

Town of Onancock
Planning Commission Meeting
Tuesday
February 18, 2020
5:30P.M.

Call to Order and Roll Call:

Chairman Judith Grier called the meeting to order at 5:30 P.M.
Commission members Bill Bagwell, Robert Bloxom, Larry Frey, Judith Grier, Scott Schreiber and Matt Spuck were present. Commission member Ridgway Dunton was absent.
Town Manager Bill Kerbin and Deputy Clerk Mariellen Mearsheimer were present.
Onancock residents John Boddie, Mayor Fletcher Fosque and Janet Fosque, Barbara Johnsen and Jim McGowan were also present.

Minutes:

Chairman Grier asked for a motion to approve the January 21, 2020 minutes. Commission member Robert Bloxom made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Commission member Larry Frey seconded the motion. The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote.

Items of Business:

- a. Discussion of the Comprehensive Plan – Draft Resilience Adaptation Feasibility Tool (RAFT) Text
Chairman Grier asked if everyone had read the summary of the RAFT text prepared by Jim McGowan and stated the RAFT text would be part of the Town's Comprehensive Plan.
Mr. McGowan stated he read through the forty-seven page RAFT document and summarized the scores and recommendations from that report. He also read through the Main Street Program and has text for that as well but did not get it sent out to the Commission members. He stated one of his concerns with the RAFT document is with the maps; they show the area but not a lot of detail for Onancock. He stated that the maps show that a lot of the worst problems are outside of Onancock.
Commission member Schreiber asked how the report fits into the Comprehensive Plan?
Commission member Spuck asked if a snapshot in time belonged in the Comprehensive Plan?
Mr. McGowan answered, not necessarily. He stated they made five recommendations and the recommendations could be put in at the end of the plan. The recommendations are to complete the comprehensive plan, design a resilient waterfront, repair the bulkhead and the boat ramp, improved drainage to prevent flooding, and investigate how investments in resilience now will promote economic development in the future. The report indicates 2065 as the date given to make improvements associated with sea level rise but Mr. McGowan was not sure what kind of sea level rise they are talking about. He also stated if the Town wanted to protect the wharf, the parking lot at the wharf would have to be raised. Mr. McGowan asked, how do you time that? Do you wait for it to get bad or plan for it in the future?

Commission member Bagwell stated the Eastern Shore Historical Society is raising the deck seven inches, in front of The Old Hopkins Brothers Store Property at the wharf and it was pointed out to him that any higher and you would have problems with the finger piers, getting on and off boats.

Commission member Schreiber asked how the RAFT plan fit into what residents need to do to protect their property and asked if the Town can require residents to follow standards set for town public properties. Mr. McGowan stated the town could require a certain elevation level or freeboard level and stated that Accomack County had a high rating in the state for flood planning because of extra requirements in the county zoning ordinance. Mr. McGowan stated he is looking at Accomack County's Hazard Mitigation Plan. Mr. McGowan finished by stating the maps in the RAFT plan are more appropriate for County planning than for the Town and the Planning Commission needs better maps of Onancock.

Chairman Grier thanked Mr. McGowan for all his hard work.

b. Preliminary Discussion on Homestays in Business District Downtown (B1)

Chairman Grier had Town Manager William Kerbin read an email sent to the Planning Commission by resident Caleb Fowler (6 Queen Street) who was unable to attend the meeting. (See attached email). In summary the Fowlers intend to submit an application that would permit 58 Market Street being used as an airbnb. They are uncertain about how to apply since 58 Market Street is in the B1 Business district. Mr. Fowler stated the property was built as a private home and as far as anyone knows, it has continually been occupied as a residence. He stated there were three options 1; Add airbnbs as a permitted use in the B1 district by right under Section 24-32. 2; Add airbnbs as a special exception in the B1 district under Section 24-33. 3; Recognize its' defacto residential status and allow the use as a special exception. Mr. Fowler stated in his letter that once they know how the Planning Commission would like to proceed they would submit an application and appear before the Commission.

Commission member Robert Bloxom asked how many residences are in the B1 district?

Commission member Bagwell asked if this would enable someone to buy a building and turn it into a residential structure?

Commission member Spuck asked if we allow mixed use, business downstairs, residence upstairs, would you then be able to make the residence an airbnb?

Commission member Bagwell stated it would not be automatic, you would need a special exception.

Commission member Bagwell stated that the objections to airbnbs are in residential areas and noted that Mr. Fowlers property at 58 Market Street has businesses on all sides.

Commission member Bloxom asked if it could be re-zoned residential since it has always been used as a residence?

Mr. Kerbin stated Town Attorney John Custis was looking into that.

Commission member Scott Schreiber asked what the Commission members thoughts were about spot zoning?

Mayor Fosque pointed out that the Fowlers residence at 6 Queen Street which is in Residential 1A shares a border with the 58 Market street property.

Chairman Grier asked if you allowed special exceptions in the Business Downtown district (B1) how would that change the flavor of downtown?

Resident Janet Fosque (16 Market Street) asked if this change were made would the zoning ordinance then allow for one homestay per landowner in town or one per district?

Mr. Kerbin stated it would be only one homestay per landowner in town.

Mayor Fosque asked if the owners can rent out each room in the house as airbnbs or just rent the whole house as an airbnb?

Mr. Kerbin stated that it is not specified in the zoning ordinance. Commission members agreed the zoning ordinance needed to be more specific.

Discussion followed, after which the Commissioners agreed the best course of action for the Fowlers would be to ask the Town Council for a text amendment to rezone the property, then apply to the Planning Commission for a Homestay.

Public Comment:

Town resident Mr. Boddie (5 Sturgis Street) was surprised not to see any mention of the sewer treatment plant in the RAFT document and thought it should be part of the planning process. Commission member Bloxom stated that there was only a small portion of the property that was in the flood zone but not the facility itself and the elevation was high enough that it was not a concern of the people that did the RAFT planning and added if the Town decided to keep the treatment plant we might be able to look at flood insurance.

Commission member Spuck asked if there was a timeline established for finishing the Comprehensive Plan?

Chairman Grier stated there was a timeline established when the group began working with Mr. McGowan and that he did not want to work on the plan in a piecemeal fashion. She told the group she had contact with Mr. McGowan on a regular basis and would find out more about when to expect a document ready for discussion.

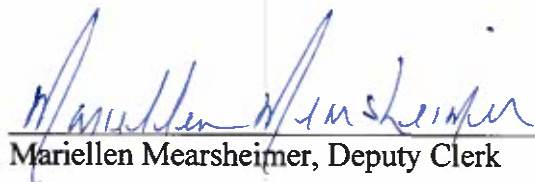
Adjourn:

Chairman Grier asked for a motion to adjourn. Commission member Bloxom made a motion to adjourn. Commission member Bagwell seconded the motion. The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote.

The meeting adjourned at 6:10 P.M.



Judith Grier, Chair



Mariellen Mearsheimer, Deputy Clerk