

NORTH EAST PLANNING COMMISSION
106 South Main Street, North East, Maryland 21901
Tuesday, November 14, 2023
7:00 P.M.

Chairman Mark Dobbins called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. Present included members Judy Duffy and Calvin Wilson. Also present were Melissa Cook-Mackenzie, Town Administrator and Betsy Vennell, Director of Planning and Lisa Rhoades, Planning and Zoning Assistant. Commissioner Hilary Crothers, was absent from the meeting.

-MINUTES-

October 3, 2023

Ms. Duffy made a motion to approve the October 3, 2023 Planning Commission meeting minutes as presented. Mr. Wilson seconded the motion and the motion was approved by all.

-OLD BUSINESS-

None.

-NEW BUSINESS-

North East Preserve

History of the Preserve property

Mrs. Cook-Mackenzie presented the North East Preserve Plan giving a brief history of the property. The property was previously proposed to be developed with a multiple living units. However, the developer eventually donated the property to the Town February 26, 2020 which consisted of approximately 59 +/- acres. Between April 28, 2020 and October 21, 2021 the Mayor and Town staff visited multiple parks. In addition they also met with Cecil County Director of Parks and Recreation, Clyde Van Dyke. Mrs. Cook-Mackenzie reported that at this point, the Mayor and Commissioners decided to make the property a preserve and on November 22, 2021 they adopted Resolution 2021-12-01 establishing a Mission Statement. March 13, 2022 the project was put out to bid with 6 consulting firms responding to the ad. The Town staff also met with the North East Isles Homeowners Association Board of Directors on March 26, 2022 to discuss the mission statement as the community is adjacent to the future preserve. After meeting with several of the consulting firms the Town signed a contract with YSM Landscape Architects. To prepare for the first meeting with the study group Mrs. Cook-Mackenzie, Mrs. Vennel and YSM had a kick off meeting to gain some feedback on what the public would like to see in the proposed preserve. The Mayor and Commissioners appointed a study group on September 14, 2023 and on September 21, 2022 a kick off meeting was held. In addition, three public meetings were held which included one meeting at the Town Hall and two at the North East Library. Through-out 2023 the study group has met 5 times and September 11, 2023 approved the recommendation of the Final Master Plan to the Planning Commission.

Connectivity to and from the Preserve and Town

Mrs. Cook-Mackenzie stated that connectivity to the Town via walking or bicycling has been an ongoing conversation for many years even prior to the preserve. In addition it has been consistently on the wish list letter to the Department of Transportation for many years. Mayor Kline, Mrs. Cook-Mackenzie and Grant Handley the Assistant Town Administrator met with the Maryland Department of transportation to express the need and put in a request for connectivity solutions. Mrs. Cook-Mackenzie reported that the

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meeting was beneficial. Mrs. Cook-Mackenzie stated that there are three main areas to address with this project permitting, funding and connectivity.

Mrs. Cook-Mackenzie also reported that Mrs. Karen Schaeffer, Grant Writer, Mrs. Vennell and Mrs. Cook-Mackenzie met with a representative of Landmark Services regarding the environmental portion of the project and discussed an environmental assessment. The Town will be seeking funding to cover the cost of this work and the work could begin as early as the summer of 2024, however the funding will dictate how the project moves forward. Mrs. Cook-Mackenzie stated that it will be very beneficial to have the environmental aspects of the property documented prior to development.

Chairman Dobbins inquired what the advantage was of connecting the preserve to the bridge or sidewalk. Mrs. Cook-Mackenzie replied that the connectivity falls in line with the Towns Comprehensive Plan in regards to connectivity. Ms. Duffy added that the walking bridge would make the preserve more accessible to other town residents. Ms. Cook-Mackenzie stated that safety is the main concern. Ms. Cook-Mackenzie stated that North East Isles began construction in the 1980's and there has been a need for connectivity for these residents to the town ever since. Ms. Cook-Mackenzie also added that lighting and ADA accessibility for safety will be very important as well. Mrs. Cook-Mackenzie stated that this property has a lot to offer the community visually however, this will be a long term project and it will cost millions of dollars to develop. Chairman Dobbins and Ms. Duffy inquired if the Town would use the maintenance staff to remove some of the invasive plants. Mrs. Cook-Mackenzie concurred that the Town's Maintenance staff will do some of the work and Mrs. Vennell added that would be in conjunction with the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area comments. Ms. Cook-Mackenzie also stated that some signage will be installed about the project as it comes closer. Ms. Duffy inquired if there will be voluntary events. Mrs. Cook-Mackenzie replied that she expects there will be volunteer events for the public in the future. Mr. Wilson stated that maybe some local businesses would like to participate in some volunteer opportunities such as Great Wolf Lodge. Mrs. Cook-Mackenzie concurred that the Town may be best served in securing some corporate volunteer opportunities and the Town will reach out to W.L. Gore & Associates among other local businesses. Mrs. Cook-Mackenzie reported that in addition to the firm that was hired for the Preserve project, a company by the name of Underwood was all interviewed and the Town has approached them to inquire if they would be interested in being part of the development as well. They stated they would like to be involved with the Preserve development.

