

Commercial Township
Visioning Session
Community Input Workshop
March 14, 2022, 6:15 P.M.

Meghan Wren from the NJ Office of Planning Advocacy made her introduction and said that what would be discussed is what the residents want to see for the future of the Township.

Meghan introduced Matt Pisarski of the Planning Director for Cumberland County and the Committee for the Plan Endorsement which includes the Township Environmental Commission.

Meghan continued by explaining a little bit about the plan endorsement process. The visioning session is one of the requirements of the Plan Endorsement Process.

Meghan acknowledged Nick DiCosmo of Remington and Vernick and said that he had been key in putting together a municipal self-assessment report which is what the process is primarily based on.

Meghan presented a power point slide show. The slide show consisted of the following.

- Commercial Township fast facts
- Demographics at a glance to include Age, gender, workforce, income/poverty, educational attainment, and housing
- Commercial/Industrial initiatives
- Community facilities
- Residential neighborhoods
- NGO facilities/attractions
- Parks and recreational facilities
- Historic resources
- Natural resources
- Status of planning
- Commercial Township zoning
- Infrastructure/circulation/transportation
- Purpose of Community visioning
- What is a vision statement?
- Guidance from the 2006 Master Plan
- Major goals of the 2017 Master Plan Reexam

Meghan concluded her presentation by explaining the next portion of the meeting will include a brainstorming session. This portion of the session invites attendees to express what they would like to see in the township in the next 10 to 20 years.

Meghan explained the next step would be to compile the results of these ideas and draft a visioning statement that will be a refresh of what we have had in the past. That would something that would be approved by the township committee. The Plan Endorsement petition is in the process of being reviewed. There is another whole process for the mapping that happens for Plan Endorsement, that's underway. There is a plan implementation agreement which has a list of

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actions for both the township and for the state to commit to each other with what they will do going forward. This is the place where the township is going to put together a wish list of things it wants help with from whether it's the County or the State. Then we ask the Township to commit to certain things to be consistent with the State.

Ideas discussed in the brainstorming session are as follows.

Emmett Vandergrift-

- Solar black out area, need improved infrastructure
- Floating solar in sand holes
- Seek grants for the road and decrease speed for school children safety
- Protect historic homes
- Nutrition education for the children, community garden
- Support regenerative farming
- Great area for duck hunting, impoundments leased for duck hunting
- Consider limits on sand mining

Tracy Richardson-

- More social services/satellite operation
- Public transportation
- Bike path expansion
- More ecotourism
- Public access to river
- More activities/activities for the kids
- Clean up derelict housing
- Connector bus goes to Laurel Lake but not Port Norris
- Port Norris school should become a community center
- Need pharmacy
- Community garden
- No more sand barging
- Address industrial truck traffic through community, adds to air and noise pollution
- Sewer service extension
- Farm market for local farm stands

Matt Pisarski suggested adding to the list traffic calming for Main St. Port Norris and residential communities.

Meghan explained that traffic calming means finding ways that encourage people to slow down through engineering of the actual roadway.

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Nick DiCosmo added that things like traffic calming could be very doable because we did apply to the state to repave Main St. do to all the truck traffic. We do have that on the horizon. We could absolutely implement traffic calming for this potential project.

Joseph Lewis -

- Sidewalks and streetlights

Peter Manzelman -

- Connect kids to historic and natural features
- Keep conservation a priority
- Coordinate more programs with the schools
- Boost availability of fresh veggies
- Have a farm market
- Address Peterson Run flooding
- Trash cleanups, Steep Run Rd
- Walking and biking paths, connect the communities
- Educate, promote, and preserve the beauty/biodiversity of the area

John Nardone -

- Important to maintain small town aura
- Doctor office/visiting nurse in Mauricetown
- Not a lot of room for more houses, keep it the way it is
- Utilize vacant homes for small shops
- Need to mitigate ageing populations, low income, high unemployment
- Need public transportation
- People need to know about CATS
- Support more restaurants
- Historical Society's open house visitors are often accidental visitors
- Add more signage for potential visitors

Debi Hollinger -

- Improved infrastructure, especially septic. It thwarts commercial and residential development
- More policing of traffic
- Bring in more people with money
- More awareness of what we have here

Pat Smith -

- More tourism, we have unique assets to draw visitors
- Need marketing for tourism
- We have a herd of bison

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Barney Hollinger -

- Wastewater treatment

Jessaca Hoffman -

- Safe bikeways like connecting of the 3 villages
- Harness Rutgers and Rowan resources for community, Use the Port Norris school
- Incentivize new homeowners
- Have a farmers' market
- Keep the Community Day
- Website needs updating, more info.
- Use of electronic sign

Edward Fox -

- Partner with school for a community garden

Billy Henderson -

- Remove/address concrete pads on Main St. makes truck pounding worse
- Support the cannabis industry (water/wastewater)
- Extra signs for school bus stops
- Motorcycles pass through, need business to capture their money

Mayor stated that concrete removal is planned, county to reimburse.

Dolly Vincent -

- Places to stay for tourist – support air B&B etc.

Tony Klock -

- Don't let houses go vacant and fall apart

Open discussion continued on some of the ideas mentioned.

Meghan Wren explained a little more about the mapping of the area with the different zones, nodes, and what areas are allowed for development currently and flood zone areas and the parameters related to the zones.

Tony Klock talked about Phragmites and the damaging effects of this on our marshes and that it is not native to this area. It is pushing out ducks.

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Meghan Wren commented that we have a very long and impressive list of suggestions that can be incorporated in the vision statement.

Mayor Vizzard asked about the flood zone mapping if it has increased.

Nick DiCosmo replied that there is a new flood damage prevention ordinance. The township can take the bottom line or add or be stricter with the ordinance. Nick does not feel it is as bad as they may have originally thought.

Meghan Wren said that DEP is planning to promulgate new rules where it is an amendment to how CAFRA is. They are looking at their coastal zone rules. They have put out PAC so there are more rules that they are proposing.

Additional discussion ensued as to effects of possible new rules.

Meghan said that if our centers are endorsed before these new rules are approved, then we have bought 10 years. Until all the centers expire again.

Meghan said that NOAH came out with a new report that is based on data as opposed to computer models and the numbers are significantly better for the 2100. The worst-case scenario is now where near what the computer models have suggested. The worst-case scenario is when it is based on a trajectory of the data from where it is and where it has been, its not as bad. And there is another piece that I have been having this conversation in my office that I have ran into in different meetings a perspective that the Bayshore is in a worse situation than the rest of the state as it relates to sea level rise. I have literally read over 100 scientific studies in part of my course work, and I don't see it. I'm preparing a presentation to try to figure out why people keep saying it. It seems like they don't want to help the Bayshore community because they are a lost cause anyway. I don't think that is founded in science. The biggest issue with the Bayshore is the lack of infrastructure investment for the past 50 years. We heard it hear tonight. Infrastructure is a huge thing for this community and that is the message I am taking back.

Mayor Vizzard thanked everyone for coming out and for their input.

Respectfully Submitted



Heather Sparks, Township Clerk