

Cowee Community Public Input

October 26, 2009

Cowee Community (20-25 attendees)

Attendees: Larry Stenger, Susan Ervin, Evelyn Owens, Derek Roland

Eric Moberg- “ Last year this community was chosen by MLI to have a charette here on land use and planning. This information has been shared with the planning board.”

TRANSPORTATION

“Cowee has been working closely with DOT on transportation issues. DOT has recently completed traffic studies in Cowee community and already made adjustments, which have been helpful.” Moberg felt that these **transportation issues in the community are something which we need to continue considering.**

The expansion of Highway 28 is another issue that concerns the citizens of Cowee Community. Citizens have met with the DOT numerous times on this. The citizens of Cowee Community would have loved to have input on this issue before it got started.

Cowee would love to see bike paths within Cowee Community. Especially on those roads that are designated bike trails.

PRESERVATION/GROWTH CONTROL

“Designations have been given to protect land i.e. Jackson County preserving land on the 441 corridor.” **Moberg would like to see all of Cowee and Oak Grove Community protected by some form of designation. “If not the whole communities, at least the historic district should be preserved via designation of some sort. The historic district is Cowee Communities number one objective from a CCDO standpoint.”**

“Cowee Community has some of the most historic area for trails, creeks, and watershed that are extremely important to the citizens of Cowee.” **Moberg felt environmental assets such as Huckleberry Creek and Cowee Creek if harmed or destroyed would decimate the value and beauty of Cowee Community.**

“It is integral to our community that Cowee School is preserved. We want to protect it and make it part of our community. It opens the door for after school programs, senior citizen services, art programs etc. This will serve as an asset to the whole northern part of Macon County.”

Moberg- “Do we have to assume that we are going to welcome future growth? Let Macon County grow at a level that growth can be sustained, **let Cowee grow at the level we want it to.** Cowee should grow at a level that is reasonable for the infrastructure that Cowee has available to it. Macon County should plan water and sewer in the areas we want to grow. Segments should be allocated for industrial and residential growth. I would rather see Cowee Community remain rural, protect the agricultural part of our area, and control the growth through land use planning that says you can’t do it. At some point we have to tell each other what we are going to do with our land.”

Citizen- When zoning was proposed earlier, it was talked about in a misleading way. Two Counties in Northern Virginia (Fredrick County and Front Royal) are located 70 miles from Washington DC. Fredrick County chose to zone, put $\frac{3}{4}$ of the land in agriculture, and is still a beautiful, slow growth county that has largely preserved its rural character. Front Royal did not choose to zone and now it is a complete nightmare. Developers made all the money and left. If you could see what has happened in these two counties and the one that chose no zoning at all it is a nightmare. **With the projected growth we are going to experience we need to have something in place now to control it.”**

Susan Ervin – A lot of our growth is motivated by profit for the few. Some people will make money, while the rest of us will lose things that are dear to us. I hope people will look at the **results of the charette that deals with protecting social culture, landscape, beauty, agriculture and history, all of which are important to northern Macon County. These are the things we want to see.”**

Stenger informed the citizens that zoning is driven by density. “As density increases, zoning is an avenue that we will have to consider. As more and more people become educated on zoning, they will become more receptive to it. We should consider an incentive type zoning that rewards responsible decision making. As a county, we need to discuss the issues and concerns that our county will face in the future.”

Citizen- “Were going to have growth regardless. You can do things to maintain this growth but who will pay for it as it comes? Right now it is people that are currently living here that pay for it. **To help maintain our area we need to have impact fees, if these are designed properly, they will maintain our level of living, and at the same time provide infrastructure needed for increased growth.** People are fearful this will scare away builders, what this does is attract good builders. Builders come in and construct neighborhoods that help the county and help the schools.” Citizens felt that if people are coming in and developing in our county they should compensate Maconians for this.

Moberg- “We need to put measures in place to control the vastness of this growth. We can have a say in what this growth will be. **We can have measures in place that ensure the growth does not decimate our community.”** The largest historic district in Western NC is located in Cowee Community. The most pristine stretch of the Little Tennessee River is in Cowee Community, in February we will have the scenic by-way designation, and we have our own Farmers Market. The point Moberg was making is that Cowee is a

unique community and the people deserve to have a say in preserving it. There are 8 criteria to qualify for the “Scenic By-Way” designation. Cowee meets all 8, there are only three in the state that have more than 3 criteria. Cowee is the only community ever to meet all 8.

Citizen- “We are going to have to have commissioners that are willing to do what the citizens in Cowee want done.”

Fire Chief- “Until People are educated about zoning they will fight it tooth and nail”

Citizens of Cowee Community felt we already have zoning to a certain extent. They felt that whatever your neighbor decides to do zones your property for you (i.e. if your neighbor puts in a trailer park next door, your property has been zoned.)

Susan Ervin- “We need to establish Urban Growth Boundaries. Basically, a circle that denoting where the citizens of Macon County want large scale growth to occur.”

Coweenc.com has prioritized short and long term goals for Cowee Community.

Citizen- **I hope the county takes on Steep Slope Development.** This is a real opportunity for us to do that. We should not limit ourselves in Northern Macon County. We need to explore creative ways to preserve this area. **Macon County should have a special plan in place to preserve the cultural and historic areas that are second to none in the nation.**

Citizens felt that county **should set aside strategically positioned land for Parks.** **Citizens also felt that the senior citizens are an asset to Macon County.**

PUBLIC SERVICES

Fire Chief in Cowee Community- **There was a 15% (largely medical calls) increase in the number of calls in just 1 year for Cowee Community.** “It’s too late when population hits to accommodate it at that point. You have to plan 10 yrs. from now.” With a large majority projected to be older, the chief felt there would be an increase in Medical Calls. Currently retirees are moving into the area and their medical problems are coming with them. By 2029 the chief felt that the fire department in this community would be fully operational. “Most fire department members will be paid men by 2029.” Currently one man on staff is paid this number is projected to increase. Cowee has two stations the chief would like to have a full time man at each station. For the future, Cowee would like to see a shift on during part of the day and part of the night. Early morning and up until midnight are when most people experience their problems, requiring fire department assistance.

HEALTHCARE/ LOCAL FOOD

Citizen- **We need to consider prevention rather than cure of disease concerning healthcare.** Medical costs, hospital bills, and other costs associated with healthcare and curing a disease could be decreased dramatically by educating citizens on preventative measures. Concerning agricultural production “we know we will be feeding a larger population, we should consider producing our own food.” **The citizen felt we should promote local consumption on a countywide basis.** The citizen felt we should stimulate our markets, producing food for our schools, and taking other measures to promote local consumption. “If our population is becoming older, public transportation should be increased. This helps senior citizens, lessens traffic on the road, saves us money and creates jobs.”