

**Freeman Funk: Third City Manager of Fredericksburg (Part II) --**  
3/27/2006

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(Tape 2, Side A, May 14, 1999)

Interviewer: We're going to talk about the "master plan." Mr. Funk mentioned the master plan and the need for it in one of his early city manager statements. Tell me about a master plan. Where did the idea for a master plan come from?

Freeman Funk: Well, a city is not much different from other corporations; it is a municipal corporation, in fact. Nearly every company has a master plan. A lot of that is obvious these days when so many mergers and conversions and corporate shenanigans are going on, that this all comes about from a plan that has some objective in mind. In a city, you know the city is likely to grow in area and population, needs will change, but mainly they will expand. Sometimes you have new needs in a city, but it's simply a matter of putting on paper, generally, the thought processes you go through in trying to predict the future of a city. In the case of the city, the city was so different then from now, we didn't have a city planner. We also didn't have a finance director...

Interviewer: You had about five people?

Freeman Funk: Very, very small. Very small staff. So the city manager had to do a lot of things himself. And I'll tell you about the budget preparation and the budget. So the planning process is one of prognostication and selling; You've got to sell the City Council on it or you haven't got any plan. And that's not too hard a thing to do. City councils are a reasonable body of people who have no axes to grind, no personal agendas and certainly no profit motive of their own. I never experienced conflict of interest in the council. If it ever showed up, they'd excuse themselves from voting. So it's a true process, without doubt. And then you take every thing that you can imagine ought to be in the plan. It's somewhat of a financial plan. Without that, and that's the thing that struck me as I developed the first "master plan" the city ever had, and I said it's a master financial plan because without the money you can dream all you want to...

Interviewer: That's right. You can't do it.

Freeman Funk: ... but if you don't have the practical possibility to fund these things they don't exist. Thirty years after I developed that plan I reviewed it with the newspaper and nearly every element of it had come true.

Interviewer: It had worked.

Freeman Funk: At the time some of them seemed pretty far out. But I developed six or eight categories and did what thought process I could and put it down on paper about what this is about and why we are likely to need it. And another related chapter of finances: Where will the money come from to do these things? Ed Watson [CEO of the present Fredericksburg Area Museum in which Funk worked when it was City Hall] gets amused when I tell him how I developed the plan physically. I went up into a study, I called it, in City Hall. It's an unfinished room that was adequate for my purpose and certainly was a good hiding place. There was an old wooden door up there on a closet and I put nails across there, little headed nails, and I made up little tickets with a hole punched in the end, and this is a school ticket-- and this is something else and something else. With an estimated cost ...

Interviewer: How far down the road did you go? Did you project?

Freeman Funk: ... thirty. Thirty years. As I recall. Perhaps twenty. But I had a one, five, and twenty. The one, of course, became the budget first capital budget that we had.

Interviewer: For the first year.

Freeman Funk: And five was ... it was originally thought that people couldn't look... Beyond five. I think I was out there by myself on the twenty.

Interviewer: I expect.

Freeman Funk: And so I would take these things and hang them up on the right nails under years and shift them around until the total matched the money that I thought would be available.

Interviewer: Didn't you have to project ... find a place to get more money?

Freeman Funk: Well, there's hardly anywhere to get more money. You have to project...

Interviewer: ... What you've got?

Freeman Funk: ... [what] you thought will be coming in, with inflation factored into it.

Interviewer: But you had industrial development as one of your elements in one of the programs I looked at.

Freeman Funk: Yes.

Interviewer: So you must have been thinking about bringing in...

Freeman Funk: Well, you always thinking industrial development because that's a nice thing ... it helps to build.... it truly doesn't bring in a whole lot of money into a city. People think it does. It brings employment, it's good for the health of the city, but it doesn't do much for local government.

Interviewer: For your tax base.

Freeman Funk: That's right. They pay their real estate tax and that's all.

