

Albemarle County Planning Commission
April 17, 2018

The Albemarle County Planning Commission held a public hearing on Tuesday, April 17, 2018, at 6:00 p.m., at the County Office Building, Lane Auditorium, Second Floor, 401 McIntire Road, Charlottesville, Virginia.

Members attending were Tim Keller, Chair; Julian Bivins, Pam Riley, Vice-Chair; Bruce Dotson, Karen Firehock and Bill Palmer, UVA representative. Absent was Jennie More and Daphne Spain.

Other officials present were Mark Graham, Director of Community Development; Andrew Gast-Bray, Assistant Director of Community Development/Director of Planning; Sharon Taylor, Clerk to Planning Commission and John Blair, Deputy County Attorney.

Call to Order and Establish Quorum

Mr. Keller, Chair, called the regular meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and established a quorum.

Regular Item.

Resolution of Intent: CPA-2018-00001 Hydraulic / 29 Resolution

Approve Resolution of Intent for considering the Hydraulic/29 Small Area Plan as part of the Places 29 Master Plan and support a transportation funding request for associated road improvements
(Mark Graham)

Mark Graham, Director of Community Development, presented a PowerPoint presentation entitled Hydraulic / 29 Consideration of Resolution – Land Use Plan and noted this is a continuation of discussion we had last fall moving onto the next step with this Hydraulic / 29 Small Area Plan and what you have before you today is a resolution that is actually going to serve a number of purposes.

Purpose of Attached Resolution

- Endorse preferred transportation improvements (Scenario 1), which is part of Attachment C with your executive summary for consideration with the Hydraulic/29 Small Area Plan
- For the Board, it also allowed them to support the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) making a Smart Scale application that will include some or all of the preferred transportation improvements He notes that some or all because it is still under discussion with the Hydraulic Advisory Panel on specifically what improvements should be in this Smart Scale application and that probably is not going to get decided until April 26.
- Adopt a resolution of intent to consider amending the Places 29 Master Plan to include the Hydraulic/29 Small Area Plan. He pointed out there would be some discussion about why we are recommending holding off as far as actually completing a Comprehensive Plan Amendment with this small area plan.
- Include the transportation improvements in a planned 2019 readoption of an Official Map for right-of-way on Hydraulic /Route 29. Mr. Graham said he had a little discussion of this in the executive summary and no action is required on that today, but we did include it in the resolution just noting that we do plan to readopt that official map next year. He noted it is required to be readopted every five years for the right-of-way that we are trying to reserve. He said we obviously do not have enough detail with the preferred transportation improvements

now to revise that map. He said we are hoping if this project is funded by sometime next year, we will have that detail so that we can provide a more accurate change for that official map. With that said he would move on to what are those proposed transportation improvements, and as he said these are provided in Attachment C of the executive summary.

Preferred Transportation Improvements (Scenario 1, page 113 of Attachment C)

Mr. Graham said the preferred transportation improvement are numbered in the presentation and have identifiers. He said the big one, of course, is at Hydraulic Road and 29 to create a grade-separated exchange. He said a model run of this in just a bit will help you understand how some of these things work. The second one at District Avenue and Hydraulic Road that is right by the Stonefield Theater that will be converted into a two-lane roundabout to improve the function of the road there. Similarly on the other side of the Hydraulic/29 interchange at Hillsdale over by the Whole Foods there would also be another two-lane roundabout. The fourth thing is the Zan Road Grade Separated Pedestrian Bike/Vehicle Connection over 29. This is the really the key part as far as the land use plan. It really does not function so much from the 29 ability to carry traffic; it is much more intended to make a cohesive small area here for development. The fifth one is Angus Road located near the Best Buy and the restaurants that are right along that area to provide a grade separation over 29. It will not really be functioning as an intersection there; it will have a U-turn for southbound traffic but other than that, they will be totally separated. Then f. is to complete a Hillsdale Road going south to Holiday Drive that is coming down from Hydraulic where it ends right now. Then g. is the relocation of the westbound U.S. 250 ramps. The current ramps that you have right down by the motel would be removed and replaced with this Hillsdale Extension. Finally, to extend the eastbound Route 250 left turn lane at Hydraulic Road. This is where you have a lot of movement right now and it is backing into the through lanes. Therefore, that is just kind of a quick summary of all those improvements. With that, he is going to present a model run that they have and point out some areas.

