

Charlotte County Planning Commission  
Public Hearing & Special Called Meeting  
February 15, 2022  
Charlotte County Administration Office

Present:

Miller Adams	W.V. Nichols
James Benn	Clark Poindexter
Andrew Carwile	Eugene Wells
Cornell Goldman	David Watkins, Jr.
Kenny Howard	Hazel Bowman Smith*
Kerwin Kunath	

Absent:

*\*Board of Supervisors Representative (non-voting)*

Staff in Attendance: Monica Elder, Assistant County Administrator

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Chairman Carwile called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm and David Watkins gave the invocation.

Kenny Howard made the motion to approve the agenda as presented. Kerwin Kunath seconded the motion and the motion carried with all members present voting yes.

***Public Hearing***

Chairman Carwile then recessed the meeting for a public hearing on Love Over Crisis LLC's application requesting a zoning text amendment that would allow emergency housing shelters for the homeless in the County's General Agriculture Zoning District.

Staff provided a report on the application, explaining that, if approved, the amendment would establish the use as a conditional use in the General Agricultural Zoning District; providing an overview of the request; discussing next steps; and reviewing possible actions.

Love Over Crisis Executive Director Shelley Mays-Couch then addressed the Commission, explaining there is currently no emergency housing shelter in Charlotte County or surrounding counties. She noted that her program is for non-violent residents, and all participants will be screened. Ms. Mays-Couch reported that currently motels were the only emergency housing option, and the cost was substantial. She stressed her interest in working with other organizations to serve the homeless community and the need to do the right thing for the entire community.

Love Over Crisis Executive Director's Assistant discussed Love Over Crisis's existing services for the disabled and elderly. She stated services are currently provided for 200 cases in nine counties, including 25 cases in Charlotte County. Primary state programs mentioned included rent relief and housing voucher programs, and she noted evictions are not uncommon due to back rent owed. She also discussed the challenge of relying on hotels for temporary housing, the lack of available hotel rooms at times, and the distance to shelters outside the region.

***Public Hearing Comments***

Shawn Rozier, Vice-President of Housing for STEPS – Mr. Rozier's letter stated STEPS received requests for shelter from homeless individuals, which they referred to Tri-County Community

Action Agency. He noted STEPS worked with Ms. Mays-Couch in her capacity as administrator for LOC Family Services and found that organization be an excellent resource. He also noted the need for additional homeless services in rural Virginia to provide shelter and deliver support services.

Paul and Joanna Baker, Co-Presidents of FACES Food Pantry – The Bakers wrote in support of the amendment, stating that Love Over Crisis could access and create services to help end chronic homelessness. They stated that FACES would support Love Over Crisis’s work by providing food and drink to assist program participants when able to do so.

Petrina Carter, President of Tri-County Community Action – Ms. Carter wrote in support of the amendment, stating Tri-County was the lead for Continuum of Care which included homeless services, for Charlotte County. Ms. Carter noted the challenges of finding adequate affordable housing, issues with overcrowded homes, and the cost of housing homeless individuals in hotels.

Jill Ahmad with Piedmont Alliance for the Prevention of Substance Abuse Coalition – Ms. Ahmad wrote in support of the amendment, stating lack of support for the homeless may be one of the reasons for increases in substance misuse and need for mental health services in rural Virginia. She also stated Love Over Crisis will be able to network with other agencies, non-profits, and faith-based entities to address homelessness.

Citizen Terry Ramsey – Mr. Ramsey wrote recommending denial of the amendment, questioning the need for shelters; stating other organizations served the homeless, the County did not have support systems or financial means to serve homeless individuals from outside the county, and it was unknown if the use might encourage for-profits to bring homeless individuals to the county; and expressing concerns about impacts to towns and residential uses.

Citizen Angela Cook of Charlotte Court House addressed the Commission, stating her support of the amendment. Ms. Cook stated that there was a lack of rental properties in the county, some individuals were having to live in hotels, and housing issues were escalating. She stressed the need for shelter options for the homeless and the importance of addressing the needs of all citizens.

Matthew Homan, Pastor of Eureka Baptist Church then spoke, indicating he was addressing the Commissioners as an individual rather than representing his congregation. He expressed support of Ms. Mays-Couch work. He discussed the importance of being charitable while empowering those in need. He expressed his support of the amendment, stating that Ms. Mays-Couch’s proposed shelter would offer an opportunity for the homeless.

There being no additional public comment, the hearing was adjourned.

### ***Zoning Amendment Discussion and Action***

Chairman Carwile called the meeting back to order.

Commissioner Wells inquired about security at the facility Love Over Crisis would be proposing. Ms. Mays-Couch indicated an ADT camera system and an alarm system that would let staff know if anyone was leaving after hours would be installed. Emergency calls would be directed to 911 and she or staff could respond in person if needed.

Commissioner Wells inquired about the localities the proposed Love Over Crisis shelter would serve. Ms. Mays-Couch indicated the service area would be Planning District 14, which includes Charlotte, Prince Edward, Cumberland, Buckingham, Lunenburg, and Amelia. In response to inquiries regarding other shelters, Ms. Mays-Couch reported there were currently no other shelters in Planning District 14.

Commissioners inquired about employment and work transportation for shelter residents. Ms. Mays-Couch indicated she would be using the local workforce center and networking with faith organization leaders and other individuals for transportation services.

In response to questions regarding why another locality with more resources was not chosen, Ms. Mays-Couch referenced opportunities provided to her as a result of her residence at the Patrick Henry Girls Home in Charlotte County when she was in high-school.

Commissioners addressed Ms. Mays-Couch regarding placement of shelters in the agricultural district rather than in towns with better access to services. Ms. Mays-Couch noted the importance of separation from residential properties.

In response to further inquiries from staffing and transportation, Ms. Mays-Couch explained that the shelter would be staffed on weekdays and transportation resources included Crossroads for case management, Medicaid for medical transport, and the FAB bus for senior citizens.

Commissioners discussed local service impacts for the Charlotte County Sheriff's Department and Department of Social Services. Ms. Mays-Couch stated the Sheriff had expressed concerns that the program would make more work for the department, but had confirmed there were no issues associated with the pilot program. She also noted that Social Services Director Sara Goff had expressed concerns regarding the likely increase in her department's workload and the limited resources to address the needs of the homeless.

Eugene Wells made the motion to recommend approval of the zoning text amendment as presented for emergency housing shelters, since current housing options in Charlotte County for the homeless are insufficient and need to be expanded to include local shelters. Jim Benn seconded the motion.

Commissioners further discussed law enforcement impacts, the need for action, and potential use of facility by those outside of Charlotte County with additional input from Ms. Mays-Couch. They then discussed the draft zoning regulations with staff explaining that further requirements could be included in the conditions for a specific project.

Roll call vote was as follows: Eugene Wells, Aye; Jim Benn, Aye; W.V. Nichols, No; Clark Poindexter, Aye; Kerwin Kunath, No; Kenny Howard, No; Miller Adams, Aye; David Watkins Jr., Aye; and Andrew Carwile, Aye; with Cornell Goldman abstaining. Motion carried.

David Watkins made the motion to adjourn the meeting, Kenny Howard seconded the motion and the motion carried.