



TOWN COUNCIL
Work Session
Cape Charles Civic Center
November 6, 2025
6:00 PM

At approximately 6:00 p.m. Mayor Adam Charney, having established a quorum, called to order the Work Session of the Cape Charles Town Council. In addition to Mayor Charney, in attendance were Vice Mayor Buchholz, Councilmen Butta, Grossman, and Newman, and Councilwomen Ashworth and Holloway. Staff members in attendance were Town Manager Rick Keuroglan, Planning & Zoning Director Katie Nunez, Planning & Zoning Assistant Tracy Outten, Assistant to the Town Manager Pam Endlein, and Town Clerk Libby Hume. Also in attendance was Claudette Lajoie, President of the Cape Charles Historic District Civic League. There was one member of the public in attendance.

Town Clerk Libby Hume read a statement honoring William “Billy” Powell, recognizing his nearly 34 years of service to the Town’s Public Utilities Department and 43 years with the Cape Charles Volunteer Fire Company. She noted his passing on November 3, 2025, and the details of his upcoming funeral with Firefighter honors on November 8th. She informed Council that, in lieu of flowers and in accordance with his obituary, the Town would make a \$100 memorial donation to the Cape Charles Volunteer Fire Company. A moment of silence was observed.

Town Manager Rick Keuroglan introduced the topic of the work session: continued review of Article VIII, Historic District Overlay, with specific emphasis on Appendix G. He noted the extensive work completed by the subcommittee, consisting of Claudette Lajoie, Ed Wells, Councilman Grossman, and Councilman Newman, who invested significant time refining the document to improve clarity and usability. He invited Claudette Lajoie to present on behalf of the subcommittee.

Claudette Lajoie presented the subcommittee’s process, emphasizing collaboration with staff and the Planning Commission and explaining that the primary goal was to create a clearer, more accessible Appendix G that clearly distinguished routine maintenance, minor work, and major work. She stressed that the revisions were aimed at clarity rather than substantive changes. Their goal was to have a single, alphabetized table as a reference document to help evaluate projects. A column was added to show when the Building Code Official needed to be involved so owners would understand that more than just zoning approval was required.

Discussion began with routine maintenance. The subcommittee originally proposed requiring a simple email from property owners notifying Planning and Zoning staff of their intent to conduct routine maintenance. Staff described current practices, explaining that such notifications helped them manage complaints and ensure compliance. Councilwoman Holloway expressed concern that some property owners will misinterpret the boundaries, and that lack of documentation could complicate enforcement and fairness. Councilman Newman noted that having at least a record of what owners believed they were doing could be useful when things went off track.

After extended discussion, the Council and staff agreed that routine maintenance would be clearly defined in Appendix G and in the ordinance. No formal application, notification or fee would be required for routine maintenance. Staff would be available to answer questions and confirm whether work was routine.

The Council next discussed the definition of “repair,” specifically the use of “equivalent” versus “like for like.” The subcommittee recommended shifting to “like for like” to avoid misuse of the term

“equivalent” in cases such as replacing wood decking with composite. Staff pointed out that some historic materials were unavailable and that composites might be appropriate in certain cases. Ms. Lajoie noted that the Virginia Department of Historic Resources now recognized certain composite materials as acceptable in historic contexts. The Council agreed to adopt “like for like” and supplement the guidelines with examples illustrating acceptable substitutions.

The discussion turned to survey and site plan requirements under Section 8.26. Concerns were raised about the cost and timing of surveys. Staff clarified that surveys were required for zoning purposes and that the Historic District Review Board did not independently require them. Council recognized that the wording in Section 8.26 could be misinterpreted and agreed that the authority to require surveys should remain strictly under Planning and Zoning. The Council supported revising the language accordingly.

Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) expiration and extension fees were reviewed. The subcommittee proposed extending COA validity from six months to one year citing difficulties with securing contractors and supply chain issues. Staff explained the importance of alignment with the building permit cycle and noted that COAs were not automatically revoked when clear progress was evident. After discussion, the Council chose to retain the six-month validity of the COA to maintain consistency with the building code but eliminated the COA extension fee. Staff would continue to use discretion and flexibility where supply chain, contractor, or other uncontrollable conditions delayed work.

Ms. Lajoie introduced future-phase topics including fee structure updates, such as adjusting the threshold for substantial alterations or considering incentives for historically appropriate restoration. Council agreed that a detailed review of fees, fines and application formats would be scheduled separately after the ordinance and Appendix G language was finalized.

Ms. Lajoie noted specific categories in Appendix G, to address the treatment of non-historic features like pools, fuel tank additions, removals and emergency stabilization, along with certain temporary features. These items were included in Appendix G so owners knew they must still go through zoning and building code review. Council also discussed the challenges faced by corner lots or properties adjacent to undeveloped parcels, acknowledging these “line of sight” issues as complex and requiring further policy development.

Appendix G formatting was reviewed broadly. The Council supported the subcommittee’s recommendations to reorganize headings for clarity and address specific categories such as accessory structures, architectural details, shutters, and exterior surfaces. Screening requirements were clarified to apply only when used to mitigate the visibility of structures requiring review and not to general landscaping uses.

Council also discussed outdoor kitchens, built-in bars, saunas, and similar amenities now appearing more frequently in the historic district. These items were not clearly addressed in current guidelines, and the group agreed they should be incorporated into Appendix G and zoning review as a future refinement.

The subcommittee was directed to prepare a clean revised draft of Appendix G incorporating the Council’s consensus decisions. Once complete, staff and the Building Code Official would review the draft and provide comments. The revised Appendix G and associated Article VIII would then move forward through the Planning Commission and public hearing process.

The Council thanked Ms. Lajoie and the subcommittee for their significant volunteer efforts and contributions to simplifying and improving Appendix G. This would help reduce staff workload and provide a more usable tool for homeowners.

Motion made by Councilwoman Ashworth, seconded by Vice Mayor Buchholz, to adjourn the Town Council Work Session. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

The work session adjourned at 8:02 p.m.

Adam Charney, Mayor

Libby Hume, Town Clerk