

Town of Colonial Beach Planning Commission Minutes – Work Session

Date: Thursday, June 18, 2015 – Town Center, 22 Washington Avenue

Time: 4:05 p.m.

Present: Robin Schick, Chairwoman
Maureen McCabe, Vice Chairwoman
Pam Tolson
John Reinhart

Absent: Bob Busick
Diana Clopton

Staff: Brendan McHugh, Planning and Zoning Administrator
Tori Haynes, Planning Assistant

Item 1: Call to Order

Chairwoman Schick called the meeting to order at 4:05 p.m.

Item 2: Public Comment at Planning Commission Matters Not on the Agenda

Chairwoman Schick asked if there was any public comment on Planning Commission matters not on the agenda.

Margaret McMullen of 615 Washington Avenue asked about the Capital Improvement Plan process.

Chairwoman Schick explained that the Capital Improvement Plan is integrated with the Comprehensive Plan. Every item that is requested has to have a goal that's set in the Comprehensive Plan.

Vice Chair McCabe explained that Mr. McHugh composed a status list of all action items in the Comprehensive Plan, as of the past month. She explained that the Planning Commission is currently reviewing those items and their completion status.

Linda Farneth of 121 5th Street asked if the Planning Commission would be talking about the Artisan Trail regulations today.

Chairwoman Schick replied they were not.

Ms. Farneth commented on the restriction of outside display of items, in relation to Home Occupations and the Artisan Trail. She asked if sculptures should be permitted if they're in the back out of sight, since some artists' work will be outside.

Chairwoman Schick thanked Ms. Farneth for her comment and closed Public Comment at 4:10 p.m.

Item 3: Comprehensive Plan Review, Chapter 5 - Implementation

Chairwoman Schick asked Mr. McHugh for a Staff Report.

Mr. McHugh explained that he went through Chapter 5 and highlighted important items within the chapter. He also updated the statuses of the Action Items with footnotes explaining the revision history, Planning Commission recommendations, and Town Council action. Items on the CIP are listed as Completed (C), In Progress (IP), Not Completed (NC), and On-Going (OG). Highlighted Action Items were items that the Comp. Plan highlighted to be the most important of the Action Items.

Mr. Reinhart said there were a lot of NC's on the list. He asked why Planning Commission recommendations from 2013 were still awaiting Town Council approval.

Mr. McHugh said that the former Town Council's meetings would go so late into the night that items would get continually delayed.

Chairwoman Schick said the Commercial Residential (CR) District and Article 18 are still awaiting Town Council approval.

Mr. McHugh said Article 18 should be going on the Town Council agenda for the Work Session in July, and then the regular meeting in August for a vote. The Planning Commission will be voting on it in July.

Chairwoman Schick said there was a much bigger disconnect between the Planning Commission and Town Council in the past.

Vice Chair McCabe asked Mr. McHugh if Town Council got a copy of the Planning Commission Annual Report.

Mr. McHugh said if he would get them a copy.

Vice Chair McCabe said it might help Council see which items are still awaiting action.

Chairwoman Schick expressed concern about making changes to documents that are still awaiting Town Council action. She then began the Chapter 5 review. She asked how to legally go about updating the Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. McHugh explained that it would be a Comprehensive Plan Amendment.

Chairwoman Schick asked where in the Comprehensive Plan is it documented that it has been reviewed every five years.

Mr. McHugh suggested adding the date it has been reviewed in the Comp Plan Amendment.

Chairwoman Schick suggested adding it in the history of the plan.

Vice Chair McCabe asked if we could add a page to Chapter 1 that itemizes the revision history.

Mr. McHugh suggested adding a table with revision history at end, similar to the zoning ordinance.

Vice Chair McCabe said that would make it easier for staff.

Chairwoman Schick agreed.

Vice Chair asked if there was a brochure for the Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. McHugh said staff would work on a brochure.

Ms. Tolson asked if it made more sense to use the town website instead of a printed brochure.

Chairwoman Schick agreed that it should be online.

Vice Chair McCabe expressed concern for citizens who do not have access to the internet.

Mr. McHugh suggested using print and internet.

Ms. Tolson noted that one of the things we're supposed to be doing is finding ways to inform the citizenry.

Ms. Haynes explained that she has been in the process of getting Planning Department/Commission documents online. The Comp Plan was already there.

Chairwoman Schick asked if the Comp Plan is by chapter online.

Ms. Haynes confirmed that it is.

Ms. Tolson suggested some sort of addendum where all the changes would go, rather than updating each chapter.