Interviewer: And they may take off some.

Freeman Funk: Yes. But I'm not anti industrial development but it's not the panacea that people think it is. This idea of the nails in developing the "master plan" came from the work of my father. He was chief clerk of the Norfolk and Western Railway. And the keeper of the cars, the conductor, would make a long list of everything on his train with each car on a line and that would be turned in and go to his office and they'd cut the strips out and hang them up and find out where this car is today...

Interviewer: The box cars?

Freeman Funk: Yes. Where is it going the next time.

Interviewer: And this worked?

Freeman Funk: It was easily computer adaptable, except that they didn't have computers!

Interviewer: I know. You didn't need it as long as you had that door. What was your ... what was the one you thought would give you the most trouble? I suppose it was water.

Freeman Funk: Well, water was a constant thing because it was kind of like a river draining itself. You get started and can't stop. Some of the municipal services are that way, police and fire. Once you create your fire department you've got to have it operating every minute from there on ... you can't stop for anything. The water production, you've got to produce it, day in and day out. No stopping. And it's a little nerve racking when you think of all the things that can go wrong. And that's the reason a filter plant, by the way, is built in sections. You have down there now eight filters, not just one big filter. Because you've got to take the filter down and ... go inside and clean and rebuild the inside. So it's built that way on purpose. And so that fear is taken out but you do have to budget the money....

Interviewer: ... to do that.

Interviewer: We're talking about a financial master plan, but then you had some other master plan...

Freeman Funk: Headings?

Interviewer: Yes. I'm thinking about the zoning and subdivision regulations.

Interviewer: They wouldn't be so serious in the city, would they?

Freeman Funk: ... That doesn't fit into a financial plan.

Interviewer: That's more of an over-all master plan.

Freeman Funk: But I had transportation and markets, street development, major street plans. All of the utilities. Wastewater treatment of course was one of the big things.

Interviewer: Oh, yes that would be very expensive. Well, tell me about ... talk about the streets though. What did that mean, "Street Plan"?

Freeman Funk: Well...

Interviewer: We had streets, didn't we?

Freeman Funk: Yes, but what is the projected volume of traffic on a street? And is it large enough to handle that traffic? If not, what can you do about it? A month ago, I had in my car something I came across, out of my desk somewhere, there was a city map, about this size, and on it for 1959 I put "major street plan." And it was just a red pencil with dash lines and it was so laughable that I took it down to Jervis Hairston, the city planner, and I said, "I want you to see this." And he marveled at it. He said "Oh, look, you had this east-west connector. This is..." He was just overcome that in 1959...

Interviewer: That you could look at it and see that.

Freeman Funk: You know he was born until ten or twenty years later or something. Twenty maybe. Almost. But these things are not impossible to do, but you have to be around awhile to think about it--to come up with some reasonable....

Interviewer: Did "street plan" also mean like sidewalks? Making sidewalks and paving sidewalks?

Freeman Funk: No, That's just annual capital (maintenance). Maintenance comes like they're doing this neighborhood right now. Taking up a block because a tree lifted it, and replacing it.

Interviewer: What about parks? That was one of your...

Freeman Funk: We had very few things to call "parks." Kenmore Park existed. And Pratt Park did not. We don't have a whole lot of parks right now. But over a period of time certain plots of land have been set aside and named public use for that purpose, so it's a matter of availability of land, reasonable. You're not going to go and tear down a major building and say "We need a park there," so that's where it will be.

Interviewer: That's fair.

Freeman Funk: We just put them where you can. And Maury Stadium has been there a long, long time, too.

Interviewer: Yes, it has. Let's shift gears just a minute and go back to zoning, Did the city have no zoning at all when you came here?

Freeman Funk: It had some zoning.

Interviewer: Had some zoning?

Freeman Funk: Yes. Yes.

Interviewer: But downtown? The historic area? The preservation of the historic area, that came pretty soon after you were here.

