

February 23, 2022

To The Commissioners and Town Manager of St. Michaels

300 Mill Street

P.O. Box 206

St Michaels, Maryland 21663

Commissioners

Please accept this Memorandum that contains our recommendations for location of a new town hall and new police station, town growth, and parking. We attempted to keep our information gathering process open, and conclusions concise.

During the course of this effort we gained an appreciation of the hard work performed by town staff and thoughtfulness of their response to public need. While we note that some changes could improve the 'workings' of the town's bureaucracy, those proposals are really a series of tweaks, and minor in scope.

We enjoy this effort and look forward to your response.

Regards

Patricia L. Faux RLA

President of The Faux Group, Inc.

February 23, 2022

Memorandum to: The Commissioners and Town Manager of St. Michaels

From: The Faux Group, Inc. located at 350 Oak Drive Unit C, Arnold, Maryland.

Introduction

The Faux Group, Inc. was contracted by the St. Michaels Town Commissioners to provide recommendations and guidance for three distinct tasks with special emphasis on livability and sustainability. We offer these recommendation within the following text and we will offer explanations on any particular aspect, as requested.

Task 1A New Town Hall and Task 1B New Police Station

The Faux Group, Inc. recommends to the Town Commissioners two “Design Development Option’s” for locating a new Town Hall and new Police Station. Both options utilize the Mill Street properties currently owned by the Town and differ only in their ability to accommodate the either one or both uses on the two sites. As part of that process we conducted a series of interviews with stakeholders, reviewed the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code. (See the Appendix for a List of Criteria used in the site selection process and a list of stakeholders interviewed).

The conclusions and recommendations are the result of continually asking ourselves, “if an event happens or a direction suggested is taken, what will be the result?” The text that follows is not meant to offer a detailed set of actions, but should act as a guide to next steps.

Fourteen Sites Considered, Two Sites Recommended

We examined fourteen sites suggested by the Town Commissioners and Staff as possible locations for municipal buildings. After reviewing these suggested sites and applying the criteria offered by the Commissioners to all sites, we focused our attention on two sites, 300 and 301 Mill Street. (See the Appendix for a complete list of sites reviewed and the criteria applied).

300 Mill Street Overview

This property is owned by the Town. It is 1.16 acres and is currently zoned R2 and entirely within the Historic District. It has a Critical Area Designation of Intense Development Area (IDA) / and Buffer Management Area (BMA). This property was acquired in 1999 with Program Open Space (POS) funding assistance. This property has a use restriction the result of the POS grant from

the State of Maryland. For this site to be suitable for use as a site for a municipal building, this restriction would need to be removed.

A large portion of the property is within the 100 year floodplain and is periodically subject to “Mean High Tide”. Also, the site is subject to periodic inundation. Reviewing the “Harbor and Stormwater Infrastructure Study” Dec 2020, reveals that occupied space and critical functions should be located above elevation eight (8) Mean Sea Level (MSL).

Because this property is currently zoned Residential (R2) a Special Exception will be required to locate a government facility.

301 Mill Street Overview

This property is owned by the Town. It is one (1) acre and is currently zoned Maritime Museum (MM) and about one half of the site is in the Historic District. A ‘Special Exception’ would be required to locate a Government facility in the Maritime Museum (MM) zone with a Maritime Museum (MM) zone designation the property has a maximum impervious surface of 50%. This will limit the amount of development onsite. If a 10,000 square feet building program and associated parking is desired then a zoning map change is recommended.

A Talbot County sewage pump station exists on the western edge of the property. This facility is maintained by the County and requires access. The underground piping associated with the pump station has been adjusted to allow a building to be constructed in the northeastern portion of the property.

Development Option One

This scenario proposes designating the site located at 301 Mill Street as the location for ***both*** the New Town Hall and the New Police Station. This recommendation is made with the knowledge that additional parking will be located at 300 Mill Street.

The biggest advantage to option one is lower overall development costs. While some development costs are unique to each desired facility, the overall site development requirements associated with both functions can be combined and some building systems shared. The ability to proceed immediately with development of this option without adjusting the existing POS agreement will have considerable time and allow the planning and development of 300 Mill Street as an active community space. To accomplish Development Scenario One the Town should consider doing the following;

- The Town should obtain a Zoning Map Amendment (ZMA) to change the zoning of 301 Mill Street from Maritime Museum (MM) to Public Facilities (PF).
- The Town should obtain a text amendment to change the use table to make a Government facility a permitted use in the Table of Permitted Uses 340-56. In the column of this Table of Permitted Uses for the Public Facilities (PF) Zone, on the line for Government facilities, change N (not permitted) to P (permitted).