Vice Chair McCabe said some of the chapters have to be there legally. She explained that the implementation chapter suggests a specific timeline. The addendum could be added to the website and distributed. She thought people would be more likely to read the addendum than the entire plan.

Ms. Tolson said that at the previous night's Council meeting, many people complained that there was no CIP, although the process has been started and will be in effect for next year's budget. She explained that letting the public know about the CIP process should be an immediate priority.

There was a general discussion on Town Council procedures.

Mr. Reinhart said that there is a level of frustration throughout the town. Planning Commission can do whatever they can to recommend and vote, but there are still so many "Not Complete" projects.

Chairwoman Schick agreed that it's frustrating.

Vice Chair McCabe asked how to disseminate information about the CIP process to the public.

Mr. McHugh suggested a press release.

Ms. Tolson asked again if something could be put on the website. She also suggested a handout for people when they come in to pay their water bills.

Chairwoman Schick said that's a great idea.

Ms. Tolson asked if there was a budget to draft the handout, and who would do it.

Mr. McHugh said everyone can draft it. He asked if she meant a brochure.

Chairwoman Schick said it could be a letter that says what's happening with the CIP.

Ms. Tolson reiterated that people complained about not having a CIP at the previous night's Town Council meeting.

Vice Chair McCabe suggested handing out Planning Commission information at Council meetings in addition to water bill payments.

There was a general discussion about the status of the public access channel.

Vice Chair McCabe suggested starting with one page about Planning Commission work and distributing it throughout town.

Ms. Tolson asked if we're doing the CIP process for the first time.

Vice Chair McCabe confirmed.

Ms. Tolson asked if the budget for the CIP was done by the Planning Department.

Chairwoman Schick confirmed.

Vice Chair McCabe suggested evaluating the report from last year at the July meeting, so they would be ready in August for the CIP process and budget.

Chairwoman Schick explained that we need to eventually get to all of the things that are in the Comp Plan, but for now the focus will be on a one page progress report.

Ms. Tolson asked if it would be monthly.

Chairwoman Schick said it could be quarterly.

Ms. Tolson reiterated the idea to distribute information when people pay their water bills. She confirmed she would draft something to distribute.

Chairwoman Schick was pleased with the number of Partnerships in the region, including Montross, Northern Neck Planning District, Dahlgren, DCR, VDOT, VMRC, and various grants.

Vice Chair McCabe said she heard positive comments around town about the growing relationship with the Northern Neck.

Chairwoman Schick explained how the Planning Commission has been reviewing and updating each ordinance as part of the Comprehensive Plan. She reiterated that two ordinances are still awaiting Town Council approval. She asked Mr. McHugh how many ordinances still need to be reviewed.

Mr. McHugh said about ten more.

Vice Chair McCabe asked if the official map would be replaced.

Mr. McHugh explained that he just needed supplies to hang the new map, which have been ordered.

Vice Chair McCabe said it would be essential to for the people to see, since it has been approved.

Ms. Tolson asked if the Historic District was approved.

Mr. McHugh explained there is a proposed district, but no ordinance has been passed.

There was a general discussion on the proposed Historic District, Main Street District, and Downtown Colonial Beach.

Chairwoman Schick asked about the Corridor Overlay District on the Future Land Use plan.

Mr. McHugh explained that it is the Route 205 and Colonial Avenue Overlays.

Chairwoman Schick asked if there should be a new map with to designate the overlays.

Mr. McHugh explained that the overlays are on the Future Land Use Map.

Ms. Tolson asked if that was where Route 205 was to be designated as a scenic byway. She expressed concern about the foresting of trees along Route 205.

Vice Chair McCabe expressed her concern about needing more businesses to be involved with the Main Street initiative.

Ms. Tolson explained the revolving loan process that funds local business revitalization.

There was a general discussion on the Main Street process.

Vice Chair McCabe asked if Main Street should be included in the Comp Plan.

Chairwoman Schick suggested adding it to Capital Improvements.

Mr. McHugh suggested adding it on the Action Item List under Quality Organization and Safe Community.

Chairwoman Schick said it needs to be in the CIP as being Main Street designated. Individual tasks within the Main Street Program would then be itemized on the Action Item List. She explained that joining Main Street would be a 3-5 year process.

Chairwoman Schick moved on to Recommended Zoning Revisions.

Vice Chair McCabe asked if there is a regulation that says there needs to be a certain percentage of Open Space.

Chairwoman Schick said the Comp Plan recommends a certain percentage of Open Space.

Vice Chair McCabe asked if we're meeting that.

Ms. Tolson asked if it's in the Town bylaws.

Chairwoman Schick said that we're not meeting the recommended Open Space.

