



OCCOQUAN PLANNING COMMISSION
Regular Meeting Minutes
Town Hall – 314 Mill Street, Occoquan, VA 22125
Tuesday, December 10, 2019
6:30 p.m.

Present: Daryl Hawkins, Ann Kisling, Jenn Loges, Eliot Perkins

Absent: Ryan Somma

Staff: Kathleen Leidich, Town Manager; Katy Nicholson, Town Clerk

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Planning Commission meeting was called to order by Eliot Perkins at 6:30 p.m. Katy Nicholson, Town Clerk, took minutes for the meeting.

2. CITIZEN COMMENTS

There were no citizen comments.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

August 27, 2019 Regular Meeting

The Commission voted unanimously to approve the August 27, 2019 regular meeting minutes.

September 24, 2019 Special Meeting

The Commission voted unanimously to approve the September 24, 2019 Planning Commission special meeting minutes.

4. SET MEETING CALENDAR FOR 2020

The Commission voted unanimously to approve the 2020 Planning Commission meeting calendar.

5. PLANNING COMMISSION PRIORITIES UPDATE

Mr. Perkins inquired about the status of the town entrance signage and timed parking projects. Town Manager Kathleen Leidich responded that the former town clerk had been working on both projects and she will be taking over. Mr. Perkins requested an update from the Police Chief at the next meeting regarding timed parking. He also requested that Ms. Leidich provide an update on the signage project at the next meeting, noting that the new signage concepts have been reviewed by the Architectural Review Board and should be ready for Town Council review soon.

Noise Ordinance:

Ms. Loges provided an update on the research she has conducted on the town's noise ordinance, a topic that was discussed at a recent Town Council meeting. She noted that Occoquan's noise ordinance is virtually unenforceable because the guidelines are not

measurable and are based on “common sense.” Through her research, Ms. Loges discovered that this is an issue many other localities are grappling with, and the city of Virginia Beach became a model for other Virginia localities after overhauling its noise ordinance when the Virginia Supreme Court deemed its old ordinance unenforceable. Prince William County also overhauled its noise ordinance recently, and Ms. Loges noted that some aspects of it are applicable to the town. Through her research using an app that measures decibels, Ms. Loges found that the normal “buzz” of Occoquan is within the healthy range, but loud music and vehicles on top of the baseline noise can create an unhealthy amount of noise pollution, which can compromise the wellbeing of residents, business owners and visitors. She also queried the Police Chief on the top noise complaints in town, and they are: loud music, vehicles and barking dogs. Ms. Loges suggested that the commission create a new draft noise ordinance based on those of other localities. The new ordinance would require a public hearing and Town Council approval, and the Police Department would need sound-measuring equipment to enforce the ordinance. Mr. Perkins requested that Ms. Loges send her fellow Planning Commission members copies of Virginia Beach’s and Prince William County’s ordinances, and that the group be prepared to discuss the topic at its next meeting.

Beautification, Town Entrances, Streetscaping:

Mr. Perkins confirmed the locations of the town entrance signs: Route 123 at the stoplight, Commerce/Washington streets, and Old Bridge/Tanyard Hill roads. He noted that he dislikes the current signs, and that Town Council members have stated they think the signs are unattractive and do not represent the town. He envisions that the new signs would have a consistent general look but the dimensions may vary due to space. Mr. Perkins requested that Ms. Leidich instruct the town’s landscapers to leave a space between new trees that have been planted on Commerce Street, to allow for potential sign placement in the location. Ms. Kisling noted that she thinks a different type of sign, such as a stone, would look better at the Commerce/Washington streets location; Mr. Perkins questioned whether a sign is needed at that location at all. Ms. Loges noted that the purpose of the signs on Route 123 and Old Bridge Road are to attract people to town, so they need to be large and attention-grabbing. The signs in town, on the other hand, are informational for visitors who are already here, and should contain introductory information. She views the area in front of Mamie Davis Park as a key intersection where directional and/or public parking signs would be helpful. Mr. Perkins noted that the Visitor’s Center will soon be closing and will be replaced by a kiosk near River Mill Park, and that the town will have input on that signage as well. Mr. Perkins said he likes a particular design concept that includes rustic stone. He asked Mr. Hawkins to mock up a design that blends several concepts for the next meeting. He also requested that Planning Commission members look at the various sign locations and report any ideas at the next meeting.

Regarding beautification, Mr. Perkins noted that trees and grass have been planted near the entrance to the town on Commerce Street, and additional landscaping will take place in the spring.

Parking and Traffic:

Mr. Perkins asked Ms. Leidich to provide an update on parking at the next Planning Commission meeting.

Strategic Relationship Building:

Ms. Loges reported that there were no updates on this subject.

Capital Improvement Project:

Mr. Perkins reported that funding for the kayak ramp is in place, but there have been some complications with the contractor. In-water work will not be allowed between February 15 and the end of June due to fish spawning season, and the project may be pushed back until the end of June if the problems are not resolved. Mr. Perkins also noted that the applicant for the Mill at Occoquan project is still working on an updated plan, and he has not heard any new information yet.

6. CHAIR/TOWN COUNCIL REPORT

Mr. Perkins asked Ms. Leidich whether there were any updates on the project at 426/430 Mill Street. Ms. Leidich responded that the contractors are permitted to winterize the building, and they were working on the roof, windows and stone siding.

7. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:16 p.m.