Mr. Graham noted first he wanted to point out Route 250 and 29 at the Best Buy and the only thing he wanted to point out was it was eliminating those ramps there by the motel at 250 and 29. Then you can also see the Angus Road cross-over and the grade separation that is being proposed as well. He said you could see a part of the extension of Hillsdale Road. He pointed out this was an accelerated traffic movement and gives an idea of how the traffic slows with all the improvements. He said this is a simulation of the p.m. traffic peak volume and shows how the improvements would work. Next, at Hydraulic and 250 it shows they have extended the ramp distance here so you no longer have the problem with the traffic stacking into the through lanes. Next, at the Hillsdale Drive roundabout he pointed out the new proposed part of Hillsdale Drive. He said it would be a two-lane roundabout. He noted you will see a little bit of stacking that occurs but certainly nothing like what we see right now. He pointed out this is a simulation of anticipated 2045 traffic volume so this is a 70 percent buildout of the small area plan and other anticipated growth.

Mr. Graham noted next is the main improvement that is being discussed here, which is the grade separation at Hydraulic and 29 noting what they are doing the Route 29 through lanes continue over at the same grade they are right now but Hydraulic Avenue has been taken and it goes underneath that road. With that, there is a ramp or lane that by passes it to allow free movement from Hydraulic to 29 North and then similarly a lane for the traffic that was going from 29 North and trying to turn onto Hydraulic; but other than that, the through traffic on Hydraulic would go underneath.

Mr. Graham pointed out Hydraulic Road through lanes you can see it provides for left turn lanes from the center of the road. He pointed out that gives an idea of the movement and because you have cut down on the number of turning movements here, it greatly improved the efficiency of the intersection. He noted the Zan Road cross-over grade separation that is being proposed here is for the future part of the small area plan with the core for the development. Therefore, that is a future proposed improvement. He said then looking at the Seminole Square entrance to show that the traffic is functioning in a good level right there. He said that finally we would jump over to the District Avenue Hydraulic Road intersection to try to show the proposed two-lane roundabout. He noted this gives an idea on how that would work. He noted what did not work was Cedar Hill on the other side in the city would not be able to come into the roundabout it would have to come in as a right in and right out to the east of that roundabout. He noted that Inglewood would continue to function as right in and right out as it does today. He said that was a quick overview of the proposed transportation improvements there.

Mr. Keller invited questions on the transportation improvements. He noted he had three questions. First, he asked if the ramp at 29/250 is eliminated would the land freed up from that be sold for development by VDOT or would it remain a VDOT property.

Mr. Graham replied that he did not have an answer for that since we have talked about that some but there have been no considerations given that. He noted that he came up with about an acre and a half.

Mr. Keller said throughout this discussion a number of proponents spoke for bike/ped trails that would be from 29 North/South. He said the connector talked about was the Hillsdale continuation that you have for vehicular, but there would be a pedestrian/bicycle parallel portion that would then connect up to the park on the south side of the 250 By-Pass that would allow for an alternative circulation to this major traffic zone to bring people from Brookhill and Hollymead Town Center. He said he thought that was going to be part of this and we were going to be talking about the alternative as well as the vehicle.

Mr. Graham replied that he could say that the city has discussed and they are very concerned about having a good way to get the bicycles and especially the pedestrians down to the Hydraulic and Route 250 intersection. He said the city has proposed improvements as far as their bike plan from that point. He said we know they have just recently completed a pedestrian bridge somewhat to the east of there. He said there has not really been any mention of a possible extension at Hillsdale going over and asked if anyone has any knowledge of it.

Mr. Keller pointed out it was through the Dominion Power area to bring bicycle/pedestrian flow from that North quadrant that is cut off by 250 By-Pass the way the Zan Road has accomplished the East/West connection alternative. He said it is very important that if this comprehensive effort is going on that there has to be thought addressing that at this point and not later.

