



OCCOQUAN TOWN COUNCIL
Meeting Minutes
Town Hall – 314 Mill Street, Occoquan, VA 22125
Tuesday, March 2, 2021
7:00 p.m.

- Present:** Mayor Earnie Porta; Vice Mayor Jenn Loges; Councilmembers Krys Bienia, Cindy Fithian (remotely), Laurie Holloway, and Eliot Perkins
- Staff:** Kirstyn Jovanovich, Town Manager/Interim Town Clerk; Adam Linn, Chief of Police; Manuel Casillas, Town Treasurer (remotely); Julie Little, Events and Community Development Director (remotely); Martin Crim, Town Attorney (remotely); Bruce Reese, Town Engineer (remotely)

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Porta called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Due to illness Councilmember Fithian participated remotely from home in accordance with Town ordinances.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

3. CITIZENS TIME

Mayor Porta noted that speakers at Citizens Time have to come to the podium to speak and must be wearing a mask that covers their nose and mouth. No one spoke at Citizens Time.

4. CONSENT AGENDA

a. February 16, 2021 Meeting Minutes

Councilmember Perkins moved approval of the item on the Consent Agenda. Vice Mayor Loges seconded. Motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

5. REGULAR BUSINESS – Request to Postpone the Public Hearing on The Mill at Occoquan Special Use Permit Applications SE2018-01, SE2018-02, and SE2018-03

Mayor Porta asked for unanimous consent to move up on the agenda the regular business item concerning the public hearing for The Mill at Occoquan special use permit applications. There being no objection the item was moved up on the agenda.

Councilmember Perkins moved to postpone the public hearing to a date to be determined. Councilmember Fithian seconded. Motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

6. MAYOR'S REPORT

Mayor Porta noted that he is an appointee of the School Board to the latter's sustainability task force and that he believes such a task force would be beneficial for Occoquan in the future. Consequently, he plans to work with the Town Manager to develop a charter document for such a task force to be reviewed and approved by the Town Council some time after the budget process is completed.

Mayor Porta indicated that he had facilitated a Zoom meeting on Thursday, February 25, between members of the business community and The Mill at Occoquan applicant at the request of the parties. The meeting lasted approximately 3½ hours. He noted that all the business community

participants were patient and constructive. Additionally, he noted that he had spoken to members of the Merchants Guild by Zoom on March 2 shortly before the Town Council meeting. Among the major concerns expressed were those related to the potential competition posed by new businesses and the impact on existing businesses during active construction. Mayor Porta suggested that it was incumbent upon everyone on the Town Council to be clear about what things can (e.g. height and setback) and cannot be considered (e.g. competition to existing businesses) in evaluating projects over which the Council has some role. Additionally, he remarked that there continues to be a significant amount of misinformation on the Mill at Occoquan project being spread and a significant lack of clarity about the differences between “by-right” uses, special exceptions, and variances. Last, Mayor Porta noted that he became aware last week of one or more individuals making inaccurate, disparaging comments about members of the Planning Commission related to The Mill at Occoquan project. He indicated that such comments were without foundation and therefore unacceptable and that individuals engaging in such conduct should have no role on Town boards, commission, task forces, or other advisory bodies.

7. COUNCILMEMBER REPORTS

Vice Mayor Loges noted that she, like others, had received comments on the Mill at Occoquan project and encouraged people to continue to provide them as they saw fit. She noted, as well, that on February 25 she attended a meeting she had requested with the Town Manager and the Town Engineer to address some questions she had regarding the Mill at Occoquan project; she expressed her appreciation to Ms. Jovanovich and Mr. Reese for their time.

8. BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Councilmember Perkins reported that the Planning Commission had recently met and was now focusing on the update to the Comprehensive Plan. Each member of the body has been assigned responsibility for different aspects of the Plan. Additionally, members are also analyzing the proposed AlpineX project in Fairfax County and the North Woodbridge town center project and intend to develop some sort of briefing document for the Town Council. Last, the Planning Commission is also devoting attention to road, transportation, and other projects in the environs surrounding the Town.

ARB Chair Brenda Seefeldt reported on the most recent ARB meeting, noting that they approved a demolition request for a house on McKenzie Drive. She also noted that the ARB’s last meeting had included an informative presentation on infill projects from a Leesburg representative. Councilmember Fithian suggested that the individual make the presentation to the full Council. Councilmembers discussed at some length the relevance of such a presentation to the Town Council and whether or not it would be an appropriate time for such a presentation to be made before the full Council.

9. ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

a. Town Manager

The meeting agenda included a written report from the Town Manager. Ms. Jovanovich added that staff had been speaking with VDOT about the possibility of getting additional information upon which the Town could make a decision regarding a potential change of traffic patterns on part of Commerce Street. Additionally, she reported on the status of the recently-implemented

timed parking program in the business district. Last, she noted that staff would be meeting with relevant County officials regarding the new visitors kiosk.

