PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
APRIL 1, 2026
7:50 P.M.

PRESENT

Chair:	Dianna Carneal
Vice Chair:	Maria Pitts
Planning Commission Members:	Myra Dickinson
	Timothy Bradshaw
Zoning Administrator	
Assistant Town Manager:	James Knighton
Secretary:	Patsy K. Scates

ABSENT

Planning Commission Member:	David Hammond

VISITORS

Cherly Evans

CALLED TO ORDER

Chair Carneal called the meeting to order.

MINUTES APPROVED

On motion of Maria Pitts, seconded by Timothy Bradshaw, the Commission Meeting voted unanimously to approve the March 4, 2026 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes.

Votes were cast as follows:

Dianna Carneal	Timothy Bradshaw
Maria Pitts	Myra Dickinson

REZONING REQUEST FOR JUNE PARKER OIL RECOMMEND TO TOWN COUNCIL FOR APPROVAL

On motion of Maria Pitts, seconded by Timothy Bradshaw, the Commission voted to recommend to the Tappahannock Town Council an application from June Parker Oil Co. Inc. is requesting rezone a portion of the lot known as tax parcel 32B (37) A and all of the lot known as 32B (37) B1. The proposed request would rezone the eastern portion of 32B (37) A, the extent of the request to rezone would extend 109' along the northern property line along the alley, the south from the end of the alley to the north western property corner of lot B1 totaling approximately 0.3 acres, located at the 700 and 800 block of Essex St. in the Town of Tappahannock. The applicant is requesting to rezone the property from R-3 Town Residential to CG-2 General Commercial to fix an error on the official zoning map adopted in 2023.

Votes were cast as follows:

Dianna Carneal	Timothy Bradshaw
Maria Pitts	Myra Dickinson

Chair Carneal recognized Assistant Town Manager Knighton.

SOLAR ORDINANCE

Assistant Town Manager Knighton discussed the proposed zoning ordinance updates related to solar energy, particularly rooftop and ground-mounted systems within the town and its historic overlay district. He explained that rooftop solar especially in the downtown historic overlay has been the most challenging issue, as the town wants to balance preserving historic character with allowing practical renewable energy use. He stated the Town is working with consultants to determine where rooftop solar might be appropriate, such as on less visible flat roofs or certain public and residential properties, while avoiding installations that could negatively impact historic areas.

Assistant Town Manager Knighton stated that the key goal of the proposed changes is to prohibit ground-mounted solar arrays throughout the town, primarily because of limited developable land. He stated that large solar installations could occupy valuable space better suited for residential or commercial development, as well as create potential drainage and density issues. At the same time, there is recognition of property owners' rights and the benefits of solar energy, making the issue complex and somewhat contentious.

The Commission members raised questions about how the ordinance is written, including whether rooftop solar should be listed as "permitted with conditions" rather than simply "permitted," and how terms like "small-scale" solar should be clearly defined. There is also some discussion regarding clarification that solar installations are intended for on-site use rather than energy resale.

The Commission Members discussed an ongoing effort to refine the ordinance language to reduce ambiguity, ensure consistency, and strike a balance between encouraging renewable energy and protecting land use priorities and historic character.

CANNABIS ORDINANCE

Assistant Town Manager Knighton stated that the cannabis ordinance continues to develop. He stated he wants to make sure the Town of Tappahannock has something in place before it because legal. He stated he plans to develop a map for the commission members showing the locations that it would be allowed based on what is proposed at this point next month.

VAPE AND TOBACCO SALES ORDINANCE

Chair Carneal raised concerns about the growing number of vape shops and asked whether a decision had been made to increase required separation distances from 1,000 to 2,000 feet from sensitive locations such as schools, daycares, churches, and other vape shops.

Assistant Town Manager Knighton indicated that no recommendation had yet been obtained but agreed to follow up and report back the following month.

The group discussed the clustering of vape shops, with some suggesting that even greater distances up to 3,000 feet might be more appropriate given the town's small size and the conversation then shifted to the anticipated legalization and regulation of cannabis retail.

Assistant Town Manager Knighton explained that cannabis businesses would require state licensing and oversight through a regulatory authority similar to Virginia's ABC system, though the shops themselves would be privately owned rather than state-run. It was noted that the number of licenses issued statewide would be limited, potentially comparable to the number of ABC licenses.

There was some discussion about the possibility that vape shops might seek cannabis licenses but acknowledged uncertainty about how that would unfold due to regulatory requirements.

Assistant Town Manager Knighton stated that existing vape shops would be grandfathered under any new rules. He concluded by noting they are exploring both zoning and alternative approaches to manage vape shop concentration, including reviewing strategies used in other jurisdictions, and will return with further analysis and mapping visuals for both vape and cannabis businesses at a future meeting.

Chair Carneal asked for any public comments.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Cherly Evans expressed her appreciation for the planning commission's handling of a difficult situation, acknowledging the pressures involved and stating support for their decision. They then raise a concern about an alley issue, emphasizing that while it may not be directly related to the case at hand, it creates a broader perception problem. She asked for guidance on how to begin resolving the alley situation and whom to contact, noting a desire to avoid a prolonged process like one they experienced over the past six years.

Assistant Town Manager Knighton explained that the matter falls outside the planning commission's authority, as it serves only as a recommended body, and suggests that the issue may need to be brought to the town council. He suggested that she meets with himself and Town Manager Wright before approaching Town Council.

Chair Carneal asked for any comments from the Planning Commission members or the Town Staff.

There were no comments.

ADJOURNED

On motion of Maria Pitts, seconded by Myra Dickinson, the Commission members voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting.

Votes were cast as follows:

Dianna Carneal:	Aye	Timothy Bradshaw:	Aye
Maria Pitts	Aye	Myra Dickinson:	Aye

Dianna Carneal

Dianna Carneal, Chair

Patsy K. Scates

Patsy K. Scates, Secretary