



City of Annapolis

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND ZONING

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DR. SALLY NASH, AICP
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Maritime Task Force - Future Sustainability Working Group

Date of Meeting: 12.10.20

Attendees: Eileen Fogarty (Fogarty Group), Sally Nash (P&Z), Eric Leshinsky (P&Z), Eric Borchers (P&Z), Rod Jabin (Bert Jabin Yacht Yard), Wil Scott (former Planning Commissioner), Clarence Blackwell (Yacht Haven), Mary Ewenson (Spin Sheet), John Norton (Annapolis Harbor Boat Yard), Patrick Shaunessy (Farr Yacht Design), Tarry Lomax (Maritime Advisory Board), Pete McDevitt (Ward One Residents Association), John Hammond (economic advisor)

Location: Video Conference

Purpose of Meeting: First meeting of the Future Sustainability Working Group of the Maritime Task Force

MEETING NOTES

- Opening remarks:
 - Eileen provides a brief summary of the other working group discussions.
 - Eric shares with the working group the grant program being developed by the National Park Service focused on the “Working Chesapeake” which would potentially offer funding to businesses to create new opportunities for increasing the visibility of the maritime industry.
- Rod: it would be helpful to focus on restaurants first as a contributing use to the maritime districts so that can be quickly put to bed and the group can then spend more time on other complex topics.
 - Rod: it will be important to distinguish between contributing and compatible uses
- Wil: as a resident I am willing to make sacrifices to keep active maritime uses because it’s clear how important the presence of boats is to the identity and culture of the city.
- Patrick: “industry” is first defined by manufacture, then profit.
 - The city has lost the manufacture component almost completely as it hasn’t been adequately supported.
 - Question isn’t about saving maritime, it’s about remaking it
 - Whether restaurants are contributing or compatible won’t help me
 - City of Annapolis Small Business Recovery Task Force recommendations didn’t really help my business
 - Government response to saving maritime generally hasn’t been adequate
- Eileen: What can we do to rebuild the industry?

- Patrick: we need to bring back the businesses that hire
- Patrick: my business is aggressively recruited to relocate with generous tax incentives and other assistance
- Patrick: we need to make things again. There are towns that say “we used to make things here”... we need to actually make things here now
- John Hammond: I agree with Patrick but to reestablish the manufacture, we need more people with the skills
 - There’s been a lot of effort on skill building from the various economic development offices
- John Norton: if we don’t have the skills, we can’t manufacture. My head mechanic has been here since before Clarence bought the property.
- Need to make it amenable and profitable for all
 - Rod: I agree with Patrick but bringing back manufacture is probably beyond the scope of this task force. Our main task is to strengthen the existing districts. If we don’t preserve the places of potential manufacture, we can’t bring it back.
- Patrick: I don’t disagree but I feel that we have ended up here because we’ve never had the higher level of discussion—we can’t keep kicking the can down the road.
- Eileen: I think there’re room for both of these discussions and we’ve started to hear this in other working groups.
 - We have the capacity to expand the industry with Susan Zellers and the Maritime Trades group and Steve Rice, the City’s Economic Development Manager who can focus on drawing new businesses.
 - But to Rod’s point, the first step is to figure out what the contributing and compatible uses are and then go after those.
- Will: having been on the Planning Commission, I’ve seen residents continuously lobby to have less of the maritime nuisances, and that’s what I meant by being willing to make sacrifices as a resident.
- Tarry: these are not new questions. I recently shared some documents that studied them including the Mayor’s transition report.
 - Tax incentives are a strategy that should be further explored as we can use these to not only support our current maritime uses but also draw new ones.
- John Hammond: the real culprit is the zoning. If you allow residential into the maritime districts you have a big problem as it provides tremendous competition right now.
- John Hammond: I’m curious why the margins are so thin for maritime uses?
 - Tarry: it’s because there are a lot of maritime uses in a small area
 - Dan: that’s exactly right—it’s a basic supply and demand issue. Slip demand will always go up and down. Maritime office tenants are harder and harder to find. How do we raise the overall attractiveness of the district to raise demand?

