



PLANNING COMMISSION

Work Session

Cape Charles Civic Center

November 18, 2019

3:00 p.m.

At 3:00 p.m., Chairman Bill Stramm, having established a quorum, called to order the Work Session of the Planning Commission. In addition to Chairman Stramm, present were Commissioners Diane D'Amico, Paul Grossman, Jim Holloway and Michael Strub. Dennis McCoy and Sandra Salopek were not in attendance. Also, in attendance were Town Planner Zach Ponds and Deputy Clerk Tracy Outten. There were no members of the public in attendance.

CONSENT AGENDA

Motion made by Paul Grossman, seconded by Jim Holloway, to approve the agenda format as presented. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

A. *Comprehensive Plan Update*

Zach Ponds gave an overview of the outline he provided based on the City of Woodstock, Georgia's comprehensive plan. (Please see attached.) Bill Stramm asked the population of Woodstock; about 30,000.

Discussion was as follows: (i) Jim Holloway confirmed that an executive summary would be included in the comprehensive plan. (ii) Paul Grossman found community survey results were included in many of the plans he has researched. Bill Stramm thought that would be a good idea. Mike Strub said it could be worded something like "as affirmed by the community." There was much discussion on how the survey results could be included in the comprehensive plan. (iii) Bill Stramm brought to the Commission's attention that in Wisconsin the comprehensive plan was dictated on a state level; and (iv) Paul Grossman said Council was addressing a capital improvement plan.

Discussion on chapter updates were as follows: (i) Bill Stramm read through the headings that were included under Transportation. (Please see attached.) (ii) Mike Strub did not have much to go on for the Environment chapter. (Please see attached.) Bill Stramm suggested including information from the Town Code; and information about the wetlands area, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, sea level rise, and maps. (iii) Jim Holloway said for Land Use he would be focusing on the areas that need more strategic direction and update when necessary. Paul Grossman suggested looking at the Harbor Conceptual Plan. Jim Holloway thought the chapter would be about 15-20 pages. Zach Ponds mentioned including a future land use map to guide rezoning should be included too. (iv) Diane D'Amico asked if recreational bike trails would be included in the Transportation chapter or the Community Facilities chapter. Bill Stramm answered trails would be included in the Transportation chapter. Diane D'Amico was scheduled to talk to Dave Fauber. Bill Stramm suggested contacting Bob Panek, Steve Bennett, and John Coker. (v) Paul Grossman had taken each of the comprehensive plan examples and outlined the Housing section. There was some discussion on affordable housing. (vi) Bill Stramm said Dennis McCoy had emailed his goals and outlines for the Economy chapter. (Please see attached.) and (vii) Bill Stramm said to make sure there was enough time to schedule focus groups. He would send an email with items from the Virginia Code on what should be in the comprehensive plan. Bill Stramm added that there would not be a work session in December.

Motion made by Paul Grossman, seconded by Jim Holloway, to adjourn the Planning Commission Work Session. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

The meeting adjourned at 4:32 p.m.

Chairman Bill Stramm

Deputy Clerk

Town Planner Zach Ponds' Outline

Overview

- History of Cape Charles
- Purpose of the Comprehensive Plan Update (state code, former plans, etc.)
- Community Goals
 - o Vision Overview/Statement
 - o Needs and Opportunities
 - SWOT analysis of all chapters: transportation, etc.
- Core Issues and Guiding Principles and Policies (maybe) – could come out of community survey
- Trends in Cape Charles Overview
 - o Population
 - o Economic Development
 - o Transportation
 - o Housing
 - o Land Use
- Community Engagement
 - o Online survey, planning committee sessions/meetings, workshops, etc.

TRANSPORTATION

Introduction

As in all areas, the local transportation network has played a key role in shaping many aspects of Cape Charles. Since the town's inception, the harbor and the railroad have served as important regional transportation facilities that have created an environment conducive to the physical and economic growth of the town. The historic street grid system and its arterial connections to the regional street system have also been important in the transportation of people and goods. These elements of the transportation system will continue to play an essential role in the future of Cape Charles.

Existing Roadway System

Recent Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) data¹¹ indicates that although traffic is expected to increase as population and seasonal activity increase, the town's 2020 Transportation Plan does not anticipate that the capacity of the town's street system will be exceeded in the foreseeable future. However, increased traffic may result in need upgrades for certain areas, such as the intersection of Fig Street and Randolph Avenue and the portion of Route 642 known as "the hump."

Other features of the local transportation system may also require improvements. Alley ownership in the Historic District needs to be completed so that a plan for improvements and maintenance can be created. Improvements to the town's sidewalks and multi-use paths are also needed to support alternative means of transportation such as walking, biking, and golf cart usage, which area expected to be used more frequently as the population increases.

