

# Town of Rock Hall PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

*of the meeting held on:*  
January 11, 2023

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## **In Attendance at the Virtual Meeting:**

Planning Commissioners: Vic Costa, Chairman, Anthony Colache, Cathy Jayne, Anna Riggan, and Allen Riley. Also present were Eleanor Coyer, Town Council liaison, and Christopher Jakubiak, Zoning Administrator and Town Planner.

### **I. Call to Order**

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

### **II. Approval of Minutes**

The Commission reviewed and approved the minutes of the December 14, 2022 meeting.

### **III. New Business**

Presentation by Robin Wood Kurowski . Ms. Kurowski spoke with the Planning Commission about the Rock Hall waterfront and the local maritime industry providing information and her perspectives on the Comprehensive Plan update.

### **IV. Old Business**

Continuation of Comprehensive Plan Work: Chairman Costa called on Mr. Jakubiak to continue with the review and deliberation on the comprehensive plan and the Town Planner presented the draft chapter on Housing. He explained that the Housing element is a new requirement for comprehensive plans in Maryland per State planning statutes and that it must address housing affordability.

Mr. Jakubiak reviewed the chapter page-by-page with the Commission. He summarized the chapter's evaluation of housing affordability and addressed affordability in both rental and ownership types. He described the current low income housing communities in Kent County while focusing on the two communities in Rock Hall. Commissioner Member Ms. Jayne discussed the lack of affordable housing options for residents of Rock Hall and the need for the new Plan to have recommendations about housing affordability. It was the consensus of the Commission that the new plan should.

Mr. Jakubiak also discussed the variety of housing types in Town, the split between rental and ownership units, the nature of housing unit vacancy in Rock Hall, the average size of households, the assisted living facilities in Town, senior housing generally, and what each of the Town's zoning districts say about housing. The Commission's discussed briefly the role of vacation rentals and generally agreed the once houses change to vacation rentals, they ought to be treated to a greater degree like commercial accommodations (an either be taxed and/or licensed). The Commissioner's discussions also addressed the notion that while allowing them to some degree because of the tourism industry, zoning can be used to prohibit or limit them in certain parts of Town which could address the risk of losing affordable units to the vacation rental market and help ensure that a base of stable neighborhood housing remains for year-round residents.

He then discussed the proposed Housing objectives in the chapter and the Commissioners noted a general agreement with them. When discussing recommendations, Mr. Jakubiak noted that the list in the draft is only preliminary, and the Commissioners discussed the list without approving it but agreed to review and email comments if they had any to Mr. Jakubiak for discussion later. The Commission did discuss the need to create more areas in Town for housing development and Mr. Jakubiak explained that new zoning standards could be adopted to encourage developers to include in projects housing units that are affordable to the local market, not just affordable to the vacation or second home market.

## **V. Citizen Comment**

Chair Costa recognized Mayor Jacobs who spoke about that the possibility that a recent CDBG income survey might provide useful information, that hunters liked the AirBnB's in Town, and that assisted living facilities in Rock Hall can have up to eight occupants each.

## **Adjournment**

On a motion by Mr. Colache, seconded by Ms. Riffin, the meeting was adjourned at about 8:40 pm.