



TOWN COUNCIL
Regular Meeting
St. Charles Parish Hall
March 8, 2012
Immediately Following Public Hearing

At 6:05 p.m. Mayor Dora Sullivan, having established a quorum, called to order the Regular Meeting of the Town Council. In addition to Mayor Sullivan, present were Vice Mayor Bannon and Councilmen Bennett, Evans, Sullivan and Veber and Councilwoman Natali. Also in attendance were Town Manager Heather Arcos, Assistant Town Manager Bob Panek, Town Planner Tom Bonadeo, Treasurer Jo Anna Leatherwood and Town Clerk Libby Hume. The Department Heads were in attendance along with 47 members of the public. Northampton County Supervisor Willie Randall was also in attendance.

Mayor Sullivan gave the invocation and led the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Brock Stiles, 525 Madison Avenue

Mr. Stiles deferred his allotted time to Mr. Frank Wendell.

Frank Wendell, 515 Monroe Avenue

Please see attached.

David Kabler, Blue Heron Realty at 113 Mason Avenue, 10352 Church Neck Road, Machipongo

Please see attached.

Chad Davis, 5 Randolph Avenue

Please see attached.

Lisa Harman, 104 Madison Avenue

Ms. Harman stated that she had been a resident of Cape Charles for 51 years and a taxpayer for 33 years. Her family had successfully run a business in Cape Charles for the last 120 years. Ms. Harman stated that she was here tonight to ask the Council to give Old School Cape Charles the same consideration given to Echelon, 6 months, to present a plan for the use of the Cape Charles School property. Ms. Harman went on to state that she did not think the Town needed more housing and that Central Park was not the proper location for any form of housing. For those citizens who asked "where was this group before?" the group did approach the Town but was told that the Christian School was working on a deal with the Town and was asked to wait to see if they were successful. Their group was informed in August that this was not going to happen. Regardless of that, the group was here now asking for consideration. The group was not proposing a new concept, but something that had been done in lots of small communities across the country. Just 40 miles north, in Onancock, the Friends of the Onancock School were developing a cultural and community center as a gathering place for education, recreation, culture and community activities. Ms. Harman stated that she spoke personally with Cindy Downing, the President of the Friends of the Onancock School, who informed her that they were currently supporting their facility through grants, fundraisers, membership dues, rent and gifts and were working toward selling their tax credits. Since 2007, when the Town of Onancock leased the property to the Friends of the Onancock School, there had not been any tax increase. The only increase in the Town of Onancock was an increase in the quality of life. Ms. Harman concluded by again asking for the necessary time.

Debbie Bender, 300 Fulcher Street

Ms. Bender stated that she was here tonight to ask Council to give the group time to form a committee to see what could be done to save the school to make a recreation center for the kids, a place for someone to do needlework or something similar and to teach others to do the same.

Don Bender, 300 Fulcher Street

Mr. Bender stated that he said “yes” to the community center and added that he saw one local amongst the whole Council.

Don Riley, 538 Monroe Avenue

Mr. Riley expressed his support of the community center. The building was the heartbeat of the Town and for Council to sell it off or give it away was terrible. Mr. Riley asked Council to reconsider tonight and think what this Town could be. The Town did not need any more condos but needed a place where everyone could gather – young and old.

Jim Drebes, 504 Monroe Avenue

Mr. Drebes stated that he would like to see the building as a community center. Its location at the edge of the park was ideal for people to come and go for community activities.

Gail Drebes, 504 Monroe Avenue

Ms. Drebes expressed her support for the community center.