Councilmember Bienia expressed her appreciation for how quickly staff had investigated the Commerce Street issue with VDOT.

Vice Mayor Loges asked for clarification on VDOT's striping plan. She also asked for a status update on any remaining CARES Act Funds. Ms. Jovanovich responded that staff was reviewing its earlier plan to purchase generators and would be coming forward to Council with information once their review was complete. Vice Mayor Loges also asked for clarification regarding private property owners who have not complied with snow removal requirements. Ms. Jovanovich indicated that staff has traditionally not been strict about this, recognizing the difficulty of compliance for some individuals, the absentee nature of some property owners, and the traditional reliance on volunteers to help out. Last, Vice Mayor Loges asked about several properties that have changed their use in a manner inconsistent with zoning designations. Ms. Jovanovich indicated that staff is aware of these and is in the process of reviewing them and taking appropriate action.

Councilmember Holloway thanked staff for their prompt work in investigating the Commerce Street issue with VDOT. Councilmember Perkins expressed similar appreciation.

Mayor Porta asked for unanimous consent to add to the agenda a vote on the VDOT striping plan, expressing a desire to go forward with a plan that called for no change to the traffic pattern on Commerce Street, but with recognition that he would be calling for a vote on that issue once the budget process was completed. There being no objection the item was added to the agenda. Vice Mayor Loges moved submission of a striping plan that currently retains one-way traffic on Commerce Street. Councilmember Holloway seconded. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

Mayor Porta confirmed with Ms. Jovanovich that staff is still working to bring the properties on Center Lane between Union and Ellicott Streets into compliance. He also noted that her report shows that the Police Department staff continue to donate a great deal of volunteer time to the Town and that the Public Works staff has completed an impressive number of projects. Accordingly, he request that Ms. Jovanovich and Chief Linn pass along Council's appreciation to the relevant staff.

Councilmember Holloway mentioned her interest in encouraging county and state elected officials to continue to advocate for solutions to Occoquan's traffic woes that are created by conditions outside of Town. Councilmember Perkins echoed those sentiments.

b. Town Treasurer's Report

Ms. Jovanovich provided a written Treasurer's report. Mayor Porta noted that revenues and expenses appear to be tracking expectations. There were no questions.

c. Town Attorney

The Town Attorney presented a written report and solicited questions.

10. OTHER BUSINESS

Mayor Porta indicated that earlier in the day ParkMobile had responded that they had incorporated the Town's requested changes into the agreement with the Town regarding app-based paid parking at Ebenezer Baptist Church. He asked for unanimous consent to add to the agenda authorization to sign the contract. There was no objection so the item was added.

Councilmember Holloway moved to authorize the Mayor to execute the agreement with ParkMobile upon review by the Town Attorney. Councilmembers Perkins seconded.

During discussion Councilmember Perkins asked the Mayor to refresh the Council and the public on the relevance of this agreement. In response Mayor Porta noted that it was part of the 3-part parking management initiative being pursued by the Town. This initiative involves: (1) timed parking to make more efficient use of existing parking inventory, (2) pursuing construction of a parking facility to increase the inventory of available parking, and (3) partnering with private property owners who have unused capacity to make their capacity available for app-based, paid parking. The agreement with Ebenezer Baptist Church would make 22 spaces available for paid parking.

Upon the close of discussion the motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

11. CLOSED SESSION

Vice Mayor Loges moved that the Council convene in closed session to discuss as permitted by Virginia Code § 2.2-3711(A)(3) a matter involving disposition of publicly held real property specifically involving the 200 Mill Street (formerly the Visitors Center), because discussion in an open meeting would adversely affect the Town's bargaining position. Seconded by Councilmember Bienia. Motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

The Council went into closed session at 7:58 p.m.

The Council came out of closed session at 8:13 p.m.

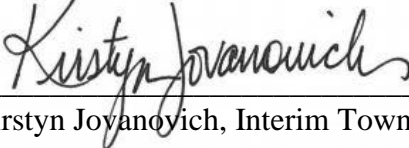
Vice Mayor Loges moved to certify that, in the closed session just concluded, nothing was discussed except the matter or matters (1) specifically identified in the motion to convene in closed session and (2) lawfully permitted to be discussed in a closed session under the provisions of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act as cited in that motion. Seconded by Councilmember Holloway.

Ayes: Vice Mayor Loges, Councilmember Bienia, Councilmember Fithian, Councilmember Holloway and Councilmember Perkins, by roll call vote.

Nays: None.

12. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:14 p.m.


Kirstyn Jovanovich, Interim Town Clerk