



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

MEETING DATE: 2024-03-26

MEETING TIME: 6:30 PM

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

Absent: Robert Love

Town Staff: Matt Whitmoyer, Deputy Town Manager; Jeff Harvey (remote), Assistant Zoning Administrator

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:01pm

2. Citizen Comments

None

3. Approval of Minutes

a. February 27, 2024 Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Kisling motioned to approve the minutes with amended recommendations from Mr. Whitmoyer. Commissioner Newell seconded. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

4. Zoning Discussion

a. Zoning Administrator Report on Potential Zoning Text and Comprehensive Plan Amendments Relating to Density

Mr. Harvey gave an overview of the potential changes to density and recommendations. Chairperson Perkins said the 20% slope restriction cannot be reconsidered due to the Town's legal history. Mr. Harvey said to consider changing the Comprehensive Plan, and to consider higher density that does not detract from the historic district. Chairperson Perkins asked about minimum lot sizes and where the Town is now. Mr. Harvey said the current minimum lot size is 10k feet. Commissioner Somma asked if allowing flag lots would make it more permissible for a resident who has two single-family detached homes to split their lot. Mr. Harvey said this is likely the case.

Mr. Harvey went over the potential zoning for 119 Poplar Lane recommendations. Chairperson Perkins asked if zoning needs to change for a parking lot. Mr. Harvey said no change is needed for Town parking, but private parking is not allowed. Commissioner Wood said part of the Planning Commission's recommendations is to make use of private parking for visitors, and asked if the lot would need to be zoned B-1 to take advantage of this. Chairperson Perkins asked if the parking lot being charged or free would have impact, Mr. Harvey said a parking lot would not be considered single use.

Mr. Harvey gave an overview of accessory dwellings. He said the Town needs to address whether accessory buildings are allowed in B-1 zone in the code. Such buildings can be problematic for parking and size to the main building. He gave an overview of mitigation steps. Commissioner Somma asked that furnished rooms over garages be included. Commissioner Wood asked how to get around the temptation of accessory dwellings becoming long term apartments. Mr. Harvey said to make the accessory dwelling incidental to the main dwelling. There are enforcement problems of whether the owner is renting the dwelling to a renter, family member, or long-term guest.

Commissioner Kisling moved to approve the attached draft report as presented and to refer it to the Town Council for their review and feedback. Commissioner Newell seconded. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

5. Action Items

a. Request to Approve and Refer Strategic Planning Recommendations to Town Council

Chairperson Perkins gave an overview of the format for each section. He said that once the Planning Commission has completed the report, he will meet with the Mayor to go over the document.

On the section about Trail Towns, Chairperson Perkins asked about the gut check survey. Commissioner Somma said the gut check is to assess Town vision. Chairperson Perkins said the connection between Tanyard Hill Park and the Occoquan Greenway will be dependent on Prince William County taking over Tanyard Hill Park. If they don't, then it becomes very difficult. Chairperson Perkins asked about the high cost of the Trail Town gateway signage. Commissioner Somma said this would be a large sign patterned after the signage at Harper's Ferry. Commissioner Newell asked about Tanyard Hill property parking. Mr. Whitmoyer said the property owner is indifferent to people using the parking available there.

On the Parking and Transportation section, Chairperson Perkins said the OmniRide bus stop is worthwhile, but is also an unknown. He asked about the possibility of finding grants for the Town seeking Bicycle Friendly status. Concerning Town bike rack improvements, the near-term goals are signage and bike racks, and the long-term goal is to have bike repair stations. Mr. Whitmoyer said that for item number four, all these things are currently in progress. For Washington Street the County is adding crosswalks and lighting.

On Green Infrastructure improvements, Commissioner Wood said the goals are broad and ambitious, and the action items are the specific recommendations. Action items show visitors the Town is serious about environmental stewardship and brands Occoquan as environmentally conscious. Chairperson Perkins said that water quality testing is in the budget, and the Riverkeepers will install muscels as a trial cost-free and then the Town will evaluate expanding the program. Mr. Whitmoyer said signs are up for the water quality testing. Chairperson Perkins said item number three is all about education, and we don't want the Town Council to think the Planning Commission is telling people to do these things. Commissioner Wood noted the Prince William Community Energy and Sustainability Plan and making Occoquan align with that. It was decided that composting would require more research. There will be an initiative to take out invasive trees and plant native trees. Chairperson Perkins was not aware of places the Town can reforest but is aware of Forest Branch Park and Commerce Street where we can re-forest.

On Placemaking and Beautification, chairperson Perkins said there is a need to fund a public art program and expand the volunteer program to include placemaking. Commissioner Newell asked how the Commission is defining public art. Mr. Whitmoyer said a survey will define this. Commissioner Newell suggested having murals elsewhere in Town.

On Business Support, Chairperson Perkins said preserving the commercial use of Town buildings is primary. Commissioner Wood asked for clarification on item number two. Chairperson Perkins said it involves working

with property owners in town and external businesses we want to bring into Town. Commissioner Kisling asked if it could be a social media initiative. Chairperson Perkins said yes.

Chairperson Perkins said there will be a need for more funding to tell Occoquan's story. The NOVA Arts District requires the most staff effort. He asked for final input on the report by the end of the week.

Commissioner Wood motioned to take the draft strategic plan as discussed on March 26th, 2024 be referred to the Town Council, taking into account minor edits with approval of the Chair. Commissioner Kisling seconded. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

8. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:29pm

Minutes Prepared by Commissioner Somma, Planning Commission Secretary