Freeman Funk: Soon after. Yes. But HFFI didn't exist. And some ideas of preservation were in the minds of some people, but they were a long time coming to have an architectural review board, for instance. And...

Interviewer: Was it considered constitutional to do zoning? Was it considered....

Freeman Funk: Oh, yes, yes. The authority came to the city from the General Assembly, as everything the city does comes from the General Assembly. And it was there. We had pyramid zoning....

Interviewer: I'm not sure I know what pyramid zoning is

Freeman Funk: Okay. I'm not sure I do either! Let me .... Yes I do. You had zone "A," "B," "C," and "D" on use. "A" was residential. "B" was semi-residential. And "C" was commercial. And "D" was industrial. In an industrial zone you could put anything in the above .... that's the pyramid, you see. Big base of industrial.

Interviewer: Okay. I see.

Freeman Funk: And residential at the top.

Interviewer: It was very restricted at the top.

Freeman Funk: You could not put industrial in residential, but you could put residential in industrial. And some people chose to do that, for some reason. But they own the land, they were always going to live there and that's it. And so that's why you would have seen still a reasonably new house being where it shouldn't have been.

Freeman Funk: That, now, has all been changed around and we have an entirely different concept.

Interviewer: Under the 1972 zoning you have a whole different concept?

Freeman Funk: Yes.

Interviewer: But then to go to the historic district a little bit, that zoning didn't come for a long, long time.

Freeman Funk: That's right. That's right.

Interviewer: And I read the newspaper accounts of that. That was still controversial in '72.

Freeman Funk: Yes. People felt that you ... Well, let's go back.

Interviewer: All right.

Freeman Funk: Of when there was no zoning in the United States. Property rights were strong. It's my property. I'll do what I want to with it. And that prevails to even today.

Interviewer: Yes, it does.

Freeman Funk: That many people feel that they have been impacted, financially, by an arbitrary decision by a city council that doesn't have any property anyway.

Interviewer: Yes.

Freeman Funk: And they don't really understand the overall benefit to a community to have reasonable zoning. They didn't understand that architectural review was of any importance whatsoever. Whatever you want to do, you do it. But as acceptance of zoning itself came to prevail the idea of "architectural zoning", so to speak, became more acceptable. Always with a back up. The courts. You can always appeal these decisions because of this marvelous concept of democracy that we have. The separation of powers. It works. And people do appeal these things, rather infrequently...

Interviewer: But they do.

Freeman Funk: Courts do get involved.

Interviewer: Was there a memorable case?

Freeman Funk: No. No. I remember some minor situations that were not court cases, that people squeaked by. The first assignment I had

to go out and look at something when I came to the city was ... we didn't have a building official either, by the way....You know, can you imagine operating a city with no city planning ...

Interviewer: No building inspector...

Freeman Funk: And no building official. We did issue building permits, but ... Interviewer: But who went to the site then and looked? You did?

Freeman Funk: I went out to look and here's this man was obviously building a house, what was to be a dwelling, in a garage on his property. And he said "No, no, it's not going to be that. It just happens that I have all this bathroom and kitchen in here, but that's..." Well, he got by with it. Nobody was willing to stand up against it and say, "You may not do this." And another place, in a commercial situation, the man got a permit to renovate his building. He got into it and found termites in it so he tore it all the way down and then built again. Well, that was against the law. He was in a residential zone in the first place. And if you tear down in a residential zone, you're out.

Interviewer: Uh huh. You got to come back to code, then?

Freeman Funk: Yes, that's right. But he got by with that. That was Chesley's Fish and Bait Shop. You know?

Interviewer: So that's fairly recent?

Freeman Funk: In my memory, it was anyway.

Interviewer: We're talking about zoning and how slowly it came in a way. But now that it's here it's been pretty fully accepted.

Freeman Funk: Yes. I think its ... no one now worries too much about it. They do accept it and they buy property based on what it is zoned and generally that's about what it's going to stay.

