

A MEETING OF THE WARRENTON COMMISSION ON OPEN AND TRANSPARENT GOVERNMENT WAS HELD ON MARCH 27TH, 2025 AT 5:30 PM

Regular Meeting

PRESENT Councilman and Vice Mayor William Semple, Chair; Mr. Kenneth Alm, Vice Chair; Councilman Eric Gagnon, Secretary; Mr. David Norden; Mr. Mike Kokoszka; Mr. Whitson Robinson, Special Counsel

ABSENT N/A

The minutes laid out below will be a brief recap of the agenda items. For more in-depth information, please see recorded video at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zgAYvVI7vsk&t=546s>

CALL TO ORDER AND ESTABLISHMENT OF A QUORUM

The meeting opened at 5:30 PM by Acting Chair Semple who declared a quorum present.

Semple indicated that there would be no public comment at this meeting, but that there would be public comment in future meetings.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Mr. Alm motioned to nominate Councilman Semple as Chair; Councilman Gagnon seconded the motion. The motion passed in a 5-0 vote.

Councilman Gagnon motioned to nominate Commissioner Kenneth Alm as Vice Chair; Commissioner Mike Kokoszka seconded the motion. The motion passed in a 5-0 vote.

Commissioner Norden motioned to nominate Councilman Gagnon as Secretary; Commissioner Mike Kokoszka seconded the motion. The motion passed in a 5-0 vote.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Vice Chair Alm motioned to approve the agenda; Secretary Gagnon seconded the motion. The motion passed in a 5-0 vote.

ADOPTION OF MISSION STATEMENT

Chairman Semple described the proposed Mission Statement of the Warrenton Commission on Open and Transparent Government (attached). Vice Chair Alm motioned to adopt the Mission statement; Commissioner Kokoszka seconded the motion. The motion passed in a 5-0 vote.

APPOINTMENT OF SPECIAL COUNSEL TO THE COMMISSION

Chairman Semple invited Special Counsel nominee Whitson W. Robinson to give a presentation of the role of the Special Counsel to the Commission. Mr. Robinson provided an overview of the Special Counsel's tasks and responsibilities.

Chairman Semple asked Mr. Robinson about periodic progress reports provided to the Commission. Robinson indicated that periodic updates would be provided to the Commission when there was information of importance to report. Robinson also indicated that if he received full cooperation from everyone who received his information requests, he could provide a report in around 60 days. Robinson further stated that if entities or individuals did not respond to his information requests, he would inform the Commission and provide recommendations for further action.

Secretary Gagnon asked Mr. Robinson about the applicability of Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requirements on Robinson's discovery process; Robinson replied that, although the Commission would be bound by FOIA requirements, he intended to fully disclose all information obtained as a result of his discovery efforts.

Chairman Semple asked Mr. Robinson how he planned to coordinate his activities with the Town Attorney; Robinson indicated that, at present, he did not have significant engagement with the Town Attorney, but that if he encountered FOIA issues, he would communicate those issues to the Town Attorney for a final opinion; Robinson indicated he would also communicate other issues to the Town Attorney for similar rulings as required.

Vice Chairman Alm asked Mr. Robinson whether he would be investigating the three land-use applications selected by the Commission in sequence, or all at once. Mr. Robinson indicated that, because there were three separate applications, he would be reviewing each of them individually, but there may be commonalities with regard to breakdowns discovered in the zoning and applications process.

Chairman Semple stated that the justification for the selection of the three land-use applications (Amazon Data Center, Warrenton Village Center, and Arrington VSA) was based on their scale, impact, and currency (recency), but that other applications might be reviewed in the future. Mr. Robinson replied that he would also be interested in researching the best practices employed in land use application approval processes by other municipalities, and how those could be implemented in Warrenton.

Secretary Gagnon motioned to authorize Mr. Robinson as Special Counsel to the Commission; Commissioner Kokoszka seconded the motion. The motion passed in a 5-0 vote.

Semple described communication breakdowns encountered during the zoning approval process, and other issues, such as the impact of a project on the Town's water and sewer capacity and the Comprehensive Plan, and lack of sufficient consideration of these factors.

NEW BUSINESS

Secretary Gagnon proposed a means of soliciting questions and comments from Town residents on the Commission's work. Chairman Semple suggested that the effort could be expanded to a dedicated web page, where citizens could be invited to share their views with the Commission.

ADJOURN.

Chairman Semple adjourned the meeting at 6:05 PM

I hereby certify that this is a true and exact record of actions taken by the Warrenton Commission on Open and Transparent Government on March 27th, 2025.

Eric Gagnon, Secretary
Warrenton Commission on Open and Transparent Government