



PLANNING COMMISSION
Joint Meeting with
Northampton County Planning Commission
Social Services Building in Eastville
August 19, 2013

At approximately 7:00 p.m. in a conference room at the Northampton County Social Services Building, Chairman Dennis McCoy, having established a quorum, called to order the Joint Meeting with the Northampton County Planning Commission. In attendance were Commissioners Andy Buchholz, Dan Burke, Joan Natali, Sandra Salopek, Bill Stramm and Mike Strub. Also present were Town Planner Rob Testerman and Town Clerk Libby Hume. In attendance from the Northampton County Planning Commission were Chairwoman Martina Coker, Jacqueline Chatmon, Roberta Kellam, Dixon Leatherbury, Sylvia Stanley, Mike Ward, Director of Economic Development Charles McSwain, Long Range Planner Peter Stith and Clerk to the Planning Commission Kay Downing. There were nine members of the public in attendance.

Introductions were made around the table for the benefit of all in attendance.

Rob Testerman thanked the Northampton County Planning Commission and staff for taking the time to meet with the Cape Charles Planning Commission and went on to state that there was a concern in the Town regarding development along U.S. Route 13 and how it could affect the businesses in the Town and asked the County Commissioners to keep this concern in mind during their planning process. Included in the information provided for this meeting were the draft Historic Entrance Corridor Overlay District language, excerpt from the Annexation Agreement which outlined how the Town and County would work together regarding commercial development "within one mile in each direction of the intersection of Route 13 and Route 184," an overlay summary and suggested language for the County Comprehensive Plan.

Peter Stith stated that it was good to get together to resume conversation especially since there were some new Commissioners and new staff on both Commissions.

Mike Strub stated that the 2010 Census showed no sense of growth in either County on the Eastern Shore and asked about the need for requiring economic development along Route 13 and where the anticipated growth was coming from.

Bill Stramm stated that currently the Northampton County Comprehensive Plan stated that the County was trying to drive businesses into the Towns and asked if the County was still leaning in this direction.

Martina Coker stated that the County was in the process of redoing the Comprehensive Plan. They were working on the economic development chapter and in the process of reviewing feedback from the public input meetings. Public Hearings would be held after the Comprehensive Plan had been drafted. The timeframe for completion of the draft was discussed and Peter Stith stated that he did not anticipate that it would be finalized by the end of this year.

Dan Burke stated that the important businesses needed to be protected, such as Rayfield's Pharmacy and asked if there was a way to include language to preclude a chain pharmacy from opening up on the highway. Roberta Kellam stated that it would be very difficult to prohibit pharmacies from the commercial district. Martina Coker commented that she had heard a lot about Rayfield's and its vulnerability if a chain drug store opened on the highway and added that she did not believe that the County could disallow chain establishments from the area. Dan Burke added

that the Town also had a historic hardware store that could be affected. Martina Coker noted that Cheriton also had an old hardware store.

There was some discussion regarding the Northampton County Public Service Authority (PSA) and the proposed regional wastewater system utilizing the Cape Charles Wastewater Plant for the southern node. Currently the proposed service area included commercial properties along the U.S. Route 13 corridor. Roberta Kellam explained that the County Planning Commission had not reviewed the sewer extension and the thoughts of the Board of Supervisors had not been presented or explained to the Commission. Roberta Kellam went on to state that she had heard two arguments: i) It would be good for Cape Charles if a hotel was built on the highway because it would bring people into the Town; and ii) It would be bad for Cape Charles if competing businesses were located along the highway.

Andy Buchholz commented that the PSA and the corridor overlay were two different issues. The PSA would facilitate an environment for people to build along the highway, but added that he did not see any immediate growth in the area. Adding more competing businesses would not work because there weren't enough full-time people in the area to sustain numerous competing businesses. Hotels would hurt the bed & breakfasts. The new owner of Aqua was planning to build a 50-100 room hotel at the Kings Creek Marina. Andy Buchholz added that the Cape Charles Town Council did not bring the PSA information to the Planning Commission for review either, but the PSA would have a big effect on the Town and its businesses. Martina Coker stated that since the Town owned the wastewater plant, why couldn't it limit the area of service regardless of what the PSA did. Andy Buchholz added that the Town had an agreement with the PSA and continued to express his concern that the current plant's capacity was not enough to service the Town when it reached build-out and almost reached capacity during the summer months. Joan Natali interjected that the plant was built for easy expansion with the addition of bio filters. The current capacity of the plant should be good for another 10-15 years at the current rate of growth. Projections could only be made based on current information.

There was some discussion regarding the Town's population during the summer months vs. the remainder of the year and it was noted that the Town's population almost tripled in numbers during the summer, not including day visitors. Dennis McCoy stated that there had been a pretty drastic increase in business activity over the last two years and the Town was on the upswing.

The discussion went on regarding development in the Harbor area. There were several large parcels, i.e., the Gallagher and Landmark Holdings properties, which could be developed and impact the Town's population and water and sewer capacity.

Joan Natali mentioned the construction of the Harbor Access Road which had just been approved and funded by VDOT through 2020 and added that the County was instrumental in getting the road approved. It could be built sooner if additional funding could be obtained. Charles McSwain added that a meeting was held recently in an effort to push the road project forward but no commitments had been received as yet.

Roberta Kellam referenced the document relating to the Corridor Overlay of Routes 184, 642 and 13 and asked what the basis was for including the additional area. Joan Natali stated that item #14 of the Annexation Agreement detailed "the creation of a special zoning district along Route 184 into the Town and along Route 13 within one mile of each direction of the intersection of Route 13 and Route 184."