Will Jones, 6 Tazewell Avenue

Mr. Jones stated that his dad was a Cape Charles High School graduate of 1964, his uncle Mark was a Cape Charles High School graduate of 1973 and his grandmother still lived in Town. Mr. Jones added that he was here to ask the Town to look further into options focused on saving the school for Town use in order to serve the needs of the community. As a concerned citizen, Mr. Jones stated that he believed there were several questions that should be considered related to this important issue: “1) Has a recent feasibility study been completed for the use of the school as a recreation center or library? Have other locations in the Town been identified for these facilities? If not, was there a long term vision or capital improvement plan in place that included such uses? 2) Federal and State government had given the Town money for a wastewater treatment plant, beach and breakwater improvements and a town park. Why wouldn’t they give the Town money to renovate an historic landmark for a community center for our children? 3) Renovations of the wastewater treatment plant, harbor, beach and municipal building had been done but what investments, outside of grants and infrastructure, had been made for the children in our town? 4) Events for children currently were held in the fire house, Aqua, the town park, Christian School and old library. Wouldn’t it be nice to have a place just for the children to go? 5) Have we requested advice from the Friends of the Onancock School, who recently transformed their old school into a community and cultural center despite the lack of town funding? 6) Did we want our town playground connected to the entrance or parking lot of a housing complex on the grounds of our town park? 7) Our town needs more businesses and services but did Cape Charles need more housing? 8) When and if the property was given to a developer, would some of the tax revenues created be used for a community recreation center or library for our children? 9) Has the idea of a task force of current residents and former school alumni been considered in helping to craft a plan for the school? 10) Whatever was decided, please consider our children when making decisions of this significance.”

Reverend Jim Davis, 533 Mason Avenue

Reverend Davis stated that he thought there was enough support for the community center, but he had a couple of questions. Reverend Davis stated that he looked at Central Park and felt that millions of dollars had been invested into it and expressed his concern about the water that had

consistently stood on the corner for 50 or 55 years and the lakes around Central Park. If the Town gave the property to the developer for \$1, the background of the property also needed to be provided so the developer was aware of the standing water and flooding problems. Did the Town have a solution to the problem before anyone throws millions of dollars into the property? Reverend Davis also asked how much land would be conveyed with the school building. The Cape Kids was there, which the Cape Charles Women's Club put in over \$35K to construct, the tennis court, and the basketball court. There needed to be a place for kids to play somewhere. Reverend Davis expressed his concern on whether Central Park would be destroyed along with Cape Kids and felt that it could be an undesirable situation. Reverend Davis added that he did not have a problem with the park, community center, etc. but felt that there was a problem with the standing water which needed to be addressed.

Daniel Burke, 516 Madison Avenue

Mr. Burke stated that he just moved to Town eight months ago and wanted to add his voice to petition the Town Council to give the citizens six months or so to review the issues and form a Steering Committee to come up with alternative plans. Mr. Burke concluded by again asking the Council for six months.

Mark Henry, Jr., 4 Inkberry Court

Mr. Henry stated that he was in support of the community center.

Karen Jolly Davis, 5 Randolph Avenue

Ms. Davis stated that she had recently spoken with Town Council and staff and gathered from these conversations that the Town did not think they had the resources to repair the school and keep it as a public space. The Town felt the job was too big and that \$500K was needed immediately in order to preserve the property. These same staff members had managed much larger, more complex and more costly projects in recent years. One had only to look at the new wastewater treatment plant, the improvements at the Harbor, the new breakwaters, the continuous beach replenishment, and the new park to realize that restoring the school to its obvious function as a community and festival center was, over time, well within our capacity as a Town. Even a quick glance at the proposed budget proved that the Town had financial resources that could be allotted differently. Talk of raising taxes 12% to pay for \$2M in renovations was pure diversion. This elephant could be eaten one bite at a time. What we lacked on the Council level was a political will to make this a priority project. The citizens were here tonight to provide Council with that political will. The Town needed an economic engine like a festival center. The Town needed a large meeting space and a safe place for youth and senior activities. The Town did not need more market rate housing. Ms. Davis volunteered to help find the money to make this dream possible and added that perhaps others would join the project. It could be done.

Chuck Little, 8 Randolph Avenue

Mr. Little stated that he was in favor of a community center for the school.

Lenora Mitchell, 309 Tazewell Avenue

Ms. Mitchell stated that she was the first and only African-American appointed to the Cape Charles School Board and that she did not know a lot about the history of the school until she became a member of the school board. When the school board realized they did not have sufficient funds for maintenance and upkeep on the school, members of the community, after working all day, came in at night to do maintenance and nurse the old boiler, which was probably as old as the school, so the water would not run out and it would not burn up. When there was talk of consolidating the schools with Northampton County the community said "no" stating that they wanted to keep their independent school. The Town Council meetings were standing room only. The school board, honoring the wishes of the community, fought consolidation and when they had to go to Federal court in Norfolk, the court room was packed

