

1 Minutes of the informational meeting on the Route 5 Corridor Study held by the
2 Planning Commission of the County of Henrico in the County Administration
3 Building in the Government Center at Parham and Hungary Spring Roads,
4 beginning at 6:00 p.m. May 11, 2017.

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Members Present: Mr. Eric S. Leabough, C.P.C., Chair (Varina)
Mr. Robert H. Witte, Jr., Vice Chair (Brookland)
Mr. C. W. Archer, C.P.C. (Fairfield)
Mrs. Sandra M. Marshall (Three Chopt)
Mr. R. Joseph Emerson, Jr., AICP, Director of Planning,
Secretary
Mr. Tyrone E. Nelson (Varina)
Board of Supervisors' Representative

Members Absent: Mr. Gregory R. Baka (Tuckahoe)

Also Present: Ms. Jean M. Moore, Assistant Director of Planning
Mr. James P. Strauss, PLA, Senior Principal Planner
Ms. Rosemary D. Deemer, AICP, County Planner
Mr. Benjamin Sehl, County Planner
Ms. Erin Puckett, County Planner
Ms. Mary Beth, Danuser, Department IT Manager
Ms. Sylvia Ray, Recording Secretary

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7 **Mr. Tyrone E. Nelson, the Board of Supervisors' representative, abstains on**
8 **all cases unless otherwise noted.**

9
10 Mr. Leabough - Good evening.

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12 Mr. Archer - Good evening.

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14 Mr. Leabough - We're going to go ahead and get started. We
15 apologize for being a couple of minutes late. My colleague, Mr. Witte, so kindly
16 reminded me that we did not start exactly at six o'clock. So, I'd like to apologize
17 for starting three minutes late.

18
19 We're here today to talk about the Route 5 Corridor Study, so thank you all for
20 taking time out of your busy schedules to be here. All of our Commissioners are
21 here with the exception of Mr. Baka, who will join us later in the evening. And
22 also, I'd like to acknowledge Rev. Nelson, who's sitting with the Commission this
23 year. We'd like to thank you again, as always, for being here, sir.

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25 With that, staff, thank you for being here. And I'd like to turn the agenda over to
26 our Secretary, Mr. Joe Emerson.

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Mr. Emerson - Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and welcome to everyone who came out to hear about what we have worked on in regard to Route 5. We will be going over a short presentation. The intent of today's meeting is really just to kick off a process of assessing the corridor to determine just exactly what types of strategies would work in order to preserve some of the things that people find special about the Route 5 corridor. And what staff has done thus far, we have compiled information from all of the old studies, very numerous. We've done quite a bit of new research. We did existing conditions assessments, took a look at the major land uses. We did a visual assessment of the views and vistas. We compiled all that information. We put together a very nice website to get this information out to everyone.

We did notify all the stakeholders in the area that we had from the lists of the older studies and also people who have indicated interest recently in order to let you know of this meeting, to bring you up to date of where we are. All the future meetings, I know there is a concern regarding the location of the meetings. All future meetings, save the final public hearings on the Comp Plan amendment itself and anything else that might come out of this analysis, will be in Varina.

We do have a presentation that will be presented by Ms. Jean Moore of my staff. She will go over all of this in detail with you.

Ms. Moore - Thank you, Mr. Emerson, members of the Commission.

Just for the public, because this is for them tonight, this presentation will be about five minutes. So hopefully it'll give you a good summary. And following that, just an example of our website, which I think will be helpful as we move forward.

We've gone over this before. Route 5 or the New Market Road corridor and Marion Hill are two of thirty Special Focus Areas identified in the 2026 Comprehensive Plan. They are both identified as Existing Character Protection Areas. And because of their close proximity and overlap, they will be studied and incorporated in one study.

The study draws upon the vision statements drafted with the Comprehensive Plan, which recognizes the area's more rural aspects and its importance as a connection of histories between Williamsburg and the city of Richmond. Route 5 is one of the oldest transportation routes in Virginia. It was the second road in the state to be designated as a Virginia Byway in 1975. And just as a side note, sometimes you will hear it referenced as a scenic byway, but it's not the same classification.

As one of the oldest transportation corridors in the state, there have been several studies and documents drafted regarding Route 5. And as Mr. Emerson said,

73 they've been numerous. These are just some of the studies we're aware of, and
74 keep in mind most of these studies and documents pertain to Route 5 as a
75 whole, and that's 56 miles from Williamsburg to the city of Richmond. I will say
76 that most of these in the more recent ones were a tremendous effort, many
77 years, but they were never implemented.

78
79 Our Route 5 study is one component of the Comprehensive Plan. It's not a
80 typical small area land use plan that you're used to. The more recent example
81 would be the Innsbrook Study. That is really prompted by a specific change in a
82 land use, in that case to intensify development such as Urban Mixed Use. It is
83 not an overarching Comprehensive Plan revision, although it is part of it. It is not
84 a standalone Zoning Ordinance change. It's not prompted by the Virginia
85 Department of Transportation, which maintains this road separately. It's not
86 prompted by them, so it is not a transportation study.

87
88 The study is linear in nature and it focuses on potential strategies to preserve
89 and/or enhance the corridor. Marion Hill will include strategies that are
90 neighborhood oriented to preserve the grid pattern and character it already
91 contains as it was developed in the 1940s and 1950s.

92
93 I will say the timing of this study is fortuitous, because there will be certain
94 recommendations and strategies that may come out of this process, such as an
95 overlay district, cluster development, which could dovetail quite nicely in a
96 separate project we're working on, which is the Zoning and Subdivision Update,
97 which kicked off this April.

