

## Notes from the 11 June 2008 Meeting of the Council of Civic Organizations

The CCO Met Wednesday 6/11/08 at 7 pm at Central Library. A quorum was present. After a short business meeting, Tom Pauls, the Comprehensive Planning Coordinator for Virginia Beach, gave a very professional and informative talk on long-range land use planning, the main focus being where the city is heading.

The committee desires feedback from the citizenry. On the website, there is a comment forum which the commission will be tracking. The website is: [www.vbgov.com/complan](http://www.vbgov.com/complan)

Mr. Pauls requested feedback from concerned/interested citizens. His email is: [tpauls@vbgov.com](mailto:tpauls@vbgov.com).  
His telephone number is: 385-8594

The commission's report is a policy document. The commission does not have the authority to enact legislation. The State requires said commissions to review their policy proposals every five years. Since the commission was established in 2003, the current flurry of activity is state-generated.

VAB has 403,000 people and is what is considered a suburban community in that it meets some ratio of dwellings versus industry and/or commercial. Much of the available land is already developed. This brings up the subject of "redevelopment". BRAC also has put limitations on growth as does the green line. Mr. Pauls stated we need to rethink how we grow in the future. Transportation is an issue and will be more of one in the future: 85% of the cars on commute have one driver. This naturally segued into the Light Rail. Norfolk and Southern owns the rail lines. The cost to VAB taxpayers to buy unused Norfolk and Southern rail lines did not come up. As I understand it, Town Center is located near the last stop of the Norfolk light rail.

The commission has identified Strategic Growth areas. Town Center is one such area.

Other areas have been designated for "neighborhoods". Shore Drive is one of those neighborhood designated areas as is Kempsville. These primary residential areas are to be protected.

(Note: Those of us who live in the Shore Drive corridor wonder whether "protection" is quite the word we'd use for what is happening to us. My son lives in Kempsville, and his "protection" is about like ours).

Likewise the Green Line is to protect the rural way of life.

One of Mr. Pauls's statements gave me the shivers. "Single family units at market value don't pay for themselves."

Oceanfront is another area. Mr. Pauls stated the Oceanfront has 3 million visitors (tourists) per year and brings in 70 million dollars/year. (I have heard this figure disputed. The Virginia Beach Tax Alliance has data which shows Oceanfront is a negative income loss to taxpayers. I do not know whose figures are correct and without a forensic audit of the city's books, there is no way to find out). One of the CCO members questioned Mr. Pauls's numbers on Oceanfront and was told that information is available from Mike Easom (Convention Bureau) at 385 4700.

Commercial and Industry form the fourth area and Green Line the fifth. Water and sewer lines are not allowed south of Indian River Road (green line) which prevents development and preserves the "rural way of life".

Following the presentation, Mr. Pauls took questions from the floor. I had two questions:

1) why the Planning Commission allowed developers to over-build before infrastructure could handle the increased traffic and 2) Whether Mr. Pauls had visited cities like LA, Houston and Dallas who have similar traffic patterns to see the mistakes they'd made so VAB could avoid them.

I'm not sure Mr. Pauls understood my first question because his reply was that developers could not be forced to build infrastructure BEFORE the projects were developed. Since the city builds the roads, I followed up by saying if the city gave permission to build, why then did the city not put in the roads at the same time as the developments? Mr. Paul gave an answer I didn't quite understand in that I took him to mean the city had no way of doing this. But given that the city must give permission and/or variances to developers, that didn't make sense. Still, I did not think it appropriate to enter into a dialogue and deprive other questioners of their time.

So far as if Mr. Paul had visited other cities with similar spread out traffic issues, his reply was to give his credentials as a City Planner. I understood that to mean he didn't need to, but I may have misunderstood.

Other questions from the floor were taken and responded to, including one by Todd Sullivan regarding Indigo Dunes. It is my opinion that the formal presentation of the information was excellent, but Mr. Pauls did not adequately answer the questions from the floor.

Ms. Hudson who is in charge of neighborhood presentation then gave a

brief statement regarding her project and directed membership to the website, inviting comments and feedback. Her email is [lhudson@vbgov.com](mailto:lhudson@vbgov.com).

The meeting was then adjourned.

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