



TOWN OF OCCOQUAN
Town Hall - 314 Mill Street, Occoquan, VA 22125
MEETING DATE: 2019-01-14

MEETING TIME: 6:30 PM

Present: Ann Kisling, Jenn Mathis, Eliot Perkins, Ryan Somma

Absent: none

1. Call to Order

The Planning Commission Public Hearing was called to order by Eliot Perkins on 2019-01-14, at 6:31 p.m.

Secretary for Meeting

Ryan Somma took minutes for the meeting.

2. Citizen Comments

There were no citizens comments.

3. Approval of Minutes of December 19, 2019.

Jenn Mathis moved to approve the Planning Commission meeting minutes of 2018-12-19 with grammatical edits. Ann Kisling seconded the motion. The motion carried by poll vote, unanimously.

4. Approval of Parking Study Recommendation Report

Eliot Perkins gave a review of the report. Jenn Mathis provided several edits to the report to address grammatical errors and sentence fragments.

Jenn Mathis moved to approve the Parking Study Recommendation Report with edits. Ann Kisling second. The motion carried by poll vote, unanimously

5. Budget Discussion/Recommendations

Eliot Perkins gave a review of the budget recommendations. He noted that the Community Planning Project was already on the budget for 2020 and the recommendation was to move forward with it as so many items in the Comprehensive Plan were dependent on it. Timed parking is new recommendation, and was considered a low cost, easy win.

Chris Coon expressed concern about the \$1,000 wayfinding signage estimate, explaining that bigger, more visible signs would cost more. Eliot Perkins indicated that this was the case as larger signs were

needed. Chris Coon recommended placing the estimate at \$2,500 to be safe, and that the last significant signage purchase was \$2,200.

Concerning private parking recommendations. Chris Coon had a discussion with the Zoning Administrator and Town Engineer and learned that the current zoning code won't allow Parking Panda or other paid-parking applications use with private lots. There would need to be a re-zoning to allow this.

Chris Coon said that the 2016 and 2017 crosswalk improvements were in progress, but crosswalks previously planned for 2018 were not in ADA compliance and that VDOT will not maintain intersections not in compliance. There was a discussion about the possibility of finding grants to fund additional intersections. Chris Coon said that once Prince William County and VDOT provided estimates on the current intersections being worked on, the Town could make more informed decisions in planning future intersection improvements.

Eliot Perkins moved the conversation to another key budgetary area of focus for remaining FY2019 and FY 2020 budget, the need for Occoquan to look cared for. He said that Town stakeholders had stressed in the Comprehensive Plan that they want Town to be beautiful.

Eliot Perkins then provided a presentation of Town-owned properties listed in the Town's existing landscaping contract to review "what is beautiful and what is not beautiful." The slide show included photos of Town Hall, Mamie Davis park, Visitors Center, Maintenance Facility, and a plot at the Washington-Commerce section highlighting weeds, unpruned plants, and trash at each of these locations for which the Town was paying monthly upkeep fees. These were examples of the landscaping company not doing what they are supposed to.

Eliot Perkins also highlighted opportunities to beautify the Town. He presented a photo of Tanyard Hill Road and Old Bridge, indicating it was maintained by VDOT and the Town should request they beautify the spot and address the signage advertising the Town there. There was inquiry about the Town-owned land across the street and potential signage there, to which Chris Coon explained that the conservation easement prevented installing anything too big on that property.

Eliot Perkins then highlighted the entrance to the Town at Commerce Street, showing the unused overgrown space at the Town gateway. He proposed clearing out the overgrowth and working with the property owner(s) to acquire an easement to fix or replace the fence there. This would create an area to plant bushes, flowers, possibly add a bench, and generally improve the main entrance to Occoquan.

Eliot Perkins concluded that the main points were to make sure the landscaping company is fulfilling their responsibilities, to contact VDOT and request they maintain the Town entrance for which they are responsible, and seek additional improvements to Town-owned properties.

Jenn Mathis expressed relief knowing that the Landscaping contract was up for renewal June 30th, and asked how soon an RFP would need to go up. Chris Coon said he would work with Town Manager on it. Eliot Perkins requested Town Staff ask the landscaping company how they thought they were doing. Ann Kisling also indicated the work in the photos was sub-par.

