

Onancock Town Council Meeting – October 25, 2021

Town of Onancock
Town Council Meeting
October 25, 2021
7:00 p.m.

Call to Order and Roll Call:

Mayor Fosque called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and roll was called. Mayor Fletcher Fosque and Councilmembers Robert Bloxom, Ray Burger, Thelma Gillespie, Joy Marino, Sarah Nock and Maphis Oswald were present. All members were present, and a quorum was established.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Mayor Fosque acknowledge two individuals that recently passed away in Onancock, Miguel Bizzotto of Bizzotto's Gallery Caffé and Mary Ann Connolly of Red Queen Gallery.

Consideration and Approval of the September 27, 2021 Town Council Meeting Minutes:

Mayor Fosque asked if there were any changes, corrections or additions to the minutes as submitted.

Councilmember Marino stated that the word rabid on page three should be removed.

Councilmember Nock made a motion to approve the minutes as amended. Councilmember Oswald seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

Public Business:

No public hearings scheduled.

Council Discussion:

- a. Comprehensive Plan Discussion: *Councilmember Bloxom made a motion to approve the Comprehensive Plan. Councilmember Burger seconded the motion. Council discussion followed.*

Councilmember Bloxom shared Planning Commission's journey to getting the document together and ready for Council's approval, stressing that Council adoption was appropriate and needed without further delay.

Mayor Fosque called for the vote. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

Public Comment:

Mrs. Brenda Smith, Market Street, read her letter of concern regarding the lack of police coverage aloud to Town Council (attached).

Mr. Bill Burnham, Onancock Business and Civic Association, shared with Town Council the Christmas season events calendar. Councilmember Oswald asked that Town Hall be kept apprised of the events so that when people call staff will be able to assist them with the correct information.

Rick Turner, Onancock, Street, reiterated Mrs. Smith's concern over the Town's lack of police coverage.

Mr. Spuck shared with the public Council's commitment to increasing our officer's salaries over the next three years, putting Onancock's departments salaries in the top three on the Shore.

Mrs. Priscilla Hart, Market Street, also expressed her concerns over the lack of police coverage.

Police Chief, Eric Williams, shared with Council and the public that currently there are two Onancock officers who are at the Police Academy and that currently the Town only has two certified officers on staff. They are currently rotating shifts. The Department is also looking into putting cameras up in areas of concern. Councilmember Oswald asked what the citizens could do to help deter crime in Town. Chief Williams suggested that the installation of motion lights will help deter crime and that businesses should look at their setup to see where their security weaknesses are and work to correct those deficiencies.

Mr. Glen Smith, Market Street, suggested that the Town look into different approaches to police recruitment, stating that it is all about the quality of life.

Councilmember Gillespie shared that the Police cannot be expected to be everywhere and that our residents and businesses should do all they can do to help themselves.

Committee Reports:

- a. HRSD, Robert Bloxom: Councilmember Bloxom deferred to Mr. Spuck. Mr. Spuck shared that he received an email from USDA – Rural Development Friday morning asking to see the signed minutes and adopted ordinance to verify that Town Council approved the transfer for the wastewater treatment plant to HRSD.
- b. Waterfront Committee Report, Robert Bloxom: Councilmember Bloxom read Chairman T. Lee Byrd's report aloud (report include in the minutes).

Councilmember Nock asked about T&W Block's progress with dust mitigation plan. Mr. Spuck shared that the well is installed and that they are working during normal business hours. Mr. Spuck stated that they are still working on getting the landscaping barrier installed.

- c. Planning Commission, Robert Bloxom: Councilmember Bloxom shared that the Planning Commission recently reviewed the zoning of a parcel on Pine Street which backs up to Pennewell Street, the initial consensus was to rezone from R1A to R1C. Planning Commission also reviewed the potential rezone of four Town owned parcels into Parks and Open Spaces which will match their current use. The Planning Commission also discussed how best to upgrade paper roads in Town which may have future construction on them, it was the general consensus to upgrade the roads using VDOT's specifications. Lastly, the Commission continued their discussion of the homestay ordinance rewrite. The rewrite will come before Council in the New Year.
- d. Personnel Committee, Joy Marino: No meeting.

Mayor's Report:

Mayor Fosque asked Council to agree on the best method to interview prospective candidates for Councilmember Bloxom's open seat, which will be vacated after the December meeting. Council decided to hold a Closed Session meeting following the Regular Town Council meeting in November to interview the interested parties. Council has also asked to see resumes a week before the interviews.

Town Council also had a brief discussion of cancelling the December meeting due to its closeness to the holidays.

