TOWN COUNCIL
Work Session
Cape Charles Civic Center
January 15, 2025
6:00 PM

At 6:00 p.m. Mayor Adam Charney, having established a quorum, called to order the Work Session of the Cape Charles Town Council. In addition to Mayor Charney, in attendance were Vice Mayor Bennett, Councilmen Buchholz, Butta, Grossman and Newman, and Councilwomen Ashworth and Holloway. Also, in attendance were Town Manager John Hozey, Project Manager Bob Panek, Town Clerk Libby Hume, and Ricky Wiatt from VHB, the Town's consulting firm. There were 5 members of the public in attendance.

Mayor Charney announced to those in attendance that this was just a work session to review and discuss the Beachfront Master Plan adding that nothing had yet been finalized on the plan.

John Hozey stated that since the last meeting, VHB had been trying to incorporate the comments received and provide a scaled down version of the last plan. A very downscaled draft of the plan would be reviewed this evening and there would be discussions on how the Town could involve the public moving forward.

Ricky Wiatt added that funding opportunities would also be discussed. He went on to add that tonight's plan was a fresh aerial view and was not meant to be a colored rendering. He would zoom in so the detail could be seen. The plan also showed how the dunes were proposed to be reshaped in width and uniformity. He and John Hozey took all the comments that were received and went through the old plan block by block and updated the various items. Mr. Wiatt went on to review the plan starting at the north end of the beach.

First Block/Jefferson Avenue: The bath house was moved from Washington to Jefferson Avenue and combined with the ADA area. There would be a small sitting area with the ADA ramp. The food truck/vendor spaces were eliminated. The biggest change was the parking plan being flipped from the last version to have head-in parking on the west side to also include designated golf cart spaces. The east side would have parallel vehicle parking with dimensions of 10'x22'. The openings at the ends of the streets were reduced to about 25', which was similar to what it was today. The majority of the plazas were removed with one remaining at Randolph Avenue at the gazebo with an 80' opening.

There was some discussion about the ADA accesses as follows: i) John Hozey stated that an alternate ADA access would be at the fishing pier with a ramp and a short ADA mat; ii) Bob Panek added that mats could be added anywhere in the future and were not that expensive. The mats would serve multiple purposes, not just for ADA accessibility; iii) Appropriate ADA parking would also have to be added at each ADA access.

Madison, Monroe & Tazewell Avenues: The beach accesses for these streets would be natural entrances. The east-side sidewalk would be 8' wide from the back edge and would be no closer to the houses that the current sidewalk. The grass strip was removed. There would be a 6" curb, 10' parallel parking spots, and the road would be 26' wide. 24' was the normal width for roads, but since we had the land area, the additional 2' would provide adequate room for vehicles backing in and out of the head-in parking spaces. The median strip would be removed. On the west side, the parking spots would be 10'x22' to allow for extra space to load/unload vehicles. The standard space was 9'x18'. The volley ball net would be moved and the entire plazas initially proposed for these streets

were removed. Several golf cart parking spaces were placed within the head-in vehicle parking and they would be striped. Bump-outs were added for vegetation, sidewalks, etc. to help organize the parking spots. Today there was nothing delineating the parking spots which was inefficient. It would also deter vendors from parking along Bay Avenue.

Randolph Avenue/Gazebo area: This area was scaled back as well but there would still be seating. Taking out the center median provided additional space around the gazebo. Councilwoman Holloway asked how people could view the sunset from the gazebo. Mr. Wiatt explained that based on the circular pattern, the center entrance would be steps with seating on either side. An ADA ramp would also be added.

South Plaza: This plaza was scaled back as well. Everything in this corner would be ADA compliant. The plaza would tie into the fishing pier and the steps would be replaced by a ramp. The restrooms were in the same location but the size was scaled down. The vendor area was moved to the back area behind the dune. It would not be taking the dune or blocking the LOVE sign, but the space would be organized. A drop-off area was proposed so people can pull in to drop off items, then drive around and exit the area to park. The long building, that was initially included for a wind break, was eliminated and the dunes were reshaped to wrap around the area to protect it. The LOVE sign was moved about 5' over to allow people to walk on the walkway along the waterfront. To allow for ADA access to the LOVE Sign, pavers should be placed around it. This was a detail item that could be addressed in more detail at a later date. There was an opportunity to add a few flag poles. The south plaza would be more formal for events with pavers, hardscape, etc. A walkway would be placed along the promenade so people could go through the food truck area or loop around to walk along the seawall along the beach or into the harbor area. This connector was part of the Harbor Plan. There was much discussion about the area around the LOVE sign with space for a tent to be used for events, etc.

