



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

MEETING DATE: 2023-07-25
MEETING TIME: 6:30 PM

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

Town Staff: Matt Whitmoyer, Management Fellow; Philip Auville, Town Clerk

1. Call to Order

The Planning Commission meeting was called to order by Chairperson Perkins on 2023-07-25, at 6:32 p.m.

2. Citizen Comments

None.

3. Approval of Minutes

a. May 23, 2023 Meeting Minutes

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

4. Discussion Items

a. Town Council Meeting Update

Chairperson Perkins said the Town is continuing to work with the Berkley Group on the Riverwalk. Progress reports will be distributed to the Town Council and Planning Commission. For the Art Mural, there were 13 mural submissions, three finalists, and all were amazing with the thought and enthusiasm put into them. The Town wants all three artists to be involved in other public art projects. Chairperson Perkins said the Town will be doing a seasonal shuttle service. Mr. Whitmoyer said it will run from Labor Day until Christmas every Saturday. Chairperson Perkins said the Town will be marketing this service, measuring it, and possibly expanding the program if it goes well. Mr. Whitmoyer said the pilot program will cost \$15k.

Chairperson Perkins expressed thanks to Commissioner Wood for measuring water quality in the Occoquan River, which includes sampling locations at the ruins, kayak launch, and regional park. These tests have covered 10-to-12 weeks and the results have been green every time except for once due to bird droppings at the kayak launch. Commissioner Wood said the swim app doesn't give detailed data, but we are seeing the data and the one failure was by a very small margin. Chairperson Perkins reached out to Chief Linn, who reached out to Fairfax Water

concerning the different kinds of testing they do to get their data and use this to educate people on local water health aspects.

Mr. Whitmoyer said the Town budget was passed. The sign ordinance and zoning ordinance for trailers were approved. The Island Naming contest finished, and the Town Council chose "Heron's Haven" as the winner. Signage will be installed at the island and kayak launch. Town Council decided to move forward with a franchising process for an EV charging station outside of Urban Posh using the electrical connection from the now defunct ATM. The Town will get a small percentage of the revenues. These are level two chargers, which provide 14-35 miles per one hour of charge. Chairperson Perkins said this draws visitors in for an hour to eat and visit while charging.

Commissioner Wood asked if the shuttle is the same as Riverfest. Chairperson Perkins said that with Riverfest there are multiple different routes. Mr. Whitmoyer said this shuttle will use the 123 Old Bridge Commuter Lot as a pickup location.

Chairperson Perkins said the Beer Garden will open imminently. Josh Anderson has brought in a host of electric bikes for rental and for selling. This is a private solution that works with the Town's goals.

Commissioner Love asked about the timeframe for the mural. Mr. Whitmoyer said September, once the Virginia AARB approval and other permits go through. The goal is to have it by the Fall Craft Show.

c. Planning Commission Priorities Update

- **North Woodbridge Town Center**

No update.

- **Alpine X**

Chairperson Perkins said the Town will continue to work on this relationship.

- **Belmont Bay Expansion Project**

No update.

5. Work Session

a. 2024 Strategic Planning Workshop Session

Chairperson Perkins said the focus tonight is to prioritize the goals, schedule workshops for each prioritized item, and present to Town Council for buy-in. Mr. Whitmoyer gave an overview of today's goals, reviewed themes from April/May, provided an overview of the themes and goals, and the recommended ranking of goals.

Chairperson Perkins said individuals might want to take items as their own priorities. The Riverwalk Vision Plan is the most important and most complicated to implement. The renderings are for this side of the river, but there are opportunities across the river for parks and trails. Commissioner Newell asked who owns the property across the river. Chairperson Perkins said it was a mixture of VDOT, Leddy Lynn, Fairfax Water, and the Vulcan Quarry.

Commissioner Love asked if the themes have been communicated to Town Council and asked if they should be socialized. Chairperson Perkins said the goal is to socialize all of this with them. We already know Town Council is interested in many of these efforts. The goals of bringing new business in and green infrastructure have not been socialized at all. It is possible to communicate these at the next Town Council meeting. Mr. Whitmoyer suggested sending Town Council the slide with the main goals and a ranking of what we will work on. If they want more, we can come back with action items.