- John Hammond: Restaurants in the maritime districts could have the same effect that they've had downtown in forcing out other businesses because they are so profitable.
 - Dan: but without more investment, the maritime properties are less maintained.
- Mary: because so many boats have sold during COVID, we have a real opportunity to ride that momentum. Restaurants are certainly a proven way to make a profit and I'm sure we can find a way to make them work in the maritime districts without compromising what we have.
 - Economic experts are saying that in the post-COVID economy there will be room to grow in the service economy.
 - Newport is an example of what is possible with restaurants – boatyards would kill for a place like Bell's at the Newport Ship Yard
 - I think we can be sensitive to how restaurants could displace maritime uses without throwing out the idea.
- Clarence: we have to remember that this is a business. Annapolis is in competition with other places. It's easier to service your boat up the Severn than in Annapolis, or keep it on the Eastern Shore. But people will pay the premium if we make it worth their while.
 - There's no camaraderie up the Severn where you don't have the density.
 - If I didn't have the non-maritime uses, I couldn't support the maritime uses, they wouldn't be viable.
- Pete: we're always trying to balance between the needs of residents and visitors
 - I travel a lot for my work and when I think about the other cities of the world known for their waterfronts, it's because of their grand public waterfronts. We don't have that luxury here in Annapolis with private property interests.
 - But I choose to keep my boat at City Marina because of the context, the views of the harbor and downtown, and the family operation. It's hard to replace that.
- Eileen: there are three key questions to answer as a working group and we'll need to break up into smaller groups to address them--
 - What are some concrete things we can do to promote the industry?
 - What kind of incentives, on taxes or otherwise, can we provide ?
 - What are the contributing, compatible or conflicting uses?
- John Hammond: City Marina knew the rules when they came in but now they want to change them. We need to be very careful in changing the zoning.
 - Part of the reason why the retail disappeared from downtown was the fluidity of the zoning, and the bars.
- Eileen: is residential development incompatible?
 - Tarry: We have heard a lot of response to this question at the Maritime Advisory Board over the years. Some of what we've heard—

- we can't look at the districts in isolation, they all have different contexts and successes.
- it's hard to argue with the compatibility of restaurants if you look at any successful boating town. Restaurants are one of the key pieces of successful marinas.
- Residential is certainly incompatible because residents complain about maritime uses.
- Are there seasonal uses that we can leverage, such as event spaces?
- Are there opportunities for new storage? These would not necessarily be contributing but perhaps compatible.
- Patrick: One of the reasons I bought a house in Eastport is the mix of uses. Maybe I'm in the minority but I like to see working things.
 - We saw the issue with the debate about the new brewery which makes things.
- Wil: I would say the same as Patrick but I would also add a restaurant to a working boatyard exactly to see the work happening around there
 - The current zoning doesn't all that, it's all single use zoning
- Pete: are there any properties that could event support residential?
 - Tarry: there are several property owners who have been approached for residential development.
 - John Hammond: Just like with the residential zoning where you have different scales of housing, you have the same thing with the maritime zoning where it's not one size fits all.
- Mary: on the AA County Maritime Industry Advisory Board, we did look at compatible uses a few years ago as we have a lot of vacant office space in Eastport.
 - I know it's dangerous to convert any of it to residential but frankly parking is the biggest the constraint.
 - However, there are residential activities like paddle sports, fitness, yoga, etc, which are compatible.
 - We should bookend the discussion from the beginning on whether we discuss residential and restaurants or not.
- Rod: I think there's no question that residential is incompatible, though we might all admit that we would want what South Annapolis Yacht Center has. But I agree that there are a number of newer uses more associated with residential that may be compatible like fitness, etc..
- Eileen: any reason why residential should be allowed to compete for this space?
 - Consensus: NO
- Eileen: for the restaurants, we need to discuss by zone. Should they be allowed in the WMI ?
 - Rod: I don't see any reason to deny the restaurants here given the size of the industry that currently exists in this district.

- Pete: has there been any interest in developing restaurants there?
 - Rod: Yes, but the idea is quickly shot down because of the current zoning limitations. We need to be careful to not overwhelm the existing maritime uses like the catering business did at Annapolis Landing marina but like Mary said, we can figure this out.
 - Rod: right now, we lose out to Sam Waterfront Café which is right across the street, but in the County.
- Eileen: should we look at restaurants in conjunction with working maritime?
 - Consensus: YES
 - Dan: won't it be hard to define "working maritime"?
 - Eileen: we do have a definition already in the code, 20,000sf working yard and 20 ton boat lift
 - Patrick: the protections will need to be very strong so we don't continue to weaken the restrictions when restaurants become more successful. Unless we supplement the loss of maritime, we will continue to lose it.
 - Tarry: but we do need to acknowledge that most successful maritime needs the complementary uses—so we need to keep the triggers in place.
 - Eileen: so can we agree that restaurants should be allowed in support of working yards?
 - Consensus: YES
 - John Norton: we need to be careful about the support we allow for the restaurants, so it doesn't push out the flexibility of the maritime.
 - Patrick: my concern remains that it will continue to weaken the industry as a whole, but it doesn't mean we shouldn't do it.
 - Eileen: we do need to keep focusing on how the new uses will support the industry.
 - Mary: we also need to keep in mind that every site is different, some might already have some other food service or liquor license.
 - John Hammond: you could put a restriction on it where if the industry goes, so does the restaurant.
 - Eileen: are we ok with a provision that if the industry goes so does the restaurant?
 - Consensus: YES
 - Pete: how would something like this impact the City Marina?
 - Tarry it wouldn't impact it because it's a planned development that predates the code.
- Tarry: in addition to listing the contributing and compatible uses, we need to come back to the triggers.
 - Eileen: let's start with the contributing uses and then get into the compatible uses. The compatible and conflicting are more complicated.