Development Option Two

This option proposes designating the site located at 301 Mill Street as the location for the New Police Station only. This option further recommends siting the New Town Hall at 300 Mill Street. The Town should limit the number of parking spaces at 300 Mill Street to provide enough for visitors and deliveries only. This recommendation is made with the knowledge that additional parking will be located at 301 Mill Street as necessary.

The advantages of this option are twofold. First is the ability to include other government facilities on 301 Mill Street at some future date. Second, locating the new Town Hall at 300 Mill Street would allow the Town to add publically accessible bathrooms and event facilities to the waterside of the new structure. To accomplish Development Option Two the Town should do the following;

- The Town should meet with the State of Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) staff and indicate that the Town desires to revise the Program Open Space (POS) agreement, that it may retain the use of the site as a municipal facility. A review of the Deed indicates that the State of Maryland has placed restrictions that do not allow for alternative uses unless specifically authorized. To consider this property for use as a municipal building site, a decision should be rendered by the State in a timely manner.
- The Town should obtain a Zoning Map amendment to change the zoning of both 300 and 301 Mill Street. Change 301 Mill Street from Maritime Museum (MM) to Public Facilities (PF). Change 300 Mill Street from Residential Zone (R2) to Public Facilities (PF).
- We recommend that the Town obtain a text amendment to change the use table to make a Government facility a permitted use in the Table of Permitted Uses 340-56. In the column for the Public Facilities (PF) Zone, on the line for Government facilities, change N (not permitted) to P (permitted).

Follow-up Recommendations for New Town Hall and the New Police Station

Recommendations that have a direct or indirect effect on future planning efforts of both properties include the following;

- The Town Commissioners and Town Staff should contact Talbot County Department of Public works to coordinate a solution to a Right of Access Easement to the Pump Station located at 301 Mill Street as requested by Talbot County.
- The Town Engineer and the selected Civil Engineer should include Talbot County criteria in the site design for 301 Mill Street to insure maintenance accessibility as needed.
- To expedite the overall development process, the Town Commissioners should initiate the recommended zoning map and text changes for 301 Mill Street, at the same time as the design effort is initiated.
- The Town Commissioner's should adjust the historic district's boundary to include all the land associated with 301 Mill Street 'entirely' within the boundary.
- The Town Engineer should review all datum that establish the Mean Sea Level (MSL) elevation in and around St. Michaels, Maryland prior to initiating, civil engineers design efforts. The Finish Floor Elevation (FFEL) of any new structure follows state guidelines regarding new construction within a flood prone area. Both sites 300 and 301 Mill Street are subject to periodic inundation. Reviewing the "Harbor and Stormwater Infrastructure Study", Dec 2020, reveals that occupied space and critical functions should be located above elevation 6 Mean Sea Level (MSL). According to State of Maryland Geologic Survey storm surge data indicates that during Hurricane Isabel (September 9th 2003), Cambridge, Maryland experienced a surge of 5 feet above Mean High Water (MHW). This would translate into an elevation 6.0 feet above Mean Sea Level (MSL). Additionally, the State of Maryland has recently added a "Freeboard Requirement" of three 3' above base flooding (100 year event) for all jurisdictions accepting state assistance for new building construction. This would translate into a finish floor elevation above 9. The elevation 6' might also be applied to Police Station parking and the vehicular access route to Talbot Street.
- With both options, the town should redevelop 300 Mill Street as an 'active' community space. This would be in keeping with the intent of the Program Open Space (POS) agreement. Consider creating a maritime setting with facilities for outdoor events. This space

should offer public bathroom facilities and a modest amount of parking for public use. Consider adding an American Disability Act (ADA) accessible boardwalk with tie-up cleats to accommodate dinghies and small launches, for temporary use.

- The town should consider entering into an agreement with the Maritime Museum to confirm access to the parking area adjacent to the rear of the 301 Mill Street site. This might be desirable in the event of a max flood 'event' to avoid Mill Street and might alter the need to raise Mill Street above 4'. Raising the elevation of Mill Street above 4' will require changes to the adjoining properties that require access. It will also alter the drainage characteristics of Mill Street and especially that area north of Mill Street. This upland area west of Mill Street is inundated during high tide events. A culvert under Mill Street that connects the upland area to the tidal zone should be studied for adequacy of flow / capacity to insure proper drainage.

Task 2 Eventual Town Buildout

In this task we were asked to evaluate three aspects of town's capacity to grow:

- A. Fremont Street Corridor Revitalization
- B. Opportunities For Additional Affordable Housing
- C. Overall Town Growth Capacity – residential and possibly office growth

Our analysis, findings and recommendations are as follows:

A. Fremont Street Corridor Revitalization

As the 2008 Community Legacy Plan, the 2015 Comprehensive Plan, and property data over the last 15 years shows, needs comma here)the town has long desired to see change in the Fremont Street District. The vision for change has not been fully defined, nor have the actions defined to date been fully implemented. The district, as currently defined, includes about 33 Commercial Core zoned properties located along a one block section of Fremont Street and Connor Street extending from Canton Street to Rail Rd Avenue. There are 11 parcels on Fremont Street and 22 parcels on Conner/ Canton Street. This area has a rich and distinctive history in town as it was once the center of black commerce. This heritage is not articulated in the town materials we have reviewed to date.

