



OCCOQUAN TOWN COUNCIL
Work Session Minutes - DRAFT
Town Hall - 314 Mill Street, Occoquan, VA 22125
Tuesday, October 17, 2017
7:00 p.m.

Present: Mayor Liz Quist, Vice Mayor Pat Sivigny, Councilmembers Jim Drakes, Joe McGuire

Staff: Kirstyn Jovanovich, Town Manager; Chris Coon, Town Clerk; Adam Linn, Police Chief; Carla Rodriguez, Town Treasurer; Julie Little, Events and Community Development Director

Other: John Riley and Jennifer Ray; Johnson, Mirmiran, & Thompson, Inc.; Olaun Simmons, Vanderpool, Frostick & Nishanian;

Absent: Councilmembers Matthew Dawson and Cindy Fithian

1. Call to Order

Mayor Quist called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. Regular Items

A. Parking and Traffic Study Draft Report Presentation

Mr. Riley and Ms. Ray, Johnson, Mirmiran, & Thompson, Inc. (JMT), presented a draft report of the Parking and Traffic Study. Mr. Riley stated that the data collected by Town Staff included information on public street parking, public lots, mostly commercial lots, and mostly residential lots within and immediately adjacent to the Historic District. There were a total of 880 parking spaces in the study area, with 49 percent being public parking. Mr. Riley stated that a healthy level of parking in a downtown area is for 50 percent of available parking be for the public.

Ms. Ray presented data on parking capacity on a regular weekday, regular weekend, and during a special event. The data indicated that while there are times that parking is at full capacity in certain lots, there is still available parking in town. Mr. Riley presented data on vehicular turnover rates. The data indicated that 75 percent of the vehicles surveyed were parked for two hours or less.

Mr. Riley presented the findings for the cut-through traffic portion of the study. The morning route that was surveyed was from Tanyard Hill Road/Union Street turning right onto Commerce Street and then out of town. The afternoon route was from Commerce Street turning right onto Washington Street, turning left onto Mill Street, and then turning left to Union Street and out of town. Mr. Riley reported that during both the morning and afternoon routes, on average, there were between 250 and 300 cut-through vehicles. Mr. Riley stated that VDOT has a residential cut-through policy and that this data could be provided to VDOT in order to initiate a formal cut-through study, depending on if VDOT will classify the study area as residential.

Ms. Ray presented recommendations for the Town to address parking needs, including walk and bike Occoquan, improve signage and wayfinding, shared parking with private lots, parking enforcement, working with new developers, reverse angled parking, and placing a parking map on the town website.

They also discussed options that were reviewed and ultimately deemed not a recommendation for the town at this time, including a parking garage, parking meters, and timed parking. It was discussed that a parking garage was cost prohibitive, and that timed or metered parking was not necessary at this time since the town's vehicle turn over and parking duration rates were considered healthy.

The team also discussed parking impacts regarding widening the parking stall widths for on-street parking, as well as impacts to parking and cut-through traffic if Commerce Street from Washington to Union Streets was converted to two-way traffic.

Councilmember McGuire inquired how there were 400 spaces within the Historic Business District. Mr. Riley indicated that this number included public parking, private residential, and private commercial lots.

Mayor Quist commented that the cut-through study did not include Washington Street, even though it is a known problem. She indicated that based on the time and cost of the study, Council wanted to focus on the area that had the most impact and then based on that information, decide to continue to look at cut-through traffic.

Councilmember McGuire inquired about the recommendation to install signage to direct the public to park in private lots. Ms. Ray indicated that this could come in the form of a directory that would require the private owners to agree to allow their patrons to use that parking. She also indicated that this would allow for some open spaces for on-street parking.

Councilmember McGuire inquired about the recommendation to have individuals walk and bike into Occoquan. He stated that because of the location of the town, there are only a limited number of people, mostly residents or just outside of town limits, which would be able to walk or bike into the town. Mr. Riley indicated that the purpose of these suggestions is to make some impact. He stated that Ashland, a town near Richmond, has individuals that bike 20 to 30 miles to get there, they eat and then bike home. He stated he could see Occoquan being that destination for Northern Virginia. Ms. Ray also indicated that these suggestions are something that may only affect a couple of people per recommendation, but when combined, could have significant impacts. Ms. Jovanovich stated that with the improvement of sidewalks and intersections, more town residents and those just outside of town limits would be encouraged to walk instead of drive. This would allow more parking for individuals that need to drive.

