

**Albemarle County Planning Commission
Regular Meeting
FINAL Minutes October 25, 2022**

The Albemarle County Planning Commission held a public hearing on Tuesday, October 25, 2022, at 6:00 p.m.

Members attending were: Karen Firehock, Chair; Julian Bivins; Fred Missel; Luis Carrazana; and Lonnie Murray

Members absent: Corey Clayborne

Other officials present were: Charles Rapp, Director of Planning; Andy Herrick, County Attorney's Office; Scott Clark; Kevin McCullum; Rebecca Ragsdale; Alberic Karina-Plun and Carolyn Shaffer, Clerk to the Planning Commission.

Call to Order and Establish Quorum

Ms. Firehock said opportunities for the public to access and participate in the hybrid meeting were posted on the County's website, on Planning Commission's homepage, and on the County Calendar when available. She said participation would include the opportunity to comment on those matters from which comments from the public would be received.

Ms. Shaffer called the roll.

Ms. Firehock established a quorum.

Other Matters Not Listed on the Agenda from the Public

There were none.

Consent Agenda

No items from the Consent Agenda were commented on nor pulled.

Mr. Bivins moved to adopt the Consent Agenda. Mr. Missel seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously (5-0).

Public Hearings

SP202200004 Scottsville Substation Expansion Project

Mr. Clark said that the special use permit request was for an existing substation that predated the zoning ordinance. He said that for the substation to expand, it had to come into compliance with the ordinance. He said that the site was located on James River Road west of Scottsville.

Mr. Clark noted that there were two parcels, and the southernmost parcel was the current substation. He said the parcel to the north, until recently, had been a separate residential parcel. He said due to the need for space for stormwater requirements from the state, the applicants had acquired the parcel to combine into the existing substation facility.

Mr. Clark noted that several pieces of equipment would be replaced in the substation due to their age. He said that there was screening vegetation to the east, and to the west screening vegetation would be added. He said that there would be stormwater channeling to be carried under the existing road. He said that to address a site distance issue at the northeast corner, there would be a new entrance, and the entrance would be used by maintenance and construction vehicles to enter the substation facility.

Mr. Clark said that the existing road providing access to the residential lots to the west would remain and continue to be used by the residents. He noted the locations of grading and additional vegetation. He said that some vegetation would be removed in the rear of the parcel for the channeling of the stormwater flow. He said that there was a staggered row of trees that would be included to restore the visual screening for the properties to the west.

Mr. Clark said at the north, there were the entrance and stormwater facilities. He said that staff did not believe there was an impact to the adjacent properties or on the character of the area. He noted that the facility fed all the uses in the area and was a longstanding use, so there was no conflict with the Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Clark said that staff found the proposed upgrades met the utilities' need for upgrading without creating significant new impacts on the rural area. He said that they did not find unfavorable factors for the proposal. He said that they recommended approval with one condition—compliance with the substation conceptual plan. He said that the condition specifically referred to the new screening vegetation and the vegetation to remain.

Mr. Murray noted that the proposed landscaping plant guide addressed the screening vegetation, but it did not address the stormwater retention facility. He asked whether there was a planting list for that.

Mr. Clark said that he did not know if the applicants had performed the final engineering for the site to that level of detail. He said the applicant would likely be able to answer the question. He said that his main concern with the vegetation related to the screening areas and the replacement where there would be grading. He said that it seemed there needed to be final engineering for the stormwater areas.

Mr. Murray said that he assumed staff would work closely with the applicant.

Mr. Clark said that the applicant had worked with the County Engineer in reviewing the conceptual plan.

Mr. Missel mentioned screening from the road. He asked if the screening was from the right.

Mr. Clark said that they had discussed screening with the applicant and whether there was a way to screen. He said that the substation facility was already close to the road, and there was a slope from the pad area to the road. He noted that it was difficult to install screening that would be maintainable over time. He said that an issue for the applicants related to safety—either with screening vegetation, animals getting into the substation, or with members of the public being able to access the substation.

Mr. Missel clarified that there was a double row of vegetation.

Mr. Clark said that would be new vegetation the County requested the applicant plant.

Mr. Missel said within the limits of disturbance, there was enough distance to contain a single row of shrubs and screening material.

Mr. Clark said that staff had made the same point, but the applicant expressed concerns the screening would be too close to the fence for the electrical safety and security on the site.

Ms. Firehock said that the applicant was welcome to present.

Mr. Daniel Frasier, Power Engineers, said they were the engineering and environmental consultant supporting Appalachian Power with the Scottsville substation expansion project. He said that other members from the project team were present to answer questions.

Mr. Frasier said that he would address what the project expansion covered. He said that the access road would be relocated to address safety concerns and that they would construct a stormwater retention pond to manage water from the new access road and existing substation site.