Town Manager's Report: Attached.

Mr. Spuck highlighted a few items from his Town Manager's Report:

- Small Business Grant: stating the Town will be able to assist 31 businesses through this grant totaling approximately \$331,000. Mr. Spuck thanked Mrs. Lisa Fiege for all of her help with the grant administration.
- Purchase of a New Mower: Mr. Spuck explained that the Town outsources some of its mowing as does the Historic Onancock School. With the purchase of a new mower, which is already part of the capital expenditure plan, the Town will be able to bring that activity back in house and be able to cut the lawn for HOS with them reimbursing us for that service.
- Mr. Spuck also updated Council on the Northeast Section Grant which was previously denied due to ANPDC gathering insufficient qualifying surveys. Mr. Eric Luchansky, ANPDC, said that with the inclusion of Pine Street Apartments he feels they will have the required number of qualifying surveys to get the grant application approved.

- a. ARPA Project Updates – Attached.

Council Comments:

Councilmember Bloxom stated that he feels that the Town is on a good trajectory.

Councilmember Marino thanked Police Eric Williams and Officer Kim Whitelock for their hard work.

Councilmember Oswald thanked Town Manager Spuck for his detailed Town Manager's Report.

Councilmember Oswald thanked Police Chief Williams for his hard work.

Councilmember Nock updated the public about the recent Main Street event in which various groups were invited to meet with the State and National Main Street representatives.

Councilmember Gillespie thanked Mr. Spuck for her street assignment as well as asked for dates to start planning the park in the Northeast Section of Town.

Closed Session:

None was had.

Adjourn:

Councilmember Bloxom made a motion to adjourn. Councilmember Gillespie seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous voice.

The meeting adjourned at 8:27 p.m.


Fletcher Fosque, Mayor


Lisa Fiege, Deputy Clerk

We purchased our house in Onancock in 2009, expecting to retire here and become part of a family oriented, safe community. We have lived here full time for 5 years. In 2018, my husband and I started noticing small changes around town. Beautification became a priority, while attention to laws decreased. We've seen the kayak park established, the harbormaster's house renovated twice, the gazebo area trees and shrubs planted and replanted, parking area improvements on King Street. In that same time, police patrols, which had been a daily experience, became almost non-existent. There was a noticeable increase in illegal parking—parking in front of fire hydrants, parking close to corners and stop signs and parking in no parking zones.

On several occasions, we brought our police concerns to the attention of the mayor and council and to the town manager. We were told more than once that the police department is short staffed. They hired people, trained them and then they left for better paying positions. We noted that Onancock advertises that it has its own 24 hour police force and that this simply wasn't true. Sometimes it seemed trivial to complain about not seeing police patrols and about peoples' disregard of parking laws, but we felt that our taxes were paying for police coverage and also that the character of Onancock was sliding downhill.

In the last year, I have encountered several drunk people walking the streets of Onancock. The latest, in September, was at mid-day on Market Street, a couple who had their beer (Miller Lite) in koozies. A regular patrol would have spotted this.

On Sunday night (10/17) my purse was taken from my car. While I was careless-I usually don't leave it in my vehicle-my car was parked in my driveway! This happened about 8:15 pm. My husband and I saw it as an indication that Onancock was continuing to go downhill. First, little police presence and general disregard for rules, then riffling thru cars looking for loose change and items that are easy to sell. They probably figured they hit the jackpot with my purse! Next comes breaking and entering and then muggings. Sure enough, Tuesday morning, Onancock had the breaking and enterings.

Onancock has made a great push to make itself a tourist destination and a haven for retirees. The Main Street group and OBCA are working hard to make Onancock a great place to live. How many retirees will seek out this town if their

safety is not a concern? Why would anyone want to come visit if they know that one careless moment will be maliciously exploited?

The dog park is being planned for an area by the old carnival grounds. An area where quite a few houses, priced at \$250,000 and up, are being constructed. This is also the area where on October 13, a shooting took place. The person was shot at about 3:00 in the afternoon! They later died. This is an area where I frequently walk, often pushing a stroller carrying my granddaughter. I know for a fact that early in the summer my friends spoke to the mayor and town manager about their concerns in that area. They believed there was drug activity, but were told there was nothing that could be done. Perhaps more of a police presence would have prevented this.

When I called Onancock Police to report my stolen purse, there was a phone recording. I left a message and then called town hall. I was told no one was working-they'll be in on Tuesday. The person took my name and number and said she'll give him a message. I have yet to receive a phone call. I called the sheriff's office and was told THEY were shorthanded, so I went to Accomac to talk to a deputy. That deputy had been an Onancock Police Officer!