The plans included the additional breakwater that would allow for the growth of the beach. This could be a phased plan. The breakwater would be easy to add in at a later date. Without the rock structure, just adding sand from dredging, would not keep the sand there. Some type of rock structure was needed to grow the beach. John Hozey stated that the additional breakwater was not critical to the rest of the design. If the Town grew and Council felt that there was a need for more beach area, the additional breakwater could be considered at that time.

After the initial review, Mr. Wiatt asked Council for feedback about the South Plaza area. i) Councilwoman Ashworth did not like the location of the vendor area adding that when someone walks down Mason Avenue toward the beach and LOVE sign, they would see the vendor area which took away the simple beauty of the entranceway. Councilwoman Holloway noted that the results of the survey showed that people wanted an area for food trucks with seating and shade for families to gather and eat, adding that she liked this plan much better than having the food trucks lined up along Bay Avenue. Details could be discussed later but this created some excitement and a nice gathering place. There was much debate about the food truck/vendor area. Mr. Wiatt stated that we could look at structure placement and push the food trucks to the back with some formal plantings of ornamental grasses. Mayor Charney noted that once they obtained their business license, they could park pretty much anywhere, but he felt a happy compromise could be reached by moving the shed to the right and placing the food truck behind it, out of sight of Mason Avenue which was better than having them on Bay Avenue. Councilwoman Holloway added that if the building/shed was moved, a mural could be painted on it for another location for a photo opportunity and to improve the visual; ii) Councilman Grossman asked about the road elevation changes and crosswalks adding that he was not in favor of raising the elevation in the intersections. Mr. Wiatt stated that the intent of the raised crosswalks was to slow traffic. It added a strong safety element and was required for some grants. Councilwoman Ashworth asked what would have to be done to Bay Avenue to accomplish this. Mr. Wiatt stated that the road would have to be re-milled, which the transportation grants supported.

There was much discussion about the construction of Bay Avenue which was compared to the trail work along Washington Avenue and South Peach Street. It was noted that Bay Avenue was part of the Town's community trail plan which began in 2007 and was also in the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Wiatt stated that the amounts of the VDOT Transportation grants had increased tremendously up into the $20M range but certain items needed to be addressed such as multi-modal transportation, ADA accessibility, stormwater management, resiliency, sea-level rise, etc. Lighting, raised crosswalks, and EV charging stations were other attractions for grant sources. The maintenance wall was actually where the boardwalk was currently located. One of the walls could be reconstructed as a seawall for a second layer of protection if the dunes failed; iii) Councilman Buchholz stated that the added parking along Bay Avenue should alleviate beach parking drifting into the neighborhoods. Mr. Wiatt added that the Town was fortunate to have this rare opportunity to add parking capacity to the roadway without have to take right-of-way property to accomplish this. Matthews and Tappahannock also did similar projects which were successful;

Funding Opportunities: Mr. Wiatt informed Council that he attended a webinar for a five-year pilot program, Rural and Tribal Assistance Program (RTA), through the US Department of Transportation. 13 projects were awarded in 2024. This year, $27M was available and could take the project from a master plan to engineering plans. There were five federal programs and he emailed the list to John Hozey. The grants were only available to rural communities with census tracts under 150K. They were 100% funded, no local match. The grant cycle would open on March 4th at 2:00 p.m. It was not an elaborate application but must meet the criteria. It was available on a first come, first served basis. Last year, 70% of the approved projects were submitted on the first day and were granted $250K - $750K per project. The notice of funding would be on May 22nd and the Town would have three years to spend the money. Each state received a certain allotment. He was in Duck, NC earlier this morning and they were going to apply. He asked for Council's blessing to explore this further on the Town's behalf. The Dept. of Transportation also offers RAISE grants with up to $25M in awards and the Town could look at submitting a RAISE grant application in January 2027.

John Hozey asked Council if the parking concept was okay to move forward. Councilman Buchholz asked if there was a way to survey the number of cars, golf carts, etc. parked along Bay Avenue during the summer so the Town would have the data moving forward. John Hozey stated that yes, staff could do this. There was a consensus to move forward with the parking concept as presented.

John Hozey summarized the plans from the Randolph Avenue entrance northward. The Tazewell Avenue deck would be removed and there would be two places for viewing the sunset – at Randolph and Jefferson Avenues. The plan preserved the original look and feel of the gazebo, adding ADA access. There would be a curved maintenance area, and the dunes could be reconfigured. There would be foot washing stations and trash cans at every intersection. The Monroe and Madson entrances would be the same. The volleyball court would still be at Monroe but the orientation would be mostly north/south. The restrooms were moved to Jefferson Avenue with tables and umbrellas, and the ADA access.

