

**NORTH EAST PLANNING COMMISSION**  
106 South Main Street, North East, Maryland 21901  
Wednesday, April 2, 2024  
7:00 P.M.

**-CALL TO ORDER-**

Chairman Dobbins called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Present for the meeting included Commissioner Hilary Crothers Moore, Neil DeMatt were present for the meeting. Calvin Wilson came to the meeting at 7:25 p.m. Also present were Melissa B. Cook-MacKenzie, Town Administrator and Betsy Vennell, Director of Planning. Member, Judy Duffy and Lisa Rhoades, Planning and Zoning Assistant were absent from the meeting due to illness.

**-PUBLIC HEARING-**

Zoning Ordinance Amendment: Ordinance 2024-04-01 and Ordinance 2024-04-02.

Chairman Dobbins called the Public Hearing to order at 7:00 p.m. There were no members of the public who signed up to speak. Mr. Dobbins asked the Planning Members if they had any comments on the regulations, and they did not have any comments. Chairman Dobbins requested comments from staff. Mrs. Vennell reported the brief overview of the Town's research into Cannabis regulations since Cannabis became legal in Maryland. A group from Town attended a Cannabis Symposium in August and conducted additional meetings to review the County's Cannabis regulations and attended the County's Public Hearings concerning the new regulations. Mrs. Vennell reported that both Ordinances have been reviewed by the Town's Attorney, who reported that he had no objections to the language or content of the Ordinances, as proposed.

Mrs. Cook-MacKenzie reported that the Maryland Cannabis Commission did not appeal the County's approval of the regulations which passed in January 2024.

With no additional comments, Mr. Dobbins closed the public hearing at 7:15 p.m.

**-APPROVAL OF MINUTES-**

There were no minutes presented for approval.

**-NEW BUSINESS-**

1. Recommendation to the Mayor and Commissioners:  
Ordinance 2024-04-01 and Ordinance 2024-04-02.

Ordinance 2024-04-01

Mr. DeMatt made a motion to recommend approval of Ordinance 2024-04-01, as presented, to the Mayor and Commissioners. Commissioner Crothers Moore seconded the motion and motion was approved by all.

Ordinance 2024-04-02

Mr. DeMatt made a motion to recommend approval Ordinance 2024-04-0, as presented, to the Mayor and Commissioners. Commissioner Crothers-Moore seconded the motion, and the motion was approved by all.

2. Maryland Department of Transportation: Priority Letter 2024.

Mrs. Vennell reported that the Town had sent a priority letter to the Maryland Department of Transportation in Fall 2023, however, to get the town back in line with the “Annual Tour” schedule, this letter is being sent out now.

Mrs. Vennell reported that Ms. Duffy requested that re-paving Route 272 North and South Bound lanes East and West Cecil Avenue (Route 7) be added to the list, and the Planning Commission and Ms. Cook-MacKenzie concurred.

Mr. Dobbins asked if there was any feedback from the State Highway Administration from the January 2024 meeting with the Planning Commission. Mrs. Cook-MacKenzie reported she has not heard from the State Highway Administration since the meeting. Ms. Cook-MacKenzie reported that she attended a meeting a few months ago with other Towns about long range traffic goals and concerns. The outcome of that meeting was that it should be a concerted effort to include the County, Maryland Department of Transportation and the Municipalities to review and facilitate a plan for the long range transportation planning concerns. The meetings could be conducted by WILMAPCO due to sensitivity of the County and Municipalities individual concerns. Mr. Dobbins thought it would be advantageous to add this into the Maryland Department of Transportation letter, and should probably be placed as a top priority.

Melissa: separate into planning and one for construction sections: letter:

**-OLD BUSINESS-**

There was no old business on the agenda.

**-COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC-**

None.

**-REPORT-**

Mrs. Cook-MacKenzie reported:

1. Special Exceptions for 16/18 South Main Street: The Special Exception for a restaurant and an on premise alcohol beverage license received approval from the North East Board of Appeals.
2. Mayor Kline has offered his resignation effective April 23, 2024, due to family and health issues. The current Vice-Mayor, Kelly Benson, will move over to the position of Mayor.
3. Lisa Rhoades, Planning and Zoning Assistant is due to return to work next week after being out for 65 work days.

4. North East Gateway Site: The Town has received notice that there is a proposal for a cars wash and oil/lube shop to be located in North East Gateway, on the lot closest to North East Plaza, fronting Route 272.
5. North East Preserve: A Consultant from Landmark will be performing an Environmental Assessment as soon as funding is awarded from the grant funding they applied for.

North East Comprehensive Plan Updates and Refinements:

Mrs. Vennell reported that the Town put out a request for proposals for the required updates and/or refinements to the North East Comprehensive Plan. A contract has been signed with EPAPc.

Mrs. Vennell reported that she recently conducted a meeting with Stacey Dahlstrom, the consultant who will be working closely with the town throughout the amendment/refinement process.

Steering Committee: The Town will need to choose a Steering Committee for the process, which will include Planning Commission and some other members of the public who have expressed a desire to serve in this capacity. Some meetings will be conducted via zoom and can the meetings can be done as a workshop with different hours if amenable to the Committee. The Consultant will be at the first Committee meeting, however, the necessity of whether she attends in person, or not, will be determined on the meeting content and the Committee's desires.

Public Participation: Methods to receive public participation are being researched by Ms. Dahlstrom's firm.

Survey: Mrs. Vennell reported that the Town would like to put out as survey to receive input regarding the goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan. The plan is to put a survey on the Town's website and we will have the option of sending out postcards which they can scan the UR code and bring up the survey on their phone to fill out. It is imperative that the survey isn't so lengthy that people stop filling it out mid-stream. Ms. Dahlstrom is researching other towns where the survey approach has been effective. The Plan of action is to have a draft survey to show to everyone at the first steering committee meeting.

Mr. Dobbins reported that he would prefer workshops. Prefers in person. Limit of two hours per meeting. Thursday between 4:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. seemed to fit with most schedules.

Project Clean Stream: Saturday, April 6, 2024. The Town will provide gloves and garbage bags and the Town will provide a dump truck to load the trash. Volunteers may want to wear boots as it has been raining for days, and will most likely be muddy.

**MISCELLANEOUS:**

There were no miscellaneous items to report at this evening's meeting.

**NEXT MEETING:**

North East Planning Commission  
April 2, 2024

The next Planning Commission meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 7, 2024. There are no applications, to date. The Planning Office is in the midst of preparing the 2023 Annual Report, however, Mrs. Vennell reported she is not certain it will be ready for the May meeting.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

With no further business, Commissioner Crothers-Moore made a motion to adjourn at 7:59 p.m. Mr. Mr. DeMatt seconded the motion and the motion was approved by all.

Respectfully Submitted:

Attest:

Betsy Vennell, Director of Planning

Mark Dobbins, Chairman