Mr. Graham replied yes, he appreciates that and he thinks there has been a lot of consideration of that. He said on the city part they have not been as concerned about the traffic getting to Hillsdale but trying to get the bike/pedestrian traffic from Hillsdale across Hydraulic over to going east along 250. He noted so that has been their focus. He thinks it is similar to what you are saying taking that part of Holiday Drive and finding a way to connect it over.

Mr. Keller noted he was talking about east and he thinks what we were hearing in those early meetings was the number of people in terms of mileage of 3 or 4 miles from those northern residential areas to

the University of Virginia. He said we are not talking recreational trails here; we are talking about an opportunity for commuting movement of alternative transportation.

Mr. Graham said he appreciates what you are saying, the city has been pushing that traffic a little bit east before they try to get across 250 and then run up to Rugby Road. He said that has kind of been their focus instead of in front of Barracks. Mr. Graham said he would take the concern back to the city, however, he believed what he has heard from the city is they believe they have accomplished that. He said what they were trying to do as far as the separation by bringing that pedestrian bike traffic eastward along 250 and then using that new pedestrian bridge as the grade separated crossing.

Mr. Graham said he was not talking about the city but do we have separated grade bringing bicycles down within this zone from the work that has been done at Rio so that Rio is then tying into Hydraulic and then tying into the city.

Mr. Graham replied that we do not right now, no. He asked if you are looking for a physical separation from along Hillsdale for bikes and pedestrians.

Mr. Keller replied that he was looking for a separation within the zone of planning in here that we take the greater area that you have lettered if you go back to a. through g. Mr. Keller said you have addressed pedestrians and vehicles crossing at Zan Road but you really have not addressed it from the northern part to the southern part of your study area that would tie into the city.

Mr. Graham replied no, but that is actually part of the reason why we are recommending that Comprehensive Plan Amendment for this be deferred until we can look at Places29. He noted saying that we need to look at this from a broader viewpoint in that trying to look at Hydraulic/29 in isolation does not get us what we are trying to accomplish here either from a bike/pedestrian, transportation or even possibly a land use perspective.

Mr. Keller said one last point, you say that and yet here we are going forward for improvements that would occur without those improvements for that bikeway within this zone of construction that you are talking about.

Mr. Graham replied yes, that is true; we are looking at a deadline for a smart scale application to get to VDOT by this summer. He pointed out that what you are discussing is something bigger than we have been able to look at with the Hydraulic/29 plans up to date. He explained that this is part of why he is encouraging to hold off on adopting a Comprehensive Plan Amendment for this area until we can integrate that into Places29 and look at some of those issues.

Ms. Riley asked what the timeframe for the update is for the Places29 Master Plan.

Mr. Graham replied what he is saying is he did not anticipate before late 2019 or 2020 and right now the Board has not scheduled that. He asked if the Commission would object to Chip Boyles coming up and speaking.

Mr. Keller replied certainly not since this is informational.

Chip Boyles, with the Thomas Jefferson Planning District, the MPO and on the Hydraulic Planning Advisory Panel, said he was little bit confused because there may be some infrastructure that he thinks

is meeting what you are talking about. He pointed out that the current new construction at Hillsdale has bike and pedestrian lanes on it and so that would continue across Hydraulic to the 250 bypass and the road construction that is being proposed both on the existing Hillsdale and new Hillsdale will have those bike/ped facilities on it. He said at the 250 By-Pass then he thinks following the city bike/pedestrian plan it turns into a greenways trail that then the future gets it across the 250 by-pass and to that portion going towards Barracks Road. Once it hits the greenways trail, it leads to the transportation component that we will be applying for funding for but the Hillsdale component that we will be applying for does have the bike/ped going north and south. He asked does that answer the questions.

Ms. Firehock commented that my staff have been using that new Hillsdale route and even though the road is quite curvy but slow enough it is actually quite safe but it is true when you get down to Hydraulic you run out of safe space to be. She pointed out that she was glad to hear that it would be going under and you are saying it is going to turn into a greenway trail.

Mr. Boyles explained there was a greenways trail that follows the creek, and he apologized that he did not know the name of the creek that separates the Brandywine and Michie Drive area. He said that follows a course all the way to the 250 By-Pass and so you would venture off Hillsdale from the new construction onto that or you could pick up that greenways trail further up towards Rio at a certain point as well. He pointed out that is the City's bike/ped plan and it is not part of this project.

