



TOWN OF OCCOQUAN
Town Hall – 314 Mill Street, Occoquan, VA 22125
MEETING DATE: 2021-08-25

MEETING TIME: 6:30 PM

Present: Chairperson Eliot Perkins, Commissioners Darryl Hawkins, Ryan Somma

Absent: Commissioner Ann Kisling

Town Staff: Kirstyn Jovanovich, Town Manager; Sara Fila, Zoning Administrator; Bruce Reese, Town Engineer;

1. Call to Order

The Planning Commission Public Hearing was called to order by Eliot Perkins on 2020-08-25, at 6:31 p.m.

Secretary for Meeting

Ryan Somma took minutes for the meeting.

2. Citizen Comments

There were no comments.

3. Approval of Minutes July 29, 2021

Ryan Somma motioned to approve the minutes. Darryl Hawkins seconded. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

4. Discussion Items

a. Comprehensive Plan Review/Update

Ryan Somma took the Planning Commission members through an overview of he and Kirstyn Jovanovich's recent updates to the Comprehensive Plan. This included updates to population, demographics, and traffic numbers; new Town amenities such as River Mill Park and the Canoe/Kayak Launch; and new developments in the area such as Fairfax Peak and the Woodbridge Town Center.

Specific items of discussion concerning updates to the Comprehensive Plan:

Main Street America Program

Eliot Perkins went over some of the requirements to become a Mainstreet America community. The Town does not need to be a population of 5,000 or greater to qualify. The Town would need a paid

Program Manager working a minimum of 20 hours per week. The program would need an adequate operating budget of \$40k for a Town of 5k or less, and an active Board of Directors or Committee that is not part of Town government. Kirstyn Jovanovich said, drawing from memory, that the benefits of Mainstreet America included funding for sidewalks, parks, and other improvements—including opportunities for private property owners to make improvements to their properties. The Town would provide seed money to start the program until an organization could support itself. It is also very marketable to be a Mainstreet Community. Eliot Perkins said this would set up a whole separate group of individuals looking out for the Town, but the biggest challenge is finding this group. This requires time and effort from people who don't exist yet. He's not against it, but he only wants to put it forward if it's a serious thing and needs everyone to have an opinion. Ryan Somma said he would love to see it happen, but he doesn't see how to get the volunteers to pursue it.

Town Post Office

Eliot Perkins said the Post Office is inconclusive at this time. A lot of people like getting their mail at the Post Office, and a lot of people don't like it. The Mill at Occoquan will require a minimum of 50 additional PO boxes and there is no room for them right now. If the Post Office cannot accommodate these, then the Town will need to address this. Another option is home delivery or a mixed home-delivery option where HOA's in Town can have cluster boxes. The Comprehensive Plan should review the challenges and options. Ryan Somma asked if this includes the option to grant a variance to the Post Office to expand. It was confirmed this was an option.

Noise Ordinance

Kirstyn Jovanovich noted that Noise Ordinances are very challenging, and there is not much the Town can do about vehicular noise. The Comprehensive Plan has added language about outdoor music but doesn't want the plan to set an expectation that we can enforce exhaust and vehicular noise. Eliot Perkins said law enforcement officers can't stop for exhaust noises. Kirstyn Jovanovich said there needs to be a new opening sentence acknowledging mixed use in a lively commercial district. The ordinance should manage the relationship between commercial and residential uses

Miscellaneous

An additional River Access Point at the West end of Town will be referenced in the Plan. Kirstyn Jovanovich will continue to work with Bruce Reece on the Environmental Stewardship chapter.

b. Community Plan Addendum

Kirstyn Jovanovich walked the Planning Commission through a very rough draft of the Community Plan. The Town is trying to meet a December deadline. She needs the Planning Commission to establish guiding principles and recommendations, and make sure the document is not missing any strategies. Members should send changes over the next week via email. In October there will be a planned public meeting/public hearing on this. This is being called a Community Strategy plan. This is an addendum to the Comprehensive Plan, and she will add exhibits and photos to serve as a guiding document for priorities. Each strategy will have guidelines.

Kirstyn Jovanovich covered the topic of vistas, what to remove, what to add, how to create more vistas. Concerning landscaping and gardens, Darryl Hawkins referenced Havre de Grace, Maryland's tree wells, which use stainless steel high-end LED lighting for street trees.

Kirstyn Jovanovich covered the top of sidewalks to create a walkable pedestrian friendly safe environment where people want to walk around. Eliot Perkins said we want a place where people can lounge and relax outside. Kirstyn Jovanovich said that there is a challenge of narrow sidewalks for outdoor dining. She covered the topic of sidewalk seating seeking consistent street furniture and the use of Town easements for benches. Concerning street infrastructure, she covered having old poles removed, establishing standards for lighting and colors for establish paintings and signs. Darryl Hawkins noted that Havre de Grace was very colorful, producing a whimsical effect. Concerning street uses, Eliot Perkins said that street dining is popular due to COVID and there is a push in Old Town Alexandria to leave outdoor dining in place. Kirstyn Jovanovich said she needs help with the vision for the Riverwalk. Eliot Perkins said the public needs to see possibilities of a completed Riverwalk. Concerning streets, Kirstyn Jovanovich said the Town would seek curb bump-outs to slow traffic and roundabouts at the Town entrances. Concerning public art, Eliot Perkins said the Town needs murals and statues. Kirstyn Jovanovich said she will need Planning Commission guidance on murals and the Town Code. She met with the director of the Workhouse concerning public art and cross-promotions. There was also the opportunity to put art under the 123 Bridge. Concerning trails, Eliot Perkins said there were seven segments of Occoquan Greenway, and Occoquan should get ready to be part of that. Kirstyn Jovanovich said she and Bruce Reece will be attending a Tap Grant meeting for Occoquan's section of trail.

Kirstyn Jovanovich asked Planning Commission members to send their feedback on the Community Strategy Plan by Sept 3rd.

10. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:08 p.m.

Eliot Perkins: Perkins
Chair, Planning Commission

Submitted by Ryan Somma, Planning Commission Secretary