

Planning Commission and Historic District Review Board
Joint Work Session
Cape Charles Civic Center
March 3rd, 2025

At 6:00 p.m., having established a quorum, Chairman Bill Stramm called to order the Planning Commission continuation of the February 17th, 2026, Joint Work Session. In addition to Chairman Stramm, Commissioners present were Bill Ashworth, Libby Wright, Ian McDonald, Jim Holloway, Clayton Newman, and Alan Clark.

At 6:00 p.m., having established a quorum, Chairwoman Kathy Glaser called to order the Historic District Review Board continuation of the February 17th, 2026, Joint Work Session. In addition to Chairwoman Glaser, members present were Joan Cooper, Ken Monarch, and Elizabeth Wright.

Staff present were the Director of Planning/Zoning Administrator Katie Nunez, Code Official Jeb Brady, Planning/Zoning Assistant, Preservation and Zoning Administrator Tracy Outten, Town Clerk Libby Hume, and Zoning Compliance Officer Jack Steinmayer.

There were 2 members of the public in attendance.

Consent Agenda

The consent agenda was approved by common consent.

Unfinished Business

A. Review of Draft New Appendix G to Design Guidelines

The main focus of this work session was the ongoing review of the draft of the new Appendix G to the Historic District Design Guidelines, starting at item number 26 of the revised document.

Before resuming the item-by-item discussion, staff addressed the term “replacement,” which had become a concern following the previous meeting. Staff observed that the term “replacement” is not defined in the Zoning Ordinance or the Guidelines document, and its presence in the draft caused ambiguity. Ms. Nunez then explained that “replacement” suggests a complete substitution of an entire feature or element, which is quite different from a repair.

The two boards discussed the distinction in detail, noting that a repair may involve replacing individual parts, while replacing the entire item is more like new construction.

The boards then reached a consensus that the terminology should be refined throughout the document. Where work involving replacing components without any change in design, dimensions, materials, or overall appearance should be classified as a repair. Replacements that do not alter those elements described above would be classified differently from replacements that involve a change in materials or design. The board agreed to apply this change in terminology across all remaining categories.

Staff also noted that the term “primary structure” would be removed from Appendix G and replaced with “main building,” in line with Town Code definitions, and that a corresponding amendment to Appendix A of the Zoning Ordinance would be forwarded to the Town Council.

Next, the staff proposed several new definitions for review, noting they would revisit them at the end of the meeting after completing a full review of the guidelines chart. Proposed additions included definitions for alteration, in-kind, repairs (major and minor), and a refinement to the existing repairs definition, replacing the word “equivalent” with “in-kind.” The boards were also told that several points in the document reference an “approved list of materials” that does not yet exist, and that further discussion would be needed to decide whether to develop such a list or remove the references.

Before starting the line-by-line discussion, Member Cooper addressed the provided definitions she thought would be helpful to include in Appendix A of the Zoning Ordinance. (see attachment A)

Item-by-Item Review of Appendix G (Items 27-46)

Roof Forms and Coverings (Item 27): The boards discussed how to distinguish routine repairs from more extensive roof work. Using a square footage threshold consistent with building permit requirements, the boards agreed on the following framework: (1) repairs less than 100 sq. ft. with no change in design, materials, dimensions, or overall appearance would be considered routine maintenance; (2) repairs exceeding 100 sq. ft. with no change in those elements would be classified as minor work, reviewed on a case-by-case basis; and (3) replacement involving a

change in materials would be considered major work, and any alteration to dimensions, design, or appearance would also be categorized as major work.

Satellite Dishes and/or Television Antennas (Item 28): The boards discussed whether satellite dishes and/or television antennas are historic features that should be included in Appendix G. It was noted that, although they are addressed in the Zoning Ordinance, they are not considered historically significant. The boards then agreed to remove this category from Appendix G and keep its regulation within the Zoning Ordinance. They also agreed that if the item remains, removal or replacement without change would be considered routine maintenance, while any new installation or change would qualify as minor work.