Over the last 15 years both the Town and the County bought a number of parcels in the district. Several older structures have been demolished and various public facilities have been built with the expectation of catalyzing private sector change. During that time several small businesses and a restaurant opened, some of these have since closed and are currently vacant. There are about 3 commercial activities there today. The district parcels that face Fremont St are included in the town's Historic District Overlay Zone. Relatively few of these parcels still contain historic structures. At one time a large private sector plan to redevelop a cluster of lots and build a decorative streetscape was proposed but not implemented. Many of key non-commercial elements/players in and near this district have plans under discussion for new changes that will impact this area. These players include the Housing Authority property, the Library, the police station and the Community Center.

We note that the town's Commercial Core (CC) zoning category may be hindering revitalization in this district. As written, it supports a vital Talbot Street corridor with properties that have excellent pedestrian and drive by visibility but is less helpful for this district. This district is less visible and traveled than Talbot Street. The Commercial Core (CC) zone use list focuses in

retail shops, hospitality and vertical mixed use buildings. It does not allow a wider diversity of residential and small scale entrepreneurial uses more suited to the history and practicalities of this part of town and its adjacent neighborhood. Likewise the Planned Redevelopment (PR) Floating zone tool may not be helpful as it is designed to encourage property assemblages and redevelopment rather than small scale reinvestment.

The 2015 Comprehensive Plan lays the ground work for further action today. For instance:

Chapter 1, page 2 states:

“Fremont Street which lies immediately to the west of Talbot Street has long been recognized as an area suitable for neighborhood commercial redevelopment. In recent years, the Police Station, the St. Michaels Library and several small businesses and restaurants have located in that area. The Town recognizing the value of this area is investing in storm water, street and sidewalk upgrades in an effort to promote the continued re-development of this street.”

The Objectives and Implementation Strategies section in Chapter 1 page 5 proposes the following about the district:

“1.5 Enhance the development of the commercial district.

1.5.1 Develop and implement a redevelopment plan for Fremont Street.

1.5.2 Develop and implement a commercial street plan which encompasses pedestrian corridors, lighting, parking and aesthetics.

1.5.3 Promote the use of funding sources available through the Sustainable Community Program, Legacy Plan and other grant opportunities.

1.5.4 Investigate the benefits to the Town of establishing St. Michaels as a “Main Street Community”.

Chapter 2 page 9 states”

“...development regulations element shall encourage: Economic development through the use of innovative techniques;”

Chapter 7 pages 1&2 states

“While Talbot Street will in all likelihood remain the primary retail shopping area, Fremont Street is well suited for neighborhood based shopping opportunities and office space.”

Page 2, While we recognize that tourism will in all probability remain the economic driver for the Town, we are pursuing additional economic resources, such as small computer based businesses, enhanced medical facilities and home based industries. As the national economy increasingly relies on information based services”

Chapter 5, page 4 addresses affordable housing and states that:

“The location of such housing, its proximity to jobs, childcare, stores, services and accessibility by car, public transportation or walking, have a significant impact on the cost of living and therefore affordability.

Chapter 10, page 5 indicates the Town is also experiencing the deterioration of a small portion of our housing stock, through home abandonment or neglect.

Chapter 7, page 3 & 4 recommends that the town:

“Develop with the involvement of the private sector a plan for the re-development of Fremont Street, The goal of this plan will be a better mix of civic, residential, commercial and business uses to enhance the downtown’s role as an activity center while protecting the quaintness of the Town. Research federal and state grants that may be applicable. Create a revitalization zone and study other possible revitalization measures that can be taken.”

Suggested Next Steps:

Based on an initial review of the area we recommend that the town:

- A. Community involvement: Hold discussions with area stakeholders on future vision and plan of action for the district including the following ideas.
- B. District Expansion: Consider expanding the boundaries of the district to include the full length of Fremont Street up to Dodson Street to include the housing authority complex (see map). This larger area is variously zoned Central Commercial (CC), Residential (R3) and Residential (R1). This area could include several parcels on the East side of Fremont Street that may be suited for inclusion as they are not through lots to Talbot Street. It includes about 60 parcels including:
 - 8 parcels belong to the Town or County
 - 5 parcels belong to the Union Church and
 - 2 parcels belong to the Community center
 - 3 parcels totaling belong to the St Michaels Housing Authority
 - 8 parcels appear to be used for commercial enterprises and
 - The remaining parcels appear to be used primarily as single family homes or have no structures
- C. Clarified Vision: We suggest a district vision that allows property owners and small scale builders to evolve towards richer mix of uses that respects its heritage and potential with a mix of single family homes, live/work homes, accessory units, small apartments, maker space workshops, offices, civic uses and retail shops.
- D. New Zoning Text: We recommend creation of a new more flexible zoning district that permits the uses in the CC, R-3 and HR districts (we note the town Goal stated on page 2 of the Comprehensive Plan’s Preface to “continually update the town code”). This would involve a formal process

which would include a zoning text amendment (ZTA) and a zoning map amendment (ZMA).