with local people. Now the Town had an opportunity to turn a brown field into a green field. Ms. Mitchell stated that she knew that Council did not make a rash decision. The Library Board looked at the building to expand the Library but that did not happen. Ms. Mitchell stated that she knew that Council had given the school a lot of thought but asked that Council give it more thought. The Town Council did not even have a place to meet and asked whether that did not tell them something. Council needed a place. Ms. Mitchell continued to state that she talked to a lot of tourists and they all want to know that after they leave the beach, what was there for the kids to do or where could the kids go. There was no place for any kids to do anything. Council had to consider everybody, not just a certain group. So many fences, gates and invisible barriers had been put up to barricade ourselves from each other. There were also a lot of invisible personal barriers. Cape Charles was a small town. Somebody once said that "you're only as strong as your weakest person." Ms. Mitchell asked Council to think about that. If everyone came together, we could be a great example for other communities. There were others out there that made things like this work. Ms. Mitchell concluded by stating that the bottom line was to turn a brown field into a green field and give the citizens more time to do a community center.

Bob Packer, 606 Randolph Avenue

Mr. Packer stated that it was interesting to hear the thoughts and options available and asked the Council to give the group some more time to think about more options. What was done at Central Park was beautiful and putting an apartment complex would tarnish the Town's image. Mr. Packer concluded by stating that he thought more time was needed to think about the options.

Town Clerk Libby Hume read three letters which were submitted prior to the meeting. The letters were from Mr. Erin Harvey of 123 Peach Street, Ms. Patricia Buckley of 4 Perny Court, and Ms. Alice Morehouse, President of the Board of the Friends of the Cape Charles memorial Library. (Please see attached.)

There were no other public comments to be heard nor any written comments submitted prior to the meeting.

CONSENT AGENDA:

Mayor Sullivan stated that Item 7.C. – Federal Highway Safety Grant Application was being deleted.

Motion made by Vice Mayor Bannon, seconded by Councilman Bennett, to approve the agenda as modified by Mayor Sullivan. The motion was approved by unanimous consent.

The Town Council reviewed the minutes of the February 7, 2012 Joint Public Hearing, February 9, 2012 Public Hearing, February 9, 2012 Regular Meeting, the February 22, 2012 Work Session, and the February 22, 2012 Executive Session.

Councilwoman Natali noted a typographical error at the bottom of the first page on the February 9, 2012 Public Hearing minutes and several typographical and grammatical errors in the minutes from the February 9, 2012 Regular Meeting minutes. Councilwoman Natali questioned the language describing the Tall Ships at Cape Charles events regarding the Parade of Sail. Libby Hume would listen to the recording of the meeting and make any necessary changes. Councilwoman Natali noted a typographical error on the first page of the February 22, 2012 Work Session minutes.

Motion made by Councilman Bennett, seconded by Vice Mayor Bannon, to approve the minutes of the February 7, 2012 Joint Public Hearing and the February 22, 2012 Executive Session as presented and the February 9, 2012 Public Hearing, February 9, 2012 Regular Meeting and February 22, 2012 Work Session as amended. The motion was approved by unanimous consent.

REPORT PRESENTATIONS:

A. *Town Manager's Report:*

Town Manager Heather Arcos reported the following: i) The Town received notification from the Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Health Office of Drinking Water that the water samples taken in February were in compliance with the total trihalomethane (TTHM) standards; ii) Northampton County was working with Everbridge Aware for Citizen Alerts to disseminate emergency notifications to residents and businesses in the County. Copies of the Press Release were located on the table for attendees to take; iii) Five candidates have registered for the three Town Council seats for this May's election. The candidates were Councilmen Steve Bennett and Larry Veber, Donald Clarke, Thomas Godwin and Frank Wendell. The Town would be scheduling a Candidate Forum the end of April; iv) A Public Information Meeting was scheduled for this Saturday, March 10th, at the Cape Charles Fire Hall at 10:00 AM. The staff would be providing information regarding the former Cape Charles School; v) The old STIP building was recently sold to Waco Chemicals, who was leasing the space. Waco Chemicals was planning to expand their operations and hoping to add more jobs; and vi) The subdivision plans for Bayside Village was signed and staff was reviewing the Erosion & Sediment and Site plans. The construction plans were expected to be received any time.