Mr. McHugh said that is why Robin Grove was not sold.

Ms. Tolson asked where it's recommended.

Mr. McHugh replied in the Comp Plan.

Chairwoman Schick explained that the part of the amount of Open Space is also a Best Practices. The percentage is in the Comp Plan, and we are not meeting it yet. She did not know the exact numbers, but suggested Councilman Looney may have that information.

Vice Chair McCabe expressed concern about the eroding shoreline in Robin Grove.

Mr. McHugh explained that staff has begun researching erosion grants.

Chairwoman Schick suggested contacting the property owner adjacent to Robin Grove, as the shoreline erosion would affect his property too.

Mr. McHugh said the property owner wanted to fix the shore himself, but since he could not buy the land, he wanted the town to fix the shoreline.

Chairwoman Schick moved onto Preparation of Annual Review. She explained that this process is happening now. She then introduced the Recommended CIP Projects Status list. She said the concept plan is done but not the overlays for the Historic Resort Commercial area.

There was a general discussion on the consistency of the proposed Historic District and applicable overlays between the Future Land Use Map and the Comp Plan.

There was a general discussion about the areas eligible for the revitalization grant.

Mr. McHugh announced the town was awarded the TAP Grant.

There was a discussion clarifying the roles and boundaries of current rehab grants.

Ms. Farneth explained the matching process for the TAP Grant.

Chairwoman Schick moved onto the tourism website, which she noted is non-existent and should be a goal.

Ms. Tolson clarified that a tourism website is being worked on.

Vice Chair McCabe clarified that it was an intranet site and was only for the use of the committee.

Ms. Tolson asked about the “Attractions” website.

Chairwoman Schick explained that it’s privately owned and operated.

Chairwoman Schick and Vice Chair McCabe suggested contacting the “Attractions” website owner about the tourism website.

Chairwoman Schick moved onto the Colonial Avenue Plan. She asked if it was part of the current block grant.

Mr. McHugh explained that the Colonial Avenue Plan hasn’t been pursued yet. It would be another plan like the business revitalization plan.

Vice Chair McCabe said it should be a priority since the end of Colonial Avenue will be revitalized.

There was a general discussion about sidewalks.

Chairwoman Schick said Colonial Avenue should be a priority.

Ms. Tolson asked who made the decision to remove the trees along Colonial Avenue.

Chairwoman Schick said she did not remember why it happened, but she did remember the trees.

Vice Chair McCabe said there should be something through the state for beautification.

Chairwoman Schick asked about the murals.

Vice Chair McCabe said that the murals would be attended to with the revitalization grant.

Ms. Tolson asked if they were going to be upgraded or replaced.

Vice Chair McCabe said there are two new murals going up, and the others would be refreshed.

Ms. Tolson asked if it’s the same group that did Montross.

Vice Chair McCabe said they’re putting it out for a bid.

Chairwoman Schick said the Colonial Avenue Improvements is probably also part of the Colonial Plan.

Mr. McHugh explained that it says In Progress because of the grant for the end of Colonial Avenue. It’s just a section of it, but it’s part of it.

Chairwoman Schick moved onto Gateway Enhancements Along Route 205. She didn’t know of anything being done with that. She then moved onto Paving of Roads in Riverside Meadows, which is In Progress.

Mr. Reinhart said there hasn't been anything done in Riverside Meadows, except for Meadow Avenue two years ago.

Mr. McHugh clarified that he classified it as In Progress because he has been in talks with Westmoreland County to develop a plan on how to get the roads taken care of.

There was a discussion on potential funding sources.

Ms. Farneth said Westmoreland may not be getting involved after all.

Chairwoman Schick moved onto Removal of Cement Pier Pilings in Water.

Vice Chair McCabe confirmed that it has been completed.

Chairwoman Schick moved onto Route 205/Colonial Avenue Intersection Improvements. She suggested it should be part of the Colonial Avenue Plan.

Vice Chair McCabe agreed.

Chairwoman Schick moved onto Shoreline Stabilization. She asked if money for Robin Grove could be used elsewhere along Monroe Bay.

Ms. Haynes said she would look into it.

Chairwoman Schick moved onto Stormwater Management, which she noted would be a constant battle in town.

Ms. Haynes said the Housing Grant may cover stormwater management in the Central District.

Chairwoman Schick moved onto Stable Neighborhoods and Design Guidelines, which has been completed.

Chairwoman Schick moved onto the Golf Cart Path Across Route 205. She explained that it's the path that goes behind McDonalds.

Ms. Farneth said she thought it was done already.

Ms. Tolson said it's not done.

Mr. Reinhart said nothing's been designated.