98
99 So the boundaries of the study are construed and focused on the corridor. It
100 includes the entire length from the city line to Charles City County and extends
101 500 feet from the center line of the corridor. I'm going to emphasize the 500 feet
102 is not intended to be a setback. It is to denote the boundaries of the study. This
103 was sufficient and to be manageable and to capture the smaller individual
104 parcels around Route 5 without overlapping into other focus areas such as
105 Osborne Turnpike and Varina Village at Strath and Route 5, which will be
106 separate studies as there are identified in the Comprehensive Plan as well.

107
108 That doesn't mean the physical patterns of the surrounding development or area
109 will not be considered. The characteristics of Route 5 do vary, and it is unlikely
110 that one strategy is going to fit all the existing and desired character of the
111 corridor. For instance, it may not be appropriate to have an enhanced setback or
112 buffer, say along Strath and Route 5, where the village Varina concept. The basic
113 look of a village would want buildings closer to the road Just an example. This
114 will be the longest corridor plan done by the county. Its length is almost 14 miles
115 and includes 878 parcels and 1,409 acres within the 500-foot boundary.

116
117 Because of its length and its variation along Route 5 and to provide a starting
118 point for goals and strategies that may be relevant to more specific portions of

119 the corridor, the background document of the study shows that we will have
120 posted three areas of distinction: from the city line to McCoul Street, from McCoul
121 Street to 295, and from 295 to the Charles City line, of course which is the more
122 rural area of the study. These areas provide a framework only. There are no
123 hard-edge development patterns or styles to these areas. And they may change
124 as we kick off the public input process. It could be that we might have four or five
125 sub areas that are warranted. But they'll still be under one cohesive study.

126
127 The variations of character along Route 5 become apparently during the
128 windshield survey of the corridor, which includes over 1,000 photos to assess the
129 existing patterns and streetscapes that staff conducted.

130
131 One major factor that is visible throughout the corridor, one that makes Route 5
132 even more unique from the other major roads in the County is that commercial
133 development and existing zoning for commercial development is pretty limited.
134 Only 7 and 5 percent of the land along the corridor is zoned for commercial and
135 industrial uses. The Comprehensive Plan is consistent with this intent of keeping
136 the corridor from being commercially stripped. But there are still opportunities
137 through this study to reinforce that intent. There are, however, from very small to
138 very large properties that are designated for residential development that can be
139 developed for residential by right at any time. So it's desirable for the outcome of
140 this study to provide strategies that address landscaping, appropriate
141 landscaping, site layout, and orientation of houses to limit these impacts to
142 development.

143
144 During this process, there will be more photos and ideas forthcoming, as the
145 process is just getting started. Following today's kick-off meeting, there will be
146 several opportunities for public engagement, and these will be held in the Varina
147 District. Because this kick-off is part of the Planning Commission agenda, as
148 directed by the Board of Supervisors, this meeting was held here tonight as their
149 usual business. We do anticipate extensive engagement with the public
150 throughout the process. And our goal is to complete the plan in 8 to 12 months.

151
152 There will be an open house on June 8th at Varina Library from 4:30 to 7:30. The
153 window of time will hopefully accommodate people's schedules so they can
154 arrive at any time during this timeframe to meet with staff, with each other, ask
155 questions, review the displays, and learn more about the plan and process and
156 provide their input. Following the open house, we will hold two community
157 workshops over the summer. These will also be in the Varina District. We may be
158 reaching out directly to people to participate, various members of the community,
159 to achieve the most participation from property owners and stakeholders as
160 possible. We will also have a website dedicated to the study.

161
162 I don't want to take up too much of the public's time, but I do want to go over the
163 website and particularly go over what we created as a public engagement portal.
164 On our website, when you navigate you will see the portal which has five tabs,

165 and it has instructions. It has a virtual tour. We designated all the historic
166 markers. And we have a survey that anyone can fill out that we will be
167 monitoring.

168

169 The newest component is a public input map, which we're pretty excited about.
170 This is the first time we've used it. Fred, can you bring up the website, please?
171 We finally went live with the website today. So if there are any glitches, please
172 call us and let us know.

173

174 Just real quickly, you can get to this; It's on the Project page of the County's main
175 website. There is something called Projects. If you scroll down, you'll come up to
176 the Route 5 Corridor/Marion Hill Study, and it'll lead you to this website. This will
177 be updated as the process goes on. But where I want to get to just quickly is the
178 Public Engagement Portal. The tab that we just talked about, a little instructions.
179 We'll probably add to these as warranted, but basically you can click on any and
180 it'll bring up a photo of that area along with a description, which you can click
181 down or up. And as mentioned, we have a historic markers tour that's
182 documented, and we recently updated this to be more accurate. The two
183 important tabs are really the survey that you can fill out. And I believe it's about
184 12 questions where you can put in specific comments.

185

186 We're pretty excited about this. The public input map will have instructions.
187 Basically, just quickly there are four tabs that you can toggle. It gives you
188 instructions. This is a layer list where you can pull up the study area boundaries.
189 And each of these has a description. But one part is you can click on the
190 comment. And what we want to learn is opportunities, challenges, strengths,
191 weaknesses, whatever you want to call it. So you can click on one of these and
192 actually go to a part that you're interested specifically on the map. Enter your
193 name, email, and your comment.

194

195 We tested it out today. I'm going to pull that one up because I think we all can
196 agree. "Bike lanes through 7-Eleven parking are unsafe."

197

198 That's it in a nutshell. Just play with it. Please tell your friends about it. We want
199 all the public input we can get, and we think this is a great tool.

200

201 With that, Commission, that concludes my presentation to allow you to open it up
202 to the public, unless you have questions.