- E. Town investments: We do not recommend adding more government buildings here as they would consume land that could be used for entrepreneurial purposes. We do recommend continued investments *in storm water, street and sidewalk upgrades, street lights. A pedestrian connection down RR Avenue to the Nature trail might also be helpful here.*
- F. Designations: We recommend pursuing a Community Legacy Designation and a Main Street Maryland Designation that includes the district as these program offer helpful tools, staffing and grant opportunities
- G. Grant Program and other incentives: We recommend establishing several grant programs to encourage investment in the district by current property owners and small scale builders.
- H. New District Tourism Opportunities - We suggest the town consider adding elements in the district to tell the story of local Black history using markers, interpretive plaques, online information, etc.
- I. Per the 2015 plan –
 - a. Establish a Business District Improvement Committee composed of the St. Michaels Business Association, business owners/operators and town officials. ·
 - b. Create a Master Improvement Plan with particular focus on redevelopment of the Fremont Street area and ways to stimulate small town commercial revitalization. ·
 - c. Create an improvement priority list for better lighting, benches, brick sidewalks and landscaping in the commercial areas. ·
 - d. Integrate the recommendations into the Town’s Capital Improvement Program, as appropriate.

B. Opportunities for Additional Affordable Housing

Need: In our study interviews / concerns have been raised regarding the need for additional affordable housing in and around town to help retain and attract workers needed to staff town businesses. While the worker shortage is a nationwide issue in February of 2022, local businesses report that the added costs of commuting from out-of-town and out-of-county is putting town employers at a hiring disadvantage especially for those jobs being offered with a pay scale under \$20 dollars an hour.

The Census Reporter, American Community Survey (ACS) 2019 reports that in Talbot County the Median family Income is \$87,400 and the St. Michaels Median family Income \$61,563. The State of Maryland defines workforce housing as being housing for people who make 50% of the median income and

defines affordable housing as that which costs no more than 30% of the household income for rent or mortgage. In Talbot County the Median family Income is \$87,400. A full worker paid 50% of the median income would be making about 22 dollars an hour. Thus workforce housing would equate to: rent or mortgage of \$765.00 for a single person household and rent or mortgage of \$1092 per month for a family of four. Per online mortgage calculators tested on 10/24/21 this would enable a worker to buy a unit priced at \$120,000 to \$190,000. By this formula a full time worker paid \$12.00 an hour would need to find a rental unit offered at \$600 a month.

Supply Analysis: Based on our research to date, there are very few long-term rentals or for sale units available in this price range. Many of the existing small accessory units and apartments above commercial business that formally served this market have reportedly been converted to short term rentals for tourists and are marketed via sites such as Airbnb. While the town's new zoning text is now designed to end this practice in other zones, it does not restrict short term rentals of the apartments in the Commercial Core (CC) zone. While there may be room for additional units on the upper floors of existing (CC) zoned buildings, it seems unlikely that conversions for the purpose of offering affordable apartments to workers will occur due the cost of life safety requirements.

Based on current zoning text and maps, apartments and town homes are permissible only in the Residential (R3) zone. Most of the currently Residential (R3) zoned land is under Housing Authority management. The 2015 Comprehensive plan listed 114 existing and planned income restricted units in these areas.

According to the 2019 Census data (Source: Census Reporter ACS 2019 - 5 year data) 27% of the homes in St Michaels were valued at under 200K (about 217 units) and 1% of units were valued at under 100K (about 8 units). Prices have gone up since then. According to Zillow's sale 10/24/21 information three housing units were sold in St Michael in the \$200,000 to \$300,000 range in the last 36 months and none under \$200,000. Per Realtor.com on 10/24/21 a single town home in town sold for \$ 125,000 in November, 2020. Realtor.com listed 6 homes for sale in the \$200,000 to \$300,000 range including one home to be constructed on Trusty Lane for \$269,000.

Suggestions:

We suggest the town direct staff to help educate people about the new opportunities created by the zoning code and create other action plans to add

new affordable for sale units and rental units as were recommended in the 2015 Plan. We suggest exploring several new and older yet to be achieved opportunities as follows.