B. *Treasurer's Report:*

The Treasurer's report dated February 29, 2012 showed \$617,953 in the Bank of America checking account, \$200,000 in the new Shore Bank account and \$1,143,364 in the Local Government Investment Pool ("LGIP") with a Total Cash on Hand of \$1,961,317. Treasurer Jo Anna Leatherwood continued to report the following: i) The tax collections were slowing down but the business license applications were picking up; ii) The Town opened up an account with Shore Bank and that information was added to the Cash Position report; iii) Landmark Holdings paid their outstanding 2009 taxes and penalties to the Town. There was no basis for tax sale until three years of taxes were outstanding. Heather Arcos added that she received notification from Northampton County that Landmark Holdings paid the outstanding tax debt to the County in full.

Councilman Bennett asked about the cost overruns shown on the Capital Improvements report for the Public Works building and the west dock walkways at the Harbor. Jo Anna Leatherwood stated that these items would be reviewed at the next Budget Work Session. Heather Arcos added that the west dock walkways item did not show the funding from the Virginia Port Authority which would offset some of the expense.

Motion made by Vice Mayor Bannon, seconded by Councilman Veber, to approve the Treasurer's Report as presented. The motion was approved by unanimous consent.

C. *Recreation Report:*

Heather Arcos stated that Community Events/Recreational Coordinator Jen Lewis was not in attendance.

D. *Library Report:*

Librarian Ann Rutledge stated that she did not have any additional information to add to her written report.

E. *Harbor Report:*

Harbor Master Smitty Dize stated that he did not have any additional information to add to his written report.

F. *Public Works / Public Utilities Report:*

Public Works / Public Utilities Director Dave Fauber stated that he did not have any additional information to add to his written report.

G. *Code Enforcement:*

Heather Arcos stated that he did not have any additional information to add to his written report.

H. *Planning Report:*

Town Planner Tom Bonadeo reported that the roof had been installed on the Harbor Bathhouse. The work was moving faster than expected. Tom Bonadeo reminded the individuals running for political office that the Town's ordinance did not permit political signs to go up before 45 days prior to the election and required their removal seven days after the election. The size was restricted to four square feet which was similar in size to real estate signage. This information would be published in the next Gazette as well.

I. *Police Department:*

Chief Charles Brown reported that a Town citizen was reported missing. The individual was a young black male about 5'4" tall and weighing about 120 lbs. The man was known to suffer from seizures and was last seen on Friday in front of the Bayview Medical Center. The man was usually seen walking through Town and surrounding areas. Chief Brown asked that anyone seeing this individual to please call the police department.

OLD BUSINESS:

A. *Wastewater Treatment Plant Status:*

Assistant Town Manager Bob Panek stated that the majority of the flow was now going to the new wastewater treatment plant. The Town was working with the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and expected to receive the Certificate to Operate the beginning of April. The Town was also working with the contractor to close out the contract.

Councilman Bennett commended Bob Panek on the 2% change order rate stating that it was fantastic for a project of this size. Bob Panek added that there was another change order in process for \$44K for miscellaneous items.

B. *PSA / Regional Wastewater System Update:*

Bob Panek stated that, at their January 2012 meeting, the Town Council of Cheriton passed a resolution to consider a mandatory connection ordinance at the usage rate specified by USDA Rural Development (USDA RD) which was about \$44 per month. The PSA recommended to the Board of Supervisors (BOS) that no county areas be included. The project still needed about an 80% grant ratio to be done. For the Northern Node, the PSA recommended to the BOS that they agree to a moral obligation bond to underwrite the loan and to allocate the County's capacity for a Community Development Block Grant to the PSA. The BOS passed resolutions in support of this. On March 14th, representatives from the PSA and the Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission would meet with USDA RD, the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development and the DEQ to discuss a coordinated approach to grant/loan packages for the Northern Node. The number of required county appointees to the PSA Board was reduced from six to five members as a

result of redistricting and the total membership was now nine instead of 10. The BOS appointed one new member, John Reiter of Exmore, leaving one county vacancy.

Councilman Bennett stated that he was pleased that the BOS filled one of the vacancies on the PSA and hoped that the last vacancy would be filled soon. Supervisor Willie Randall stated that the BOS had someone in mind to fill the vacant position.

C. *Technology Zone:*

Tom Bonadeo stated that Town Council and staff had reviewed the proposed Technology Zone Ordinance at several work sessions and the modification was made to reduce the Facility and Connection Fee grant from 100% to 50% as suggested by Council at their January 26 Work Session.

