



**TOWN OF OCCOQUAN
PLANNING COMMISSION**
Town Hall - 314 Mill Street, Occoquan, VA 22125

MEETING DATE: 2022-08-23
MEETING TIME: 6:30 PM

Present: Chairperson Eliot Perkins, Commissioners Darryl Hawkins, Ann Kisling, Ralph Newell, Ryan Somma, Don Wood

Town Staff: Martin Crim, Town Attorney (remote); Bruce Reece, Town Engineer (remote); Matt Whitmoyer, Management Fellow

1. Call to Order

The Planning Commission meeting was called to order by Chairman Perkins on 2022-08-23, at 6:30 p.m.

2. Citizen Comments

There were no citizen comments.

3. Approval of Minutes

a. July 26, 2022 Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Wood motioned to approve the minutes. Commissioner Kisling seconded. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

4. Action Items

a. Request to make a Recommendation to Town Council on Zoning Text Amendments to Add Definitions to Town Code § 157.008 and to Add a Section Numbered 157.013 Generally Relating to Solar Facilities

Concerning the proposed amendments as they relate to the Historic District, Chairperson Perkins asked if the Mill at Occoquan would need a certificate of appropriateness. Mr. Crim confirmed this.

There was a discussion about the definition of Temporary Photovoltaic Facilities. Chairperson Perkins asked how many landscape lighting panels would fit into 10 square feet. Mr. Reece said 160 landscape lights. Commissioner Hawkins said that 10 square feet is half a solar panel. Mr. Crim said the temporary panels are frequently used in RVs and to charge cell phones, and that the intent is to provide for use on private property without permitting commercial use. For this purpose, the current language is fine.

Chairperson Perkins asked about defining rooftop panels to include those installed on the side of house. Mr. Crim said there is difficulty in defining a roof, and the language is an attempt to be generous and fair. Commissioners Hawkins and Wood voiced approval for being generous and fair.

Chairperson Perkins asked why ground-mounted solar panels should not be allowed. Mr. Crim said the issue is about defining something that can stand up to legal scrutiny. Ground-mounted facilities would impact the character of the Town and would not be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. Chairperson Perkins said the code is not set in stone and can change in the future. Commissioner Somma said ground-mounted panels require clearing trees, which conflicts with Occoquan's status as Arbor Day Tree City town. Commissioner Wood asked if there is a danger to not prohibiting ground-mounted panels. Mr. Crim said that not defining would mean not permitted. Commissioner Wood said he agreed concerning not cutting down trees, but there may be areas where ground-mounted could be possible and the Town wants to encourage solar. Mr. Reece said there are also environmental concerns that goes with ground-mounted solar panels as they relate to water runoff and the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

Commissioner Newell moved to recommend approval of the attached ordinance as presented. Commissioner Kisling seconded. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

5. Discussion Items

a. Planning Commission Priorities Update

- Riverwalk Visioning

Chairperson Perkins said he has met with a group to come in and help with the process. The goal is to have a book guiding the Town on the process to develop the riverwalk complete with renderings. Commissioner Wood said he would like the Town to explore swimming in the Occoquan and determine if it's safe, ensure view sheds for the river, and pursue low-impact landscaping. Chairperson Perkins said the Town should explore finding if there are ways to use alleyways and private spaces to provide more access points to the riverwalk. There should be social corners on the riverwalk side with bump-outs to allow for shopping and commerce. Concerning swimming, Chairperson Perkins said the Potomac Riverkeeper Network has a program to train volunteers to test water for recreational safety. They have an app called Swimguide that color codes for river safety and the Town could post these colors at points along the river. They will be making a presentation to Town Council.

- North Woodbridge Town Center

Chairperson Perkins said this development will continue to be important and will represent a large number of residences and businesses. He will work to have someone from that organization come talk to the Planning Commission.

- Alpine X

Chairperson Perkins said the Town will continue to communicate with the developer.

- Belmont Bay Expansion Project

Chairperson Perkins said there will be more contact with the developers once they are further along

Mr. Crim told the Commission that there is a district court of appeals opinion that short-term rental laws violate the US Constitution and there will be a need to evaluate rental regulations as a result.

5. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:14 p.m.

Minutes Prepared by Ryan Somma, Planning Commission Secretary