The Onancock Police Department staffing issues have been going on for years. They are not covid related, they are not retirement related, they are the result of the town's failure to plan and budget for adequate coverage. Onancock has pursued a vision of a lovely town for tourists. Money and time have been spent on appearances. Even if grants and outside funding was paying for such things as the harbormaster's house and parking areas, the time spent on finding those grants could have been spent on finding police funding. The safety of residents as well as tourists needs to be prioritized!

When I spoke to the person at town hall, I said I with the shooting last Wednesday and now my purse being stolen, I was concerned about the path Onancock was on, she assured me that everyone there was also concerned. I believe that the time for concern is over, it's time that the town acted. Stop gussifying up the town and start spending money on infrastructure that will support the safety of residents.



T Lee Byrd <tleebyrd@gmail.com>

WATERFRONT 10/12

T Lee Byrd <tleebyrd@gmail.com>

Sun, Oct 24, 2021 at 2:26 PM

To: Robert Bloxom <robert_bloxom@msn.com>

Bob please find Waterfront synopsis front October meeting:

THE MARINA WILL CLOSE FOR THE SEASON AT THE END OF OCTOBER. FUEL SALES ARE AVAILABLE WITH 24 HOURS NOTICE BY CALLING THE MARINA .

THE TOWN MANAGER PRESENTED THE MOST UP TO DATE FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE FOR THE MARINA AND ANTICIPATED EXPENDITURES FOR MAINTENANCE AND REPAIRS DURING THE OFF SEASON.

THE BOAT RAMP IS COMPLETED INCLUDING THE APPROACH BLACK TOP REPAIRS. VIRTUALLY EVERY TRAILER BOATER HAS HAD NOTHING BUT GREAT THINGS TO SAY ABOUT THE NEW RAMP !

THE RENTAL OF THE OVERFLOW PARKING LOT AS WELL AS THE SLIP RENTED FROM THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY (BEHIND MALLARD'S) HAVE BEEN COMPLETED FOR THE UPCOMING 2022 SEASON AND ARE WELCOMED ADDITIONS ONCE AGAIN WITH OUR LIMITED PARKING AND THE ADDITIONAL SLIP.

TRANSIENT BOATERS HAVE HAD WONDERFUL COMMENTS REGARDING THE PERFORMANCE OF THE HARBORMASTER AND STAFF AS WELL AS THE KIND VOLUNTEERS FROM OBCA AND RESIDENTS OF OUR TOWN THAT WERE WILLING TO TRANSPORT GUESTS TO THE GROCERY STORE, ETC...."WE HAVEN'T RECEIVED THAT KIND OF FRIENDLY TREATMENT AT MANY MARINAS IN ALL OUR YEARS OF BOATING!"

THE WATERFRONT COMMITTEE, MARINA HARBORMASTER AND OUR TOWN APPRECIATE THE GENEROUS VOLUNTEERS .

THE NOVEMBER WATERFRONT COMMITTEE MEETING WILL BE HELD ON THE SECOND TUESDAY OF NOVEMBER(11/9) AT 5:30 IN COUNCIL CHAMBERS

Town Council: Bob Bloxam, Ray Burger, Thelma Gillespie, Joy Marino, Sarah Nock and Maphis Oswald
Mayor: Fletcher Fosque | Town Manager: Matt Spuck

ARPA Project and Spending Report

Police Generator:

- Have two quotes in hand, comparing them and working with electrician and DPW to determine the best location for the unit itself. Both quotes are for less than the allowed budget, but there will be site work required (cement pad, etc.). There is no reason to suspect that the project will exceed the maximum funds appropriated by Council.

GIS of Water System

- I am exploring the possibility of getting the first layers of the plan from HRSD, who just completed this work for their purposes. If we can work with HRSD to obtain this work, we may be able to save some of the budgeted funds. More information to come.

Police Department/Bathroom Renovation

- No action taken thus far.

Dog Park

- I am waiting for the surveyor to provide a larger printout of the plot. I met with Ray about getting design help and once we have a plan to consider, we will make it publicly available and solicit specific feedback from OBCA and its members. Ideally, we would finish the planning over the winter with an early Spring construction.

Northeast Park

- I spoke with the Tree Board about reviewing the plantings there to be sure everything is healthy. I intend to speak with the Street Captains from the A-NPDC Northeast Planning Grant to develop a plan for the design of the park renovations.