Mr. Keller said but simply stated we are moving towards planning that would dramatically increase the number of residential units north on 29 from Hydraulic to Airport Road. He asked if we are all in agreement with that.

Mr. Graham questioned if that was under the current Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Keller replied yes and the way the small area plans anticipates it. He said so we have a straight shot as the crow flies down 29 for people who would be commuting to the university area and if they wished to have an alternative circulation system with all the expenditures that are happening in these projects – Hydraulic first and Rio now that there is not a defined mechanism for that commuter pedestrian traffic to go down to 29. He noted they would be expected to go all over the place and pick up some green way trails to be able to do it as opposed to Copenhagen or a world class city that is claiming to have these direct interconnections.

Mr. Boyles replied that is correct.

Mr. Keller said he can't understand how we are making the same set of mistakes at Rio that we made at Hydraulic in this particular area given the number of individuals that there are who have come to the public meetings and have specifically talked about the need for alternative circulation.

Mr. Boyles said that he could only just comment from his participation that there have been numerous requests for the bike/ped consideration; however, he would not say that he has heard a lot of those wanting it on 29.

Mr. Keller replied no, but there have been small work group who have told us that they do commute now, and Mr. Boyles agreed.

Mr. Boyles said there has been larger work group than that who said if there were a safe way to commute they would like that as an alternative not necessarily year round on rainy or snowy days and there is not really a mechanism built in for that to happen.

Mr. Graham said that he would agree with you actually and it is part of why he is trying to suggest that it would be premature to adopt this small area plan as Comprehensive Plan Amendment; it needs to be considered in the larger scale of Places 29. He said right now whatever we do with the small area plan it does not matter if there is not a connection to some transportation improvements that are bike-ped improvements that are part of Places 29. Therefore, he is just trying to suggest that from the local user perspective it is premature. What we are trying to do tonight is really say let's put this as a resolution of intent for consideration of this as part of the next Places29 update and at the same time let's consider some of the road improvements which VDOT believes are necessary for 29 as a road of state significance. He said what we are trying to focus on here is there is a deadline for an application for those road improvements and we are trying to get that in. He said we have to submit a preliminary application by the end of May and final by the end of July. Therefore, we are trying to make sure we are harming the county's chances of getting necessary road improvements but then looking at the land use and the other issues as part of that Places29 to make sure we have a well-integrated plan. He said he hopes that helps.

Mr. Graham pointed out one of the things that we are still struggling with as far as bikes and pedestrians is that at the intersection of Hydraulic and 29 how do we handle pedestrian movements across 29 there and what is being proposed right now is shown in red as a dashed line is a tunnel that would go underneath 29. He noted there is a top illustration on the slide of how that might look. Then on both sides over by the Trader Joe's and over in the city by the Kmart site where that would come out there would be ramps that would lead back up to grade level. So there is a plan to try to get a pedestrian connection across 29, but that is still being worked on. He said we do not have all the answers on that yet. As part of that there would also be at grade pedestrian crossing for traffic going north/south on both sides of 29. He said that is a quick overview of what is being proposed right now as far as transportation improvements.

Ms. Riley said that she not sure she quite understands the different grades and asked would the bike or pedestrian be underneath the whole grade separated.

Mr. Graham pointed out it was being considered running parallel to the travel lanes but separated. He pointed out the part that would come underneath and that when it gets to either the east or west end the orange lines on the map illustrate the ramps that would bring you back from the lower grade back up to the surface grade that runs along Hydraulic and 29 there. He noted that it was difficult and we have struggled with this quite a bit and it is far from a perfect solution is the best way to put it. He noted it is one of the reasons why Ms. McKeel and he have been pretty strongly advocating for Zan Road being early in the project; we need a much better pedestrian bike connection for this area than what this is going to be providing.

Mr. Graham noted next is back to the Land Use Plan, with just a reminder that we have the conceptual land use plan that was presented to the Planning Commission back last October. He said nothing has changed there and similarly with the core area plan as presented it does kind of illustrates that the Zan Road crossing there where it shows #7 that is where it is crossing over 29 part. He said that is part of the core area for this small area plan that we would be looking at. He noted that most of the gray

buildings are existing buildings and the color illustrates things that would be built in the future once this plan starts to come together here.

