

Presentation to the Hampshire County Planning Commission on Suggested Additions to the Draft Comprehensive Plan dated March 2018

by Charles Hall, September 19, 2018 in the County Courtroom

Correction: page 6 and page 59: the highest point in Hampshire County: Nathaniel or S. B. Mountain?

Review of statistics in opening section of the Draft Plan:

1. Expected decline in the population over the next ten years. (p. 13)
2. An owner occupied housing rate over 20 percentage points below the state average speaks to a lower income, less stable, less connected population segment and less stable tax base. (pp. 14-15)
3. About 9% of the population has advanced degree above high school; Education attainment levels below surrounding counties and Hampshire's graduation rate lags behind the state rate by almost 20 percentage points. (pp. 18-21)
4. Employment establishments declining (pp. 21-22, 25)
5. Household income seriously declining and poverty rate above surrounding counties and above the state rate (pp. 26-27)
6. More highway fatalities per 100,000 in population than the state average or national average. (p. 39)

This disturbing analysis is followed by the Vision Statement:

Hampshire County is a place where the rural lifestyle and **characteristics of a rural locale is preserved** – Country Living by Choice. **Future growth and development is directed to existing communities served by adequate infrastructure systems.** The result of this “protect and promote” approach is a **diversified regional economy** for a **thriving population** that enjoys a high quality of life within a **sustainable environment** for current and future residents. (page 29)

There seem to be several problems here:

1. Growth is directed to **communities which grew without planning.** Such emphasis on developing along our major corridors will simply make Hampshire County another long strip community squeezing and slowing traffic without arrangements for adequate movement, parking or extension of infrastructure to less congested areas with space for better planned communities and facilities.
2. The idea that our communities are served by **adequate infrastructure** does not seem to me to align with public sentiment.
3. The statistics give no indication that a county lacking in so many quality of life criteria can develop a **diversified regional economy.**
4. The statistics point toward something far from a **thriving population.**
5. The Plan does not include any new suggestion for **sustaining the environment** which must include our Dark Night Sky and our quiet countryside.

Land Use - To Protect and Better Utilize Our Environment

1. Develop regulations to protect our Dark Night Sky by setting standards for outside lighting including advertising lighting as well as residential outside lights which will specify horizontal shields and proximity switches or timers to limit wasted light polluting the sky and our neighbors peace and health as well as the health of our wildlife. (add p. 35)

You have been given a packet of information on measures to take to preserve the Dark Night Sky.

2. Implement a noise ordinance to maintain the quiet rural quality of life which so many of us treasure. (add p. 35)

3. Coordinate with the West Virginia DNR for the use of Wildlife Management Areas by summer tourists. (add p. 35 and/or p. 56)

Transportation

Maintain/keep open old roadways which are sometimes blocked off by adjacent landowners when the road becomes rarely used. (add p. 41)

To Advance Economic Development

The areas which I would suggest have the greatest possibility for advancing economic development in the county include:

Tourism - heritage tourism, recreational tourism (which includes nature tourism) and **cultural tourism** which includes music, arts and crafts. Pages 54-55 of the Draft Plan outline some of the benefits of this light industry. One benefit not mentioned, but of great importance, is the fact that **tourism does not rely on advanced education on the part of those supporting it**. It is a far better fit to our situation than the fantasy of "Attract[ing] and retain[ing] sustainable, well-paying jobs to Hampshire that capitalize on the **highly educated workforce** and outstanding quality of life afforded by the area." (page 54)

To support the encouragement of Tourism there should be a more in-depth analysis of the **amenities needed to support tourism** and a plan to encourage these amenities. (pp. 55-56) Such study should include answering questions such as where can a tour bus of 60 passengers find adequate restroom facilities in Hampshire County or where can it easily feed such a crowd?

Emphasize **farming** as an industry that should be encouraged/expanded

According to <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/hampshire-county-wv/> Hampshire County has an unusually high number of residents working in Farming, Fishing, & Forestry; however they were among the lowest paid residents in the county. We need to encourage "Farm to Table" and truck farming/farm stand selling to the nearby metropolitan areas. We also need to develop "value added" facilities or consolidating arrangements

in this county to maximize our farm profits.

Whether it is farming, tourism or any other industry, **Hampshire County can not get rich selling to itself.** We must reach out to broader markets which can bring revenue into our county. That is how a community grows. There must be greater emphasis in this Plan on this foundational principle.