Councilman Veber asked Tom Bonadeo to explain what a Technology Zone was for the benefit of the members of the public in attendance. Tom Bonadeo stated that the Town was allowed by the Code of Virginia to establish a Technology Zone to attract technology-based businesses to Town. Qualifying businesses would get a discount in taxes and fees. Tom Bonadeo added that he was in discussion with a company interested in locating to Cape Charles and they were very interested in the Technology Zone. If the Town Council adopted this ordinance, it would be the only one on the Eastern Shore of Virginia.

A public hearing was held earlier this evening and no comments were heard.

Tom Bonadeo went on to state that the Planning Commission would begin working on a Tourism Zone Ordinance.

Mayor Sullivan moved to adopt Ordinance #20120308 - to Add Cape Charles Town Code Sections 23-1 through 23-7 - Technology Zone Ordinance as noticed and forwent reading of the Ordinance. The motion was unanimously approved. Roll call vote: Bannon, yes; Bennett, yes; Evans, yes; Natali, yes; Sullivan, yes; Veber, yes.

D. *Adaptive Reuse:*

Tom Bonadeo stated the Planning Commission recommended a text change to the R-1 Zoning Ordinance for the Adaptive Reuse of contributing historic structures and structures over 50 years old with the objective to save the buildings vs. demolition.

A joint public hearing regarding the proposed modifications was held on March 6th with the Planning Commission and no comments were heard.

Motion made by Councilman Evans, seconded by Councilman Bennett, to approve the proposed text change to the R-1 Zoning Ordinance for adaptive reuse. The motion was approved by unanimous consent.

NEW BUSINESS:

A. *Grounds Maintenance Service Contract Extension*

Heather Arcos stated that an Invitation for Bids for Grounds Maintenance Service was advertised on February 9 and 12, 2011 and the contract was awarded to Eastern Shore Landscape Management, Inc. The contract was signed March 2011 and allowed for three one-year extensions.

The base bid for mowing services had increased as a result of adding the area at the Keck Well site, the new wastewater treatment plant and one additional week of mowing. The contract also included maintenance of Central Park.

Motion made by Vice Mayor Bannon, seconded by Councilwoman Natali, to approve the one-year extension of the Grounds Maintenance Service Contract, including the maintenance of Central Park, with Eastern Shore Landscape Management, Inc. The motion was approved by unanimous consent.

B. Waste Collection and Disposal Services Contract Extension

Dave Fauber stated that in May 2009 the Waste Collection and Disposal Services contract was awarded to David Disposal Co., Inc. with an effective date of August 12, 2009. The contract allowed for three one-year extensions. In 2010, the contract was extended from September 1, 2010 to August 31, 2011. The second contract extension should have been executed in August 2011, but was inadvertently overlooked. Dave Fauber went on to state that the current rates would remain unchanged for both residential and commercial accounts. At this time, the Town was exercising the second and third year extensions making the timeframe of this extension effective September 1, 2011 to August 31, 2013.

Motion made by Councilman Veber, seconded by Councilman Bennett, to approve the extension of the Waste Collection and Disposal Services Contract with Davis Disposal Co., Inc. through August 31, 2013. The motion was approved by unanimous consent.

Ms. Marion Naar informed Mayor Sullivan that she thought the Council meeting began at 7:00 PM and wanted to address the Council regarding funding for the Cape Charles Museum. Mayor Sullivan told Ms. Naar that her written request was distributed to the Town Council who would be discussing contribution requests at their March 14th Budget Work Session.

At this point, Mayor Sullivan congratulated Ms. Naar, who was named Citizen of the Year, and Ms. Clelia Sheppard, who was named Volunteer of the Year, at the Northampton County Chamber of Commerce Annual Citizens of the Year Awards.

D. Local Challenge Arts Grant Application:

Ms. Clelia Sheppard thanked the Town Council for their support since 1997 and added that she had heard individuals comment earlier that there was not anything for children to do in Town. Ms. Sheppard stated that the Arts Enter offered programs for children throughout the year. Ms. Sheppard went on to ask the Town Council to again consider an application for the Virginia Commission for the Arts Local Government Challenge Grant to help the Arts Enter with operating costs. With the current economy, the Arts Enter was struggling and had cut expenses considerably. Ms. Sheppard added that she desperately wanted to keep the Arts Enter and Palace Theatre doors open and to continue their services to the Town, its residents and visitors for many years to come.