Interviewer: They expect that. That kind of density to be there. Well, you know we didn't talk about electricity at all.

Freeman Funk: No.

Interviewer: And this city has the same kind of situation with the electricity service that it does with the other ...



Freeman Funk: That went way back though. The city was in the electric business, but I think fairly briefly.

Interviewer: Manufactured your own electricity?

Freeman Funk: Yes, hydroelectric.

Interviewer: From the river?

Freeman Funk: Yes, and... I'm not too conversant with the history of it, except that I know that there were several companies, maybe a couple operating simultaneously, and Virginia Electric and Power came in and kind of put it all under one ownership.

Interviewer: And that was done by the time you got here?

Freeman Funk: Oh, yes. Yes. Well ahead of my tenure.

Interviewer: Did Fredericksburg have -- I noticed also housing and public buildings ... did Fredericksburg have areas that had to be renovated? Cleaned up? Gentrified? When you came in...

Freeman Funk: Yes. I guess every city goes through that phase of run-down neighborhoods. That's what you're speaking of?

Interviewer: Yes. That's what I'm thinking about.

Freeman Funk: There's a plan now, and it's been in operation for awhile, where there's assistance on those things that will use public funds to bring a house up to standard and make it habitable again and make it compatible with its neighborhood.

Interviewer: That didn't exist a long time ago?

Freeman Funk: No. No. It didn't. We had to force people to tear buildings down. If they.... "fix up or tear down" was about the order to do. Later that was amended to "fix up/board up or tear down" and the courts brought that about. They said if somebody could make that building safe, and safe meant boarded up so no one could come in there and live or start fires or whatever, that that was all that had to be done. Well, it's a pretty sad neighborhood that has a lot of plywood windows and doors.

Interviewer: Yes, it is a sad neighborhood. (Interruption)

Interviewer: Let's talk about annexation. I think that's such an interesting topic in Virginia. Did Fredericksburg, after its experience of being forced to annex people, did it then go out to do some annexation?

Freeman Funk: Yes.

Interviewer: And when was this? In the late '50s?

Freeman Funk: I drew a map one time of the various annexations and graphed it ringing out from...

Interviewer: I'd like to see that.

Freeman Funk: ... the central city and I would have to look up the dates of those.

Interviewer: Maybe we ought to stop and say here for the people who don't know anything about annexation, about Virginia and why annexation becomes... became a vehicle in Virginia. Because Virginia's cities are independent from its counties. Is that right?

Freeman Funk: From the county. Yes. Yes.

Interviewer: And the effect of that is that the city....

Freeman Funk: Well, the city government, the city charters are somewhat different from town charters. And certainly different from county. When a town wants to become a city and applies for a new charter, if it's granted by the General Assembly, it takes over the public education system, school system, and the courts system, and it gets away from the patrolling sheriff. The sheriff in the city is a court officer. In the county he is a court officer, but he is also a patrol officer. And the sheriff is still elected. He is a constitutional officer, meaning that it is one of that group of officers that is required by the Constitution of Virginia. Whether you want it or not, you're going to have it.

Interviewer: They are?

Freeman Funk: The sheriff, commissioner of revenue, treasurer, clerk of the court, commonwealth's attorney....

Interviewer: That's in the county?

Freeman Funk: A county has to have the same thing.

Interviewer: Those five constitutional officers?

Freeman Funk: Yes. But sometimes they become almost redundant. As the case of the sheriff, he's not what people think of as a sheriff generally. But then the county doesn't have a police department.

Interviewer: That's right.

Freeman Funk: And then you wonder why tax rates are higher in the city than in the county!

Interviewer: -- but you have the police department.

Freeman Funk: Police, and generally paid firemen, fire departments Which you've got [in a city with] a concentration of wealth in real estate, in a built-up business district that you don't have in the county. So your demand to have an upgraded fire department is clearer in the city than in the county, so it takes more money.