Funding for Development

The placing of "use existing revenue streams" at the top of the Fiscal Considerations list on page 58 and other sections does not highlight the importance of increasing funding for economic development projects. **The foundation of capitalism is that one must spend money to make money.** It is by increasing investment that one increases opportunities for economic growth.

To Protect Public Health and Safety - Opioid Epidemic

Another area which we need to give special time and effort to is our Opioid Epidemic which I believe is directly related to our poor education system and our underdeveloped economy which cannot offer the younger generation adequate jobs to support family life. We are killing off a segment of our population which is important to our development and well being. We are destroying many families by our failure to attack this problem with every opportunity we have. It is a complex and far reaching problem that calls for the commitment of serious resources across a broad spectrum - a "comprehensive solution." It must be addressed in this Comprehensive Plan.

Final Recommendation

The Draft Plan has several important recommendations concerning gathering community organizations to work together on solutions to our problems. However, I feel that more emphasis should be placed on cooperatively implementing comprehensive plans to solve our many problems.

The Plan does mention several times the need for coordinated working relationships:

County Transportation Committee and DOH to advocate for the implementation of the road and safety improvements p. 41

cooperative efforts among county government, the Board of Education, community organizations, residents, and businesses p. 54

Foster county and business community cooperation in promoting economic development, community attractiveness, etc more p. 56

The problems facing Hampshire County at this time are very serious and will strangle us if we do not recognize them and determine to overcome them. Our downward drift can only lead to further poverty and desperation. Now is the time for a comprehensive approach to complex-interconnected problems. This County Comprehensive Plan can not be just another

bureaucratic exercise. It must be a clear call to our citizens to face a very pessimistic future and to reverse our downward spiral.

The most often cited problem raised at the November, 2016 initial meeting which was held at the Bottling Works on redrafting the Plan was that **"no one ever paid attention to the Plan."** I suggest that the final - and perhaps most important - addition to this draft plan is the **requirement that either the Planning Commission or the County Commission must hold a broadly publicized meeting every two years with the sole purpose of reviewing adaptation of the plan and fine tuning our movement toward bring prosperity to our county.**

Attached:

Appendix A Suggested Stakeholder Contact list

Appendix B Public Notice samples/prices

See also packet of material on Saving the Dark Night Sky which includes the web link to a model ordinance for outdoor lighting.

Suggested

Departments, Offices, Organizations to be invited to submit suggestions
to the Hampshire County Draft Comprehensive Plan

These entities should be contacted directly by mail or email and asked to respond.

Hampshire County:

- Clerk of the County Commission
- Development Authority
- Parks and Recreation
- Convention and Visitors Bureau
- County Health Department
- Sheriff's Office
- Board of Education
- Office of Emergency Management

Town of Romney

Town of Capon Bridge

Hampshire County Chamber of Commerce

Hampshire County Arts Council

Region 8 Planning and Development Council, Petersburg, WV; (Region 9)

Region VII Workforce Development Board

Valley Health/Hampshire Memorial Hospital

Local Ministerial Associations

Historic Site Organizations:

- Fort Edwards Foundation

- Fort Mill Ridge Foundation

Web links for Information on Saving our Dark Night Sky

International Dark-Sky Association: <http://darksky.org>

Friendly Lighting page: <http://darksky.org/resources/ida-publications/>

Dark Sky Friendly Lighting Products: <http://darksky.org/fsa/fsa-products/>

Lighting Ordinance Information: <http://darksky.org/lighting/lighting-ordinances/>

Model Lighting Ordinance: <http://darksky.org/our-work/public-policy/mlo/>

NASA Blue Marble Navigator | www.blue-marble.de Satellite maps of Earth showing how bad light pollution is where you live and around the world.

Public Hearing Notice

In compliance with the Code of West Virginia there will be a Public Hearing to consider Amendments to the Hampshire County Floodplain Ordinance, Telecommunication Ordinance & Comprehensive Plan on September 19, 2018 in the 2nd Floor Courtroom of the Hampshire County Courthouse at 7:00 p.m. All interested citizens are invited to attend. Questions prior to the meeting may be directed to the Hampshire County Planning Office at 304-822-7018 or P.O. Box 883, Romney, WV 26757.

9-20-1c

Cost: \$14.04 – 1 publication

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Cost: \$17.16 – 1 publication

Certificate of publication is additional.

Appendix B

Cost comparison of various public notice formats in the Hampshire Review

CCHall 9/19/18