1. Expand the town's old Sustainable Community boundary to include all targeted infill and redevelopment areas in order to access state grant Programs such as Community Legacy & Strategic Demolition for housing, the nature trail and other projects. Create a detailed 5 year plan of action as part of a new Designated Sustainable Community application to the State with a focus on revitalizing the Fremont St district and housing.
2. Work closely with the Housing Commission of Talbot on their upcoming plans to redevelop their properties along Fremont Street Recent revisions to the R-3 zoning text and creation of the recommended Fremont St zone might enable the construction of a high number of units and a wider range of prices and rents on these parcels.
3. Consider a sale or long-term lease of the current police station site to someone who agrees to provide moderately priced rental units once the Fremont St district is rezoned to allow small apartment buildings.
4. Work with Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) to establish Incentive programs and project grants to help interest property owners and builders in constructing new accessory units and small apartment buildings in Fremont Street and Connor Street District
5. Seek federal, state and other funds specific to revitalization and rent-to-own opportunities.
6. Consider amending the Comprehensive Plan to allow limited added annexations of vacant residential parcels along the northwest edge of town between the town boundary and the State Highway Administration owned ROW focusing on that portion of Comp. Plan Area 2 located north of North St. generally on Brooks Lane and Chester Park Lane. Annexation could be conditioned on Annexation Agreements committing to provide affordable housing. We note that as the alignment of the next section of Nature Trail is planned, the town may wish to annex parts of the State Highway Administration right of way and or Railroad Right of Way (RR ROW) in order to tap into state grants for that project. Parcels to consider might include:
 - Chester Park Lane parcels - outside of the town boundary near Habitat for Humanity Parcels
7. The town might also offer the PP overlay to owners of larger opportunity sites in town such as
 - 302 Dodson Avenue - 1.72 Acre lot Tyler Const. non-conforming use zoned Residential R1, Watermark Holdings LLC.

- 929 Talbot Street -3.04 acres sometimes referred to as the Tricycle site.
- 8. Start a town Façade Grant Program with an American Disabilities Act (ADA) element targeted to towards low to moderate income owners of existing homes in town.
- 9. Undertake a town wide zoning map review and update encouraging owners of key opportunity sites to apply for zoning changes now that the new zoning text is adopted.
- 10. Start accumulating a list of needed amendments to the zoning code such as:
 - a. Consider a ZTA and ZMA to define areas of residential areas in which live / work uses in house and or accessory buildings and criteria for consideration on individual lots elsewhere.
 - b. Consider adding a floating zone category to the ordinance to allow the town flexibility to approve creative affordable housing and mixed use infill and redevelopment projects

C. Overall Town Growth Capacity

The 2015 Comprehensive Plan (CP) reported that the town had 711 residential units and estimated a capacity for 260 more homes for a total of 970 in the area based on the water and sewer capacity. The Plan however projected a smaller residential Build-Out in the town itself of 886 housing units or 175 more units. 153 added units were anticipated to occur as infill within the existing town boundary and 22 through annexations. The Plan's projection is based on a review of the development capacity of unbuilt lots using the existing base zoning text and map and an assumed typical lot size of 7200. It anticipated three known infill projects: Marea with 16 dwelling units; Chesapeake Avenue with 7 dwelling units and The Point at Perry Cabin with 14 dwelling units. The plan notes that growth is not constrained by water or sewer capacity. *Chapter 4- page 5 of the 2015 Comprehensive Plan text stated that in the spring of 2008 Talbot County completed construction of a 660,000 gallons/day (GPD) sewer treatment plant. The latest information available from Talbot County relating to plant flows and capacity volumes allocated for use within the municipal boundaries of St. Michaels indicates the following:*

Existing flows: 133,950 GPD

Future Flows: 109,700 GPD

Reserved Capacity for I&I: 151,600 GPD

The town does not keep a running total of the number units added since 2015 however, according to the 2019 Census data (Source: Census Reporter ACS 2019, the town as having 805 residential units, a gain of 94. The details of the

2020 Census data will be available soon. The town's development pipeline includes approximately a dozen more units that have been approved or planned but not yet built and occupied. This includes the annexed lots in the Brooks Lane area. By these numbers 69 units still remain from the town's 2015 build-out projection.

As of October 2021 the County estimates a capacity for 160 new homes in the area based on sewer capacity. Further it is reported that there is a need to add more homes to the sewer system in order to service the debt incurred for the sewer plant upgrades done in 2008.

