

Wachapreague Planning Commission

Community Visioning Session

Summary Report

Background

The Wachapreague Planning Commission is updating the Wachapreague Comprehensive Plan as required by the Virginia State Code. A community visioning session was held on May 13, 2023, to support this effort. This report summarizes the results of that session. The Commission thanks the Wachapreague Volunteer Fire Company for providing meeting space, the Wachapreague Country Store for providing coffee and supplies, and the Accomack Northampton Planning District Commission for meeting supplies.

Methodology

An informational flyer encouraging participation was posted at the town post office, town hall and mailed to every property owner. The session was held at the Wachapreague Volunteer Fire Company building from 9 am to noon on Saturday May 13, 2023. A total of 20 people attended to share their views on the town's future. A member of the Planning Commission facilitated the session and documented the results.

Attendees worked in four teams to first address "What do we want to see in place ten years from now?" Each team brainstormed and shared ideas then selected their highest priority items. The four teams shared their priorities and participants then identified clusters of similar ideas to develop a shared vision. Details are provided in Appendix A and are summarized in the next section.

The teams then worked to identify challenges to achieving the ten-year vision as well as key opportunities before adjourning.

A Vision for the Future

Please note that vision elements are not listed in any order of priority.

Within ten years residents and visitors will experience:

Expanded retail businesses and dining opportunities at the marinas and commercial districts. Seafood retailers and local entrepreneurs offer a variety of goods and services. Adequate parking is marked and available.

Recreational waterfront opportunities including fishing, crabbing, a birdwatching observation deck and other eco-friendly activities. Controlled lighting and ramps for turtle hatchlings demonstrate the communities' commitment to protecting the environment.

Year-round events such as festivals, seafood and farmers markets, art fairs and town park recreational opportunities. A variety of outdoor public art is enjoyed at various locations.

Public restrooms are available along the waterfront and town parks and facilities.

The new town hall and visitor center provides important information and services to residents and visitors. A town maintenance building protects equipment and records. **The town museum and historic district** highlight the unique natural and historical significance of the area.

Town-wide public sewer serves residents and businesses helping to ensure drinking water from wells is safe and the environment protected.

Communication infrastructure provides free wi-fi throughout the town and reliable cell phone and internet services.

An effective drainage system protects homes and business establishments from rainstorm flooding and minimizes problems created by standing water.

Challenges and Opportunities

Participants worked in teams to brainstorm opportunities for achieving one or more of the vision elements as well as challenges to making the vision a reality.

Challenges	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Securing funding for community improvement projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek state and federal grants and loans for infrastructure and other projects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addressing drainage issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete current drainage improvement study • Develop ways to effectively communicate information on drainage plan development and outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeping residents informed and involved about plans and activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the town website and social media to share information and solicit feedback and active involvement • Prepare a monthly or quarterly newsletter and distribute via the town office, post office, local businesses and VIMS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying a location for a new cell tower and convincing service provider it is feasible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link improved cell services to public safety and tourism initiatives • Improved service supports economic development by allowing people to work from home
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enforcing local ordinances is cumbersome and costly when courts get involved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase outreach to property owners to help educate and assist with compliance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning and conducting town events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve volunteers, businesses and local organizations in designing and implementing festivals and recreational events

Challenges	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Moving the current town hall out of the flood plain and finding a convenient location	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify a suitable location for a new town hall and incorporate a visitor center and museum to save costs• Sell current town hall to a suitable business

Appendix A

What Do We Want to See in Place in Ten Years?				
Effective Drainage System	Public Restrooms	Communication Infrastructure	New Businesses and Dining	Year-Round Events
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructure drainage • Drainage control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modern public toilets • Year-round restrooms at seaside, park, marina 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efficient tele-comm: internet, cell phone • Cell tower • Townwide free public internet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working waterfront with seafood sales • Three new businesses at marina • Cafe/bistro • Entrepreneurs: shops, dining • Marked public parking. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town festivals • Town events • Seafood/farm market • Art market/fair • Active town park – playground; BBQ; picnic • Outdoor public art

Recreational Waterfront	New Town Hall and Visitor Center	Town Museum and Historic Sites	Town-wide Sewer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public crabbing • Birding platform • Improved waterfront – clean; preserved; observation deck. • Dark skies certification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town info, welcome center with bathrooms • Improved town hall • Impressive multipurpose town hall • Visitor center welcome pack 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town museum • Ecological and historical sites and monuments • Registered historic district 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public sewer town-wide • Expanded public sewer

Please note items are not listed in any order of priority.