Eliot Perkins said that the Town needed to find people to professionally design these spaces. Ann Kisling said the enhancing the Town entrances would provide the biggest bang for the buck. Chris

Coon noted that the more in-depth the design work the more substantial an increase there would be in maintenance costs, and that the RFP should be as specific as possible.

Ann Kisling noted that the Mamie Davis Park entrance looked good when the company redid it after the truck accident had damaged it. Chris Coon agreed that when the company has had to make improvements, the improvements looked good.

Jenn Mathis asked if there has ever been a time the Town had asked the company to come back out and do something. Chris Coon said this had happened with Rivermill park, when the company had failed to cut the grass because people were using the park. Town Staff called them out to cut grass for a park event. The company also handles snow and de-icing. He said that when the Town provides feedback, the company gets the work done. Jenn Mathis asked how the Town could increase its oversight and keep the company following through on its responsibilities.

Eliot Perkins asked what new efforts the Town would want. Jenn Mathis said the Town needed a cohesive overall plan, and could approach local nurseries for a vision for the Town. Eliot Perkins said that he felt the Town could find some dollars for this fiscal year and start a piece of it now.

Jenn Mathis said it might be easier to get an estimate once we have adequate maintenance on the properties for which we are currently responsible, and that it would be easier to ask for enhancements to the Town's entrance once current maintenance is proper.

Chris Coon said that once the desired enhancements were defined, to get the list to staff. Kathleen Leidich said they could then seek approval from Town Council.

Eliot Perkins said there were currently 17 public buildings to maintain, and that beautification of the Town entrances would be the 18th maintenance item. Kathleen Leidich said she wasn't sure about adding an 18th item, and that the Town needed to address deferred maintenance so that it would be built into the current maintenance.

Chris Coon noted that the RFP is put out as an advertisement and that people might not respond. He suggested that another strategy to advertise the RFP might be to ask landscaping companies to bid on cutting back kudzu and mention the maintenance RFP is coming up. Jenn Mathis asked if there was anything the Town can do to proactively get the RFP in front of bidders. Chris Coon said there were limits on approaching specific companies. Kathleen Leidich said they could post the RFP to a professional contractors website.

Eliot Perkins suggested it might be possible to get a volunteer to plan out landscaping and then get an estimate from a contractor to apply it. Jenn Mathis suggested that the Master Gardeners Associations might be interested from a PR standpoint. She said that conservation associations might be interested because the Town's current plants are fairly generic, and we could make a conscious effort to plant native flowers. She also wondered if there were grant opportunities with horticultural schools.

Jenn Mathis said she would reach out to her master gardener contact. Eliot Perkins said he would reach out to local nurseries and asked if staff could look into grant opportunities. Kathleen Leidich cautioned that the administrative portion of satisfying grant requirements could be a lot of work. Eliot Perkins said he will reach out to the Mayor about Trails and Streams contacts.

Eliot Perkins said that the final item was the need to increase the budget for facility maintenance in order to catch up on deferred maintenance. Kathy Leidich said that, in very general terms, she envisioned a capital asset replacement program to put money aside to replace things in the future.

Eliot Perkins asked staff to rate maintenance on a scale of A to F. Kathy Leidich said she hasn't completed a total assessment. Chris Coon said the Town was below average.

Kathy Leidich said the Town should maintain facilities the way they should be properly maintained, and that the Town needs to take the lead and show the community we can maintain facilities properly. Once the Town is properly maintaining current facilities, then we could start looking at enhancements.

Chris Coon recommended focusing on things the Town residents can see, things that are visible every day. Kathy Leidich said the Town Council requested a focus on the most visible things, like events.

Eliot Perkins noted that he will make sure to mention to the Town Council that Town Staff have reached out to the Guild and to residents for feedback on Parking and other recommendations. Chris Coon said the Guild wanted to be brought in to provide input on specific approved policies rather than provide policy direction early on.

Kathy Leidich provided Commission members a document she had drafted that went through Comprehensive Plan and Strategic Plan to show how the CIP focuses tie into each other. She said that it sounds like the Commission's budget recommendations tied into these things.

6. Chair/Town Council Report

Eliot Perkins indicated that the budget is the Town Council's top priority.

7. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:14 p.m.

Eliot Perkins
Chair, Planning Commission

Submitted by Ryan Somma, Planning Commission Secretary