Motion made by Councilman Bennett, seconded by Councilman Evans to approve submission of the Local Government Challenge Grant application by the April 1, 2012 deadline. The motion was approved by unanimous consent.

E. NMA Federal Credit Union Board Representation:

Heather Arcos stated that the Cape Charles branch of NMA Federal Credit Union had officially opened. With the opening of the branch office, the Board of Directors of NMA Federal Credit Union opted to expand their board to include a representative from Cape Charles to provide feedback concerning NMA's performance and additional services that were needed in the community. Board members serve an initial term of two years and were responsible for the soundness of the Credit Union's policies and overall operations and were bonded for personal liability. The Board met monthly in Virginia Beach with several meetings scheduled for the Eastern Shore. The reason this item was on the agenda

was to ask if any members of Council would be interested in serving or if they knew of anyone that would be interested. Board members must be a member of the credit union and were strictly volunteers and not compensated in any way for their time or service.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- March 10, 2012 – Public Information Meeting re: Old School @ 10AM at the Fire Hall
- March 14, 2012 – Town Council Work Session @ 3PM
- March 22, 2012 – Town Council Work Session @ 6PM
- April 12, 2012 – Town Council Regular Meeting @ 6PM
- April 13-14, 2012 – Blessing of the Fleet
- April 14, 2012 – Pirates & Wenches Ball @ 7PM
- April 19, 2012 – Town Council Budget Work Session @ 6PM
- April 26, 2012 – Town Council Work Session @ 6PM

Motion made by Councilman Bennett, seconded by Councilwoman Natali, to adjourn the Town Council Regular Meeting. The motion was approved by unanimous consent.

Mayor Sullivan

Town Clerk

**Town Council Regular Meeting
March 8, 2012
Public Comments**

Frank Wendell, 515 Monroe Avenue

To The Cape Charles Town Council:

I am here again tonight to voice my continued objection against the council moving forward with, or accepting at any time, the proposal from Echelon Resources, Inc., of Richmond, Virginia.

The sale of our Historic Cape Charles High School to Echelon Resources, Inc. would be in direct conflict with the vision statement on page 5 of the Cape Charles Comprehensive Plan which states "the people of Cape Charles cherish and nurture the unique qualities of this small historic town. At the same time, Cape Charles will reach for a future that gives all citizens opportunity for prosperity, cultural enrichment, access to environmental treasures, and secure, sustainable homes."

Listen closely to the words used in those two sentences, "a future that gives all citizens opportunity and access." Opportunity and access are important qualities and worthy goals to strive for in our community. Private housing in our school or private anything there, cannot accomplish that goal "for all citizens." By its very definition, private always limits access. Guess what amenity would meet that standard and accomplish that goal? You guessed it! A community center right in the heart of our town. A community center in the old school "for all its citizens" is the highest and best use for our building.

In the first sentence of our vision statement, the words cherish and nurture is used. However, the continued failure of this current and previous council to budget any maintenance or execute any repairs to our 100-year-old building, is in direct violation of our Building Maintenance Code. This failure has caused our building to suffer from a condition known as "demolition by neglect." I am sure our old school building most definitely does not feel cherished or nurtured. You have also failed to apply for any grant funds when other communities have been successful in such endeavors.

For some on council have used the excuse that there is no money for the school, however, our municipality took in over two million dollars in revenues last year. You chose to spend lavishly in other areas of local government while withholding the funds needed to maintain our building. A reasonable effort was not put forth. Now our collective, best efforts must be made. Now is the time to learn from our mistakes and take the corrective steps needed to save our Historic Landmark.

Through our Freedom of Information Request that we filed with the town, we have learned that you have been in negotiations for 6 months with Echelon Resources, Inc. We ask for equal time, 6 months. We are your friends, your neighbors, your citizens, and your fellow taxpayers. Some families represented here tonight have been paying taxes in this town since its incorporation back in 1886, over 126 years ago. Treat us the same as you have already treated a yet faceless corporation who has offered only a single dollar for our public land and building in our park. I wonder if we can get Echelon Resources Inc., to throw in some beads and trinkets to go with that one dollar they are offering. Please do not jeopardize our chance to have a community center in our Historic Cape Charles High School. This opportunity will not come again.