Remove Wood Shop

- This has been completed and paid. We are using town equipment to grade the disturbed land. When this is finished, this project will be complete.

Tower Paint and Seal

- The painters are scheduled, and we have received the pressure release valves that are installed on fire hydrants to support the system when the tower is offline. The design for the exterior painting will be presented to Council before it is finalized. That rendering will come to you as soon as it is available.
- I will use the town communication systems to let residents and businesses what to expect and what they will see during the project. There should be no disruption in service, or reduced pressure.
- I have contacted AT&T and have connected their project foreman with the foreman for our tower painting crew to coordinate when the cell service needs to be paused while they clean and paint around that equipment.

Hypo Tank

- The tank has been ordered but there is a significant delivery delay. When it arrives, we will construct the cement pad and install it ourselves. This will take place after the first of the year.

Security for Water Tower

- No action taken thus far

Electric at the Tower

- Hoping to use the same electricians that we are using for the installation of the pedestals at the Wharf, but I have not received confirmation from them yet

Air Conditioning at Town Hall – Upstairs

- No action taken thus far

Matching Grant for Onancock Businesses to Renovate Building Facades

- A brief email exchange took place between Main Street and one Councilmember, but nothing related to decisions. My plan is to create a team (similar to the one we assembled for the first Cares Act business grant) to develop a program and present to Council before any action is taken.

Sunset Park

- No action taken thus far

Touchless Faucets at Little League

- No action taken thus far

Drainage Ditch Cleanout

- No action taken thus far

Valve Isolation

- This project is dependent on the GIS mapping of the water distribution system. No action taken thus far

Duckbill at Wharf

- No action taken thus far

Clean Out Under Floating Docks

- I pursued a firm that specializes in projects like this one and have received an engagement letter for the surveying and applications services we would require. I have sent it to you in a separate email. This firm will walk us through the entire process from permitting to completion. There is no other firm nearby that performs this work. I have not signed the engagement letter yet because I want to review the budget for the remainder of the project and consider the intricacies of the site we plan to use for disposal. More information is to follow.

Downtown Aesthetics

- No action taken thus far

Town Square Repairs

- No action taken thus far

Walking Path at Little League Complex

- No action taken thus far

ESCADV Support

- Plan to discuss the timing of the distribution of these funds once I have the near-term outlay of the town's ARPA funds. More to come, soon.

Stormwater Management

- DPW and Police Officers are giving me a list of areas in town with standing water issues. Once we have this first-pass list, we will make the list publicly available. At this point, we will work with VDOT for any priority area that falls on their secondary system to learn about the process for them to repair, for us to cost share in the repair, or for us to undertake the project under their supervision. This is going to be a long process.

Town Council: Bob Bloxom, Ray Burger, Thelma Gillespie, Joy Marino, Sarah Nock and Maphis Oswald
Mayor: Fletcher Fosque | Town Manager: Matt Spuck

Town Manager Report

October 25, 2020

HRSD

- USDA in D.C. has all the information they requested, and we are simply waiting to hear about their final decision regarding any repayment requirements of the grant portion of the original USDA bond used to construct the wastewater treatment plant.
- All other tasks, to the best of my knowledge, have been provided and once we hear back, we will be ready to close on the transfer immediately.
- After we close, we will begin the process to transfer the Town's collection system.

Bulkhead

- The permit drawings are complete, and the application has been submitted to the County, State, and Feds.
- This should be a quick process and once we have permits in hand, we will go to bid.
- If the project cannot be completed by April 1, we will delay until next fall.
- We received a grant of \$270,000 from VPA and another grant of \$64,500 from BIG for this project. It should require little, if any, Town contribution. If any funds are required, Council already budgeted for it in the use of reserves for grant-matching.

Wharf Operations

- Wharf operations cease on 10/29. Fuel purchases can be made off-season by calling the wharf or town office at least 24-hours ahead and someone will meet them at the wharf.
- Because the bulkhead project is hopefully taking place over the winter, no slip rentals over the winter are being considered.
- Part of last year's BIG grant was to replace the pedestals at the wharf. Those have been ordered and scheduled for installation in the next month (except those at the bulkhead, we will wait until the completion of that project before we install).