The 2015 plan states that: "Based on the total water usage from existing residences and the residents of Rio Vista who are already on the Town of St. Michaels water system, the Town of St. Michaels is within the limits of their Water Appropriation and Use Permit from the Maryland Department of the Environment. Should the additional in-town possible build-out residences be constructed, the water usage would increase to 248,031 gallons per day which is still within the limits of the Water Appropriation and Use Permit. If the Town of St. Michaels were fully built out and the potential annexation area was annexed and fully built out, the total water usage would rise to 365,211 gallons per day, which would still be within the limits of the Water Appropriation and Use Permit"

With the town's recent Zoning Ordinance changes the town likely has increased its capacity to accommodate new residential units via infill and redevelopment. Previous assumptions about unbuilt and underutilized lots and tracts in town need to be reexamined as both zoning rules and defined environmental constraints have changed. While number of unbuilt lots may now be unbuildable due to critical area and other environmental constraints. New town zoning allows infill of a higher density with smaller lot sizes that are more consistent with the town's historical development pattern. Other new zoning provisions can be expected to encourage infill as it allows greater diversity of housing types that can be accommodated in places previously not feasible. For example accessory units are now allowed in the Agriculture (A), Residential (R-1), Residential (R-2) and Residential Gateway (RG) zones and the new Growth Allocation (GA) Floating Zone may create new opportunities. These new infill opportunities can result in added homes being located within walking distance of the town center as opposed to homes added through annexations at the edge of town which are likely to increase the need for residents to drive around town.

Recommendations:

An updated estimate of the build out capacity in town based on 2020 census data and new environmental and zoning regulations is needed in advance of the upcoming 2025 Comprehensive Plan update.

1. Consideration of a new Fremont Street District vision, zoning category and map changes (discussed above) may yield more infill.
2. Consideration of zoning map changes and selected annexations (discussed below) to further encourage a greater supply of affordable housing may yield more infill opportunities
3. Consideration of broader use of the Planned Redevelopment (PR) Floating Zone may encourage high quality mixed use infill on aging retail sites outside of the core. It appears that realtors and property owners are not familiar with this tool.
4. Creation of incentives to build infill housing on targeted opportunity sites using the State's Community Legacy Program (see affordable housing discussion above).
5. Creation of a Community Legacy Façade Improvement Grant Program focused on the Fremont street District and nearby residential areas to provide incentives to reinvest in aging structures in and near the Historic District

Task 3 Parking

A concern has been raised by businesses and residents regarding parking problems in the center of town. We recognize that the town has been working on parking by increasing the public parking supply and on removing congestion points on key streets. Recently significant changes have been made to the parking requirements in the zoning code. While Comprehensive Plan does not have a parking section, it is apparent that the town's policy is to promote flexible district wide parking solutions that support a traditional walkable town. While regulations require businesses to provide their fair share of parking, the overall vision is to encourage people to park once and walk about patronizing many destinations rather than visiting one place and then driving away or on to the next destination.

Based on interviews and observations it appears that current parking concerns focus primarily on parking supply and management during larger event weekends. The problems identified seem to be problems of success and are similar to challenges faced by other event oriented towns around the state as their weekend and events visitation increases.

It appears that existing public parking lots in combination with existing private parking lots and public on-street parking serves the current demands from commercial, civic and visitor activity on weekdays and small event weekends (*i.e. less than 1000 people*). We noted the existence of a temporary parking reduction condition as Covid related seat spacing restrictions have been lifted and several businesses are operating at above normal seating capacity with below normal parking due to the continued presence of temporarily installed supplemental outdoor seating and tents some of which are located on commercial parking lots. We observed weekend conditions on Saturday October 30th the Oyster Festival weekend. While the ticketed festivities at the Maritime museum were canceled activities and offerings at many other town businesses still occurred.

Parking complaints heard in our interviews focused on the following issues:

- Supply and management of parking for larger public events i.e. more than 1000 attendees; and
- Possible impacts and considerations for allowing the added Covid related outdoor seating and associated decreased parking to become permanent conditions.
- A general concern that on-street spaces are the most desirable and valuable to town businesses and should only be removed where no other option can be found.

Parking issues related to larger events include several elements:

- There is a perception that the town has some growing problems of success and needs to up their game in accommodating their yearly schedule of events in ways that other Maryland event towns are doing.
- A town staff person may be needed to better help coordinate town wide events and simultaneous events on a regular basis.
- There is a perception that some event planners do not or have not been required to, fully follow town code to ensure that adequate convenient parking has been arranged and adequate information is conveyed to all guests.
- Additional online information and signage may be needed as well as expanded hours for shuttles running to all parking locations for the hours needed including a reasonable time after the event.
- Event parking is reportedly consuming on-street parking on residential streets in the historic district where homes have limited off street parking spaces for residents and their guests. There is a perception that added management and enforcement staffing is needed. For example some event guests choose to park illegally along streets and alleys and private property closer to their destination rather than parking in designated event lot at the high school.
- Post event activities often attract event attendees to other locations after hours extending the needs for parking after event shuttle bus services has stopped
- On the plus side, interviews note the spill over benefits to other town businesses as guests who park in the town parking lots in the core and walk to the main event destinations tend to patronize more town businesses than do guests who park on-site or take the shuttle bus to the high school parking lot.

