Chairman John Miller called to order the monthly meeting of the Farmville Planning Commission.

Present at the meeting were Chairman John Miller, presiding, and Commission members Patrick Crute, Jerry Davenport, Abigail O’Connor, Sherry Honeycutt, John Miller, Charles Ross and Cameron Patterson.

Staff present were Assistant Town Manager, C. Scott Davis, and Interim Administrative Assistant, Kim Thompson.

On motion by Mr. Patterson, seconded by Mr. Crute, and with all Commission members voting “aye”, the meeting agenda was approved.

On motion by Mr. Patterson, seconded by Mr. Davenport, and with all Commission members voting “aye”, the minutes of the February 27, 2019, meeting were approved, as amended.

OLD BUSINESS:

a. Update on Comprehensive Plan, Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Ordinance

Dr. Davis updated the Commission on the joint work session with Town Council held on March 6, 2019. Dr. Ross stated he is not quite clear on the concept of reducing the number of zoning districts, such as R1A becoming R1, etc. Dr. Davis stated that The Berkley Group is just looking for feedback from the Town Council and the Planning Commission on how they are moving forward with reducing the number of zoning districts in the ordinance. Can some zoning districts be condensed with others, and how can that be accomplished? Dr. Davis also noted that the maps presented by the consultant may have confused some in attendance. The R-3 district they proposed is high density, which is different from our current R-3 zone. Mr. Crute stated he had no problem with proceeding as presented by the consultant. The new map seemed much cleaner and clearer.

b. Consideration and Adoption of Amended Bylaws

On motion by Mr. Patterson, seconded by Ms. Honeycutt, and with all Commission members voting “aye”, the Planning Commission By-laws were approved, as amended.
c. Pletcher Rezoning Request Update

Dr. Davis informed the Commission that the Pletchers had met with him, since the Public Hearing on February 27, 2019, to discuss changing their initial project plan. They do not want the Commission’s decision of not recommending their project to go to Council for their consideration. They wish to amend their plan, taking into consideration the Commission’s comments and recommendations, and then come back to the Commission after they have discussed the new plan with the neighborhood. Dr. Davis stated this amended request will probably come back to the Commission at a future date.

NEW BUSINESS:

a. Planning Commission Diagnostic

Chairman Miller had presented to the Commission members a “Planning Commission Diagnostic” questionnaire and requested each member complete the questions and prepare for discussion. He stated its purpose is as a benchmark for what they do, what they do well, what can be improved upon, but also an opportunity to develop a better way to develop policies, procedures and resources.

He then stated each question and asked the Commission members to comment.

1. Why do we exist?

Members made several comments in response to this question, including reviewing plans, recommending to Council, planning for the future, economic development, planning for orderly growth and planning for Farmville’s future.

2. What business are we in?

Members stated they are advisors to Town Council; they provide planning expertise; they further investigate to give the governing body more information; they help citizens develop an informed opinion; they educate not just the public, but developers as well, of our expectations. However, it’s felt they do not communicate our expectations to our developers as well as we should.

3. What is our “product”?

Chairman Miller directed the Commission ahead to question number four.

4. Who are our clients?

Our clients are citizens, Town Council, staff and businesses. It was also felt that future Farmville residents, as well as those citizens who have not yet come of age, are also depending on the Commission to plan for their future.
5. What is the image of the Planning Commission in the community? How are we responsible for the projection of that?

The Commission members feel they are non-existent. Only when an issue directly affects a citizen or a business do they know there is a Planning Commission. They do not know the function of the Planning Commission.

As far as making our presence known, it was felt they should concentrate on raising their visibility with Council. Making sure that relationship is strong. As far as the public interaction is concerned, continue to present themselves in a manner that conveys confidence and making sure the research is done on a project – reading the packets and asking questions.

6. What do we as a Commission do well? What are our strengths?

The Commission members feel they collaborate well. They feel organized and conscientious. Each member has a desire to learn or do better. It is felt they are a diverse group as far as expertise and backgrounds.

It was felt they could articulate their expectations better, both to citizens and developers. They could perhaps develop better use of design standards. They could be more proactive instead of reactive.

In the interest of time, Chairman Miller then asked the Commission members if they had anything to add with the remaining questions.

Members then addressed the last question as to what would happen if they ceased to meet. It was stated a lack of citizen trust, chaos, inconsistency and bias.

Chairman Miller then posed a series of questions to the Commission to which they could answer with Yes, Unsure or No. The questions dealt with topics such as defined Planning Commission roles, their specific roles and responsibilities, legal and ethical expectations, attendance at meetings, member participation, receiving adequate information from staff, working relationships and evaluations.

Chairman Miller thanked everyone for their participation and comments.

On motion by Dr. Ross, seconded by Mr. Davenport, and with all Commission members voting “aye”, the meeting was declared adjourned.

John Miller, Chairman                                  Jerry Davenport, Secretary