203

204 Mr. Leabough - Are there any questions from the Commission for
205 Ms. Moore?

206

207 Mr. Emerson - Would you go over one more time just what the study
208 is not? Because I think there have been some misconceptions in the media, and
209 they didn't speak to Planning staff. But just go over one more time what the study
210 is or the analysis is and what it isn't so people are clear on that.

211
212 Ms. Moore - Route 5 is an interesting animal because it involves
213 other cities and counties, of course; it's 56 miles long. So there could be a
214 component where I know there's a good force out there to make it a scenic
215 byway. It wouldn't be that. So there are a lot of components going on outside the
216 purview of this study.

217
218 I will say we want to make this study successful. We recognize all the studies in
219 the past, for whatever reasons, have not. So we think this is a management start
220 to get the strategies in place. And what may come out of that may be more
221 examination of certain land area studies. This really is the treatment of the
222 corridor itself. Again, it's not transportation.

223
224 People showed up for the zoning update to the Subdivision and Zoning
225 Ordinance, which is a comprehensive update to that, which is a whole different
226 project. Like I said, there are some recommendations that maybe we can use as
227 tools for that, but it's not a zoning change. It's not looking at anything really on
228 Osborne or other areas in Varina as you would with an overarching land use
229 study that may come down the pike.

230
231 Any other distinctions, Mr. Emerson?

232
233 Mr. Emerson - No, I believe you touched on everything. We did have
234 people show up for the Zoning and Subdivision Code update kick-off meeting
235 with comment regarding Route 5. I do think these projects will dovetail together
236 nicely, because I'm hopeful that out of that will come some strategies maybe for
237 some unique incentive-based zoning categories that might provide people
238 opportunities to preserve certain elements along the corridor that people find
239 important and intrinsic to the area without losing development rights and things to
240 their overall property. So I am excited about the opportunity.

241
242 But it isn't a transportation study. This is a VDOT road, and we don't have a lot of
243 control over that. It's not a land use study, as Ms Moore touched on. That very
244 well might be a recommendation that comes out of this analysis that we need to
245 pursue that, but that's not what this analysis is about. This analysis is more about
246 strategies to preserve vistas, viewsheds, and things that people find special
247 about this corridor.

248
249 Ms. Moore - And we have a wealth of knowledge in here, so we're
250 pretty sure this one's going to be successful.

251
252 Mr. Emerson - So we're excited.

253
254 Ms. Moore - Also, just really quick. If you didn't sign in, we left the
255 binder with the sign-in sheet. You can sign in on your way out. Thank you.

256

257 Mr. Leabough - All right. I neglected to mention if everyone could
258 make sure your cell phones are muted or silenced that would be great. And at
259 this point, Mr. Emerson, we're going to open up the floor for folks that have
260 signed up for comment?

261
262 Mr. Emerson - Yes sir, Mr. Chairman, that was the plan. I will note
263 that your regularly scheduled and advertised meeting with your public hearings
264 does begin at seven. So we do have to end this process promptly at 7:00
265 because that's your legally advertised public hearing time frame. With that,
266 Mr. Chairman, I'll let you call the folks up, if you'd like to, that have signed up.

267
268 Mr. Nelson - Can I just ask a question real quick, Mr. Emerson,
269 Mr. Chair?

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271 Mr. Emerson - Yes sir.

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273 Mr. Nelson - Again, this is just a kickoff presentation. We're going
274 to meet again June the 8th. We're going to have a couple more meetings during
275 the summer. So this is not—this is just the first meeting of many.

276
277 Mr. Leabough - Yes.

278
279 Mr. Emerson - That's correct, yes sir it is. And tonight, primarily we
280 were looking—number one, we wanted to inform everybody about these new
281 tools. We're very excited about this website because it's the first time we've
282 developed anything like this in-house. We've had some rudimentary types of
283 websites in the past, but this one, it's just something I've kind of wanted to do for
284 a long time. So we're very excited about that. We feel it takes public participation
285 to another level.

286
287 The Varina Library, which is accessible to everyone in Varina, has a large
288 number of computers available. We will put some hard copies of the document in
289 the Varina Library, but it is available. It's on the website. You can go in and view
290 it, provide your comments, and we will monitor it in that form and fashion.

291
292 We will start out, as Ms. Moore noted, on the eighth with our traditional open
293 house from 4:30 to 7:30, I believe. And that's typical of what we did with the
294 Comp Plan where we'll just be there. We'll have staff there. We'll have our maps.
295 And we'll all be there to answer any types of questions. Then we plan two
296 workshops probably very similar to what we did with the Comp Plan. In Varina,
297 we had one that we felt was very successful at the Henrico Theater. I hope to
298 house that closer to the Route 5 corridor, if we can find accommodations to
299 handle the number of people that I feel will be genuinely interested in this.

300
301 So we have yet to set those dates or choose those venues, but that is
302 forthcoming.

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304 Mr. Leabough - Are there any other questions? If not, Dr. Henry
305 Nelson, if you would, please, approach the podium. Is Dr. Henry Nelson not
306 present?

307
308 Mr. Emerson - Is he not here, Rosemary?

309
310 Ms. Deemer - [Off microphone] He called and put his name down,
311 but I guess he's not arrived yet.

312
313 Mr. Leabough - Okay. Hopefully he'll be here by the time we
314 conclude. So we'll go to the next person on the list. Ms. Ellis, Nicole Anderson-
315 Ellis, if you would approach the podium. I would ask that as you approach the
316 podium you state your name. And also we're going to probably limit folks to about
317 three minutes so that we can make—

318
319 Ms. Anderson-Ellis - [Off microphone] Can you make it 4-1/2? I've been
320 trying to get it to three.

