Introduction

Planning is an activity that involves considering where you are today, deciding where you would like to be in the future, and then determining how you are going to get there. Individuals and groups engage in planning on a daily basis and on many different levels: people plan for their retirement and for sending their children to college, etc.; groups may plan for the future of their organization. Planning on the community level is no different—it is simply done on a much broader scale, taking into consideration the needs and desires of an entire community as opposed to a few individuals.

Figure 1. Members of Council, town merchants and residents discuss goals for business development at one of three comprehensive plan community meetings held in the fall of 2011.

The Comprehensive Plan

The process of community-wide planning is captured in a comprehensive plan, a publicly generated document that describes the current characteristics of a community, outlines the future that the community envisions for itself, and then lists the steps as to how that future will be achieved. A comprehensive plan provides guidance for decisions in the community that involve where growth should occur, how land should be used, what services are needed, and how funds should be spent to provide those services or make identified improvements for the community. Additionally, the comprehensive plan provides the legal basis for decisions made regarding land use (e.g., through the zoning ordinance or subdivision ordinance) and provides support for grant applications a locality may submit to obtain funding for public improvements.

Generally speaking, a comprehensive plan includes the following:

- Vision statement – how the community envisions its future.
- Demographic profile – the makeup of the community today and what it is projected to be like in the future.
- Goals, objectives and strategies – the steps to be taken to achieve the community's vision.
- Special topic planning – transportation, historic overlay district, streetscape planning, capital improvements planning and other special area plans.

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- Comprehensive Plan Task List – a listing of the specific projects that need to be undertaken to achieve the plan goals and objectives and states when projects will be pursued, who will pursue them, and how they will be funded.

The Code of Virginia requires localities to develop a comprehensive plan and to review it every five years. For Gordonsville, the first comprehensive plan was adopted in 1979, and the last plan update occurred in 2000. Typically, the time frame for a comprehensive plan spans 15-20 years; the Gordonsville plan has a 20-year planning horizon, an appropriate length of time for looking ahead to the future of the town. Consistent with the plan development process outlined in the Virginia Code, this update of the Town's plan was prepared by the Town Planning Commission, with input from the community, and then adopted by Town Council on _____.

The 2015 Plan Update

Figure 2. Members of the Town Planning Commission review draft comprehensive plan sections (staff photo, 2012).

The 2015 update of the Gordonsville Comprehensive Plan began in earnest in the fall of 2011 when a town-wide community survey was sent out to all water customers. The survey enabled citizens to inform local officials of their views regarding the Town as it is today and should be in the future. In addition, citizens, business owners and local officials came together during a series of community meetings in the fall of 2011 to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the future of the town. They then listed various goals and tasks for managing the identified issues in order to provide guidance to Town Council as they make decisions regarding the future of the town. A report that summarizes the responses to the community survey and a compilation of community meeting comments are provided as appendices to this plan.

The Virginia Code states that land use, public services and facilities, housing, the environment and transportation must all be addressed in a local comprehensive plan. These items are minimal requirements; localities may include in their plans other issues that are unique or significant to the development of their communities. The Gordonsville Comprehensive Plan addresses these items and more over the course of six plan components. The first is an Executive Summary that gives an overview of the plan's major points and themes. The Town's vision statement and supporting community goals are found in "Community Vision and Goals", followed by an overview of information about the town, its people, neighborhoods, and its place within the Piedmont region in "Gordonsville at a Glance".

The goals, objectives and tasks for achieving the vision of the Town form the heart of the comprehensive plan and are found in "Comprehensive Plan Focus Areas". This section includes an analysis of current trends, existing conditions and issues, and then provides a corresponding listing of goals, objectives and tasks related to the various needs, issues and desires identified during the plan update process. The goal sections that make up this section cover a broad

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spectrum of issues important to the town and include Beautification and Community Design, Boundary Adjustment, Economic Development, Environment, Healthy Living, History and Culture, Housing, Land Use and Development, Public Services and Infrastructure, Recreation and Open Space, and Transportation. At the end of the plan is a "Goal Achievement Task List" that provides a listing of all the tasks outlined in the plan that will help the Town to achieve its goals as well as a suggested time frame in which each task will be implemented. This particular section is vital to the success of the plan in that it will enable the Town to develop and maintain a work program of varying projects for plan implementation.

Several documents are attached to the plan as appendices in order to provide supporting documentation for the plan. These include a compilation of community meeting input, the community survey report, the Historic District Property Inventory, the Gordonsville Intersections Improvement Plan (High Street), the Gordonsville Bypass Plan, the Gordonsville Airport Layout Plan, and the 2035 Regional Long Range Transportation Plan.

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