

**NORTH EAST PLANNING COMMISSION WORKSHOP
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN STEERING MEETING
North East Town Hall Meeting Room
106 South Main Street
North East, Maryland 21901
Tuesday, September 2, 2025 / 7:00 PM**

-CALL TO ORDER-

Chairman Dobbins opened the workshop at 7:18 PM.

Present for the meeting included Planning Commission Chairman Mark Dobbins, Commissioner Hilary Crothers-Moore, Ex-Officio, members, Calvin Wilson and Judy Duffy; Grant Handley, Assistant Town Administrator via Zoom, Betsy Vennell, Director of Planning, and Lisa Rhoades, Planning and Zoning Assistant. Absent from the meeting were Mayor Kelly Benson, Melissa Cook-Mackenzie, Town Administrator, and Amy Yackanech, Grant-writer, due to prior engagements.

-APPROVAL OF MINIUTES-

August 20, 2025

Ms. Duffy made a motion to approve the August 20, 2025 minutes as presented. Mr. Wilson seconded the motion and the motion was approved by all.

-OLD BUSINESS-

None.

-NEW BUSINESS-

Economic Development Plan-Chapter 7

Mrs. Vennell reported that she sent a draft of Chapter 7- Economic Development Plan to Sandy Turner, Cecil County Tourism. After reviewing the draft, Mrs. Turner returned the chapter with a few comments. At the request of Mrs. Vennell, Mr. Handley confirmed the updates and incorporated the comments into the Planning Commission's draft.

Page 7-2

Mrs. Vennell reported that she spoke with Bill Swiatek, WILMAPCO, who suggested rewording paragraph 5 to make the wording more general and remove the reference to New Jersey as there is less than 1% of a commuter relationship there. In addition, most of the commuters that work in New Castle County, work outside of the cities of Wilmington and Newark Delaware. Therefore, Mr. Swiatek suggested to update the wording as it has a slight negative connotation. Mr. Swiatek suggested rewording the paragraph such as:

"The economy of North East and Cecil County as a whole, is strongly influenced by developments in the broader region. One indicator of this relationship is the strong

commuter-shed between the North East area and New Castle County, Harford County and Baltimore County, as evident from the 2022 Census Data.”

Mrs. Vennell commented that not only is this information more current, the source of the data is also noted. Mrs. Vennell inquired if the Steering Committee concurred with the proposed wording. The Steering Committee concurred. Mr. Wilson commented that it is true that many residents work outside of Cecil County and some individuals do prefer to live away from the area where they work. Mrs. Duffy concurred. Mrs. Vennell reported that approximately 70% of commuters work outside of Cecil County. Mrs. Vennell inquired if the Steering Committee would like to keep the original wording: “between 2009 and 2023, approximately 44% of North East’s labor force commuted outside of Cecil County, with a significant portion traveling to the Baltimore and Philadelphia/Washington metropolitan areas.” The Steering Committee had no comment.

Page 7-6

Further Expand Sports Tourism

Chairman Dobbins stated that he likes the addition of the paragraphs regarding sports tourism.

Downtown Lodging

Chairman Dobbins commented that he likes the added boutique hotel language, further stating that he does not believe that big chain hotels are compatible within Downtown North East. The Planning Commission concurred with this statement.

Ms. Duffy would like to add language about Bed and Breakfasts in addition to the boutique hotels. Chairman Dobbins concurred and commented that adding some assertive language that big chain hotels are not desired, in downtown North East, in the description may also be beneficial. Mrs. Vennell replied that the final draft would include language about a need for additional Bed and Breakfast facilities in North East.

-REPORTS-

None.

-MISCELLANEOUS -

Mr. Handley invited the Planning Commission to the Town Staff Picnic on Friday, September 5th at 1:00 PM at the North East Community Park.

North East Planning Commission Workshop
Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee
September 2, 2025
Page 3

-NEXT MEETING-

Mrs. Vennell reported that there will be an October 7, 2025 Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee Workshop. The Consultant for this project indicated they would prepare a draft for the Sensitive Area Element and a draft showing the final Land Use Plan and the Future Land Use Map.

-ADJOURNMENT-

Ms. Duffy made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:34 PM. Mr. Wilson seconded the motion and the motion was approved by all.

Attest:

Approved:

Lisa Rhoades
Planning and Zoning Assistant

Mark Dobbins
Chairman