321
322 Mr. Leabough - We'll give you 4-1/2 minutes.

323
324 Ms. Anderson-Ellis - I won't say hello if I only have three. My name is so
325 long. Okay. My name is Nicole Anderson-Ellis, and I am very happy to be here. I
326 think that my blood pressure dropped a lot while Jean was talking. There you are.
327 I think that many of us in this room lived through a massive Route 5 study, and
328 just the words "Route 5 study" create a little anxiety. And there were a lot of
329 questions about what this was. So a lot of those questions have been answered
330 so quickly. I think people thought they knew what the Route 5 Study was
331 because we have some nightmares sometimes about those times.

332
333 My name is Nicole Anderson-Ellis, and I am here tonight speaking as co-chair of
334 the Route 5 Corridor Coalition. The coalition promotes sustainable economic
335 development along Route 5 from Main Street Station in Richmond all the way to
336 Williamsburg. And when we say sustainable economic development, we mean
337 growth that simultaneously does three things: profitability for the landowner; tax
338 revenue for the County; and preserves quality of life for current and future
339 residents of the corridor. And there are lots of models of how to have this kind of
340 growth. You can see examples of it all over. We've been collecting examples for
341 six years.

342
343 One of the ways you can achieve this is by tying growth to tourism. There was a
344 study that came out last month. Virginia Tech put out a study that agritourism is a
345 \$2.2 billion economic engine for Virginia. Agritourism is when families go to visit
346 farms on the weekends or for a week and pretend to farm. Pick your own berries,
347 that kind of thing. We already have a lot of that in the Route 5 corridor, and I can't

348 imagine a better place for people to go. It's a great opportunity for us to tap into
349 that economic growth.

350

351 We have been working with the Virginia Tourism Corporation for years. We've
352 gotten two grants from them so far. The first one branded Route 5 with our Take
353 5 campaign. And we had a print and online ad with that. And the second grant
354 funded our Take 5 Tourism Destination website, which we launched last week.
355 So it's live. Like Jean, I will invite you to find typos and email them to me. We're
356 really excited. It's really an opportunity. The agritourism, the history, obviously,
357 the cycling, the paddling, the beauty. And so we're excited about the study as an
358 opportunity to figure out ways to grow without losing that opportunity.

359

360 And if may speak very, very briefly as a citizen and a resident of corridor, taking
361 off my coalition hat.

362

363 Every spring for the last five years, I have been a guest lecturer at a planning
364 class at VCU. And I've been asked to speak to the citizen's experience in that
365 process. And every class I ask the students a favor. I ask that when they
366 graduate and become planners that they change the process. Because the way it
367 is set up right now, the way we all inherited this process, it creates conflict.

368

369 The citizen, most of us never think about planning at all until the minute
370 something is proposed for near our house that we don't want. And so we walk
371 into this room for the first time, and we're anxious and we're defensive. And we're
372 defensive because we feel that we're defending our house from something that's
373 bad for our family. And we're also defensive because we don't know as much
374 about planning as anyone else in the room. We don't have the vocabulary. We
375 don't have the degrees. We don't know the vernacular. We're probably often the
376 only people in the room who aren't being paid to be there. We've have to pay a
377 sitter and driver across town for it.

378

379 As a result of these things, we often realize that we're the last people invited to
380 the conversation, that we're the people invited at the eleventh hour. So we're at
381 the public hearing, but there have been so many meetings already that if we
382 have an issue or a concern, we sound like the naysayer. And that, I think, results
383 in a stereotype of pitchfork and a torch. And I'd love to change that. And I think
384 that this study is a really great opportunity. So I'm optimistic and hopeful and
385 excited. And I thank you all very, very much.

386

387 [Off microphone] And I have stickers if you don't have one all ready. I can give
388 them to you later...or right now.

389

390 Mr. Nelson - Mr. Chair, can I just take 30 seconds? Again, I want to
391 thank you, Nicole, for all the work you do in Varina and all of you who are here. I
392 want to again say that the staff has had to do what it needs to do to pull together
393 the information that we're going to be using. We've not had meetings. And so I

394 just want to make sure everybody in the room knows that this is going to be a
395 very citizen-engaged process and that again, this is one meeting here, because it
396 has to happen here with the Planning Commission. The rest of the meetings will
397 happen in Varina until we have to come back here to approve something. So
398 that's it. I mean, if it takes a year, it takes a year. If it takes, 10, 15 meetings, it
399 takes 10, 15 meetings. I know staff doesn't want to hear that, but whatever it
400 takes. It's going to be very citizen-engaged. I just want to make sure that I keep
401 on sharing that.

402
403 Mr. Leabough - Thank you, sir. Next we have Leighton Powell signed
404 up to speak. So Leighton, if you would approach the podium.

405
406 Ms. Powell - This is the ad campaign that Nicole was referencing
407 before. My name is Leighton Powell, and I'm the executive director of Scenic
408 Virginia. We're a statewide nonprofit, and we are dedicated to preserving,
409 protecting, and enhancing the scenic beauty of the Commonwealth. So yes, I
410 have the best job in the world.

411
412 I want to commend Henrico County for taking on this study. I think that as a
413 member of the Route 5 Corridor Coalition, I've learned a lot about what's there
414 both in Varina and beyond. It is a treasure-trove of history and culture,
415 recreational experience, and scenic beauty and history.

416
417 I want you to know that Scenic Virginia stands willing to help you in any way we
418 can. I was thrilled to hear the words, "views and viewsheds," because that's what
419 we're about. And we know that it's possible to keep the scenic beauty and have
420 the growth that you need. So, we are here, we want to help you.

