



PLANNING COMMISSION
Comprehensive Plan Public Input Session
Cape Charles Civic Center
February 22, 2016
6:00 p.m.

At 6:00 p.m. Chairman Dennis McCoy, having established a quorum, called to order the Comprehensive Plan Public Input Session. In addition to Chairman McCoy, present were Commissioners Joan Natali, Sandra Salopek, Michael Strub and Bill Stramm. Commissioner Andy Buchholz arrived at 6:15 p.m. Commissioner Dan Burke was not in attendance. Also in attendance were Town Planner Larry DiRe, Town Clerk Libby Hume and Ms. Elaine Meil, Executive Director of the Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission (ANPDC). There were five members of the public in attendance.

Dennis McCoy announced that the purpose of this evening's meeting was to obtain public input regarding the proposed Comprehensive Plan Update. Ms. Meil would give an overview of the significant changes from the last public input sessions in November and December 2014 but there would be dialogue with the public throughout the session.

Ms. Meil began by stating that the Commonwealth of Virginia required localities to update their comprehensive plan every five years. The current update process for the Town began with the Commissioners conducting a preliminary review from November 2013 through March 2014. The Town contracted with the ANPDC to facilitate the review process and that work began in April 2014 and meetings continued through the summer and culminated with two public input sessions in November and December 2014. The input received was taken into consideration and additional changes were made to the draft comprehensive plan. The draft plan was then forwarded to the Town Council for their review and their comments were incorporated. There were many minor revisions such as formatting, name changes, subdivision changes, etc. Ms. Meil continued to report on the major revisions as follows:

- Information regarding cost-burdened households from the 2010 Census was added. The housing crisis of 2008 came after the last comprehensive plan was adopted.
- Some new language was added to direct the Town to pursue the connection of Mason Avenue to the Harbor if there was ever a change in land use in the area.
- The Harbor Access Road was added.
- Two new goals were added – attract families with children and to continue to foster prosperity in households.
- Information taken from the *2012 Healthy People, Healthy Places Community Well-Being on Virginia's Eastern Shore*, more commonly known as the Walkability Study, was added in regards to transportation, including the changes that had occurred regarding parking.
- The Chapter 729 consistency review, which was a transportation edit required by VDOT. VDOT had to review the draft comprehensive plan because of the Harbor Access Road project. The next time, this review should not be necessary since the Harbor Road project should be complete.
- A new strategy was added to connect the Town through bicycles to the Southern Tip Bike Trail. Efforts to pursue the project were included in the draft plan.
- The upcoming relocation of the hospital and change in situation was difficult to incorporate. Strategies were incorporated to increase the Town's work with Northampton County to address medical care, etc.
- Quite a few changes were made in regards to Town-owned properties. The minutes were reviewed to obtain descriptions of the properties and their use.
- Baseline demographic data was added to the appendix.
- The Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) was added as well.

Public input was received as follows:

Phil Goetkin (602 Jefferson Avenue) stated that he and his wife were new-comers to the Town. Their house was completed in June. Their experiences from being in Cape Charles far exceeded what they thought and they were happy about being here. They were not in Town for the initial public input meetings and just read the draft comprehensive plan today. Mr. Goetkin provided input as follows:

- He felt that the plan generally provided a great vision but wasn't sure how realistic it was, but it was better than setting the sights too low.
- He had difficulty following the information online and wasn't able to view the map. He suggested more and better maps so people could relate to it.
- A complete network of sidewalks was a goal, but he wasn't sure if it could be accomplished in our lifetime. There were other ways to get there more quickly. The Town Code stated that the Town Council had the authority to require property owners to install and maintain sidewalks in areas that were missing them. There were possible grants to help property owners with sidewalks.
- There could be more details regarding the Southern Tip Bike Trail.
- There was language regarding nature and other modes of transportation but not a lot of information on how to pursue this was included in the document.
- There was a lot of language regarding access to the water and harbor. Mostly, there was access, except for the lot along Mason Avenue that was owned by the railroad.
- Landscaping and plantings were mentioned in various places in the document. Promoting the use of native plants to help restore and enhance critical habitats was a good idea. He was a former employee of the National Park Service and a landscaper. VDOT had lots of rights-of-way and sometimes there were 10' – 12' between the curb and sidewalk. With guidance, a habitat plan could be developed for these areas. Good work could be done.
- He had mixed emotions regarding the concrete plant. It was an economic driver for the Eastern Shore and provided a lot of jobs, but it was unattractive. Minimal landscaping close to the water or along Mason Avenue could minimize the visual impact of the concrete plant and provide a more attractive view shed. There wasn't much regarding this issue in the plan.
- He was in favor of pursuing the acquisition of undeveloped waterfront lots.
- Regarding the new section talking about attracting families with children, the issue on the Eastern Shore was the quality of the public schools. This wasn't mentioned in the plan. Most families wanted to know about the schools. The plan could state that the Town was supportive of the Northampton County Schools. This was critical for a long-range plan and public schools should be part of the document.
- Overall the plan was a positive for Cape Charles, the Eastern Shore and all who lived here and was a good document.

Tom Weaver (702 Monroe Avenue) stated that he and his wife, Sue, were not yet permanent residents of the Town. They had their home in Charlottesville. Mr. Weaver asked whether this document was sent to the appropriate body to develop and whether there were benchmarks to track the progress. Joan Natali responded that once adopted by the Town Council, the comprehensive plan became the strategic, tactical guidelines for decisions made by Town Council. Projects voted on by the Town Council were supposed to be compared with the comprehensive plan to determine whether they were in support or opposition of the plan. There had been a number of very vocal conversations at Council meetings regarding the contents of the comprehensive plan.

Tom Weaver went on to state that his background was with business plans and added that he would like to know what the strategies of the comprehensive plan actually meant.

Dennis McCoy responded that the comprehensive plan influenced the CIP and it was an issue of what was the most important with the funds and human resources available. The Planning Commission provided the recommendations and guidance and the Town Council made the decisions. Several

projects such as Central Park and the Library had been largely done through volunteerism. The Town was lucky when the Bank of America moved and sold the building to the Town for \$200K. It wasn't perfect, but was renovated for the current library which made the Civic Center possible. The comprehensive plan did not have milestones or measurable results. Some items in the comprehensive plan were lightning rods for discussion and remained in the plan for a good reason. As time moved on, as Town Council worked on their CIP, and as money became available, things would move forward.

Tom Weaver concluded by stating that he appreciated all the effort and time that had gone into the comprehensive plan.

Michael Strub commented that it was nice to see that a lot of the projects from the 2009 plan had been completed, but there was still work to do. As projects became more feasible, they would be included in the CIP. This was not just an exercise for the state requirement. The Town respected and tried to follow the guidelines included in the plan.

Motion made by Michael Strub, seconded by Sandra Salopek, to adjourn the Planning Commission Comprehensive Plan Public Input Session. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

Chairman Dennis McCoy

Town Clerk