

NORTH EAST PLANNING COMMISSION
North East Town Hall Meeting Room
106 South Main Street, North East, Maryland 21901
Tuesday, September 2, 2025
7:00 P.M.

Chairman Dobbins called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Present for the meeting included Commissioner Crothers-Moore, Members Judy Duffy, and Calvin Wilson. Also present included Grant Handley, Assistant Town Administrator, via Zoom, Betsy Vennell, Director of Planning and Lisa Rhoades, Planning and Zoning Assistant. Melissa B. Cook-Mac Kenzie, Zoning Administrator was absent from the meeting due to a prior commitment.

-MINUTES-

August 12, 2025

Ms. Duffy commented that she appreciated the detailed Planning Commission meeting minutes and Chairman Dobbins concurred.

Mrs. Rhoades reported that Mr. Handley had submitted a request for additional details to be added to the minutes for the August 12, 2025 meeting. The minutes were amended to include the following details, which Mrs. Rhoades read into the record.

Mr. Handley reported that this application did not meet the Town's Guidelines for the grant application requirements as the grant applicant may not start any work until the contract committing to complete the project has been fully executed. Mr. Handley reported that the proposed projects included siding that had already been installed. The Planning Commission, however, should have an opportunity to review this application. Mr. Wilson inquired if the property owner had begun the project but ran out of funding to complete the project, would they then be eligible for this grant funding. Mr. Handley replied no, although the Town Administration is sympathetic and recognizes the unfortunate timing, the project had begun prior to the application and before the contract committing to complete the project was executed. Commissioner Crothers-Moore reported that the renovations for this property are pursuant to a fire and fire insurance claim. Mr. Handley added that the applications and projects are reviewed by the State for compliance with the grant. The Planning Commission unanimously concurred this project was not eligible for this grant as the project had begun prior to the execution of the grant contract and therefore it does not meet the Town of North East Commercial Façade Improvement Grant Program Instructions (and guidelines).

Ms. Duffy made a motion to approve the August 12, 2025 Planning Commission meeting minutes with the amendment noted above. Commissioner Crothers-Moore seconded the motion and the motion was approved by all.

DRAFT

-PUBLIC HEARING-

ORDINANCE 2025-09-01: REPEALS Article 5. District Regulations; Section 5-12 “CAO” Critical Area Overlay District Regulations and Appendix CA-1, CA-2 in its entirety. This Ordinance also enacts a revised Section 5-12 “CAO” Critical Area Overlay District Regulations, Appendix CA-I, II, III and amends Article 3. Definitions.

Chairman Dobbins opened the Public Hearing at 7:02 PM and reported that the purpose of the public hearing is to receive public comment on the proposed Ordinance, then for the Planning Commission to make a recommendation to the Mayor and Commissioners regarding the Ordinance. The Mayor and Commissioner’s will conduct their public hearing on September 24, 2025.

The Planning Commission didn’t have any comments regarding the Ordinance. Chairman Dobbins inquired if there were any members of the public present who signed up to speak. Mrs. Vennell confirmed that there were no members of the public who signed up to speak.

Chairman Dobbins inquired if there were any comments from Town staff. Mrs. Vennell reported that the Planning Commission has received a copy of the State of Maryland requirement for the adoption of an updated Critical Area Ordinance, and the Planning Commission has received the redline version of the updates, showing what has been amended. Ms. Duffy inquired if the State created the wording for the revisions and Mrs. Vennell replied yes. Mr. Wilson inquired if the Town had any opposition to any of the proposed Critical Area regulation revisions. Mrs. Vennell replied the Planning office had worked closely over the past several months with the Critical Area Commission’s representative to revise the language, and the Planning office was satisfied with the language. Mrs. Vennell reported Habitat Protection Maps are included in the updated regulations. Mrs. Vennell also reported that in 2015 the Town had adopted updated Critical Area Maps for North East. Mrs. Vennell reported that two legal notices were placed in the local newspaper advertising the Public Hearings for the Ordinance adoption, also placed on the Town’s website. There have been no comments from the public.

With no further comments, Chairman Dobbins closed the public hearing 7:09 PM.

-OLD BUSINESS-

None.

-NEW BUSINESS-

1. ORDINANCE 2025-09-01: Recommendation to the Mayor and Commissioners.

Ordinance 2025-09-01

Ms. Duffy made a motion to recommend approval of Ordinance 2025-09-01, as presented, to the Mayor & Commissioners. Mr. Wilson seconded the motion and the motion was approved by all.

-REPORTS-

Feasibility Study to Improve Pedestrian and Bike Access

Mr. Handley reported that the Bike Feasibility Study was a grant provided by the Maryland Department of Transportation's Community Bikeways program, who granted the Town of North East \$50,000 to see if it is feasible to enhance bike paths through-out the Town. The ultimate goal is to connect the community to parks, the North East Preserve, the Police Station, the Library and Town Hall, among other areas in Town. The idea is to connect areas of the Town with bike paths not just create a bike path along Main Street because biking on Main Street is difficult due to traffic congestion. Mr. Handley reported that there are good existing bike paths south of Town which connect to Elk Neck State Park.

Mr. Handley reported that the open house/public workshop held on August 25, 2025 at the North East Library where concepts were presented to the public. There were approximately 12-15 citizens in attendance. Mr. Handley reported that residents of Courts of Mallory and Ridgely Forest were in attendance and were receptive to the idea of connecting the two communities via a bike path. Mr. Handley also stated there was a proposed bike path from Ridgely Forest through the State Forest and into the Town. Mr. Handley added that the Town has not yet sought permission to install a bike path through the State Forest however, this is one of the proposed ideas. Mr. Handley also reported that a survey is currently underway and is available on the Town's website, Town of North East Facebook Page and it has been distributed through the NEMD Alert messaging system. The survey will be available for 30 days and then the information will be compiled into a report.

After this process and a report on from the consultant, the next step would be to apply for grant money for design.

Dredging

Chairman Dobbins inquired if there was any additional information on the North East River dredging project. Mrs. Vennell replied she has not been apprised of any updates.

-MISCELLANEOUS-

None.

-NEXT MEETING-

There have been no agenda items submitted for the October 7, 2025 meeting, however, there is a tentative Planning Commission Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee workshop planned for Tuesday October 7, 2025.

-ADJOURNMENT-

With no further business, Ms. Duffy made a motion to adjourn a 7:16 PM. Commissioner Crothers-Moore seconded the motion and the motion was approved by all.

Respectfully Submitted:

Attest:

Lisa Rhoades,
Planning and Zoning Assistant

Mark Dobbins,
Chairman