Chairwoman Schick asked if somebody owns it.

Mr. McHugh said it's an issue with VDOT.

Ms. Tolson asked if golf carts have to cross at the light.

Chairwoman Schick explained that golf carts can cross at two locations, the light at McDonalds or 1st Street to the path. She clarified that golf carts cannot use the old road next to Union Bank because that is county land, which does not allow golf carts.

There was a general discussion on the golf path.

Chairwoman Schick asked if Public Works could put up directional signs.

Mr. McHugh said he wanted to check with the Comp Plan for design standards first. He said it would probably be a VDOT project.

Ms. Farneth said VDOT had an official sign in front of the police station, but it was taken down.

Chairwoman Schick said it would be nice if there were painted signs on the road that went from 1st Street to the golf cart path.

There was a general discussion about vehicles illegally using the path that connects McDonalds to Food Lion.

Mr. McHugh suggested poles that are spaced to allow golf carts but not cars on the path.

Chairwoman Schick moved onto Bicycle and Pedestrian Trails. She noted that the trail that connects Meadow Ave. to 12th Street is significantly better, but the section that goes to 9th Street is not. She asked about the source of the Recreational Trails Fund.

Mr. McHugh said it was through Virginia DCR.

Chairwoman Schick asked about the Safe Routes to School Program.

Mr. McHugh replied that it's part of the Comp Plan, and it's supposed to extend all the way to Bluff Point.

Vice Chair McCabe asked for clarification on the Safe Routes To School status.

Mr. McHugh said that it's In Progress and is almost ready for advertisement.

Chairwoman Schick moved onto Public Boat Ramp and Pier. She explained that it is Not Complete because the town voted to not provide free parking in the affected area, which was a requirement from the funding source to upgrade the pier. It is currently in disrepair.

Vice Chair McCabe asked if the boaters could pay a fee for its repair.

Chairwoman Schick said most of the regular boaters use a private pier. The public pier is mostly for tourists.

There was a general discussion on the state of the pier.

Chairwoman Schick asked if the parking fee money can be used for the pier, or if it goes into the general fund.

Ms. Tolson expressed concern over the safety of the pier.

Chairwoman Schick noted there was an accident there two years ago.

Mr. Reinhart said there was significant damage, but some of that was human error, too.

Ms. Farneth said that Town Council was talking about the boat ramp recently.

Vice Chairwoman McCabe suggested changing the funding source.

Chairwoman Schick said that either Town Council needs reexamine the parking fee issue, or a new funding source should be identified.

Mr. McHugh asked if the funding source was Department of Game and Inland Fisheries and VMRC.

Chairwoman Schick confirmed.

Mr. McHugh asked which one required free parking.

Chairwoman Schick said probably both. She reiterated that the funding for the pier project was ready to go, but free parking was a stipulation.

Vice Chair McCabe said we need to find a new funding source.

Ms. Tolson asked if the free parking is limited to one area.

Chairwoman Schick said it would just have to be the parking area near the boat ramp, not all parking in town.

Ms. Tolson said that most people are using it to access the beach, and that lines for the ramp are long.

Mr. Reinhart noted that signs for boat trailers have been added.

Ms. Tolson asked whose responsibility it is to prioritize incomplete projects.

Chairwoman Schick said the CIP projects have a high priority, medium priority, or low priority.

Mr. McHugh said there's a highlighted action item list determined by the Comp Plan.

Ms. Tolson asked if the Planning Commission is supposed to prioritize the CIP.

Chairwoman Schick said the Planning Commission does help prioritize the CIP as new projects come in. She clarified that priority isn't just reflected in what is needed most, but also which projects have the most potential to be accomplished.

Ms. Tolson reiterated citizens' concerns over illogical project decisions, such as random segments of streets getting paved with no explanation.

Vice Chair McCabe said the CIP applications will help determine priority.

Chairwoman Schick clarified that it's not going to be as specific as which streets get paved, because the CIP is a 3-5 year plan.

There was a general discussion on street paving.

Vice Chair McCabe suggested asking the Public Works Director about it at the August meeting.

Chairwoman Schick explained that there may be more reasoning to Public Works projects that the public doesn't see. They also have to deal with emergencies as they arise, such as the geyser on Washington Avenue, which pushes back priority for on-going projects.

Vice Chair McCabe suggested getting public input once the prioritizing process is done.

Chairwoman Schick ended the meeting at the Boat Ramp item, and suggested starting again with the next item during the 15 minute Comp Plan portion of the next regular meeting, then continuing with another work session.

Item 4: Adjournment

There being no further business, the work session was adjourned at 5:35 p.m.