421
422 The national scenic byway idea was mentioned. I'll tell you we coordinated a
423 multi-year agency effort to bring the National Scenic Byways Program to Virginia.
424 That happened in 2005. And we got four the first year applied, never been done
425 before. And what we see along this Route 5 corridor is perfection for this
426 program. I actually called Federal Highways a few years ago to ask about the
427 status of the National Scenic Byway Program and was getting information and
428 talking to this guy, the person who's the coordinator there. And he finally said,
429 "Well do you mind telling me what you're thinking about?"

430
431 And I said, "Oh yeah, sorry, sorry. It's the Route 5 corridor between Richmond
432 and Williamsburg." And he nearly fell off his chair he was so excited.

433
434 And he said, "This is a road we have wanted in this program for a long, long
435 time." And so he was acknowledging. He recognizes the beauty. I'm absolutely
436 sure it qualifies. And if anyone's interested in learning more about that, I'd love to
437 tell you about it.

438

439 What's great about a national scenic byway is that the people who are traveling it
440 typically have plenty of time; they've got plenty of money. They're happy to spend
441 it. They want the experience. And they're going to come in, spend the money,
442 and leave. They don't need infrastructure. They don't need schools. They're
443 you're best friend if you are looking for a way to combine the beauty and the
444 growth.

445
446 I think that's all. We are here; we want to help. And really, once again, commend
447 you for doing this. I commend Supervisor Nelson for being a part of this and for
448 listening to the coalition. And just whatever we can do, we're here. Thank you.

449
450 Mr. Leabough - Thank you. All right. Next we have Dorothy Gay who's
451 here to speak.

452
453 Ms. Gay - Good evening. My name is Dorothy Gay. I live on
454 Kingsland Road in Henrico County. My first comment has already been made
455 about having meetings, future meetings at the library.

456
457 My next thing is I'm asking the County that no exceptions be made for the
458 ordinance that controls the signs along Route 5.

459
460 I forgot to mention I'm here with Margo Keeles, who is our director at our church
461 at Laurel Hill, of our weekday school, and we have buses going in and out.

462
463 But it's been talked about how it is a scenic byway. And so many tour buses go
464 up and down, so I'm asking that no signs be made exceptional in size and
465 everything. Go by what the County has ordered for that.

466
467 The bank down there at Strath is a good example of how we're in keeping of the
468 history of that. So we'd like to keep that so when the tour buses go up and down.
469 And it's been brought up that they bring money, the tourists do.

470
471 The other thing that really concerns me that I have tonight is I'm asking that we
472 have guardrail along the corridor opposite Marion Hill as you come up from the
473 railroad tracks after you pass Rocketts Landing. Especially since they cut the
474 trees down and put the trail, it's a straight drop down there. And if it's an icy road,
475 it's very, very dangerous. So I'm asking if we can have a guardrail put there.
476 Thank you.

477
478 Mr. Leabough - Thank you, ma'am. Is there anyone else that did not
479 have the opportunity to sign up to speak that would like to speak tonight? If you
480 would, please come forward. Good evening.

481
482 Mr. Fisher - Mr. Chairman, members of the Board, my name is
483 Frederick Fisher. I'm from Charles City County. I've been involved with Varina
484 and Route 5 all my life, driving up and down. I've been a member of the Varina

485 Beautification Committee for a long time. I'm on the Route 5 Corridor Committee.
486 And I'm also in the Partnership for Smarter Growth.

487
488 I'm delighted with the study that you're undertaking. That was a very good part of
489 the plan that called for this study, and I'm glad you're moving forward with it. I
490 think the idea of considering an overlay district could be very, very helpful to
491 everybody in the corridor. Not only to protect it, but also so the people that want
492 to do things know what is appropriate considered by the County.

493
494 So thank you very much. I'm very pleased with the public process that's going
495 on.

496
497 Mr. Leabough - Thank you, sir.

498
499 Ms. Anderson-Ellis - Good evening. My name is Eugenia Anderson-Ellis.
500 I'm a resident of Church Hill, not of Henrico County. But I can tell you that Church
501 Hillians are very attached to our East End neighbors. We were a member—in
502 fact, the Church Hill Association was a coalition member of the Route 5 Corridor
503 Coalition from the very beginning. It started gathering seven years ago and came
504 together actually six years ago. So, we pay attention.

505
506 And I guess my question—I, like everyone else, am very pleased with what
507 you've said about this study. It sounds as if we're all on the same page. And I'm
508 sure there will be a lot of questions answered along the way.

509
510 The reason I'm here is to mention the fact that anything that has to do with Route
511 5 should be thought of as a regional thing. As has been said many times, it's 56
512 miles. And it certainly impacts the city of Richmond. It goes to Main Street
513 Station. It's right at the base of Libby Hill Park. So any development, anything
514 that happens out there will have an impact. And I'm just wondering if the city of
515 Richmond has a seat at this, whether or not they've been brought in or will be
516 brought in in any way.

517
518 Mr. Nelson - I'll take a shot at that. And Mr. Emerson, you can,
519 from staff's perspective, share what you envision with city involvement.

520
521 A couple of weeks ago, I was in Pittsburgh on a Chamber of Commerce event
522 with close to 200 of our leaders. Councilwoman Newbille, the mayor, the CAO,
523 Ms. Cuffee-Glenn, myself, and the county manager spent a lot of time talking
524 about this study and how Richmond and Henrico will work together as partners in
525 making sure that we are in one accord.

526
527 It started off with a bottleneck conversation.

528
529 Ms. Anderson-Ellis - Exactly.

530

531 Mr. Nelson: And then it went beyond. And so the City definitely will
532 be partners with us in this conversation for sure.