On page 44 of the Comprehensive Plan, it states that "growth of the town will require an increase in space for public community services; therefore, the town plans the restoration of the Cape Charles School as an adaptive reuse to preserve this structure and establish a community center." The words of the Comprehensive Plan say one thing, but the actions of the Cape Charles Town Council say something entirely different. This is not good government "for all our citizens."

I ask you to give us 6 months, I ask you to work together with us. I ask you to learn about the good things that the "Friends of the Onancock School" are doing in Onancock, Virginia, just 40 miles north. They now have a community center in their town that causes no increase in their town taxes. Cape Charles can have a community center too if we all work together for a greater good. Give us 6 months, give it to us tonight, our Historic future is waiting for Cape Charles and all its citizens.

David Kabler, Blue Heron Realty at 113 Mason Avenue, 10352 Church Neck Road, Machipongo

Cape Charles School

Still a community center

The news about the proposal for selling the Cape Charles School property has caught many fans of the Town of Cape Charles by surprise. Although this unsettling news has raised quite a few eyebrows, we should look at this as a wake-up call for dealing with this historic property that has been an integral part of the Cape Charles municipality for almost a century.

The Town is now on the brink of hosting Tall Ships Cape Charles this June, what promises to be the largest event in any local's memory. The Tall Ships Economic Development Initiative is meant to be an effort that marshalls the assets of our community to improve our own economy, to solve challenges just such as what to do with our old school. Now is the time to take time to allow for this process to happen. We have incredible resources here in people, associations, and businesses that can be brought to bear – let us let that happen.

Portland, Oregon has successfully faced this exact same issue in 1995, when their historic Kennedy School, built in 1915 and shut down in 1975, became a derelict and abandoned building. Their community activism saved the building from several demolition orders and bought time for plans to be formulated for the best adaptive reuse of their beloved school.

Several proposals were brought forward for reviving the condemned property, ranging from a retirement home to an indoor soccer facility. The city finally settles on one proposal from Mike and Brian McMenemy who launched their renovation in the spring of 1997, reviving the 80 year old structure with new life. Especially meaningful is a river of artwork that was inspired by the stories of generations of the old school's students and teachers.

On October 22, 1997, the original principal's bell was rung on the front steps at 7AM to herald the old school's new beginning as McMenemy's Kennedy School. Offering a unique and fun lodging, dining and meeting experience, Kennedy remains a community center as a lively gathering spot for neighbors and visitors alike. It is a shining star in the McMenemy's hotel and restaurant chain. Such a success here would reap bounteous rewards in attracting tourism, generating tax revenue and supplying much-needed services to the people of Cape Charles.

I urge you to take a breather here and allow plenty of time for other proposals to be gathered and examined.

Chad Davis, 5 Randolph Avenue

The Historic Cape Charles School was a Community Center when we moved into town. We went to meetings, took painting and sculpture classes, and danced our feet off in the auditorium.

I should have been reading the Town Gazette to catch the first hints as to your plans. But instead, I was startled awake by "sell it for a dollar."

I consider each of you a friend. I know you have the best of intentions.

Initial safety maintenance is essential. However, the property does not have to be converted into a shining palace all at once. Further improvements can be addressed in stages over time.

The first step would be to form a Feasibility Committee, with broad representation, to review the studies the town has about the building, and to seek advice from potential planning partners. Grants are available to non-profits that are not available to municipalities or to for-profit entrepreneurs.

But, whatever you decide to do, here this clearly.

We will notice, if you knowingly fail insist on a balanced agreement, designed in very specific detail to protect the interest of the town, and to ensure performance, including in particular to stipulate a schedule of performance.

Walk away from any for-profit developer who wants to strip from an agreement the clauses intended to protect the town's interest.

Just walk away.

I expect no less of any agreement you may make with us.

Envision the restored Community Center as an economic engine.

The Community Center can be a centerpiece, a festival center, a reason to come into town, an economic engine.

Do not settle for less than you could.

The first step is 6 months for a feasibility committee.

You know a Community Center is the best and highest use of the Historic School.

I know you each believe in our town. I do too.

Thank you.

