

Town of Onancock
Planning Commission Meeting
Tuesday
February 19, 2019
5:30 P.M.

Call to Order and Roll Call:

Chairman Judith Grier called the meeting to order at 5:30 P.M.

Commission members Ridgway Dunton, Larry Frey, Judith Grier, Scott Schreiber and Matt Spuck were present. Commission members Bill Bagwell and Robert Bloxom were absent. A quorum was established. Town Manager William Kerbin was absent. Deputy Clerk Mariellen Mearsheimer was in attendance.

Also attending the meeting were Onancock residents Jeffery Barrett and Jim McGowan, Michelle Covi with RAFT, Brian Swets, Planning Administrator with the City of Portsmouth, Ray and Nancy Rosenberger and an unidentified white male.

Minutes:

Chairman Grier asked for a motion to approve the December 18, 2018 minutes.

Commission member Scott Schreiber made a motion to approve the minutes. Commission member Ridgway Dunton seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by unanimous voice vote.

Items of Business:

A. Standardized Signage for Walking Trail in Onancock – Jeffery Barrett

Onancock resident Jeffery Barrett presented his thoughts on historical signs and a historic walk for the Town. He stated he had talked to Council member Robert Bloxom and Town Mayor Fletcher Fosque about the signs and the historical walk and wanted to speak with the Planning Commission. He stated the Town was founded in the year 1680 so there is a lot of history and some wonderful stories about the town. He would emphasize the social history, how people lived and worked. He also stated historical signs and an historic walk would make the Town more interesting for tourism. Mr. Barrett stated the signs would be standardized and all have the same look. He stated this would be a long-term project and grant funding could be helpful.

Chairman Grier and the Planning Commission members agreed to make it an agenda item in the future.

B. Coastal Resilience Presentation – Brian Swets - Planning Administrator, City of Portsmouth
Michelle Covi with the RAFT Committee introduced Brian Swets, a planning Administrator with the City of Portsmouth. She stated Mr. Swets was invited to present examples from the City of Portsmouth's newly adopted Comprehensive Plan that may help make the Town of Onancock and other localities on the Easter Shore more resilient to flooding and the importance of addressing this issue in our Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Swets gave an overview of the process they went through to develop their Comprehensive Plan called Build One Portsmouth that was adopted in November 2018. He stressed the importance of long-range planning, prioritizing your efforts, public outreach, talking to the

people, being transparent, involving staff, department heads and council members. He also stated the importance of making the plan user friendly, easy to understand.

Mr. Swets discussed several different types of maps they developed for the City, one being flood zone maps. Hampton Roads is required to deal with sea level rise in their comprehensive plans. The City of Portsmouth's flood zone maps show areas that are impacted by frequent flooding from heavy rains, tides, storm surge, and future sea level rise. One of their goals is to develop an inventory of first floor elevations to determine the impact and cost of flooding events on properties. This will help determine what projects to fund (or not fund) and implement to help reduce flooding.

At this point Chairman Grier asked if there were any questions or public comment.

An unidentified member of the audience asked if Mr. Swets used consultants. He answered yes, the project was too big for what he wanted to accomplish and explained how he used the consultants.

A question was asked by an unidentified member of the audience about how they got information from residents. He answered they attended events everywhere in the City asking questions and recording answers with paper and pencils and with white boards and markers.

Commission member Matt Spuck asked if the City had a financial plan that follows their comprehensive plan or do they have this phenomenal vision and no resources to implement it. Mr. Swets answered they were working with the finance department to start retooling the capital improvement plan and their City Manager has expressed support for this.

A unidentified member of the audience asked Mr. Swets how he developed the maps and was the data already available. He answered most of the data was generated themselves working with the consultants.

Chairman Grier asked what challenges we might face being a small town with no consultants based on his experience and did he have any suggestions for what a small town could do. Mr. Swets said to prioritize what we want to do.

Commission member Schreiber asked who the visionary was behind the process and who was championing it to make it happen. Mr. Swets answered he was the visionary and he read a lot of comprehensive plans.

Michelle Covi stated the City of Portsmouth was one of the smaller cities in Hampton Roads and has one of the smallest budgets in that area. She said being resource constrained makes you use your funds more strategically with less waste.

Mr. Swets stated the commission members could get updates about what they are doing by going to www.buildoneportsmouth.org.

Chairman Grier thanked Mr. Swets for his presentation.

C. Comprehensive Plan Review

Chairman Grier introduced Onancock resident Jim McGowan, a Planner with Accomack County. Mr. McGowan has volunteered to help the Planning Commission with updating and organizing the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. McGowan said he helped update the plan in 1990 when he first started working for Accomack County's Planning District Commission. Mr. McGowan stated the main purpose of the Plan is to provide a background for the zoning ordinances. He stated the Comprehensive Plan is the reference the Town uses when planning projects or writing grants.

Discussion followed about getting the town Council and as many people as possible involved in the early stages of development of the comprehensive plan so everyone will buy into it when the time comes to adopt it.

Chairman Grier thanked Mr. McGowan for volunteering.

Chairman Grier asked the members to read the old plan, become familiar with it and be prepared to discuss it at the next meeting.

Public Comment:

None.

Adjourn:

Chairman Judith Grier made a motion to adjourn. Commission member Larry Frey seconded the motion. The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:44 P.M.



Judith Grier, Chair



Mariellen Mearsheimer, Deputy Clerk