533
534 Ms. Anderson-Ellis - Excellent. Okay. Thank you very much.

535
536 Mr. Gibbons - I'm Dick Gibbons. I'm a licensed landscape architect. I
537 want to thank you for this opportunity to speak and also share. My wife and I
538 have lived—we've had a home on Route 5 for over 50 years. I'm a "come here."
539 My wife's family was here for hundreds of years, and so that's why I could stay in
540 Varina. I walk three paces behind her when we're in Varina. Like the king and the
541 queen.

542
543 But anyway, what I really wanted to say is that over the years I've been
544 involved—for 50 years—in resource, planning, and management. And I have
545 accumulated lots of studies on Route 5, all of which predate the ones that I saw
546 in the slide. I have Stanley Abbott's original byway plan and study, 1974. The
547 State of Virginia had a department or division of community affairs and planning.
548 They did the critical areas report, and only one formal, final, big report was done
549 by that group, and that was done on Route 5. That was about 1970.

550
551 But more important and equally exciting is that we contracted with the University
552 of Virginia's Landscape Architecture Department and Rob McLeod, and they did
553 a landscape plan for Route 5 from the capital in Richmond to the capital down in
554 Williamsburg, which showed specific landscape types of applications and views
555 that needed to be preserved. That was done in 1976, '78 period of time. And I am
556 prepared to make these and other documents available to your group for use in
557 this study. I think they'll be very informative and very useful.

558
559 Basically, I have many articles that have been written over the years and some of
560 the things that we dealt with in the early period of time. And I think the one thing
561 that we all agree on is it's probably important to keep the character and maintain
562 the character of the corridor for economic, social, cultural, and a variety of
563 recreational reasons.

564
565 So anything I can do to help, please feel free to call on me. I'll come to the
566 meetings or you can come see the stuff. But whatever I can do, please let me
567 know.

568
569 Mr. Leabough - Is there anyone else that would like to speak?
570 Mr. Welch.

571
572 Mr. Welch - Good evening, I'm Randy Welch. I'm actually going to
573 speak for Henry Nelson because it's not right to have a meeting that Henry
574 doesn't speak. And what he would say, and what he will say, is that for years
575 there's been a museum/visitor's center requested, desired, at Route 5 and 295.

576

577 In the next couple months—and I think a lot of the audience knows and a lot of
578 people in Henrico know that Malvern Hill will be purchased by the Conservation
579 Land Association, I guess. Mr. Nelson probably knows it. Capital Regional Land
580 Conservancy. And that will be a huge benefit to the Varina area and to the
581 Richmond area in general. Specifically Route 5 because also the James River
582 Association is talking about a kayak and canoe landing there at Turkey Island
583 Creek. We've got a wonderful bike trail.

584
585 So this museum/visitor's center would tie in, and I think now's the proper time to
586 get that up on the table, get something that's got some timelines to it. I think the
587 economic development that's already been spoken about, the number of visitors
588 that come, the number of tour buses that come—Ronnie's sitting back here
589 selling barbecue like crazy. So we can get that in place and I think benefit
590 Henrico and the whole Richmond region to the quality that we really have.

591
592 Mr. Nelson - Dr. Nelson.

593
594 Mr. Emerson - Speaking of Dr. Nelson.

595
596 Mr. Nelson - Come on down. You don't have to give a fast speech,
597 though, he just gave a speech for you, but you come on.

598
599 Mr. Witte - Did you all plan that timing?

600
601 Dr. Nelson - Am I allowed to say amen? I'm Henry Nelson, 3600
602 New Market Road. I've work with several committees throughout the years and
603 am still involved with the Varina Beautification Committee and others.

604
605 What I wanted to do tonight is to share with you some challenges for the Route 5
606 corridor. And I've recently reread Chapters 6 and 7 in the 2026 Plan. And as I
607 see it, the greatest challenge we have is how do we grow without losing what we
608 have. What do we do to instigate a balance?

609
610 I spoke to you earlier when you had the kick-off comments about it. Our
611 community hired two consultants to come to us and give us idea about what can
612 we do to develop our community and at the same time have sustainable value.
613 Ed McMahon, which I mentioned earlier said to us in his view in all the things he
614 worked with one of the most important elements—and I see it mentioned in
615 chapter 6 and again and alluded to in 7—is to have an architectural design in
616 mind that reflects the culture, the history and so on of the community. And since
617 we're the second oldest community, English speaking, in the U. S. of A.—before
618 Williamsburg, before Charles City, before Richmond, Chesterfield and other
619 places we could name without going into all the shires that we've fostered over
620 the years from our embryonic stage of beginning in 1611—we have, we thought,
621 to convey to the mind's eye the fact that we have a longevity in history to give us

622 that destination opportunity for people who would visit and spend money. And
623 they're called tourists.

624

625 We currently have a catalytic agent employed with the bike trail. That's been very
626 helpful. In fact, a *Richmond Times-Dispatch* article—back some time ago now—
627 said that we had along that trail 173,000 users. And that was back last year. So
628 that's quite a few folks coming to spend money, time, and energy in our
629 community, pedaling through, and we don't want to soft pedal that interest; we
630 want to take advantage of it.

631

632 And along that line on Route 5, along with architectural design, we had Randall
633 Arendt come and speak to us about mixed-use growth and how do you grow with
634 density without losing the amenities that give you the lifestyle that you want to
635 enjoy. He suggested clustering the housing around an area and then providing
636 lifestyle amenities like walking trails, recreational opportunities, things that would
637 enhance the quality of life of those who were forced to cluster themselves in a
638 small geographic location.

