



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

**MEETING DATE: 2023-03-28**  
**MEETING TIME: 6:30 PM**

**Present:** Chairperson Eliot Perkins, Commissioners Darryl Hawkins, Ann Kisling, Robert Love, Ralph Newell (Remote), Ryan Somma, Don Wood

**Town Staff:** Philip Auville, Town Clerk; Adam Lynn, Town Manager

**1. Call to Order**

The Planning Commission meeting was called to order by Chairman Perkins on 2023-03-28, at 6:30 p.m.

**2. Citizen Comments**

None.

**3. Trailers for Developers**

Chairperson Perkins motioned to add a new item to the agenda concerning allowing developers in town to set up temporary trailers. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote. Chairperson Perkins said this was concerning the Mill at Occoquan and directed staff to add language to the Town code to allow developers to have trailers.

**4. Discussion Items**

**a. New Member Robert Love Introduction**

Chairperson Perkins introduced Robert Love and welcomed him to the commission. Commissioner Love introduced himself. He has 10 years as a senior executive in the federal government, served in the Marine Corps, and has lived in Gaslight landing for three years. Chairperson Perkins said that Commissioner Love joined Town Council during a vacancy. He has helped with the process for dredging the Occoquan River and he will benefit commission with his experience in project planning.

**5. Election of Officers**

**a. Nominations and the Election of Officers for Calendar Year 2023**

Chairperson Perkins described the duties of the Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, and Secretary

- **Chairperson**

Commissioner Kisling nominated Eliot Perkins.

- **Vice-Chairperson**

Commissioner Newell self-nominated.

- **Secretary**

Chairperson Perkins nominated Ryan Somma.

Chairperson Perkins motioned to close the nomination process. There was unanimous consent.

The rollcall votes were as follows:

Eliot Perkins for Chairperson:

Yays: Newell, Somma, Love, Hawkins, Kisling, Wood, Perkins

Nays: None

Ralph Newell for Vice-Chairperson:

Yays: Newell, Somma, Love, Hawkins, Perkins, Kisling, Wood

Nays: None

Ryan Somma for Secretary:

Yays: Newell, Somma, Love, Hawkins, Perkins, Kisling, Wood

Nays: None

## **6. Approval of Minutes**

### **a. February 28, 2023 Meeting Minutes**

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

## **7. Discussion Items**

### **a. Town Council Meeting Update**

Chairperson Perkins said the Town Council's primary focus is on the budget, which is unique this year because of the SLRF dollars.

### **b. Planning Commission Priorities Update**

- **Alpine X**

Chairperson Perkins had another lunch with Alpine X. The project is on hold due to the economy. Construction prices are elevated right now.

- **North Woodbridge Town Center**

Chairperson Perkins expects to have representative meet with the Planning Commission in the near future.

- **Belmont Bay Expansion Project**

Chairperson Perkins said it was not yet the right time to act on this now.

## **8. Work Session**

### **a. 2024 Strategic Planning Workshop 2nd Session**

Chairperson Perkins said the Town Council was working with a Strategic Framework Tiers draft. Tier One includes complex projects that will take more time. For example, the Riverwalk phase I on the Town's side, and phase II on the opposite side of the river. Tier Two includes smaller projects, such as promoting the Town as a Trail Junction, establishing connections with regional partners, improving Town Gateways (ARPA funding for new signs, landscaping, and beautification), and energy sustainability. Tier Three includes Town parking, roof improvements, upgrading the Millhouse Museum, and plumbing upgrades.

Mr. Auville presented the Strategic Planning Follow Up power point presentation. Explaining this is to review plan, edit, and add to the list the Commission has been working on. He reviewed the three guiding lights: goals, rules, and reality. Chairperson Perkins said the objective is to define specific things, not general things for the Town to pursue. Mr. Auville went over the Planning Commission FY2024 goals. Concerning the objective of pursuing and persuading specific kinds of businesses to establish in Town and extend business hours, Commissioner Love asked if it is within the Town's authority to influence businesses. Chairperson Perkins said the keyword is influence. That Occoquan events influence businesses. The Town does not have authority to dictate business hours, but can have events that will create situations where businesses will want to be open. Mr. Auville brought up the subject of environmental stewardship in the Comprehensive Plan. Chairperson Perkins said the goal of promoting Occoquan as a green town needs specifics. Mr. Auville brought up the subject of business partnerships. Chairperson Perkins said the goal is to establish relationships early for upcoming projects. The Town can have regional events where multiple representatives can support and increase funding.

Chairperson Perkins brought up publishing a Community Plan to address streetscaping, social corners, and town viewsheds. Adding flowers on gaslights and murals to town benches is included in beautification. Chairperson Perkins recommended prioritizing the Town as a trail junction. He said that David Kahley of Progress Fund has spent 15 years creating a Town Assessment tool that Occoquan can use to create a report for staff and Town Council. A second priority is the Town entrances, beautification, and addresses overall what we want our town to look like. The third priority is the Business Development piece. The fourth priority is mobility to outside amenities like Alpine X and North Woodbridge Town Center.

Commissioner Wood said he liked all of these ideas. Concerning Occoquan as a river town and green town, he asked if we knew how safe the river is and if it is safe to eat fish and swim in it. The water quality program would set a baseline for how safe the river is. Chairperson Perkins said the water quality program will start in April with money from the 2023 budget. Mr. Auville said the program will be mentioned in Town Newsletter and Town website. Commissioner Love asked how this differs from Fairfax testing. Chairperson Perkins said there are differences in water quality at different locations and Fairfax is not evaluating swimability. Commissioner Love recommended leveraging Fairfax's existing testing as well.

Commissioner Somma said that it was previously brought up that VDOT will allow using space under the 123 Bridge for a mural. Mr. Lynn said the AARB would need to review and approve proposed murals. The Town would need to maintain it. Chairperson Perkins said the artwork should come from

local artists. Commissioner Wood said the artwork should focus on Historic Occoquan. Commissioner Kisling said different Towns have statues themed to their Town character. She asked if our Town has a theme or identity. Commissioner Somma said Occoquan could have millstones similar to how Norfolk has mermaids. Chairperson Perkins suggested ospreys and eagles, which are native to the Town.

Commissioner Love asked why the Town should attract hikers and cyclists as these individuals are passing through Town. Chairperson Perkins said Occoquan is unique in Virginia for having a juncture of water, cycling, and--in the future--hiking. The idea is to provide amenities for travelers to stay. Alpine X will provide places to stay. This takes advantage of Town's existing resources.

Commissioner Newell said the Town needs to define what it means to be a green town. Chairperson Perkins said there is a reality aspect to this, as the LED streetlamps did not work in our tests. So, the interim choice will be to use less gas. Commissioner Newell said if part of the marketing message for Occoquan is that it's a green town, then that needs to become part of the Town's DNA. Commissioner Love asked if being a green town adds value.

Chairperson Perkins summarized the session's discussion before closing the meeting.

## **6. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

*Minutes Prepared by Ryan Somma, Planning Commission Secretary*