Martina Coker asked how much available undeveloped and vacant commercial property there was in the Town. Andy Buchholz stated that there were about 4-5 vacant properties along Mason Avenue, but the majority of the south side of Mason Avenue and the Harbor District was undeveloped.

Roberta Kellam asked the Cape Charles Commissioners what they saw as a good vision for the area to have a positive impact to both the Town and County. Andy Buchholz commented that he would like to see businesses and growth driven into the towns and off the highway where people could see the towns, stay overnight and possibly buy property within the town.

Dennis McCoy stated that it would make sense to consider the types of businesses desirable to have on the highway. The nature of the businesses would keep the customers there for more than just a short time (other than a stop at McDonald's, etc.) and would complement the businesses within the town. Signage could be placed in the area along the highway to direct people into the Town to see what was available.

Dan Burke stated that there had been some discussion regarding an outlet mall which would not have too much impact on the businesses in the Town and could bring people into Town.

Joan Natali referred to language in the County's current comprehensive plan regarding limiting development on Route 13 and directing businesses to key locations within the towns. This was a major concern for the Town of Cape Charles and probably other towns in the County as well. Joan Natali went on to state that she was not sure of a mix of businesses that could work along the highway and added that there were people out there who dealt with this type of thing to keep towns thriving but also increase the economic development in the County.

Roberta Kellam stated that she had lived here for 5 years and Cape Charles was doing well. The Town was a huge attraction, especially in the summer. She went on to ask whether the Town had studied the tourism population and what it could look like in the next 5 years. Dennis McCoy responded that the Town would also begin its Comprehensive Plan update process soon and would be looking at the populations, etc. Andy Buchholz added that Cape Charles was a pretty inexpensive place to go on vacation and offered a beach, boating, fishing, golfing, etc. It was much more costly to travel to the Outer Banks or Virginia Beach. Sandra Salopek also added that the Harbor brought in more and more people.

Bill Stramm read from a report compiled by the former Town Planner Tom Bonadeo which stated that the Town had 958 houses, 516 of which were occupied by full-time residents. 442 were unoccupied full-time but 402 of them were vacation rentals. Dan Burke stated that the Town's population also surged during events adding that there were over 5K people in the Town for the 4th of July.

Martina Coker stated that there were probably quite a few day trippers and added that she was amazed at the number of people in town for the Tall Ships event. The tourism in the County would also impact the Town. Cape Charles was the center of activity and it seemed that we were benefitting on the unfortunate effect of Hurricane Sandy.

There was discussion regarding the potential growth for residential properties in Cape Charles. Joan Natali stated that there were a couple dozen undeveloped residential lots in the historic part of Town and Bay Creek was about a third built out. Bay Creek was designed for 3K lots and there were currently 2,700 building sites and about 700 houses were built. 12 more permits had been pulled for new houses in Bay Creek over the next several months in addition to the Beach Club which was under construction. If the economy continued to increase or even level off, the Beach Club would be a pull for people to buy in Cape Charles. There were two areas of concern – the school system if the people had children and health care if people were of retirement age. Both issues needed to be addressed.

Dennis McCoy stated that the Cape Charles Planning Commission needed to spend more time thinking about the boundary with Cape Charles and the County and how we would like to see it in the future.

Roberta Kellam noted that she was on the County Planning Commission when Corridor Overlay language was originally drafted and remembered when the language was reviewed and their changes were reflected in the handout included in the packet. Martina Coker added that the Town of Smithfield had some good information regarding an entrance corridor overlay district. Joan Natali agreed and stated that the Town often referenced information from Smithfield.

Mike Ward stated that parts of Bay Creek had been sold and asked if there had been any discussion with Sinclair regarding what their plans were. Joan Natali stated that she lived in Bay Creek and was the representative for her village and everything that she had heard indicated that Sinclair wanted to continue working with Richard Foster and agreed with his vision for the development. She also heard that the new owner of the Kings Creek Marina was continuing with Richard Foster's plan.

Roberta Kellam asked if there were any plans for the Town to extend the bike path from the highway into the Town, or possibly create a linear park into the Town. Rob Testerman stated that he had spoken with Councilman Frank Wendell last week who had the same thought. The County's trail began at Kiptopeke and ran parallel to Route 13 north and it would be nice to have the path come into the Town. He had emailed Sue Rice with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and she informed him that their plan was to bring the path into Cape Charles.

Joan Natali brought up the language regarding protection of the view sheds in the overlay corridor because she believed the drive in to Cape Charles from the highway was inviting without any buildings and the crape myrtles lining both sides of the road made a nice entrance into Town. Cape Charles was the only town in the County with no presence on Route 13. Joan Natali stated that we needed a way to invite people to come into Town.

Martina Coker asked the Cape Charles Planning Commission to work on their ideas and language and submit it for their review as soon as possible so they could review it as part of their Comprehensive Plan.

Rob Testerman stated that the Cape Charles Planning Commission was winding down on their review of the sign ordinance and the Town Council, at their last meeting, identified the top 2 priorities for the Planning Commission as development of the corridor overlay district and review/update of the Comprehensive Plan.

Martina Coker also asked for any other thoughts regarding desirable and undesirable businesses for the Route 13 corridor. Joan Natali added that it would be good to include the new proposed access road in the plans as well.

Dennis McCoy thanked the County Planning Commission and staff for taking the time to meet to discuss this issue.

Motion made by Bill Stramm, seconded by Andy Buchholz, to adjourn the Cape Charles Planning Commission meeting. The motion was approved by unanimous consent.

Chairman Dennis McCoy

Town Clerk