639

640 So we adopted a thesis: no density without amenities. And we mean that
641 because if somebody's going to give up the opportunity to have an expanse of
642 land or whatever, there should be a way that within the pedestrian location
643 they're able to do by foot something to give them a quality of life that would
644 enhance them in the future. That's why we adopted that. And there are many
645 things that could be incorporated: open space, trees, native plants, trails, passive
646 recreational activities, and so forth.

647

648 So we have a wonderful opportunity. Varina, as has been pointed out many times
649 by my beloved representative, is the largest landmass Henrico County has
650 relative to districts. And yet in many cases comparatively, it has much less
651 development relative to density and other things. So the question lies before us
652 how are we to do this.

653

654 And we're very excited about working with the County in coming up with things. I
655 mentioned something with parallelism that I don't like to mention, but I have to
656 because it's being done in Chesterfield, which grew out of Henrico County in the
657 1740s. We have two corridor areas that we looked at with intense interest in
658 Varina along Route 5. One was Route 10, which gives you along the courthouse
659 corridor architectural amenities to those buildings that reflect a past, a history,
660 and a heritage. Makes it more of a place to come and to see and for tourists to
661 be attracted to.

662

663 One of the things that we found out was if we allow ourselves to develop like
664 Anywhere, USA, we're no longer unique. We don't offer the tourist or the other
665 person anything different than they can get anywhere else. And that's something
666 we need to look for. It doesn't cost any more money to put the architectural
667 interest in place than it does to build something comparatively that has no

668 interest, no draw, and no parallel that would bring somebody to want to call that a
669 destination. So that's one corridor of interest.

670

671 Another one was around Midlothian Village, Sycamore Square and so on. We
672 worked with VCU, and we got a graduate student working on a dissertation to
673 come and study what could be done with the nodule at Route 5 and Strath to
674 develop "a Varina village." That VCU student working on his master's thesis
675 came up with a plan—I think you have it, and if you don't I do—that I could share
676 with you how it was to be done and what we suggested. The end result was it
677 looked very much similar to what Sycamore Square looks like.

678

679 I look at Henrico and say well you shouldn't just be looking in Chesterfield. What
680 have we done in Henrico that reflects what you're trying to project? Two spots
681 come to mind readily, and there may be others. One is Gayton Crossing. Some
682 of you have probably seen that. The other one is River Road Shopping Center.
683 That's a little bit on the high end of things. But none the less, it gives you the
684 ambiance that one, they care about what they're presenting relative to the
685 mercantile profile. Number two, it gives a quality appearance. And number three,
686 it's everlasting.

687

688 One of the things that we find about so-called box stores and franchise stores is
689 they have their own little store they built sometimes, but it's no good for anything
690 else. Once it's used up, it's hard to reclaim it as something else. You don't want
691 to have a boutique in the Taco Bell and say it isn't a Taco Bell because it looks
692 just like a Taco Bell before it wasn't something else.

693

694 So keep all these elements in mind. We'd love to work with you on this. I think it's
695 a wonderful opportunity that we have, many ideas to share. In fact, one thing I
696 heard about that I'm puzzled about, and that's said in chapter 6, that we couldn't
697 really call for a specific architectural—it says state law doesn't permit the County
698 to specifically recommend architectural standards. And yet I see other places
699 doing it, and getting by with it, and influencing it. I'd like to study what they did
700 and find out what we could do. If we can't do that, then I suggest that we could
701 say these are things we like, these we would respond to positively. And I know as
702 a civic group—and we've had the support of our appointed and elected officials in
703 doing this—we have been able to work with development coming to our
704 community. And we've had at least a 96 percent success rate in working with
705 them to design what they wanted to present in a way in which we wanted to see
706 it occur.

707

708 Mr. Leabough -

Dr. Nelson—

709

710 Dr. Nelson -

And I'm finished.

711

712 Mr. Leabough -

—I don't want to interrupt you, but we do have a
713 public hearing, the regular Planning Commission meeting at 7:00.

714

715 Dr. Nelson - Certainly.

716

717 Mr. Leabough - And we actually gave you probably about 10 minutes
718 to speak and we only gave other folks 3 minutes, 4-1/2, something like that.

719

720 Dr. Nelson - All right. Well, I apologize for my exuberance.

721

722 Mr. Leabough - We gave you the benefit of not hearing that up front.
723 But thank you. There's going to be an open house on June 8th. There will be
724 plenty of opportunities for folks to provide feedback. And thank you for what
725 you've shared tonight.

726

727 Dr. Nelson - Thank you very much for the opportunity.

728

729 Mr. Leabough - Your timing was impeccable, by the way. Do we have
730 anyone else?

731

732 Mr. Nelson - I think a young lady in the back. Did you want to
733 speak? Okay.

734

735 Mr. Leabough - We have about 6 to 8 minutes.

736

737 Mr. Nelson - If no one else comes up, I do think, based upon the
738 General Assembly's most recent actions, we cannot really influence—our hands
739 are kind of tied now.

740

741 Mr. Emerson - They are to a certain extent, Mr. Nelson. In a county,
742 you can't have architectural guidelines without having a historic district. In order
743 to establish a historic district, you have to have structures within an area that
744 have the elements of what you're looking for that are of historic value.
745 Unfortunately, there aren't that many buildings left along the Route 5 corridor to I
746 guess hang our hat on, as you would say. And then again with the recent
747 legislation that came through the General Assembly, our ability to influence
748 specifically residential development has been considerably lessened.