Tax Season

- This year and for the first time, the Town is printing tax bills in-house. We have (as of this writing) the real estate tax file from the County but are waiting for the personal property tax data. Once we have the data, Southern Software (our tax and accounting system) converts the data, and we can print.
 - This saves us a couple of weeks, which for mailing tax bills that are due on December 6 this year, that extra time for our residents and businesses is helpful.
 - The only change to taxes this year is that Council eliminated vehicle decals and will be billing that fee on the personal property tax return.
- Tax season is an intense time in the office with a lot of telephone calls and office visits from taxpayers.
 - Please remember that if you have an outstanding balance, your payment is applied to that balance first and penalties and interest are charged against any unpaid balance after December 6.
 - Our online payment portal is open and working. I hope you are using it for your utility bills already!
 - Also remember, that Council budgeted to absorb the fee for paying online, so there is no fee to pay online – but you will need your account number – so have your bill in your hand when you go online to pay.

Town Communications

- Lately we have had to use our new town communication systems (for water line leaks, and even a missing senior)
 - This system is NOT THE SAME AS CODE RED – Code Red is a County sponsored app for emergencies
- If you would like communication from the Town for local issues (like hydrant flushing, traffic issues, etc)
 - By Text: Text the word ONANCOCK to 91896
 - By Email: Give your email address to any employee in Town Hall

Small Business Recovery Grant

- The term for this grant is coming to an end.
- I applied for the grant over a year ago and has since distributed about \$300,000 to about 30 local businesses.
- The town has paid Onancock Main Street \$3,000 and has additional funds remaining to pay them for being part of the project management team that administered the grant.
- Team Thank you.

Department of Public Works

- The town looks great – limbs are being picked up on time, grasses are being cut, streets cleaned, maintenance issues are being addressed in a timely manner.
- This is all with only one person.
- Proposal to consider:
 - We will staff the DPW with a second person.
 - The town pays a lawn cutting service for some of our parcels about \$6,500 each year.
 - The Historic Onancock School also pays a lawn cutting service about \$5,000 each year.
 - I suggest that the town buy a larger deck mower and cut the parcels we outsource as well as the grass at the school.
 - I would ask for a 3-year commitment from the school for this service.
 - We would cut the grass once weekly (which is more frequently that they currently receive)
 - By cutting the grass short at the school and cutting it weekly, after a season the burrs will not be an issue
 - The school, with shorter grass, would also be a sought-after mid-Shore field that could be used for soccer leagues and rentals.
 - I have spoke with Joani about this and she supports it, in concept.
 - We would also have the proper tool to maintain the dog park
 - The cost of the mower is a little under \$20,000. We have a capital budget this year that will cover the cost. With the support of the school and reducing the costs to outsource, we will pay for the mower in 2 years. With a 3-year commitment from the school, we will have the funds to maintain the mower and continue to keep both DPW employees busy – but not overly so.
 - Please allow me to use up to \$20,000 of the capital funds already budgeted for this service.

Virginia Tourism Grant

- Virginia Tourism received \$50 million from ARPA
- This amount is being appropriated to each locality (County, in this case).
 - The method Accomack County is using to allocate its funds has not yet been determined, but because Onancock is both a registered DMO and a separately incorporated Town (only Onancock and Chincoteague Chamber are DMO's), I would expect to be a recipient of a portion of these funds
 - I am putting together a spending plan that aligns with the purpose of the grant and will present this plan to Council as soon as it is complete. We need to learn of the County's plan to appropriate to its Towns and DMO's before we finalize this plan for Council's approval.

Purchase of Equipment

- At the August 23, 2021 meeting, Council adopted the resolution to borrow and seek grant funding to purchase replacement equipment for the DPW (small dump truck, chipper, and trailer). The Accomack

- procurement office pointed me toward the state contract vendors for these items (thank you, Accomack!) and we have received quotes and submitted the loan/grant application to USDA. If you recall, the beginning of the USDA fiscal year is 10/1, so our timing for this is good and we are hopeful to receive the maximum possible grant for this purchase because of that effort.

2021 Audit

- We are completing the preparation for the 2021 financial audit, which should take place over the holidays

Christmas in Onancock

- OBCA is once again planning for the most charming Christmas for any town anywhere!
- The Town's decorations are being organized tested and a schedule for community decorations has been established.
- The Christmas Decorating Committee is scheduling a meeting where interested volunteers can attend to offer support in the most beneficial way.

Planning Commission

- At this point, you have heard about the change in leadership coming for the Planning Commission.
- Planning Commission members appoint the Chairperson, and I will help that process as best I can in the next meeting.

Police

- The two officers attending the police academy are performing well and will join the department here after completion in early January. They will need 240 hours of supervision after they return before they are fully certified as Onancock Police Officers.
- One of the vehicles Council authorized to purchase is being detailed and equipped currently. The other is still waiting for certain parts to be assembled and then it will be assembled and delivered. We should see the first in a week or so.