Mr. Graham said so why do we recommend deferring the Comprehensive Plan Amendment to the Places29. The first is we were accelerating things because of the Smart Scale application deadline. Since last fall, we have found out what VDOT needs to support the Smart Scale application, it is not a Comprehensive Plan Amendment, but only a resolution from the local government. He noted that is what we are trying to accomplish here. Second, is because of the complexity of the developing transportation improvements that we simply have not had adequate time to gauge the community on these possible changes. He said many of the issues that you have raised were bike/pedestrian and are a great illustration of why we think we need to have more time to work through some of these issues. Similarly, we think we need to assure how this small area plan is going to be seamlessly integrated into Places29 and trying to think about this is just a spot improvement and it does not really provide the benefits the county is looking for in the long term there. He said for that reason staff is recommending that consideration the small area plan be done as part of the next update of Places29 noting that has not yet been scheduled by the Board.

Mr. Graham noted just to illustrate some of the complexity there with what we have run into he presented a framework plan "50 Year Plan." He said we have some neighborhoods that are expressing some concerns with what we are showing here. He pointed out an area where there were dashed lines for future roads that obviously affect the local neighborhoods; the neighbors are very concerned about those. He said that is why we believe more time for consideration understanding how these proposed future roads could impact those neighborhoods and make sure if they are really needed or if some of them would be better to remove to ensure the integrity of the neighborhood. He said it was just an illustration of why we are trying to make sure that we take the time, get the community engagement and try to work through all these other issues before we try to adopt a Comprehensive Plan Amendment here. Mr. Graham said with that staff is recommending approval of the resolution that has been provided as Attachment D and he would be happy to answer questions.

Mr. Keller invited questions for Mr. Graham. Hearing none, Mr. Keller opened the public hearing and invited public comment.

Mr. Morgan Butler said he was with the Southern Environmental Law Center, but he was also a member of the Hydraulic Planning Advisory Panel and wanted to speak of both of those positions up front. He said some general that he thought the staff report, both the written report and the presentation, have done a good job of updating the Commission on the panel's progress and explaining the purposes of the resolution. He said the county's adoption of this resolution will help the panel continue to move toward our goal and so we urge you to endorse it. He said he wanted to speak to the important issues raised by Mr. Keller about the pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. He said it is important to keep in mind that before the Route 29 Solutions any of those projects were built say five years ago think about what the pedestrian bicycle infrastructure along Route 29 looked like then. He said as a result of these projects Berkmar Drive Extended has been built and it has its own multi-use trail as well as a sidewalk that extends down from the Hollymead Town Center. He said there is now a pedestrian crossing of Route 29 up in that northern portion of the corridor where you can pick up a new multi-use trail that goes down the length of a section of Route 29 that was widened that was not there before. He said that Hillsdale Drive Extended has a multi-use trail as well.

Mr. Butler noted as Mark and Chip explained that appears to be the plan for Hillsdale South Extended if that project is approved and built. He pointed out one can now safely cross 29 at Rio Road, whereas before one was taking life in their hands to do that. He said the crossing at 29 and Hydraulic is not perfect but it is far superior to what is there today which absolutely nothing. He said so the pedestrian bike infrastructure is something that has to be built out over time. He said that as a member of the prior and current panel he is quite proud of how we have made improvements to the bicycle and pedestrian connectivity along the 29 Corridor as part of this project. He said it has been something that we have made sure that keeps being emphasized; it is something the public is continuing to emphasize and there are still some gaps and the county will need to continue to focus on those. He said as part of updating the master plan we want to zero in on those pieces where we still need to improve it. He said he wanted to emphasize significant strides and progress have been made along those lines, and yes there is more to be done with these projects this plan would continue to help expand that and by no means you will be stopped there. He said it is certainly significant steps in the right direction. Thank you for the chance to comment.

There being no further public comment, Mr. Keller closed the public hearing to bring the matter before the Commission for discussion and action.

Mr. Dotson said he had a couple questions about the process and the timing. He said the reason this is going through an accelerated process is that if we do not get this submitted for this Smart Scale Application essentially it is a major opportunity lost.

