TAPPAHANNOCK PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
OCTOBER 7, 2026
8:36 P.M.

PRESENT

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

CALLED TO ORDER

Chair Carneal called the meeting to order.

MINUTES APPROVED

On motion of Sandra Hill, seconded by Maria Pitts, voted unanimously to approve the September 2, 2026, Planning Commission Meeting Minutes as amended with the grammar change and approval of the September 2, 2026 Public Hearing Meeting Minutes.

Votes were cast as follows:

Dianna Carneal:	Aye	David Hammond:	Aye
Maria Pitts:	Aye	Sandra Hill:	Aye
Myra Dickinson:	Aye		

BAREFORD GMC REZONE REQUEST

Commission Member Pitts stated she recognizes Bareford GMC as valuable business for the Town. However, the Town's comprehensive plan designates these parcels as Town residential and emphasizes protecting residential neighborhoods from encroachment so she feels this item should be tabled to give the commission members some time to make a decision.

BAREFORD GMC REZONE REQUEST TABLED

On motion of Maria Pitts, seconded by Sandra Hill the commission members voted unanimously to recommend to the Tappahannock Town Council to **TABLE** the application from Bareford GMC requesting to rezone lots known as tax parcel 32B (20) Parcels 75, 76, 76 A and 76B **with proffers**. The lots are approximately 0.73 acres and are located at the 500 block of Dangerfield St. in the Town of Tappahannock. The applicant is requesting to rezone the property from R-3 Town Residential to CG-2 General Commercial.

Votes were cast as follows:

Dianna Carneal:	Aye	David Hammond:	Aye
Maria Pitts:	Aye	Sandra Hill:	Aye
Myra Dickinson:	Aye		

HISTORIC OVERLAY DISTRICT

Assistant Town Manager Knighton stated the commission members have been provided with some documentation in the packet. (Tappahannock Historic District: Finding and Opportunities) by Commission Member Dickinson.

Commission Member Dickinson discussed the confusion surrounding historic landmark and historic district designations and their impact on property owners and future development. She clarified that state and national historic designations do not automatically impose restrictions on properties, as regulations concerning restoration, building materials, and other requirements are established through local ordinances. She emphasized that historic designations could benefit economic development by providing opportunities for tax credits and other incentives. She encouraged the Commission to further evaluate the potential benefits of historic designations and carefully consider how the Town approaches the establishment of historic areas.

The commission members got off topic and began talking about the permitting process between the Town and Essex County.

Chair Carneal redirected the Commission's discussion toward reviewing the Town's Comprehensive Plan and existing historic preservation ordinances. She encouraged Commission members to review the information, develop recommendations, and share their ideas by email for compilation and further discussion.

Assistant Town Manager Knighton discussed the distinction between local historic overlay zoning regulations and state or national historic designations administered through the Department of Historic Resources (DHR). He explained that local regulations are established to preserve the historical character and appearance of designated areas, while historic tax credits are associated with state and federal preservation programs. He questioned whether tax credits are available only to contributing historic structures within a designated district or whether newly constructed or relocated structures within the district could also qualify.

Commission Member Dickinson explained that the discussion regarding historic designations originated from efforts to assist a Green Book property located just outside the Virginia Main Street district in obtaining potential funding. She noted that the Virginia Main Street boundaries are significantly smaller than the Town's historic district and that consideration was being given to expanding those boundaries to include additional properties. She advised that during this process, it was discovered that the Town's historic district designation, established in 1973, had never been updated.

Commission Member Dickinson emphasized that structures not originally eligible for historic designation may now qualify due to their age. She also expressed concern that the loss of additional historic structures, particularly the DeShields Fisher House, could jeopardize the integrity of the historic district following previous losses from the fire. She suggested reviewing and updating the historic district to identify and include additional qualifying structures, thereby strengthening and preserving its historic integrity.

Assistant Town Manager Knighton expressed interest in meeting with representatives from the Department of Historic Resources (DHR) to better understand how historic preservation designations relate to the Town's zoning regulations. He emphasized that the Town's zoning ordinance was revised to reduce subjectivity and unnecessary regulatory barriers to economic development.

Assistant Town Manager Knighton noted concerns with allowing discretionary decisions regarding building materials and design standards, as such decisions could lead to inconsistent treatment of property owners and developers. He stressed the importance of maintaining clear, fair, and consistent zoning requirements while balancing historic preservation efforts with future development opportunities.

After some discussion, Commission Member Dickinson stated she will provide the contact information of the representative to Mr. Knighton, and he will reach out to discuss and get a better understanding about DHR Historic Overlay versus the Town Zoning Regulations and once that is accomplished the representative will be invited to attend a planning commission meeting.

VARIOUS ZONING AMENDMENTS

Assistant Town Manager James Knighton presented the Commission with a partial draft of proposed zoning ordinance updates reflecting recent legislation passed by the Virginia General Assembly. He explained that the remaining revisions had just been received and would require further review to determine whether any provisions should be tailored specifically to Tappahannock.

Assistant Town Manager Knighton anticipated presenting the complete revisions to the Commission in November for review and consideration before forwarding them to Town Council. He expressed hope that a public hearing could be scheduled for December or January to move forward with adopting the required ordinance updates.

COMMENTS

Chair Carneal asked for any comments.

There were none.

ADJOURN

On motion of Maria Pitts, seconded by Sandra Hill, the Commission members voted to adjourn the meeting.

Votes were cast as follows:

Dianna Carneal:	Aye	David Hammond:	Aye
Maria Pitts:	Aye	Sandra Hill:	Aye
Myra Dickinson:	Aye		

Dianna Carneal

Dianna Carneal, Chair

Patsy K. Scates

Patsy K. Scates, Town Clerk