



TOWN OF ONANCOCK

15 North Street
Onancock, VA 23417

Meeting Notice

Planning Commission Meeting

Tuesday

July 21, 2020

at

5:30 p.m.

The Onancock Planning Commission will hold a meeting at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday July 21, 2020. The meeting will be held in the Town Hall Council Chambers at 15 North Street, Onancock, Virginia 23417. Masks are required and physical distancing will be practiced.

Town of Onancock , Virginia
Planning Commission
AGENDA
July 21, 2020
5:30 p.m.

1. Call to Order and Roll Call
2. Review of the Minutes from the February 18, 2020 Meeting
3. Items of Business
 - a. Discussion of the Comprehensive Plan
4. Public Comment
5. Adjourn

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

Onancock Main Street Initiative (OMSI)

Strategic Plan 2020-2021

Our Vision: Historic downtown Onancock is the commercial and cultural heart of a thriving waterfront community.

Our Mission: Make Onancock the place where residents are proud to live, and visitors want to return. We will do this by forging community partnerships, cultivating downtown businesses, enhancing our artistic and recreational assets, and celebrating our historic and cultural character.

Virginia Main Street: Onancock Main Street is an affiliate of Virginia Main Street. The Virginia Main Street Program is a preservation-based economic and community development program that follows the Main Street Approach by the National Main Street Center. Virginia Main Street is a Main Street America State Coordinating Program that offers a range of services and assistance to communities interested in revitalizing their historic commercial districts.

The Four Points of a Main Street program:

- **Organization-** A strong organizational foundation is crucial for a sustainable Main Street revitalization effort. This element of the Main Street Four Points focuses on building collaboration among a broad range of public and private sector groups, organizations and constituencies.
- **Promotion-** This element deals with marketing the district's assets to residents, visitors, investors and others through special events, retail promotion and activities that improve the way the district is perceived.
- **Design-** This element focuses on improving the physical environment by renovating buildings, constructing compatible new buildings, improving signs and merchandise displays, creating attractive and usable public spaces and ensuring that planning and zoning regulations support Main Street revitalization.
- **Economic Vitality-** This element concentrates on strengthening the district's existing economic base while finding ways to expand its economy and introduce compatible new uses. This work is rooted in a commitment to making the most of a community's unique sense of place and existing historic assets, harnessing local economic opportunity and creating a supportive business environment for small businesses and entrepreneurs

Background and Context: The Town of Onancock has been a Virginia Main Street affiliate for about two decades. In 2017, a renewed effort began to put into place the organization and structure needed to pursue Virginia Main Street Designation, the highest level awarded by the Virginia Main Street organization and to take advantage of available resources and grant funding opportunities. Onancock Main Street Initiative (OMSI) is a non-profit organization whose purpose is to support downtown revitalization efforts, ensuring that downtown Onancock is a commercial and cultural center for residents and visitors.

Over the past two years, the Onancock Main Street Initiative has solicited and analyzed input from the Town, business owners, community members and visitors to Onancock to identify what these stakeholders feel is most important to increasing the vibrancy of our downtown. Additionally, a series of large and small meetings have been held to discuss and refine these findings. Based on these findings and these meetings, our vision and mission statements were developed.

Organizationally, a board of directors has been actively engaged, and in 2019, OSMI achieved 501(c)3 non-profit status. OSMI has developed relationships with the Town, downtown businesses, community organizations, the ESVA Chamber of Commerce and ESVA Tourism. A position description for a program manager has been developed and we are actively seeking an individual to fill this position. We have developed a two-year strategic plan to guide our activities over the next 24 months.

Our Goals: 2020 - 2021

1. Apply for and receive Virginia Main Street Designation.
2. Increase the organizational capacity of the Onancock Main Street Initiative
3. Develop and implement a comprehensive funding strategy to sustain the organization.
4. In partnership with the Town, develop branding for the Town of Onancock.
5. Prioritize grant opportunities and apply for at least two substantial grants in the next two years.

Onancock Main Street Initiative (OMSI)

Strategic Plan 2020-2021

Goal 1. Apply for and receive Virginia Main Street Designation.