Mr. Graham replied yes, it would be two years before we could again apply for funding. So frankly, the whole purpose we are accelerating this is to make that Smart Scale deadline. He said recognizing the complexity is from a Comprehensive Plan Amendment and all the issues associated with it is why he is suggesting let's divide the Comprehensive Plan Amendment process from what we are trying to do with this Smart Scale Application.

Mr. Dotson said assuming the Commission approves and forwards to the Board the resolution of intent tonight has a slot been reserved on May 2 or May 9 where this would come before the Board.

Mr. Graham replied yes, it is scheduled for May 9 and we were hoping that the results of the Advisory Panel's meeting on April 26 we are going to have a little better clarify on what transportation improvements we specifically want to make with this Smart Scale application request but everything else would be pretty much the same.

Mr. Dotson said so in order to avoid losing an opportunity and irreversibly losing that we have reserved a slot on that agenda, and Mr. Graham replied that was correct.

Mr. Bivins said he had an opportunity to sit on the sidelines on the panel and he has been able to attend all the public meetings that took place on the subject. He said throughout that process a couple of things he thinks stood out among the comments. He noted there were a bunch of comments on Hillsdale Drive that has to do with the intersection there and that people are not comfortable the way that intersection sits today but they feel it should be a four-way stop as opposed to a two-way stop. He said that people seem to speak for strongly for it. He said after that the primary conversation has been about how to eliminate the Route 29 Hydraulic Road as a traffic choke point and particularly that was around the pm traffic movements. He said lots of people came and spoke about how difficult and how they were having to come up with very creative ways to either go across 29 to go west on Hydraulic or

how they were going north on 29 taking very creative ways to get up there. He said this solution, particularly the Hydraulic Road 29 Solution seemed to answer and sit really well with the people who came out and spoke about that.

Mr. Bivins said the other thing that was very interesting was that there was in fact a lot of very serious conversation about how do we get pedestrians and cyclists from the east side of 29 and that is where he thinks if you look at Mr. Graham's diagram about how that is being worked out. He said while that looks messy there that there is a full commitment by this panel that they are not moving something forward without there being a solution to move pedestrians and bicyclists at that intersection. In addition, there was a narrative process there. He said the Zan Road solution for moving people and trying to create sort of a land use or a community opportunity between Stone Field and Seminole Square and how we might do that and offer how we might move people to do their business in those two areas. He said that is something the panel actually believes is critical to this phase of the work. He said not only do we deal with traffic choke point at 29 and Hydraulic but also how do we create a space in this interim period that would be open to people who don't want to drive and who particularly live in that area. He said he understands the Chair's very clear points of how do we do some of the north/south and how do we connect that.

Mr. Bivins said he really feels that during the conversations that he was able to participate in that there is an enormous concern in that community right there that they can't move at certain times of the day. He said this solution helps them moving places in a way that does not take a lot of property, too, as one might imagine from the commercial sectors that are sitting there. He said that in fact would aid some of the interesting redevelopment that we might see on 29 at the Kmart land and how they might integrate that into a live/work community at that intersection. He said therefore he could say he has watched this group wrestle in some very creative ways but he also has listened to them respond to questions and how they stood with people during the public hearings and he has watched that reflected in models for this section.

Mr. Keller asked if there was a motion.

Mr. Bivins moved for approval of the Resolution of Intent provided as Attachment D of the executive summary report for Hydraulic / 29 Resolution that will serve as a resolution of intent for a Comprehensive Plan Amendment and support for a Smart Scale application associated with the proposed transportation improvements.

Mr. Dotson seconded the motion.

Mr. Keller invited further discussion.

Mr. Dotson said he had an item that he would bring up under other business.

Mr. Keller asked if he wanted to hold our discussion of the others that we brought up to a later time, and Mr. Dotson replied that he would do that.

There being no further discussion, Mr. Keller asked for a roll call.

The motion was approved unanimously by a vote of 5:0 (Spain, More absent).

Mr. Graham thanked the Commission and said he will make sure to pass on to the Board the concerns about the bike/pedestrian. Mr. Graham said he believes he can safely say that has been taken very seriously by many people and make sure that is communicated to the Board.

The meeting moved to the next item.