Mr. Wiatt added that bikes racks could also be added at some of the entrances. Today, the beach entrances were not aligned with the streets. The plan was proposing to open up the entrances to line up with the street. There was some discussion that originally, the beach entrances probably aligned with the streets, but with the winds usually coming from the south, the sand probably blew northward causing the entrances to move over time.

There was discussion regarding the sand and maintenance involved in keeping it off the stairs, etc. John Hozey stated that the fact that the stairs could not be seen due to the sand was the reason why we needed to get rid of the stairs. Mr. Wiatt reiterated that the plan would improve the ability for the Town to maintain it. We would never stop the sand from migrating, but would have a 10' maintenance strip, which would be where the current boardwalk was located, and an 8' promenade

before coming to the street. This was a much wider area to collect the sand. John Hozey added that it would be easier to clean and significantly reduce the amount of sand going onto Bay Avenue.

John Hozey asked for a consensus of whether the main plan was heading in the right direction. Mayor Charney, Councilmen Buchholz, Butta and Newman, and Councilwoman Holloway were in agreement. Councilman Grossman stated his agreement contingent on receiving grant funding. Councilwoman Ashworth stated that she still had reservations.

There was some discussion on how to move forward to involve the public. Councilwoman Holloway suggested meeting in a larger space where stations with photos could be set up for the public to move around the room from station to station viewing the photos, etc. and having the ability to ask questions. Small tables with a facilitator would be at each station. This should be open house style with people coming and going over a period of time. She recommended two locations with two sessions each – one during a weeknight and one on Saturday. Mayor Charney agreed and felt that Ricky Wiatt and staff would be the ones manning the stations to answer any questions.

Councilwoman Holloway asked Sam Jones and Ed Wells, who were in attendance, their thoughts about this. Ed Wells stated that he would prefer multiple Town Hall meetings.

John Hozey asked about the role of Council in these meetings. Councilwoman Ashworth stated that it made sense for the majority of Council to be in attendance possibly at each table to talk with the public, especially to get the public's feedback. She added that it would be good to do a survey as the people were leaving asking specific questions. As soon as the dates and locations were set, a message needs to go out inviting everyone to attend. Emails could be sent to the survey respondents as well. The information also needed to be posted online to solicit feedback. Councilwoman Holloway agreed that the messaging was very important since we had a lot of new people who might not be aware of the Community Trail project and its importance. Councilwoman Ashworth added that we needed to make sure to get the word out that we were seeking grants to pay for this project since there was a misconception that the taxpayers would be paying for it.

Mayor Charney agreed that an education piece was needed to provide the information. Councilwoman Holloway stated that a listing of 10 or so FAQs needed to be published.

John Hozey stated that the idea of the public meetings sounded good, but who would physically do the work. If the consultants were brought in to man the tables for four nights and four Saturdays, the cost would add up. Councilwoman Holloway asked Ricky Wiatt to provide a cost estimate for the meetings.

There was some discussion about the initial roll out of the plan. Mr. Wiatt stated that the plan was presented multiple times at Council meetings, but the public was not looking for it. The virtual meeting room with boards and information was put out but it was difficult to view from cell phones or tablets. He agreed that in person meetings would be much better, adding that he liked providing the attendees with yellow, green and red dots for them to place on items they liked or not. Councilwoman Holloway stated that the community was owed this. Council did not ask enough questions on the initial model. Conceptually, we needed to be more interactive with our residents. Councilwoman Ashworth added that Council needed to do some damage control about the amount of money spent on this plan already. Mr. Wiatt noted that VHB felt that they were part of the issue and had been working to revise the plans over the last several months without billing. Councilman Butta stated that it was all water under the bridge. We needed to learn from our past mistakes.

Mayor Charney suggested contacting the YMCA to see if the meetings could be held there. It was a neutral location and could accommodate more people. We could hold two meetings at one location – one on a weekday and one on Saturday.

Councilman Butta recommended calling this a conceptual plan versus a master plan.

John Hozey asked if Council was on board to taking this plan to the public. We would hold two meetings on two different days to attract more people. Would we then make the boards available virtually to those who could not attend in person? Mr. Wiatt stated that they could do a Facebook Live meeting and give a virtual presentation.

The dates would be scheduled with VHB, then the information would be provided to the public.

Motion made by Councilwoman Holloway, seconded by Councilwoman Ashworth, to adjourn the Town Council Work Session. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

The Town Hall Meeting was adjourned at 8:27 p.m.

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Mayor Charney

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Town Clerk

WASHIN
JEFFERSON AVENUE
MADISON AVENUE
MONROE AVENUE
TAZEWELL AVENUE
RANDOLPH AVENUE
MASON AVENUE