The local transportation system links the town to the rest of the region. Routes 184 and 642, the town's two main arterial roads, intersect Route 13. Since Route 13 and portions of Routes 184 and 642 are outside the town's boundaries, the town must continue to work with VDOT and Northampton County as they plan for the future of these roads.

Cape Charles was in the transportation business for most of its early life. Train, ferry and automobile transportation were the reasons for the town's existence. More than 230,000 railcars moved through Cape Charles per year in the 1920s. That equates to about one barge load each hour of the day every day of the year. During the height of the automobile and passenger ferry business, Cape Charles had about 30 ferry dockings per day and each carried about 100 cars plus people.

The core of Cape Charles is a part of town that is six blocks by seven blocks laid out about 1885 before automobiles. The streets are distinctive to that time period. An addition of eleven blocks between Pine Street and the Chesapeake Bay, called the Sea Cottage Addition, was constructed about 1909. This addition took into consideration automobiles and added alleys between the backs of the lots. Another small addition from Fig to Fulcher Streets, made later, also had alleys. The original design and layout of the town was adjacent to and just north of the railroad and its property, around which Cape Charles came into being.

The recent revisal of Cape Charles and the current and planned future development focused serious attention to this infrastructure. A 2008 traffic study of future development shows that the Fig Street and Randolph Avenue intersection is the most vulnerable. A traffic calming project is needed at this intersection.

The “hump” has been a signature feature of town for years but is another problem area. An at-grade crossing alternative has been proposed and should be designed to straighten out Old Cape Charles Road from Mason Avenue to Bay Creek. The “hump” should be maintained as an alternate emergency vehicular route.

Entrance Corridor

The Town of Cape Charles is situated at the terminus of Route 184 (Stone Road) just two miles from its intersection with Route 13, the main transportation corridor of the Eastern Shore. This intersection is the gateway to the town and it is the main entry corridor. Cape Charles is working with the county to create an Overlay District to protect these two sections of roadway as outlined in the Annexation Agreement of 1991. The corridor of land lying between Route 13 and the town boundary constitutes the edge of town. This corridor is also bounded on the north and south by King’s Creek and Plantation Creek. The HTE District also includes Route 642 (Old Cape Charles Road), the south entrance to town.

Northampton County has designated this area as Town Edge and recommends this area as “future growth” for the county. Cape Charles desires to protect this corridor from commercial development while allowing the deployment of services such as water and sewer. Cape Charles desires to protect the view shed along these corridors so as to maintain the disconnection from Route 13.

Traffic Volume

The town has identified Mason Avenue and Bay Avenue for future street improvements. The Healthy People, Healthy Places – Community Well Being on Virginia’s Eastern Shore report defines Complete Streets as roads that are designed for everyone, including people of all ages and abilities. These improvements should be designed to i) promote safety, 2) increase parking, 3) improve bicycle, pedestrian and disabled person access, and 4) create an attractive and desirable environment for residents and visitors. Identified Mason Avenue Complete Street improvements include conversion of parallel parking to reverse angle parking on one side of the street, addition of bicycle lane(s), reduction in lane width to calm traffic, provision of accessible parking, and aesthetic improvements that promote pedestrian safety. Bay Avenue is a priority for Complete Street improvements after Mason Avenue planning has been completed. Increased parking in the vicinity of the harbor should be addressed as the next priority.

Traffic Projections

A town-wide, integrated system of bike routes, sidewalks, and multi-use paths is needed to connect existing and emerging commercial and residential areas to accommodate and promote alternative means of transportation including:

- o walking
- o bicycling
- o golf carts (designated Golf Cart Paths only)
- o personal transportation vehicles
- o water taxis
- o public transportation

Sidewalks

Community Trail

The size of Cape Charles lends itself to walking and bike riding. A Community Trail Master Plan was adopted by the Town Council in 2007. The goal of this trail is to connect the entire town by a transportation means other than automobiles. The master plan and the first phase of the Community Trail are complete, and the second phase is underway.

The town's Harbor District requires land owners to allow and encourage pedestrian access to the waterfront. Each development will be reviewed for this aspect of planning. The town was laid out in a grid pattern and the continuation of the grid is important to the transportation system while providing easy access to all parts of town.

Harbor

The south side of Mason Avenue shall provide a visually inviting connection to the harbor for all modes of transportation.

Rail

Parking

The town has purchased 201 Mason Avenue and two lots on Randolph Avenue were included in the sale. The Randolph Avenue lots will be used for additional parking. The town has also leased property from Bay Coast Railroad for Mason Avenue parking.

Star Transit

STAR Transit has a bus route that connect major towns, including Cape Charles, and the commercial areas of Northampton and Accomack counties. This service provides public transportation and is limited to the two counties.