Councilmember Drakes inquired about the recommendation to have reverse angled parking. He wanted to know if there was any place in Prince William or Fairfax Counties that utilized reverse angled parking. Ms. Ray stated that they would have to do some research and respond with that information.

Councilmember McGuire inquired how a proposed new development with 65 parking spaces designated for public parking would change their recommendations. Ms. Ray stated that this would not change their recommendations and would further encourage more improvements to the walkability of the Historic Business District. Mayor Quist also inquired if JMT could look at the Town Code and current parking requirements to see if they are adequate for what is being proposed. Mr. Riley stated that they would review the numbers and give an opinion.

Councilmember McGuire inquired about the number of surveys that were received for the study. Mr. Riley indicated that there were 134 surveys completed, 90 were citizen surveys and 44 were business surveys.

B. Treasurer's Report - FY2017 Draft End of Year Report

Mayor Quist stated that the General Fund actual Net Income is \$29,676 above budget. Mayor Quist brought attention to Meals Tax Revenue being nearly \$38,000 above budget. She also stated that the Town has increased traffic and parking enforcement, which has led to public safety fines to come in at about \$21,000 above budget. Ms. Rodriguez stated that Service Revenue and Expenditures for Engineering are high because the Town was still receiving money for River Mill Park construction from Prince William County. Mayor Quist stated that in the Revenue "Other" category there was \$18,770 mostly received from insurance.

Ms. Jovanovich brought attention to the expenditure within the Historic District category for \$10,500 was for gaslight maintenance. Mayor Quist stated that legal services are higher than budget because of litigation, FOIA, and property acquisition.

Councilmember Drakes inquired if the Building Official Revenue and Expense were accurate. Ms. Jovanovich stated that category still needs to be reviewed as this report is still considered draft. The final end of year financial report will be provided to Council at the November work session.

Councilmember Drakes inquired why River Mill Park was \$8,000 over budget. Ms. Jovanovich stated it was utility cost overages as the cost to run the electric heaters was significant since the heaters were not operating properly due to issues with the thermostats. The problem with the heaters has been resolved.

C. Community Support Budget Discussion

This budget account was created to help support the town's business community by using a portion of the revenue generated from the increased meals tax rate. Ms. Jovanovich stated that the intent was to host meetings with the business community and identify what they needed and how the town could assist. She stated that the Town has previously used the funds to clear snow from on-street parking during the January 2016 snow storm, as well as placing an ad at the request of the business guild. Ms. Jovanovich and Ms. Little have started planning meetings with the business community to begin in January in an effort to identify ways the Town can assist the businesses in Occoquan.

D. Block the Box Cameras Discussion

Councilmember McGuire stated that he met with Senator Surovell about placing cameras at the intersection of Route 123 and Commerce Street for violations of blocking the intersection. It was suggested that the Town request an update to the Town Charter. Mr. McGuire stated that if the Town Charter is updated and approved by the Virginia General Assembly, then an amendment to the Virginia State Code would not be required. Mr. McGuire stated that the process was also verified by the Town Attorney, Martin Crim. Town Council discussed whether or not other changes could be made to the Town Charter at this time.

Town staff stated that a communication from the Virginia Department of Transportation stated that they would not place cameras on their equipment unless explicitly authorized by the Virginia Code. Mr. Simmons indicated that the Town Attorney Martin Crim expressed reservations about what the cost to the Town would be for installing and maintaining the cameras and data it collects. He also stated that the bidding process could be difficult. Town Staff also indicated that this would put a strain on resources for retaining the data and staff time for possible increased FOIA requests.

Town Council also discussed different means to gain compliance at the intersection to include having a police officer sit at the intersection. Ms. Jovanovich stated that there are implementation costs that are unknown at this time. She requested that Council allow staff to research implementation costs to provide to Council prior to directing legal to prepare amendments to the Town Charter. The Town Manager was directed to bring implementation cost estimates to the Town Council during its November work session. The legislative agenda needs to be completed and ready for the Virginia General Assembly before Session begins in January.

3. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Christopher Coon, Town Clerk