connect – The County should connect parks and open spaces through a network of trails and environmental corridors.
 - a) Corridors – The trails policy has been updated to incorporate a broader set of park and open space connections and passive recreation through recreational, heritage and environmental corridors.
 - b) Corridors Map – A new corridors map has been developed to guide recreational trails planning, acknowledge and guide development of heritage trails, and identify environmental corridors.
 - c) Related Policies – Action Strategies from the Environment and the Cultural Resources chapters of the Comprehensive Plan have been reviewed and minor changes have been recommended to coordinate with the new corridors policies.
 - d) Neighborhood Park Access – A strategy has been added to encourage development of pedestrian access to neighborhood parks.

3. Coordinate – A new policy has been created regarding coordination of parks and open space policies that includes strategies relocated from other policies as well as some new strategies for interagency coordination.
- B. BOCS Action Required – Initiation of comprehensive plan amendments requires Board action. Once initiated, staff would prepare the necessary documents for public hearings with the Planning Commission and the Board.

III. Issues are as follows:

- A. Reasons for Initiation – Why should a comprehensive plan amendment for parks and open space be initiated?
- B. Timing - When would the Board of County Supervisors need to take action?
- C. Fiscal Impact – What are the fiscal impacts of initiating this amendment?
- D. Community Input – What community input will be required and what opportunities for community input have already been provided?

IV. Alternatives, beginning with the staff recommendation are as follows:

- A. Initiation – Initiation of a comprehensive plan amendment for parks and open space.
 1. Reason for Initiation – Several upcoming actions will benefit from the initiation of the proposed comprehensive plan amendments:
 - a) Bond Referendum – A bond referendum for parks and recreation is proposed this fall. Some of the money in this referendum will be for land acquisition and trails development. New policies and action strategies proposed can help guide the Park Authority in deciding the best use for these resources.
 - b) Park Authority Comprehensive Plan – The Park Authority 2000-2025 Comprehensive Plan was adopted on March 5, 2003 and is due to be updated. The new policies and action strategies can inform the Park Authority planning process, particularly in regard to planning recreational corridors.
 - c) LOS – The guidelines for monetary contributions for parks and recreation facilities can be updated. Policies established by the amendment can guide the Planning Office in the update of the monetary contributions for parks and recreation facilities.

- d) Federal and State Funding – Federal and state funding is available for conservation and protection of open space and efforts to obtain such funding can benefit from comprehensive plan guidance.
 2. Timing – There is no requirement to take action within a certain time.
 3. Fiscal impact – There are no immediate fiscal implications. Existing staff resources will be used for preparation of the necessary documents for Planning Commission and Board public hearings. Long term fiscal impacts could be the costs of acquiring land and protecting more open space, but these can be offset by improved quality of life and the resulting increase in the desirability of employers to locate in Prince William County.
 4. Community Input – Community input is not required to initiate comprehensive plan amendments. Once initiated, the proposed amendments would be reviewed by the Park Authority and the Planning Commission and properly advertised for public hearing. Prior to this initiation request, citizens were provide the opportunity to provide input on the parks and open space needs of the county at three forums that were conducted by staff, meetings held with stakeholder groups and through an on-line survey.
- B. Take no action – The Board could decide not to take action at this time.
1. Reasons for Initiation - A decision to not initiate the parks and open space comprehensive plan amendments at this time would mean that policies to meet the community’s needs for open space would not be provided to guide the Park Authority, CIP and monetary contribution guidelines.
 2. Timing – There is no requirement to take action within a certain time.
 3. Fiscal Implications - Possible fiscal implications include lost opportunities for federal or state grants, inability to justify level of service increases for parks and recreation, and indirect costs due to continued environmental deterioration.
 4. Community Input – Community needs for open space in stakeholder meetings, citizen forums, and pursuant to the on-line survey would not be met.
- V. Recommendation is that the Board of County Supervisors accept Alternative A and initiate the comprehensive plan amendments as described in this report.

Parks and Open Space Project

May 30, 2006

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Staff: David J. McGettigan, AICP, x7189

Attachment:

A. Draft Text

MOTION:

**June 6, 2006
Regular Meeting
Res. No. 06-**

SECOND:

**RE: INITIATION OF COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AMENDMENT – PARKS
AND OPEN SPACE PLAN – ALL MAGISTERIAL DISTRICTS**

ACTION:

WHEREAS, under Section 15.2-2229 of the Virginia Code, the Board of County Supervisors may consider amendments to the Comprehensive Plan; and

WHEREAS, if the Board decides to initiate consideration of such an amendment, the Planning Commission must hold a public hearing on that amendment after its referral to the Planning Commission by the Board; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Director through the County Executive recommends an amendment to the Parks and Open Space, Environment, Cultural Resources and Long-Range Land Use chapters of the Comprehensive Plan; and

WHEREAS, the general welfare and good planning practice are served by initiation of the proposed amendment to the Comprehensive Plan;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Prince William Board of County Supervisors does hereby initiate an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan to amend parks and open space goals, policies and strategies.

Votes:

Ayes:

Nays:

Absent from Vote:

Absent from Meeting:

For Information:

Planning Director