Screening (Item 29): Extended discussion clarified that “screening” refers to the shielding of modern utilitarian exterior features – such as outdoor showers, propane tanks, or mechanical equipment – from public view, often imposed as a condition of a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA). The boards concluded that screening is not a category of work and should be removed from Appendix G and added to Appendix A (Definitions). Staff then noted that if screening is a condition of a COA, any removal of that screening within replacement would constitute a violation of that COA.

Outdoor Showers (Item 30): Repair and replacement without changing dimensions, design, materials, or appearance is considered routine maintenance. Replacing with similar materials would be minor work. Alterations, removal, or new construction would be minor work on a case-by-case basis, with referral to the HDRB if the project scope warrants it. Staff confirmed that outdoor showers require plumbing permits.

Shutters (Item 31): The HDRB discussed the historic district’s shutter guidelines, which require shutters to be either operable or appear operable, appropriately sized for the window opening, and installed with proper depth and hinges. The board then agreed to remove “replacement” from routine maintenance for this category and retain only “repair.” Further clarification was provided that a replacement using in-kind materials that meet current guidelines would constitute minor work on a case-by-case basis. Alterations, removal, or new construction would be considered major work.

Siding (Item 32): A similar review structure was used for siding. Repairing less than 100 sq. ft. with no changes in design, materials, or overall appearance is considered

routine maintenance. Repairs over 100 sq. ft. with no changes in these elements are classified as minor work. Removal is categorized as major work. The boards then agree to remove the word “alterations” from the final category, keeping only “removal.”

Signs (Current #34, will change to 33): Routine maintenance of existing signage with no change in dimensions, design, materials, or general appearance is classified as routine maintenance and does not require HDRB review. Alterations, installations, or removals of signage must comply with the town's sign ordinance and are considered minor work. The Code Official does not need to issue building permits for signs.

Solar Panels (Current #35, will change to 34): Repair and replacement without altering dimensions, design, materials, or overall appearance would be considered routine maintenance. Any repair or replacement involving modifications to these elements or a change in placement on the structure or lot would be deemed minor work, evaluated on a case-by-case basis, since relocating could impact visibility from the public right-of-way. New installations not visible from the public right-of-way would be classified as minor; those visible would be classified as major. The board discussed including "placement on lot/structure" in the language of category B to better address location changes.

Stairs and Steps – (Exterior) Street View (Current #36, will change to 35): Repairs that do not alter dimensions, design, materials, or appearance are considered routine maintenance. Minor work applies if there are slight changes to those elements. Major work involves new construction, alteration, addition, or removal. For stairs and steps not visible from the street, the same general rules apply, with new construction classified as minor work due to its limited visibility.

Surfaces – (Exterior) Not Specifically Listed (Current #37, will change to 36): This entire category was eliminated. Members of both the Planning Commission and HDRB noted that any surface type not already covered elsewhere in Appendix G could be addressed under existing relevant categories.

Structure, Demolition of Contributing in whole or part (Current #39, will change to 37): Demolition of a contributing structure in whole or in part was classified as major work requiring HDRB review. Demolition of a non-contributing structure in whole or in part was classified as minor work requiring Zoning Administrator review, but not HDRB approval.

Structure – Emergency Stabilization (Current #40, will change to 38): After discussion, it was decided that emergency stabilization work on a historic property that does not alter the historic character does not require HDRB review but will need Zoning Administrator approval and Building Official review. Staff then noted this would follow the same format as item 17 (fuel tanks), with a notation spanning all columns to avoid confusion.

Swimming Pools, Spas, Saunas, Plunge Pools, and Hot Tubs, etc. (Current #42, will change to 39): Staff expanded this category to include spas, saunas, plunge pools, and hot tubs in addition to swimming pools. Repairs to existing features would be routine maintenance. Additions, alterations, or new construction do not require HDRB review but do require Zoning Administrator approval and Building Official review. The boards then discussed fencing requirements and agreed to reference the applicable Zoning Ordinance section (4.7) rather than restate the fencing standards.