Golf Carts

Cape Charles is a golf cart community. Each year, more are seen on the streets and their use should be encouraged as an alternative mode of local transportation. There are a few roadways on which golf carts are currently prohibited because of speed limits greater than 25 mph. All roadways in Cape Charles should have the speed reduced to 25 mph or less to allow the use of golf carts on all streets in the town. Old Cape Charles Road (Route 642) is an impediment to use of golf carts. A safe path needs to be planned to connect the historic town with the southern development.

AN/PDC Bicycle Master Plan

The Southern Tip Hike & Bike Trail is located on the Eastern Shore of Virginia Wildlife Refuge and connects to Kiptopeke State Park. There are plans to extend the trail further north along the abandoned railway. The abandoned portion of the railway does not extend into Cape Charles. However, the town intends to work with regional partners to promote a connection of the town's Community Trail to the regional Southern Tip Hike & Bike Trail.

Areas of Improvement

VDOT Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)

The Commonwealth of Virginia (Code of Virginia § 33.2-214 and § 15.2-2223), legislation enacted through Chapter 729 of the 2012 Acts of Assembly, requires that local Comprehensive Plans be consistent with the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) statewide Transportation Plan (VTrans 2035) and includes certain elements required by the Code of Virginia, as amended. This plan also designates Corridors of Statewide Significance but there is not designated corridor within the town. The closest corridor (Route 13) lies to the east of town.

The town has identified four projects to implement goals and objectives of the VTrans 2035 Plan.

- Traffic calming at the intersection of Fig Street and Randolph Avenue (routes 184, 1105 and 1112).
- Reconstruction of Old Cape Charles Road (Route 642).
- Complete Street to support business activity in Downtown Cape Charles on Mason Avenue (Route 184).
- Street improvements to support tourist activity at the Cape Charles beach on Bay Avenue (Route 184).

Functional Classification of Cape Charles Streets

Functional classification of the highway system is required by the federal government as part of the establishment of a national defense road system. Roads are designated by VDOT and certain classifications make the road eligible to receive federal aid for improvements and maintenance, increase the frequency of VDOT maintenance inspections and also determine road design features.

Minor Arterial

VDOT defines Minor Arterial streets as streets that link cities to large towns and other generators such as major resorts, are placed at intervals so that all developed area of the state are within a reasonable distance of an arterial highway provide service to corridors with trip lengths and densities greater than those of collectors, and are expected to provide for relatively higher overall speeds, with minimum interference to through movement.

Route 184 (Stone Road, Mason Avenue) has, as of 2013, been reclassified to Minor Arterial. The upgrade in classification, part of the required decennial review of the national highway system, was the result of finding that the roads have higher volumes of traffic. The designation includes all of Stone Road I Cape Charles and continues along Route 184 westward until the intersection of Mason Avenue and Pine Street.

Major Collector

VDOT defines Major Collector streets as streets that provide service to any county seat not on the arterial system and to larger towns not directly served by higher systems, link county seats and larger towns to other larger towns and nearby routes of higher classification, and area designed to serve the more important intra-county travel corridors.

Route 184 from the intersection of Mason Avenue and Pine Street to its end on Bay Avenue has been upgraded in classification to Major Collector as a result of finding that the roads have higher volumes of traffic.

Route 642 (Old Cape Charles Road) remains a Major Collector along its entire length. No change in classification occurred in 2013.

Local Roads

VDOT defines Local Roads as roads that provide direct access to adjacent land, serves travel over relatively short distances compared to collectors and other higher systems and include all facilities not on one of the higher systems.

All roads in Cape Charles, except Routes 184 and 642, are classified as Local Roads.

The purpose of the long-range plan is to evaluate the rural transportation network and create a plan that complements Virginia's metropolitan areas. The plan is a component of the VTrans 2035. The plan contains one recommendation for the Town of Cape Charles.

VA 642 (Old Cape Charles Road) from VA 1108 to US 13

Long Term – Reconstruct road to address geometric deficiencies (including full-width lanes and shoulders).

Six Year Improvement Plan – Only one project has been identified in the Six Year Improvement Plan, reconstruction of Old Cape Charles Road. Preliminary engineering is underway and VDOT estimates the cost to be \$6,452,000.