Public Parking Supply:

As of February, 2022 it appears that the town has, with recent improvements, about 175 free off-street public parking spaces in seven town owned lots that are located in and around the commercial core. These include:

50 spaces - 301 Mill Street

6 spaces - Town Office

18 spaces - 201 Talbot Street with 103 &105 Mill St, with visitor booth and public bathrooms

18 spaces - Talbot St & Carpenter Street with public bathrooms

48 spaces - Talbot Street

24 spaces - 114 Fremont Street

10 spaces - Talbot Street and Boundary Lane

These recently added spaces more than offset the on-street spaces removed in the past year to ensure adequate clearance for emergency vehicles. Another 24 public parking spaces are already planned in an eighth town parking lot at 122 -124 Fremont Street. This will bring the total to approximately 198 spaces.

Recommendations:

- Consider becoming a designated Main Street Community and hire a Main Street Manager to help with events. (There is a Main Street grant program that might help fund this.)
- Acquire an array of temporary town signage fixtures for event planners to use that direct attendees to both the high school and Town lots.
- Update the town Event Permit Forms and review process to:
 - Make the required Town Commissioner approval not a consent item until new permitting routines are established.
 - Require greater detail on parking plans and event promotions regarding parking to include:
 - Require event shuttle buses to stop at the town lots as well as at the High School.
 - Identify other lots on event advertisements and postings
 - Require improved event signage directing attendees to both parking and shuttle stops- perhaps these could be reusable town signs.
 - Require proof of Board of Education permission for the high school lot
 - Require the shuttle service to run a certain number of hours after the event ends
 - Ensure that per the town code event planners pay an appropriate fee to cover added police staffing during the event and a certain number of hours after, so that adequate staff to direct traffic, enforce parking and respond to calls are available. Consider adopting a fee schedule updated annually with preset fees based on projected attendees
 - Assign a staff person to confirm that approved event permit elements are being implemented on the day of the event.
 - Institute a post event staff review process for the record.

- Adjust Town police staffing to ensure adequate police presence during events to direct traffic, perform parking enforcement etc. If the Town prefers not to increase the police staff then the town should require events planners to provide private staffing.
- After a period of added parking enforcement in town conduct a review of the data and make changes to parking regulatory signage in areas where tickets are most frequently given out.
- Explore further opportunities to add/identify additional public parking spaces, for example:
 - 13+/-spaces @ 203 Dodson Street former water tower site- this might include some handicapped spaces for the adjacent church.
 - 135 spaces - add signage to identify the public's right to park in the existing Maritime Museum parking by Deed.
- Add a public parking element to the next Comprehensive Plan.
- Review and clarify Town Code requirements for temporary tent structures, permanent fabric structures and parking based on seating capacity.
- Review the Town's definitions for the terms such as Events, Public Events and Private Events. Review the zoning text to insure that these possible additions to the text will be appropriate. For example they might mean:
 - An Event is a pre-planned, single gathering, series of related consecutive daily gatherings or periodic gathering that attracts more people than the Fire Marshall approved interior seating capacity and parking supply of a building or property and which could either:
 - Result in activity impeding or impairing the normal flow of vehicles and pedestrians on streets, sidewalks or other public facilities used primarily for have or require the partial closing or obstruction of such;
 - Or requires the necessity of public safety or traffic control measures not already provided at the proposed site of the event.
 - Or require the use of remote parking to accommodate the expected number of attendees.
 - A Public Event is an advertised event open for the general public or conducted for the purpose of attracting revenue through donations, tickets or product sales. Events may be of a cultural, charitable or cause-related nature, support, awareness, and/or for entertainment purposes. Examples of

public events include exhibitions, expositions, fairs, festivals, entertainment, cause-related, fundraising, and leisure events. Entertainment includes but is not limited to fairs, carnivals, circuses, fundraisers, exhibitions, performances, rides, races, parades, marches, events, concerts, celebrations, tours, shows, and outdoor dances.

- A Private Event is an occasional and special event where only family, friends and people known to the hosts or permit holder are invited to attend, such as a birthday party or a wedding. Private Events cannot be advertised or made open to the public. Information about the event may be shared with invited guests and members only. A Private Event cannot be used to facilitate the operation of an ongoing business or operate with the intention of making a profit. Tickets may not be sold.
- Event Exclusions (which includes only those events “not open to the public that have a duration of less than 24 hours including any setup or takedown”). The following types of events are not considered Events and DO NOT require a permit:
 - school or church sponsored events
 - yard sales on residential property;
 - family reunions on residential property;
 - private parties on residential property;
 - outdoor weddings/receptions on residential property

END

Appendix

List of Formal Interviews

Town Commissioners

- Michael E. Bibb (President)
- T. Coleman “Tad” DuPont (Treasurer)
- Joyce D. Harrod
- David H. Breimhurst
- Aida Khalil