Achieving designation status will allow OMSI to take advantage of many additional services provided by the Virginia Main Street (VMS) organization, including organizational support, technical assistance and consultation, branding and image development, public relations, as well as access and scholarships to VMS seminars and training. The value of these services is estimated to be around \$100,000 over a three-year period.

Objectives:

- a. Attend "2020 Designation How-to-Apply" workshop to understand application process
- b. Gather necessary data and complete application by March 31, 2020 deadline
- c. Receive designation status

Goal 2. Increase the organizational capacity of the Onancock Main Street Initiative.

Successful Main Street programs are able to capitalize on the contributions of many stakeholders in a variety of roles. In this way the community works together to achieve revitalization goals.

Objectives:

- a) Fill program manager position in early 2020 and establish OMSI physical office
- b) Establish and strengthen partnerships with the Town, businesses, civic organizations and other stakeholders and community partners
- c) Expand board membership to include critical skill and experience sets
- d) Establish committees to achieve the strategic goals through volunteer recruitment

Goal 3. Develop and Implement a comprehensive funding strategy to sustain the organization.

Consistent and reliable funding is essential to sustaining the OMSI organization. As a non-profit, we will need to explore and take full advantage of all potential sources of funding in order to provide support to our downtown community

Objectives:

- a) Develop a 3-year budget to identify expenses and funding needed
- b) Engage services provided by Virginia Main Street to assist in identifying potential funding sources and developing a strategy to secure required funding
- c) Implement strategy and ensure adequate funding is achieved

Goal 4. In partnership with the Town, develop branding for the Town of Onancock.

A defined look and message for Onancock will consistently convey who we are, what we have to offer and the experience people will have living, working and visiting our town. It will set Onancock apart from other towns, as well as help generate pride among residents, businesses and visitors who can more clearly articulate our assets. It will serve as a promotional tool for our town and our businesses.

Objectives:

- a) Identify professional firm with which to collaborate
- b) Partner with Town to develop brand
- c) Promote consistent use of brand on Town and business signage and language

Goal 5. Prioritize grant opportunities and apply for at least two substantial grants in the next two years.

An important source of funding for OMSI and for downtown revitalization projects will be grant funding. We need to understand the range of grant opportunities available to us, and identify those that are most promising and work toward maximizing our ability to successfully apply and receive this funding.

Objectives:

- a) Compile a comprehensive list of grant opportunities and identify application requirements, timelines, partner organizations, match requirements, and other pertinent information
- b) Prioritize these grant opportunities considering OMSI organizational needs, current business needs, ability to improve the downtown physical environment, and ability to strengthen the downtown economic base
- c) Identify two to three grants that would have the most opportunity for success over the next two to three years
- d) Complete the application process for at least two of these

Onancock Main Street Initiative

The Onancock Main Street Initiative (OMSI) is a 501 (c)3 non-profit organization established in 2019 to support downtown revitalization efforts and ensure that downtown Onancock is a thriving commercial and cultural center for residents and visitors. The Town of Onancock has been a Virginia Main Street affiliate for about two decades. The Virginia Main Street program offers a range of services and assistance to communities interested in revitalizing their historic commercial districts. In 2017 a renewed effort began to establish the formal organization and structure needed to pursue a full Virginia Main Street Designation for Onancock, the highest level awarded by Virginia Main Street. The Virginia Main Street Designation will enable Onancock to take full advantage of Virginia Main Street's resources and other grant funding opportunities.

During its formation, OMSI solicited and analyzed input from the Town, business owners, community members and Onancock visitors to identify what these stakeholders feel is most important to increasing the vibrancy of our downtown. The *Onancock Main Street Initiative Strategic Plan* includes the following goals for 2020 and 2021:

1. Apply for and receive Virginia Main Street Designation.
2. Increase the organizational capacity of the Onancock Main Street Initiative.
3. Develop and implement a comprehensive funding strategy to sustain the organization.
4. In partnership with the Town, develop branding for the Town of Onancock.
5. Prioritize grant opportunities and apply for at least two substantial grants in the next two years.