Mr. Frasier said that there were three reasons for the project mentioned at the community meeting. He said the first reason was that the expansion would enhance reliability by replacing aging equipment that had reached the end of its useful life. He noted that the substation had been on the property for at least 80 years and replacing the transformers and distribution banks from the 1950s with modern equipment would result in a more reliable electric grid.

Mr. Frasier said that the expansion would accommodate future growth in the County. He said that customers were served from the substation, and they would be increasing the capacity of the substation with the upgrade and expansion. He said that the expansion would improve safe access to the site. He said that it was important for the safety of the employees servicing the sites. He said that they worked with VDOT and the County to address the applicant's safety concerns and the concerns related to site distance.

Mr. Frasier said that multiple options were considered for the project. He said that the entire substation expansion would be completed on the existing site. He noted that there was an adjacent parcel to the north that was needed to address the access road modification and the stormwater from the site.

Mr. Frasier said that there were two expansion areas on the site that would be included within the substation fence. He said that there was a 45-foot by 55-foot expansion fronting James River Road to the east. He said that on the west side, there was a 40-foot by 180-foot expansion area.

Mr. Frasier said that within the expanded substation fence, there would be three new transformers, a new distribution bay, and the control building. He said that the access road currently intersected James River Road at an angle that posed a safety concern while entering or exiting the access road. He said that the access road would be shifted by about 350 feet north and that they would be able to have a 90-degree approach to the road using the additional parcel.

Mr. Frasier mentioned the stormwater management pond and the infrastructure used to manage water from the site. He said that there would be vegetation areas that would be undisturbed during

construction. He mentioned that those vegetation areas provided screening buffers. He mentioned the areas where vegetation was proposed. He noted that they worked with County staff to provide as much screening as possible.

Mr. Frasier said that the southern portion of the parcel was a steep slope with a 10-foot elevation difference between the road and the substation pad. He said that there was a grounding grid surrounding the substation that extended outside of the substation fence by three feet. He said that there needed to be a buffer, so animals did not gather around the substation fence.

Mr. Frasier noted the elevation difference on the grading plan. He mentioned that there was a question about planting around the stormwater management pond. He said that the design was not detailed and that there were items to still work through in the civil engineering. He mentioned there was a right-of-way crossing over the pond for an electrical line, and plantings within the right-of-way were another consideration.

Mr. Frasier provided images of the existing substation. He noted that there would be a small expansion to the substation on the left, and the majority of the expansion area was on the backside of the parcel. He provided an image of the access road onto Bryant Road and noted the safety concerns. He said that following construction, the access road would be replanted as part of the vegetation plan.

Mr. Frasier mentioned that the substation was well screened from James River Road. He noted that the elevation grade was a challenge to providing screening along the hillside. He said that from Bryant Lane, there was an opening in the screening where transmission lines egressed from the site.

Mr. Frasier said that the process began in 2018. He said that they met with the community in spring, and construction was expected to begin in 2024.

Mr. Missel said that he did not understand how a line of evergreen shrubs could not be planted to screen the higher elevations.

Mr. Scott Markwell, Project Manager, said that the grounding grid had to be moved out of the station by three feet.

Mr. Missel clarified that a grounding grid was a metal grid that was put under the ground.

Mr. Markwell responded that was correct and that it would use up the first three feet. He said that there needed to be a maintenance buffer as well, and those buffers essentially extended up the slope. He said that if they added additional buffers onto the slope, then they risked destabilizing it. He noted that there was some natural growth on the slope already.

Mr. Missel asked if the maintenance buffer was a walkable access.

Mr. Markwell responded that the maintenance buffer would be a walkable area.

Ms. Firehock noted that there were no comments from the public. She closed the public hearing and brought the item back before the Commission.

Ms. Firehock noted that she drove by the substation every day as part of her commute. She said that the area was unsafe and messy. She said that the new proposed access was safer. She noted that the slope was steep and fallen trees were a common problem. She asked whether the substation would improve Scottsville's power grid reliability. She confirmed that it did.

Mr. Missel moved that the Commission recommend approval of SP202200004 Scottsville Substation Expansion Project with the condition recommended in the staff report. Ms. Firehock seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously (5-0).

Adjournment

At 8:15 p.m., the Commission adjourned to November 22, 2022, Albemarle County Planning Commission meeting, 6:00 p.m. via electronic meeting.



Charles Rapp, Director of Planning

(Recorded by Carolyn S. Shaffer, Clerk to Planning Commission & Planning Boards; transcribed by Golden Transcription Services)

Approved by Planning Commission
Date: 11/22/2022
Initials: CSS