

Town of Rock Hall PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

of the meeting held on:
June 14, 2023

In Attendance at the Virtual Meeting:

Planning Commissioners: Vic Costa, Anthony Colache, Cathy Jayne, and Anna Riggin. Also present were Eleanor Coyer, Town Council liaison to the Commission, and Christopher Jakubiak, Zoning Administrator and Town Planner.

I. Call to Order

At 7:00 pm, the Chairman Costa called the meeting to order.

II. Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the previous two meetings were not available and the Commission will take them up at its next meeting.

III. New Business

There was no New Business.

IV. Old Business

Continuation of Comprehensive Plan Work: Chairman Costa asked Mr. Jakubiak to return to the topic of the comprehensive plan update. Mr. Jakubiak then reviewed the draft plan, the pertinent revised sections of which were sent via email to the members on June 8, 2023.

He referred the Commission to the revised hard copy of the draft plan, noting it was now completed with the exception of the final chapter to be called "Implementation". He reviewed the substantive changes and/or additions to the draft. He focused on new population and housing data from the Census that confirmed the Commission's understanding about the lack of population growth and the ongoing conversion of much of the housing in Town second-home and vacation homes in the Town.

He reviewed the new section that was added due to a recent State law on the topic of fair housing. He reviewed changes to the housing recommendations that addressed separate comments made previously by Chairman Costa and Mr. Colache including recommending a new residential zoning district called R-4, limiting the concentration and proliferation of short-term vacation rentals, and requiring that short term rentals be subject to permit requirements and pay occupancy taxes.

Mr. Jakubiak also reviewed a new page in the Housing chapter that contains photos of different acceptable housing types and in this regard the Commission decided the photos of housing types for multi-family buildings should be replaced by photos that show lower scale buildings that are generally more compatible with Rock Hall.

He also reviewed the new text addressing the waterfront which incorporated ideas learned from the Annapolis experience, new sections in the Land Use chapter on the waterfront, downtown master planning, and coastal resiliency. He also reviewed the Transportation Chapter and the Community Facilities Chapter.

With respect to the as yet uncompleted Implementation Chapter, Chairman Costa asked that Mr. Jakubiak provide guidance in that chapter on timelines for undertaking the needed zoning amendments and studies that were being recommended. He also described how important it would be for the Town Council to formally hear from the Planning Commission periodically about the implementation.

Chairman Costa noted that words "allowing narrow street widths and reducing parking requirements" should be removed from the last paragraph on page 30 under the heading "Minimize Impervious Surfaces". Mr. Colache noted that in the same sentence the word "parking" should be added following the word "pervious", meaning that both pervious parking and sidewalks should be encouraged where practical. The Commission concurred. The Commission also directed that the last paragraph on page 69 under the heading "Address Short-Term Vacation Rentals" should include a recommendation that the Town should adopt a rental housing code and conduct inspections of rental properties, including short term rentals, annually.

Several Commission members and Mr. Jakubiak highlighted instances where typos needed to be corrected in the draft and Mr. Jakubiak explained that the final numbering of tables, figures, and maps was still needed. Mr. Colache asked Mr. Jakubiak to confirm that "Alt Text" was available so that the document, as an electronic document, would be accessible to reading impaired persons. Councilwoman Coyer noted that the second sentence under the heading "Police and Emergency Services" on page 81 should be revised to state that there are three, not five, fulltime police officers, and one, not two, parttime officers. She also noted the second sentence on page 86 under the heading "Support Rock Hall's Museums" should be revised to note that museum will be temporally relocated to Tolchester until a new location in Town is found, which would

ideally be at the Rock Hall Harbor. The Commission concurred.

The Commission decided not to set a public release date for the Draft Plan, or public hearing date, yet. The Commission will make that determination after reviewing the Implementation chapter at the July meeting.

V. Citizen Comment

There was no additional public comment.

VI. Adjournment

On a motion by Mr. Colache, seconded by Mr. Riley, the meeting was adjourned at about 8:54 pm.