

NORTH EAST PLANNING COMMISSION
North East Town Hall Meeting Room
106 South Main Street, North East, Maryland 21901
Tuesday, April 4, 2017
7:00 PM

Chairman Mark Dobbins called the meeting to order at 7:02 PM. Present included Commissioner Eric Braley, Valerie Combs, 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.

-MINUTES-

February 7, 2017 Meeting Minutes

Ms. Combs made a motion to accept the February 7, 2017 meeting minutes as presented. Ms. Duffy seconded the motion and the motion was approved by all. Commissioner Braley abstained as he was absent from the February 2017 meeting.

-NEW BUSINESS-

1. Annual Planning Report-2016: Adoption

Mrs. Vennell reported that the Planning Office completed the 2016 Annual Report, pursuant to the requirements of the Annotated Code of Maryland. After acceptance by the Planning Commission, the report is forwarded to the Mayor and Commissioners as well as the Maryland Department of Planning. Mrs. Vennell inquired if there were any comments, questions or changes the Planning Commission would like to make.

Chairman Dobbins requested Dan Speakman, McCrone Engineering be recognized for design assistance on the ENERWA project for the Municipal Parking lot rain garden. Also, Chesapeake Bay Trust should be mentioned.

Mr. Nair inquired about the number of code enforcement correspondence. Mrs. Vennell explained that the majority of the enforcement correspondence is from the distribution of green door hanger reminder notices to residents for items such as trash, grass height, junk, debris, yard waste, un-shoveled sidewalks etc. In addition, letters are sent to homeowners, when there is no response to the initial contact made by the green door hanger.

Ms. Duffy inquired about code enforcement court appearances. Mrs. Vennell stated when violation letters are ineffective a citation is written and the Town will go to court if the violation is not abated. The court will then make a determination on whether the homeowner is required to abate the violation, pay a fine or both.

Commissioner Braley made a recommendation to adopt the 2016 Annual Planning Report. Mr. Nair seconded the motion and the motion was approved by all.

Approved
May 2, 2017

2. Maryland Department of Transportation 2017 Priorities Request Letter

Mrs. Vennell reported that the Mayor submits a Priority Transportation Request Letter to the Maryland Department of Transportation each year containing a list of projects which are priorities for the Town. The Planning Commission received the 2016 request letter for consideration, with a request that they review for the purpose of adding or amending the letter in preparation for sending the 2017 Priorities Request Letter.

Chairman Dobbins commented on the proposed pedestrian bridge over the North East Creek and inquired if the proposed pedestrian bridge over the North East Creek was previously submitted to the State Highway Administration (SHA) in the 2016 Maryland Department of Transportation Priorities Request Letter. Mrs. Cook-Mackenzie commented that the ultimate goal is to have a sidewalk from Catherine Street to North East Isles drive. Mrs. Vennell inquired if the interim plan would be a pedestrian activated signal. The Planning Commission concurred.

Mr. Nair inquired about the motivation for asking to have the Route 7 Bridge over the North East Creek elevated. Mrs. Cook-Mackenzie stated the reason for the elevation of the bridge is flooding. The bridge is very low and during flood events ice, branches and other debris get caught under the bridge and create a dam. Mrs. Cook-Mackenzie reported in the past, after a significant storm, divers have been sent to check the foundation and integrity of the bridge.

Mrs. Cook-Mackenzie commented that although it would be very advantageous to have a sidewalk along Mechanics Valley Road, this is a County road not a state road. However, the Mechanics Valley Road sidewalk could be added as a separate paragraph or a letter could be sent addressed to both the SHA and Cecil County Department of Public Works.

Ms. Duffy commented on the May 2017 Cecil Whig article regarding a possible new I-95 interchange in the North East Area. Ms. Duffy recommended sending a letter of support to the Maryland Department of Transportation from the Town. The Planning Commission concurred.

Mr. Nair made motion to accept the Maryland Department of Transportation 2017 Priorities Request Letter. Ms. Combs seconded the motion and the motion was approved by all.

Mrs. Vennell reported that the Planning Commission's comments would be submitted to the Mayor and Commissioners during their April 12, 2017 Town Board Meeting.

-OLD BUSINESS-

Route 272 Amtrak Bridge

Chairman Dobbins inquired if there were any updates on the construction of the Route 272 Bridge over Amtrak. Mrs. Cook-Mackenzie stated she was informed construction would begin Mid-April. Mr. Nair inquired if the work that has already been done would be replaced or are they proceeding with what is already in place.

Mrs. Cook-Mackenzie stated that the State will assume responsibility for the work that has already been done and the new contractor will be proceeding from there.

Crosswalk Route 40 & 272

Mrs. Vennell reported that the crosswalk construction work at the intersection of Route 272 and Route 40 is scheduled to begin in late May.

Library

Chairman Dobbins inquired when construction on the new Library would be started. Mrs. Cook-Mackenzie stated that they will be hiring an architect and engineer in July. In addition, the Planning Commission may be asked to meet at a different time to accommodate the Library as they will be on a very tight schedule. Mr. Nair inquired what will happen to the current library building. Mrs. Cook-Mackenzie stated that the County must continue to operate an educational program in the building otherwise ownership reverts back to the Town of North East.

-REPORTS-

Electronic Sign

Mrs. Vennell reported that there will be a case for an electronic sign heard at the May 2nd meeting. The sign will be the same size as the existing sign however the new sign will have an electronic component.

-MISCELLANEOUS-

Nazarene Camp Pavilion

Ms. Duffy inquired about the Pavilion located at the Nazarene Camp. Mrs. Cook-Mackenzie stated that there is an agreement with the Maryland Historical Trust, that the Pavilion will be moved somewhere on the property. Chairman Dobbins inquired if there has been any new information regarding the proposed Cross Dock Facility. Mrs. Vennell replied that no action has been taking on this property.

-COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC-

None.

-NEXT MEETING-

The next Planning Commission Meeting is scheduled for May 2, 2017.

-ADJOURNMENT-

With no further business, Ms. Combs motioned to adjourn at 7.35 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

Approved
May 2, 2017