Interviewer: So it makes the city reach out and take in parts of the county that are growing [in need for services].

Freeman Funk: Yes, that's right and the city has always wanted to increase its tax base. And these days it's becoming questionable whether increasing just for the sake of increase is worth it. Because you can take in all of the residential property you want to but generally you're not going to make any money on it.

Interviewer: You've got to give them back in services.

Freeman Funk: That's right. And there you're going to have schools for the children and dependant on demographics and other factors it might cost more to annex a certain territory than it would have if you'd left it alone.

Interviewer: So this ... like today's times, annexation is no longer really a feasible alternative for a city.

Freeman Funk: That's right. In fact, it's not a legal alternative anymore. The General Assembly has done away with annexation.

Freeman Funk: ... but one time it caused great contentious feelings between counties and cities here. The county says, "Oh, they're looking. They're going to grab this. We've got a nice subdivision. They'll get it. We've got an industry. They'll get it." So they drew these real strong political barriers at the line.

Interviewer: At the line. Freeman Funk: Oh yes. And now these lines merge. Not visually. But in the minds of people. We're convinced that there are people who live in the county that think they live in the city. Don't care. They have to pay their taxes in the county but...

Interviewer: They really don't care?

Freeman Funk: They really don't know who represents them in local government.

Interviewer: Isn't that interesting development. Because it was a real political way of thinking about things, I think, in the old days.

Interviewer: We're talking about planning districts, and I suppose about 1967, '68, in there, towards the end of that decade at least, planning districts became a vehicle for counties and cities, and you were saying...

Freeman Funk: Mandatory.

Interviewer: Mandatory? You got put where ... they wanted you to be put. You didn't have a choice.

Freeman Funk: That's right.

Interviewer: And you became part of what planning district?

Freeman Funk: Planning district 16, if I remember correctly.

Interviewer: And there's five political subdivisions?

Freeman Funk: Yes.

Interviewer: It made people think a little more regionally?

Freeman Funk: Indeed it did. Suspiciously to start with, and then comparatively later when they realized later that it was without teeth. But we have a good planning district here now and good director.

Frank Kenny, the first director of PD 16, was a good director, too. Incidentally, one thing ties into another .... Frank Kenny ... remember the plan that I developed?

Interviewer: Yes, the master plan.

Freeman Funk: The master plan with all categories.

Interviewer: The "Door Plan?"

Freeman Funk: He, Frank, read that and came back to me and said that this is a textbook thing that you've done here for the city in developing this plan. I was very much pleased because he was a trained planner himself as well as an attorney. The planning district concept has grown and in confidence, people do trust it, and they have done very, very good things all with the acceptance and agreement of the city. If the city, for instance, as a member of this planning district doesn't like any particular thing, it just doesn't participate. It's just not forced into anything. But the programs that they set forth are very much like, on the absolute local level, the administrator proposes something, and he goes about selling his idea to somebody. To the city manager. To the city council.

Interviewer: ... and the county executives.

Freeman Funk: ... to the city in general. And so it has come about that it has become a viable part of the government fixture.

Interviewer: Really a vehicle...

Freeman Funk: Yes.

Interviewer: ... for getting things done.

Freeman Funk: And as we have mentioned, many regional things have come about that might not have come about if we didn't know each other better.

Interviewer: We're talking about the jail?

Freeman Funk: Yes.

Interviewer: ... and the library. Would that be?

Freeman Funk: Yes. The library. The jail. Commuter rail.

Interviewer: Oh, I hadn't thought about that.

Freeman Funk: All sorts of things now. Water.

Interviewer: Oh, yes.

Freeman Funk: We talked about that.

Interviewer: We did.

Freeman Funk: That's regional. It's so regional that water from Stafford comes through the city system and out in Spotsylvania.

Interviewer: ... out to Spotsylvania. And all this became, sort of flowed out of the planning district cooperation.

