

Residents jam Moyock planning session

By Cindy Beamon
The Daily Advance
Wednesday, September 26, 2012

CURRITUCK — There's apparently a lot of interest in Moyock about Currituck's future plans for what many consider the county's fastest-growing area.

About 100 residents crammed into a meeting room at the Moyock library, a number that surprised the county's planning staff. Usually about a fourth of that number attend the county-hosted planning sessions, said Planning Director Ben Woody.

The crowd was one of the biggest Woody has seen in 15 years of planning meetings, he said.

County commissioners called for the staff to develop a Small Area Plan for Moyock after residents met earlier this year to discuss possibly turning the unincorporated community into a town. Leaders of the group said Moyock's needs were being overlooked by county officials.

At Monday's meeting, county planners outlined the eight-month process for forming a plan for Moyock's future growth. Participants filled out a survey and some signed up to become members of a "stakeholder committee" that will help develop the plan.

Woody said there's no question a plan is needed. Moyock's population has more than doubled since 1990, he said.

Monday's meeting was just the start of the Small Area Plan, said Planner Holly White. The first step will be compiling survey results. After that, planning staff will call for another community meeting to discuss the outcome with participants.

The four-question survey asked what residents liked and didn't like about living in Moyock and what was most needed to make the area better.

A few sparks flew Monday after one resident said he had expected to be given a chance to speak at Monday's meeting. He complained "there's not a lot of dialogue between local government and the community."

The complaint drew a sharp response from Moyock resident and former Clerk of Court Sheila Romm Tyler, who asked why the man had moved to Moyock in the first place.

At that point, Commissioner Marion Gilbert broke in with a plea for residents to be patient.

"We have a lot of strong personalities here and I am grateful that we have a lot of passionate folks here," Gilbert said.

She said the planning staff needed time to prepare before gathering comments.

“We do want to hear what you have to say,” said White, adding that the Small Area Plan will be created using residents’ feedback.

After the meeting, White said the survey results will help planning staff ask residents specific questions at the next meeting.

“I think once people start sharing the issues, they will find that they have more in common than they realize,” said White.

After the meeting, residents voiced different reasons for coming to the meeting.

Launch Landing resident April Baer said she was not surprised by Monday’s turnout.

“There’s so much that’s happened lately in Moyock,” said Baer.

She said the recent appearance of eight Internet sweepstakes cafes just a few miles from the state line is one of her concerns.

Baer was also among residents concerned about the county’s plan for schools.

Overcrowding in schools was a concern for Sherri Regan-Smith. She said she also wanted to protect the county’s rural atmosphere.

“I like having a chicken coop and a garden,” said Regan-Smith.

Several residents — including longtime residents and newcomers alike — said they wanted to protect Moyock’s rural character while allowing some commercial and residential growth.

Tyler, whose family has lived in Currituck for 150 years, said she was interested in finding out what direction Moyock would take next. She said she’s in favor of “keeping growth at a respectable level.”

Marsha Stonecypher, another longtime resident, said she, too, wants Moyock to retain its rural character and sense of community while allowing for managed growth. Stonecypher said she’s glad for the growth in her lifetime, which has meant stoplights and not having to drive 30 minutes to a grocery store.

“My concern is for young people getting out of high school and college and finding work here and a place to live,” she said.

Other residents who have moved to Moyock from elsewhere were also concerned about preserving the small-town atmosphere.

“We really don’t want it to become another Virginia Beach,” said Bruce Harding, who said Moyock is a nice place to raise kids.

P.J. McMenamain moved from Virginia Beach to Moyock three years ago and says she liked getting away from higher taxes and the fast-paced urban setting.

Others were just curious about what's ahead for Moyock.

"I just wanted to see what was going on," said Patrick Cooper, who also attended the meeting about incorporating Moyock.