749

750 We can put forth some guidelines in a study. We can look at different things that
751 people would like to see. We possibly could look at some incentive-based types
752 of zoning in some sort of regulatory fashion that you still retain your rights under
753 the existing zoning, but if you're willing to do x, y, and z, then you get the benefit
754 of a, b, and c. So there are different ways that you can come at this to encourage
755 people to move in that direction. But you are correct, we are severely limited by
756 the General Assembly in what we can and can't do.

757

758 Mr. Nelson - Thank you, sir. I'm not sure whether or not the
759 Planning Commission itself knows this, but we started this conversation. Most of

760 you all know the frustration that came out of the potential Family Dollar going at
761 the corner of Midview and Route 5. It was shortly thereafter that Mr. Leabough
762 and I met with Mr. Emerson and Mr. Vithoukias and tried to talk about what we
763 can do to get ahead of these types of situations happening again. Ultimately,
764 when persons sell their land, the zoning kind of gives guidelines to what can go
765 there.

766

767 We heard about Broad Street, the overlay district there, the impact that the
768 community could have in developing principles that go into an overlay district.
769 Initially, that's what our thought was, just do an overlay district. And then we
770 talked a little bit more about well let's just look at the whole Route 5 corridor in
771 Henrico. Let's not put any parameters on ourselves. This is how we ended up
772 here with the open conversation that we've not put a time limit on. But instead of
773 just saying we're going to have an overlay district, which may still come out of
774 this, this conversation will give our residents and the citizens in Henrico in
775 general, but Varina District specifically, opportunity to talk about what we want in
776 general.

777

778 So this is why we're here. I want to again say don't be anxious, don't be nervous,
779 afraid. This is going to be a very transparent, open process. And we just want to
780 be proactive instead of being reactive. And the Family Dollar situation caused us
781 to be reactive, and we don't want to be reactive.

782

783 Thank you guys again. June 8th, 4:30. We invite you to one of the eight most
784 beautiful new libraries in the world. No seriously, that's the truth. And Mr. Ronnie,
785 just because I like you so much, I'm going to put a shameless plug out for your
786 barbecue festival. No, seriously. Ronnie's is having a barbecue festival June
787 10th, right?

788

789 Mr. Ronnie - [Off microphone] Right.

790

791 Mr. Nelson - 12 to 7. And it sounds like it's going to be quite an
792 event.

793

794 Mr. Leabough - Is it free barbecue as well? Now that's some good
795 barbecue.

796

797 Mr. Nelson - Is it free barbecue, Mr. Ronnie?

798

799 Mr. Ronnie - [Off microphone] Some of it.

800

801 Mr. Nelson - Okay. All right.

802

803 Mr. Emerson - Mr. Chairman and Mr. Nelson, if I could add on the
804 open house that is from 4:30 to 7:30 on the 8th of June, there's no specific
805 presentation. We'll have staff there. We'll have all our research documents

806 available. So, any time you can come within that time frame. That's the reason
807 for hitting that 4:30 to 7:30 time frame. People are coming, going from work,
808 different things like that. It's an opportunity. You can come by, spend 15 or 20
809 minutes with us, and we can get the conversation started. That's our goal.

810

811 Mr. Nelson - We're going to shoot for a couple bigger conversation
812 workshops during the summer.

813

814 Mr. Emerson - Yes sir, that's correct.

815

816 Mr. Leabough - The website is really neat. I've never seen that done
817 in that way before, so I'm real excited about folks' opportunity to provide
818 feedback via the web. That's pretty cool.

819

820 Mr. Emerson - That was all developed in-house by our Planning
821 systems staff.

822

823 Mr. Leabough - Great.

824

825 Mr. Emerson - So a lot of thanks to Mary Beth Danuser and Parker
826 Bradshaw on that one. They did a great job.

827

828 Mr. Leabough - So the website is off of the Henrico County webpage.
829 So it's www.henrico.us, correct?

830

831 Mr. Emerson - Correct.

832

833 Mr. Leabough - Go to the Projects page and then scroll down to the
834 Route 5/Marion Hill Study link.

835

836 Mr. Emerson - Correct.

837

838 Mr. Leabough - And that'll take you to the four to five different tabs
839 that folks can click on.

840

841 Mr. Emerson - Correct. Do we have a link from our webpage?

842

843 Ms. Danuser - There's also a link from the Planning webpage as
844 well. If you go to henrico.us/planning, you'll find it right there as well.

845

846 Mr. Leabough - So two different places to get to that portal.

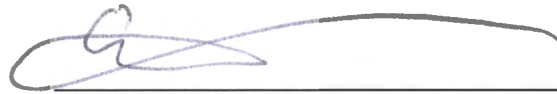
847

848 Mr. Emerson - The simplest way to get there is to go to the Planning
849 website and hit the link. Otherwise, you're jumping through a bunch of other
850 steps. We encourage you to go and take a look. We're proud of that site.

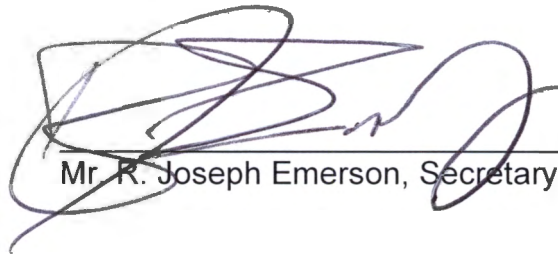
851

852 Mr. Leabough - And also I just would encourage the folks in Varina,
853 let other folks know about the open house. The last thing we want to have
854 happen is the same number of people here be at the open house. We want it to
855 be standing room only. So please share the information, share the website.
856 Okay? Thank you all for being here and taking time out of your schedule.

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Mr. Eric S. Leabough, C.P.C., Chairman



Mr. R. Joseph Emerson, Secretary