Goals, Objectives, Policies

Cape Charles Comprehensive Plan Update

Environment

Chesapeake Bay - Covering nearly 200 miles from Baltimore to Cape Charles with an average width of 30 miles, the Chesapeake Bay is the life blood of our town. It is more important to the town's survival than the other environmental components combined. Its tributaries and creeks infuse the area with a sense of health and well-being that is very precarious. Like the blood in our bodies, the chemical composition of the salt-water of the bay is very delicate and sensitive to slight variations. The bay is defenseless against unwelcome deposits which occur daily and which poison the water. According to data submitted to the US environmental protection agency in 2014, 80% of the Chesapeake Bay's title segments are partially or fully impaired by toxic contaminants. The November 2019 issue of AARP bulletin contains a special report entitled "The Cure for Everything" With respect to environmental effects on the human body, it mentions that pollution, air and water quality, environmental allergies, and a host of other environmental factors can trigger and sustain inflammation, including damage to the healthy cells in our body. A 1981 report by the American Universities Field Staff details the devastating effects on the South Padre Island (Texas) economy from the blowout of a Mexican oil well in the Gulf of Mexico in 1979. The damage to our local economy from the toxicity of the Chesapeake Bay water could range anywhere from a temporary annoyance such as closing the beach in the summer for a day or two to a significant decrease in the tourist trade and even possibly loss of economic life with our town left as a ghost town, a not uncommon phenomenon in our country.

Since the water in the Chesapeake Bay is not partitioned, pollutants which affect the water quality in the dumping area affect the entire body of water. Unfortunately, the pollutants from the poultry-farm based economy interests of our neighboring county to the north, Accomack County, threaten the fishing and wildlife interests of our county (Northampton) and town (Cape Charles). A January 2019 report by Waterfront Law on large poultry farming operations on Accomack County concludes that the massive amount of manure waste generated by large poultry farming operations will increase as poultry farms increase on the Eastern shore with associated environmental harm. In addition, the poultry farms remove significant quantities of ground water from the aquifers that serve as the sole source of freshwater for the Virginian Eastern shore. Nevertheless, the negative impacts to the environment are offset by the economic benefits to residents of the Eastern shore. This report's conclusion reveals the cross-county tensions that exist with respect to the conflicting economies. Thus, a constant, challenging, and delicate balancing strategy must be devised and implemented to ensure that harmful economic impacts from pollutants to the bay and harmful economic impacts from excessive poultry farming restrictions are minimized.

Much effort is being expended by local, county, state and federal governments as well as charitable organizations to maintain the sustainability of the bay so that crabs, oysters, and clams may flourish, beaches may be populated, and waterman may earn their keep. One of the key goals of our environment is to intensify the monitoring of all measures of the bay's health and take whatever steps are necessary to ensure its continued health. The Waterfront Law report concludes, "Any real progress is more likely to be made at the grassroots level rather than in Richmond or Washington DC. The ways for this to come about include citizen participation in the issuance and/or renewal of permits issued under the ground water management act of 1992, participation in the issuance and/or renewal of the VPDES (Virginia Pollution Discharge Elimination System) permits, court challenges if

these permits are lenient in ways that contravene the governing statutes and grassroots public pressure.”

Other Natural Resources - Also of note, critical wildlife habitats such as wetlands, natural areas, and the public beach, or present within the town’s boundaries and nearby. The town’s concern for its natural resources is illustrated by projects to maintain the beach as well as participation in Virginia’s Clean Marino program. Land-use policies must continue to take into account the importance of the local environment to protect these resources for present and future generations.

Dennis McCoy Comprehensive Plan Economy Draft Goals and Topic Outlines

tracy.outten@capecharles.org

From: Dennis McCoy <dennis.mccoy@mindspring.com>
Sent: Tuesday, November 12, 2019 12:33 PM
To: 'Tracy Outten'
Subject: 23019 Comp Plan Economy Draft Goals and Topic Outlines

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Hi Tracy,

Economy Draft Goals:

- #1 - Attract Tourists, Vacation and Second Homeowners
- #2 - Attract families with children
- #3 - Continue to foster Prosperity and Strengthen Households

Economy Topic Outlines:

- #1 - a). Work with Eastern Shore of Virginia Tourism and others to promote Cape Charles - Cape Charles Comprehensive Plan 2016
- #1 - b). Work with Cape Charles Main Street as a force multiplier on this topic
- #2 - a). Education - The quality of public schools in the region create a challenge to recruit new residents whether they are young families or singles - CCMS Market Study 2018
- #2 - b). Consider working with the Northampton School System to implement the Escuela Nueva learning model which has worked well in Columbia (or the North America equivalent) - <https://govinsider.asia/connected-gov/four-ways-improve-rural-education/>
- #3 - a). Appoint a housing task force to evaluate the causes of cost-burdened households in town and provide recommendations to strengthen households - Paul Grossman's Economic Revitalization SWOT
- #3 - b). Consider working with Northampton County to designate a Residential District for manufactured housing near Cape Charles as a way to provide workforce housing.

Let me know if you have any questions.

Thanks,
Dennis McCoy