

## **NORTH EAST PLANNING COMMISSION**

North East Town Park Gilbert Lighthouse Pavilion  
Walnut Street, North East Maryland  
Tuesday, October 4, 2016  
7:00 PM

Chairman Mark Dobbins called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M. at the North East Town Park Gilbert Lighthouse Pavilion. Present included Michael Nair and Judy Duffy. Also present were Melissa Cook-MacKenzie, Town Administrator, Betsy Vennell, Director of Planning and Lisa Rhoades, Planning and Zoning Assistant. Commissioner Eric Braley and Valerie Combs were absent.

### **-MINUTES-**

July 5, 2016

The Planning Commission accepted the minutes, as presented.

### **-COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC-**

None.

### **-NEW BUSINESS-**

#### 1. Waterfront North East Phase 1 - Site Visit.

A site visit was conducted at the North East Community Park ("Park") to review the proposed Waterfront North East-Phase 1 site, proposed by Hudson Benson on June 7, 2016.

The purpose of the meeting was to have the Planning Commission walk and visually see the first phase of the proposed Waterfront Walkway, as proposed by Mr. Hudson Benson, 15 North Main Street, North East, Maryland, at the June 7, 2016 Planning Commission meeting. Mr. Benson believes this proposal will link the Park with the Main Street Business District as well as increase the property values of the homes along the proposed walkway.

The Planning Commission began their walk at the Park and ended at the former site of a foot bridge across the creek, at the northern end of Second Street, linking Beech Street and Church Point Road. The foot bridge was removed 25 plus years ago because of public safety and liability concerns.

The proposed Waterfront North East Phase 1 proposes a pedestrian bridge to be located within the same vicinity. Ms. Duffy was concerned if a walking bridge was reconstructed, the police would have to be on foot to be able to monitor the area. Town would incur more expense than just the cost of a walkway and walking bridge.

Mr. Nair inquired who the target people are that are being considered when proposing this walkway as the majority of the people he sees when visiting the Park are locals, other than when there is an event being held at the park. Mrs. MacKenzie reported that based upon the proposal of Mr. Benson, the proposal provides the general public a way to access the General Commercial Business District from the Park, without having to walk up Walnut Street and South Main Street.

Mr. Nair questioned the net value of the proposal. He was not sure this project would be worth the expense due to the minimal beneficial impact, adding that he would prefer to see the Town work with what we already have. Mr. Nair suggested that the Town could close South Main Street periodically as they do during the Annual Christmas Parade for special shopping events, further stating that special events held by the Town's Chamber of Commerce seems more likely to draw people to the General Commercial District. Mr. Nair stated the funds for this project could be spent on other projects of higher priority.

Mrs. Cook-MacKenzie mentioned that a trolley car had been discussed in the past and that shuttle services have been provided when large events have been held in the Park. Mr. Nair believed that a trolley car running Friday, Saturday, and Sunday or during special events held at the Park seems to make more sense.

Ms. Duffy stated that the cost of installing a walking path with a bridge over the North East Creek would cost millions of dollars considering all of the agencies and inspections involved with this type of project.

Chairman Dobbins commented that the proposed bridge is quite a large span from 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, across the creek, to Church Point Road. In addition, Chairman Dobbins was concerned about the negative impact the proposed bridge would have on the wildlife habitat. Ms. Duffy concurred.

Mrs. Cook-MacKenzie discussed the North East Comprehensive Plan and the proposed linkage into the downtown. "Finding ways to improve access to and between water-borne modes of travel and travel options on land" is outlined under "goals" in the Plan, however, the Transportation Plan maps do not include the proposed "Waterfront North East" pedestrian linkage.

After discussion, the Planning Commission concurred that this project would be much too expensive and that they did not see the benefit of this project. The Planning Commission would recommend some new directional signage which could direct the public downtown from the North East Town Park.

**-UNFINISHED BUSINESS-**

None.

**-REPORTS-**

272 Bridge over Amtrak

Mrs. Cook-MacKenzie reported that the construction of the 272 Bridge over Amtrak shall resume in the spring of 2017 and proposes to be completed by fall of 2018.

**-MISCELLANEOUS-**

None.

**-NEXT MEETING-**

Chairman Dobbins cancelled the November 2016 Planning Commission meeting as there are no agenda items.

**-ADJOURNMENT-**

With no further business, Mr. Nair made a motion to adjourn at 7:55 p.m. Ms. Duffy seconded the motion and the motion was approved by all.

Respectfully submitted:

Attest:

Lisa Rhoades  
Planning and Zoning Assistant

Mark Dobbins  
Chairman