Freeman Funk: I think so. They proved that regional cooperation was not a bad thing. But this goes back to annexation. We're not competitive anymore either. We're not after anything they've got. And they know it.

Interviewer: Because the law protects it.

Freeman Funk: It does. So Virginia is really a unique state in its annexation laws and its independent cities. No, there are a couple of other states that have independent cities. So it's not unique but...

Interviewer: It's close to it.

Freeman Funk: ... it's rare. And it's just hard for other states to understand. I can give you an example. I've lived under, perhaps you have, the dual taxation situation in overlapping government.

Interviewer: Uh, huh.

Freeman Funk: In Raleigh, North Carolina, where I lived for a while at assessment time you have to appear personally and so through a line and tell people how many clocks you owned and how many dogs and how many diamonds and with no way for them to understand. And you had a county man here and a city man here and they both took the information. They didn't even cooperate on taking the information. It took two people.

Interviewer: You repeated it twice?

Freeman Funk: That's right. So it was kind of bad. You had two police jurisdictions, overlapping. I like the Virginia system, in spite of..

Interviewer: I do, too.

Freeman Funk: ..its failings. I think it's pretty good.

Interviewer: Well, annexation was its worst failing, wasn't it?.

Freeman Funk: I like local government.

Interviewer: Yes.

Freeman Funk: This is a general thing, but I call it the 'responsive' level of government. If you want a Salem Church Reservoir Project it's federal and you're going to have a time getting it. Even if they proposed it. If you want the state government to do something for you to whom are you going to turn? Really. Your delegates can help but they are out of touch with the administration and the Governor is pretty much untouchable. So that's not a 'responsive' level of government.

Interviewer: No, and they can see you on the street here and tell you the garbage didn't get picked up.

Freeman Funk: That's right. That's right.

Interviewer: I'm sure they have!

Freeman Funk: That's the reason I like it and have supported it all my life.

Interviewer: I like local government, too.

Freeman Funk: We were going to talk about street extension.

Interviewer: Let's do talk about street extension.

Freeman Funk: Long ago, in the '50s and before, the city hoped that the city would expand and grow evenly and nicely and wanted to do what it could without adequate laws to promote that. And it had a policy that was this: if a street existed on a map but not on the land, and someone wanted to build a house a block away from the nearest

house, the city would say, "Well, okay. You go ahead and get your building permit and start building and we'll get the facilities out to you by the time you're finished. We'll give you water and sewer, storm drains, curbing gutter, paved street...

Interviewer: That's very expensive.

Freeman Funk: And that meant that the people who had been here all their lives were still paying in the general tax rate for this street to go out to one house. And then maybe they would fill in and maybe then another house would go and they'd get another street. But College Heights was developed essentially that way. It was called a development, but it was in 1898 that it was laid out on a map by the Fredericksburg Development Company without regard to anything. It was just a piece of land and somebody said there's a street, there's a street, there's a street ... nice grid system, but without regard to hills and valleys. And without regard to the drainage from one lot to another and that was a mess because one person would grade his lot and say "Well, I'm perfectly happy" and the one next to it would say "Well, I'm not so happy. All the water from your lot is going over into my backyard." And so that's an unplanned development. And that has been changed to where a developer would have to build his own streets and provide his own facilities. And include it in the cost of those houses. Not in my house which has been here for fifty years.

Interviewer: Or he wouldn't get his original site development approval, or his original approval to go ahead ...

Freeman Funk: That's the only way he could do it--is to show that he' had a street to build on.

Interviewer: And that came in the '50s? Something like that?

Freeman Funk: Yes. Well, that came up recently. Someone asked me a question about when did it happen and it's hard to say just when it did, but sure enough the old policy fell into the background and the formality of a planned development came about. A site plan. Someone had to have a site plan before he can get a building permit now. In the early days, we didn't know what a site plan was.