Town Staff

- Jeff Rhodes, Interim Town Manager
- Kim Kudla , Zoning Administrator

Planning Commission Chair

- Jeff Knapp

Police Chief

- Anthony Smith

List of Informal Conversations or Telephone Interviews

St. Michaels Public Works Operations Manager

- Bryan Thompson

St. Michaels Zoning Administrator

- Kim Kudla

Rauch Engineering

- Ken Mc Fadden

Talbot County, County Engineer

- Ray Clarke

Talbot County Engineer at Talbot Street Sewer Plant

- Russell Lease

Others

CEO, Lyon Rum

- Jamie Windon

Former Owner of 208 Talbot

- Curt Cummings

St. Michaels Climate Change / Sea Level Commission Members

- Roy B. Myers
- William Boicourt

Stated Criteria for New Municipal Buildings

Throughout the interview process a number of criteria were suggested for locating a new Town Hall and new Police Station and after completing these interviews we focused our attention on the following;

- Any new municipal building should be located on land currently owned by the Town, be zoned properly and while acknowledging environmental constraints to construct according to local codes and practices. However, municipal buildings that the public might interact with should stay in town core area.
- Talbot Street and Fremont Street should remain a commercial / mixed use zone for the town. The Town should locate any new municipal building or use off of Talbot Street.
- Because St. Michaels is a water oriented tourist destination, image is important. The new Town Hall and Police Station should be located close to water and designed in such a way that acknowledges its heritage.
- Because St. Michaels is a small town with small scale buildings, any proposed municipal structure should be planned as a 1 story building. Combining both uses onto one site should be considered as it reduces overall project costs.
- Any new facility should be planned as a 50-year location/building, have the ability to expand at a future time and address sea change.
- Use the following space requirements.
 - Town Hall should have a floor area between 4,000 to 4500 square feet and provide adequate parking (@2.5/1000, 10-12 spaces). This is also based on maintaining current staffing levels at 9 staff (including Town Administrator).
 - Police Station 4,500 to 5,600 square feet and associated parking (@2.5/1000, 12-15 spaces). Police Station needs both a separate public entrance for after hours and a sally port. Police Station needs a secure exterior storage area (for Bicycles).

Comprehensive Plan References

- Comprehensive Plan Chapter 1 page 3 Museums: The economic impact of the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum to the Town of St. Michaels is substantial. The Museum's waterfront campus occupies more than 18 acres with approximately 18%, fronting on St. Michaels Harbor. The Museum and their surrounding lands carry a Maritime Museum zoning designation which is specific to the use and operation of the Museum. The Museum continues to expand their exhibits and educational

programs concentrating on preserving and exploring the history, environment and people of the Chesapeake Bay.

- Comprehensive Plan Chapter 2 Municipal Growth page 8 Objectives and Implementation Strategies: *Ensure sufficient police, medical emergency and fire station staff exists for increased demands of the tourist industry and population.*
- Comprehensive Plan Chapter 5 page 6: Support the needs of the St. Michaels Police Department.1 to 5 5 thru 5.6.5 states “Continue to support outreach programs targeted to the youth of the Town, with a focus on community responsibility, drug awareness and personal growth”.

Sewer Water Capacity in the system (available sewer EDU’s) Discussion

During telephone interviews with Talbot County Public Works Department, staff members stated that there was remaining capacity at the local waste water treatment plant to support an additional 160 EDU’s (equivalent dwelling units). The plant was expanded in 2008 from 500,000 gallons per day (GPD) to a permitted capacity of 660,000 GPD. With this expansion, the life expectancy of the treatment plant was extended fifty years. This expansion was designed to meet anticipated demand of two residential developments that did not materialize.

The MDE discharge permit assumes a discharge of 250 GPD. Talbot County Public Works indicates that their data shows a discharge that averages 114 GPD per unit. Staff indicated that there was evidence of Inflow and Infiltration (I & I) of about 30 GPD per unit, though this does not represent a serious problem.

Water Wells and Tower Discussion

According to the St. Michaels Town Engineer the current town water wells are adequate to meet the current needs of the businesses and residents. The capacity of the wells is capable of handling a modest amount of growth. The amount of growth remains ‘unclear’. The Town is aware that the current distribution system is aging and requires ongoing maintenance. The St. Michaels Water Tower provides pressure to the distribution system and is expected to remain in service for at least another decade.

Possible Annexation uses that could be considered for any possible annexation

- Land to consider
- Desired to enter town
- Town desired to better control

Lower cost housing units, (Habitat for humanity)

- For sale (Habitat for humanity)
- Rental

Fremont Street

- Current conditions
- Possible actions

Appendix Attachments

1. Maps

(See Attached)

2. List of Properties Reviewed for Town Hall and Police Station

(See Attached Excel Spread Sheet)