Ms. Duffy made a motion to recommend the adoption of the North East Preserve Master Plan to the Mayor and Commissioners, Mr. Wilson seconded the motion and the motion was approved by all.

-MISCELLANEOUS-

Maryland Department of Environment Letter – Aluminum Furnaces

The Maryland Department of the Environment sent a letter to notify the Town and Town Boards of the addition of aluminum furnaces at an existing business, B and H Auto. Mrs. Cook-Mackenzie stated that after the Mayor had received a letter, Mrs. Cook-Mackenzie requested a public hearing which was held around the third week of October. A letter was then sent out with information regarding the proposed aluminum furnaces to the Boards and Homeowners Associations in the area to notify them as well. Mrs. Cook-Mackenzie reported that a zoom meeting took place in which attendees were required to sign up in advance. Mrs. Cook-Mackenzie reported that the Town participated in the meeting and by the conclusion of the meeting the Town's concerns had been answered. Mrs. Cook-Mackenzie stated that she inquired about their backups to their systems and were there any redundancies for safety and she stated they were addressed. In addition according to the Maryland Department of the Environment they are falling well within the requirements. B and H Auto has had two aluminum furnaces which they have been operating for years and they are looking to add two more units. Mrs. Cook-Mackenzie reported there were also 3 to 4 Maryland Department of the Environment representatives on the zoom call who stated there were no

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issues with any of the paperwork submitted for their permit. Ms. Cook-Mackenzie reported that Mr. Polanski did a good job of explaining the process.

Chairman Dobbins commented that the exterior of the business has improved since the new owner has taken over and this is a professional industry and the use is needed.

Ms. Cook-Mackenzie inquired if Chairman Dobbins or Mr. Wilson had received a notice from their Homeowners Association. Chairman Dobbins and Mr. Wilson both replied no.

-REPORTS-

Ms. Vennell reported that A. Duie Pyle will be coming back in December to present their Preliminary Plan and in addition Bee My Voice /Live for Thomas Foundation will also be coming in for a Special Exception to request the use of the lower level for their business.

Ms. Cook-Mackenzie reported that the North East Community Park received the funding for the playground and exercise equipment and hopefully it will be able to be installed before the summer of 2024.

Chairman Dobbins reported that the turtle pond along North East Isles Drive is drying up. The pond area which used to be where the spoils from the dredging are going to be deposited has been removed and at the same time the turtle pond began to dry up.

Chairman Dobbins inquired if the Town tests for Perfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) in our public water. Mrs. Cook-Mackenzie reported that the Town does test for PFAS which is found in plastics and it is very difficult to remove. Mrs. Cook-Mackenzie added that the Town is waiting for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) report to come out with some additional information.

Mrs. Cook-Mackenzie also wanted to report that the Enviroscape Educational Kit was a hit during a recent school event. Mrs. Cook-Mackenzie stated she would like to see a station set up during the Ike Foundation event next June.

Ms. Duffy reported that the Perryville Library is closing for 9 months for renovations.

-COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC-

There were no comments from the public.

-NEXT MEETING-

The next Planning Commission meeting has been scheduled for December 5, 2023.
Bee my voice and Lot 3 and 4 Preliminary

-ADJOURNMENT-

With no further business, Ms. Duffy made a motion to adjourn at 8:05 p.m. Mr. Wilson seconded the motion and the motion was approved by all.

Respectfully submitted:

Attest:

Lisa Rhoades
Planning and Zoning Assistant

Mark Dobbins
Chairman

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