Commissioner Wood asked if the items listed were ordered by prioritization. Chairperson Perkins said several of the items work together. Commissioner Newell said they are symbiotic. Chairperson Perkins said the workshops should be handled in this order. Commissioner Newell said he did agree with the order and asked why the connectivity items excluded pedestrian safety. Chairperson Perkins said the Town is already working on pedestrian safety with new sidewalks, crosswalks, etc. So safety is defined, but the other items are not defined. Commissioner Love noted the same logic applies for attracting businesses. Chairperson Perkins said that, for beautification, he took photos around Town and there are weeds everywhere. We could use a program to make Occoquan beautiful with public spaces and private property owners. Beautification has elements we can implement now, but the connectivity and encouraging new business items are more complicated and need defining. Commissioner Kisling said that if the Town looked more beautiful it would be easier to attract new businesses. Commissioner Newell said that Forever Young took down all weeds and bushes at their building, and it looks nice. Chairperson Perkins said he looks forward to putting standards and programs into place that incentivize beautification.

Commissioner Wood said that in the Comprehensive Plan, there are 58 line items and ongoing projects. Chairperson Perkins said we will be reviewing that, taking line items out and putting new items in as part of this process. The Comprehensive Plan is hard to write as some things are specific and some are general. We can be more specific with action items. Mr. Whitmoyer said the Comprehensive Plan is a legal document.

Mr. Whitmoyer brought attention to the green infrastructure and storm water priority. Commissioner Newell asked about green requirements for the Mill at Occoquan. Chairperson Perkins said they must follow EPA, Chesapeake Bay Protection Act, and other existing requirements. Mr. Whitmoyer said it will not be a LEED certified building, but will involve wetland credits, storm water retention, and Chesapeake Bay preservation.

Mr. Whitmoyer asked if there should be more items. Commissioner Love said five or six items is a lot. Chairperson Perkins asked if everyone is okay with these six items and the ranking order. All agreed.

Mr. Whitmoyer provided an overview of the process, deadlines, and deliverables. Chairperson Perkins said it is important to come to these work sessions having already done the work. We can share what we are finding. Mr. Whitmoyer said that so long as there is no conversation over email. The best practice is to blind-copy all members of Commission so they cannot reply all. Chairperson Perkins said he wants everyone to come to these work sessions with a real sense of education and due diligence. The better the work we do, the more likely and easier it is for Town Council to buy in and accomplish things more quickly.

Chairperson Perkins asked Commission members for their thoughts on someone taking a lead on specific items. There are concerns about others not being as involved. Mr. Whitmoyer said it was the difference between a group project versus one or two people leading. Commissioner Newell said that there are six items and six Commission members. We could have teams, but not the same people on each team. So each person has two items. Commissioner Love asked if we are allowed to recruit others as ad hoc committee members. Mr. Whitmoyer asked if this meant sub committees. Commissioner Somma said this would be like how the Comprehensive Plan was done. Chairperson Perkins said members could recruit citizens to come into meetings and discuss. Commissioner Love said there is a lot of work here for the Commission, having others with expertise could help. Chairperson Perkins said, for instance, bringing an expert in Trail Towns in to present and that the Town Staff will be deeply involved with some of this as well.

Chairperson Perkins recommended having Work Sessions one meeting at a time. Commissioner Wood asked if these are Planning Commission meetings. Chairperson Perkins said they are. Mr. Whitmoyer said the Town can schedule special sessions. Commissioner Wood said having longer meetings is beneficial.

The Planning Commission members worked out a schedule and assigned study items. Chairperson Perkins said that, for each assignment, members should talk to Mr. Whitmoyer and the Chair for a good definition. For the Riverwalk, read the report on it. There are other municipalities dealing with these exact same things. Contact other Town Managers and research online. Some of these things will require a higher-level of relationship and be careful of who you reach out to where we don't have relationships established. Mr. Whitmoyer said to treat work sessions like doing a research paper.

There was a discussion about the logistics and legality of members meeting one-on-one. Mr. Whitmoyer said Town Staff could assist with scheduling additional public meetings.

Chairperson Perkins said there is a host of things we are doing here that have never been done in the history of Town, and we are very fortunate to live in a Town that gives us the opportunity to do special things and he is very excited to be embarking on this.

6. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

Minutes Prepared by Ryan Somma, Planning Commission Secretary