

Moyock wants more amenities, but at what cost?

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MOYOCK — A recent survey indicates Moyock residents want more recreation, shops and walking paths linking destinations, but at what price?

That's the question an advisory panel overseeing a small area plan for Moyock has been considering.

Adding amenities like recreation are likely to compete with two qualities residents like about Moyock — low taxes and the area's rural atmosphere. A few Currituck County officials told members of the stakeholders committee Monday that compromises will be ahead.

"Anything we fix is going to affect (taxes)," said chairman Fred Whiteman.

What members of the 14-member board will have to decide is what trade-offs they are willing to make, said Senior Planner Holly White. The committee is helping form a 10-year plan Currituck County will use to guide growth in Moyock. At the end of a year-long process with community meetings and residents' input, Currituck commissioners are expected to consider adopting the small area plan as county policy.

Economic Development Director Peter Bishop said the panel needs to consider how rural Moyock should remain. He pointed to population figures indicating Moyock grew faster from 2000 to 2012 than it has in all the 50 previous years combined.

"At what point are we still rural based on past development patterns?" asked Bishop.

Some advisory board members said Moyock needs more development, including multi-family housing, to attract businesses Moyock residents want.

Brian Innes said the area needs more affordable housing for workers that new businesses would hire. Employees working for \$8 to \$10 an hour cannot afford to pay \$4 a gallon for gas to commute from affordable housing in Elizabeth City and Great Bridge, he said.

"People have to be able to live here," said Innes.

Bishop said businesses and industry usually look at what housing is available for their employees before deciding on a new location.

"You need a lot more density to get the type of business diversity that people are talking about," said Bishop.

Another trade-off with the rural setting may be finding suitable locations for industry to locate in Moyock, said Bishop. If Moyock wants to offer jobs so that fewer residents commute to Virginia for work, the area needs a location that allows heavy or light manufacturing uses, said Bishop.

Finding the right location will not be easy in Moyock, some board members said.

“An industrial site doesn’t have to be where everybody can see it,” added board member Eldon Miller.

Another trade-off Moyock residents will have to consider is how much they want to pay for additional services.

Mike Doxey, district technician for Soil and Water Conservation, said solving drainage issues in Moyock could add to residents’ costs.

Committee members compiled a list of flood-prone areas. Yards in the south section of Eagle Creek next to Ranchland flood up to 12 inches in not-so-unusual rains, said Whiteman. Other areas mentioned included the Food Lion parking lot, sharp turns in Tulls Creek Road, sections of Newtown Road, Wildwood and Beechwood Shores.

Doxey said upkeep of drainage ditches is not a county responsibility and oftentimes property owner associations and the state are reluctant to assume the duty. The three tax districts in Moyock were formed with residents’ blessing to help solve drainage issues, he said. Residents pay an extra 1 cent to 2 cents on their tax rate for the service. If Moyock residents decide they need more ditches cleared, more stormwater districts will have to be created or a single stormwater district covering all of Moyock could be created, he said.

Emergency Medical Services Chief Rob Glover said Moyock’s growth pattern in the past decade has posed difficulties for firefighters and rescue workers.

“It’s a very busy district,” said Glover.

The spread of housing across Moyock makes it difficult at times for the existing volunteer fire station to meet its goal of a nine-minute response time, Glover said. Fixing the problem — which could mean eventually adding another station — would be costly, he said.

Adding more recreational programs in Moyock will also have a price tag, said Parks and Recreation Director Jason Weeks.

Weeks acknowledged the northern end of the county needs more recreational facilities. A new community park is on the county’s comprehensive recreation plan, but construction is not scheduled until 2017, he said.

Adding to the cost of the project will be finding desirable property. The county owns some land, but the locations lack water access and shade, two big draws at a park, Weeks said. Committee member Vic Ramsey said the location will be important.

“The first step in the park process is finding a site you really want to use,” said Ramsey.

Weeks said Currituck’s 13-year-old Parks and Recreation Department, relatively new in comparison to other departments in the area, will need more money to run its programs in future years. The

department has been focused on building new facilities, but eventually upkeep will become a bigger part of the budget, he said.

Moyock Community Park alone will cost \$17,000 a year to maintain, said Weeks.

One committee member wanted to know why Moyock would have to wait until 2017 for construction of the new park to begin.

Weeks said construction funds will be needed over the next few years to cover the community park in Maple's \$5 million cost.