Temporary Features – Emergency Stabilization and Family Healthcare Structures (Current #42-43, will change to 40-41): Emergency temporary installations to protect a historic property do not require HDRB review but do require Zoning and Building review. Temporary family healthcare structures, authorized under Virginia Code Section 15.2-2292.1, similarly do not require HDRB review but are subject to both Zoning and Building review. Staff noted that the word “temporary” may need to be revisited for the ADA ramp category, as such features persist for the duration of a medical need and are not temporary in the traditional sense.

Walkways (Current #44, will change to 42): Repairs that do not affect dimensions, design, materials, or overall appearance are considered routine maintenance. Replacing materials with minor changes is classified as minor work. New construction, alterations, additions, or removals are also minor work on a case-by-case basis, depending on their visibility. The boards agree to add ramps—particularly ADA-compliant ramps—as a separate line item within this section, noting that such installations are governed by the ADA and fair housing provisions in the Zoning Ordinance and do not require HDRB review.

Walls (such as garden or retaining walls) (Current #46 will change to 43): Repairing and replacing existing walls without changing their size, design, or appearance, using approved materials from the guidelines, is considered routine

maintenance. New construction, modifications, or changes in placement would be classified as minor work.

Windows (including casings and sills) (Current #47, will change to 44): Caulking and weatherstripping with no change in dimensions, design, materials, or overall appearance are considered routine maintenance. The board discussed the difference between repair and replacement within the context of existing window guidelines, which — similar to shutters — may require new windows to meet current standards rather than match non-compliant existing windows. The board agreed to remove "replacement" from the routine maintenance category and keep only "repair." Replacing windows with in-kind materials that meet the guidelines would be minor work done on a case-by-case basis. Installing new windows, changing window style or opening size, or removing windows would be considered major work. The Code Official confirmed that window replacement that does not involve changing the opening size does not require a building permit.

Window Storm (Current #48, will change to 45): Repair and replacement without altering dimensions, design, materials, or appearance would be considered routine maintenance. Replacing with different materials or appearance would be classified as minor work. Installing, altering, or removing storm windows would also be minor work.

Following the completion of the chart review, the board approved the proposed amendments to the Zoning Ordinance and Appendix G: (1) adding the definition of "alteration," sourced from The Complete Illustrated Book of Development Definitions, Fourth Edition; (2) including the definition of "in-kind" in the Zoning Ordinance to replace the word "equivalent"; (3) amending the definition of "repairs"; and (4) creating new definitions for "major repair" and "minor repair." The term "primary structure" would be removed from Appendix G and replaced throughout with "main building," as defined by the Town Code. Commissioner Newman suggested replacing the "X" notation in the chart columns with a checkmark or bullet, noting that "X" can carry a negative connotation inconsistent with the document's intent.

Finally, staff noted that due to the significant revisions made during this and the previous work session, they would need additional time to thoroughly review the revised Appendix G against the entire existing historic district design guidelines to

identify any remaining alignment issues. As a result, the staff indicated that the Zoning Text Amendment would likely not be ready for the March Town Council meeting and would instead be submitted for the April Council meeting. Staff also mentioned that they might need to return to the Planning Commission in April if further changes to the guidelines are identified.

Motion made by Chairman Stramm, seconded by Commissioner Ashworth, to adjourn the March 3rd, 2026, Planning Commission Joint Work Session with the Historic District Review Board at 7:35 p.m. The motion was approved by unanimous consent.

Motion made by Chairwoman Glaser, seconded by Member Cooper, to adjourn the March 3rd, 2026 Historic District Review Board with the Planning Commission at 7:35 p.m. The motion was approved by unanimous consent.

Chairman Stramm

Chairwoman Glaser

Zoning Compliance Officer