



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

MEETING DATE: 2023-10-26
MEETING TIME: 6:30 PM

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

Town Staff: Matt Whitmoyer, Management Fellow

1. Call to Order

6:30pm

2. Citizen Comments

None

3. Approval of Minutes

a. September 26, 2023 Meeting Minutes

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

b. October 5, 2023 Subcommittee Meeting Minutes

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

c. October 17, 2023 Subcommittee Meeting Minutes

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

4. Discussion

Chairperson Perkins gave an update on the NVRC Trails Summit. He said he learned about funding, engaging communities, volunteers, safety, data, and mapping. Commissioner Somma said he learned about the VDOT criteria for trails and the prioritization of regional connectivity.

4. Work Session

a. Beautification Work Group

Chairperson Perkins gave an overview of the new recommended template for work session artifacts. For the Beautification plan, he presented the Theme of Fostering a Distinct Identity for the Town and the Vision Statement, why the effort matters and why it benefits Occoquan. He said the program would use the notion of placemaking, beautification, and a public arts program to create special kinds of places that people want to visit multiple times. He gave an overview of the sections Past Accomplishments, what has OCQ done before; the SWOT Analysis; Goals; and Action items. For action items, he introduced the concept of pocket parks, empty spaces in Town that can be enhanced, such as the grassy area between Gift and Gather and Glory Be. He talked about incentives for weeding and maintenance for private property owners. He talked about establishing an Occoquan Volunteer core.

Chairperson Perkins requested feedback from the Commissioners on the document. Commissioner Somma suggested including a section for stakeholders and update action items table to align with Comprehensive Plan items. Commissioner Love said this document provides a framework and follows the same process as the Riverwalk Plan. Commissioner Wood asked if the document should include past failures or what actions other towns took that didn't work. Commissioner Love suggested past initiatives and what didn't work. For example, a lack of funding or in the SWOT analysis concerning municipal Wi-Fi. They found at one point the Town did have it, but it was overcome by technology and personal unlimited data plans and individual businesses providing Wi-Fi. Commissioner Newell noted Tanyard Hill as a past initiative.

Commissioner Kisling brought up the Town's status as a Bird Sanctuary as a theme and actions to support that. This included planting perennials around town that are lower maintenance and support birds, decorative bird houses in places, and the Audubon At Home program. Chairperson Perkins also noted Occoquan's status as a Tree City.

Commissioner Wood asked about going into specific ideas from the strategic framework. Chairperson Perkins said to email ideas.

Chairperson Perkins gave an overview of the proposed Public Arts Program. He said it will draw in visitors and contribute to community identity. He provided an overview of the goals and the NOVA Arts and Cultural District history. Commissioner Wood asked about funding for the Arts District. Chairperson Perkins there was none for this initiative.

Commissioner Kisling said that Henderson, North Carolina raised hundreds of thousands of funds with their Bearfootin' Art Walk & Auction. It provided 20 artist-painted bear statues which were auctioned to raise money for the non-profit. The company Icon Poly has a program to make paintable items such as these bears. Occoquan could do the same such as for OCQ osprey, eagle, fox, that relate to this area. Puts OCQ on the map and on Instagram.

Commissioner Somma suggested drafting a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to define and track progress on the NOVA Arts and Cultural District. Mr. Whitmoyer said an MOU was created in 2017. It made the Workhouse the financial agent to create a logo, website, and sign off. The Town will need to follow up on it with the new leadership at the Workhouse.

Commissioner Love said that one element missing from the framework is who is responsible for each action item. Chairperson Perkins said there is a need for timelines as well. Commissioner Love suggested the same as was used for the Riverwalk roadmap, including long term, midterm, and short-

term goals. Mr. Whitmoyer said timelines and responsible parties can fit in with the Comprehensive Plan table.

Commissioner Wood said he was wondering if the Volunteer Corps is something overarching over all these initiatives. We have brilliant staff who are being overloaded with ideas. We need additional talent to get help. He noted the Food Rescue application, which makes volunteering very convenient. Chairperson Perkins agreed the Town needs to find a simple way to connect people.

5. Discussion Items

a. Riverwalk Vision Planning Update

Commissioner Love gave an overview of the Riverwalk Roadmap. He said there are three high-level steps. The first step is the responsibility of the Planning Commission to identify why the Town benefits from a Riverwalk, and what are the options for a Riverwalk with pros and cons for each. At the end of step one is a decision by Town Council to proceed to step two and authorize funding. Step two is the development of a strategic plan. This actionable plan to move forward on the Riverwalk includes pre-construction activities such as assessments, surveys, architectural drawings, and other specifics with costs. Step one is short term and will be complete by December 2023, step two is longer term, and step three is the actual construction and contracting with firms. Step two includes Subject-Matter Experts (SMEs), Town Staff, and other responsible parties.

Commissioner Love said there were three options for proceeding on the Riverwalk. The first is a traditional basic boardwalk as a midterm goal with a long-term goal would be putting in bump-outs, a Ferris wheel, or other enhancements. The second option is to build it with all known enhancements. The third option is to not do anything, which is a throw-away option. Commissioner Love provided an overview of potential phases for implementing the Riverwalk.

Chairperson Perkins encouraged members to provide feedback. Mr. Whitmoyer asked if comments should be sent in emails or with collaborative working documents. Chairperson Perkins said to use working documents comments.

6. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:39pm

Minutes Prepared by Ryan Somma, Planning Commission Secretary