Submitted via email and read into record:

Erin Harvey, 123 Peach Street

I am excited to hear that people are finally interested in doing something with the old high school. It is a shame for that building to simply rot away. However, it is obvious that many of our town's citizens are at least as interested in the school as the developer that brought the apartment proposal. Offers of money, labor, and time are being put forth that were not part of the equation when you received the developer's initial proposal. We can afford to wait another couple of years to be sure we make the most out of this old building that we currently own.

To have public interior space like that right next to our park is a great asset that we should not simply give away. As part of a growing and increasingly active younger generation of Cape Charles residents, I know that we would make great use out of the gym space in particular, with volleyball and basketball helping to maintain spirits during the long winter months.

The current town council, mayor, and staff have been doing a great job preserving and enhancing our town's other major assets at the beach, the harbor, and the park. The old high school should also be considered one of those assets.

In a couple of years, if this renewed interest and energy still cannot develop a workable solution for restoration of the old high school, it could then be offered to developers in a bidding process, where the winning bidder is the developer that is willing to offer the largest portion of the building back to the town. It is hard to imagine that if we wait a couple of years that the \$1 price you are now contemplating is going to go down.

Patricia Buckley, 4 Perny Court

I would like to commend our Town Council for their willingness to facilitate a constructive reuse of the Old Cape Charles School. I applaud their commitment to fiscal responsibility. The building has been a drain on our scarce resources since it was abandoned as a school. Hundreds of thousands of hard earned tax dollars have been used to reduce the deterioration of an empty facility and continue to insure it. Asbestos has been managed and a new roof installed. The cost of demolition exceeds the value of the land on which it stands. We lament the untold empty federal facilities that drain our national resources, but on the local level, we are fortunate to have an opportunity to turn a liability into an asset.

The citizens who are coming forward after almost twenty years of nonuse have admirable goals, but the wrong answer. Most of the users they envision for this facility are already finding space for their activities. The volunteer fire department, the Arts Enter, churches, and businesses cooperate creatively to facilitate community functions. We have dances, festivals, movies, concerts, meetings, elections, council meetings, and bridge games in a variety of places. We have a gym albeit a private facility. Artists have a place to exhibit at the Arts Enter, but with our limited population it struggles to find an adequate revenue stream to support its programs. We are a vibrant and healthy community because we work together to enrich our collective lives.

Our most critical need in terms of space is for our library. The old school is not the right answer for a library. An ideal library space would be a one story street level energy efficient building with ceilings under 9 feet that can be segmented to provide areas for different types of patrons but sufficiently open to minimize supervision requirements. The cost to provide and maintain this type of space would be less than half of that to renovate the old school. Where were these individuals when the Friends of the Library sent out an appeal for contributions to start a building fund? I hope the individual who has offered \$10K to renovate the old school is willing to divert that pledge to a more fiscally responsible solution.

At this time in the history of our community we are struggling. With an economy closely tied to tourism and discretionary income, the recession has hit us hard. Our businesses and citizens are running fast to stay in place. A community center grossly out of scale with the population of our town is a luxury that we cannot afford. In addition to the two cent increase in the tax rate for debt service to renovate the old school, one must add the cost for staffing and running programs, the routine maintenance, utility costs, and the overtime costs for the police coverage when events at the community center involve age groups or activities needing monitoring. Going forward with the proposed private renovation produces tax revenue from real estate, personal property and businesses. It provides sorely needed affordable housing for our teachers, policemen, and young adults and brings more full time customers for our local businesses. We cannot afford sentimentality to divert us from making the choice that best serves our total population. The renovation will preserve the historic character of the building's exterior. Its use will change under either scenario. Please move forward with the property sale and necessary rezoning.

Alice Morehouse, President of the Board of the Friends of the Cape Charles Memorial Library

RE: Proposed Redevelopment and Use of the Former High School Building

The Board of the Friends of the Cape Charles Memorial Library is in full support of the proposal being considered to redevelop the former high school property into housing. The Friends believe the Town Council would be remiss in the duties if they let this opportunity pass.

The Friends do not support any proposals that would include the library as part of a non-housing redevelopment of the high school property.

The Friends and the Library Board developed a plan in 2010 for a new library facility. In that process the Friends reviewed prior studies related to the old high school building and concluded that the facility was not well suited for library purposes for two reasons. First and foremost the facility is in a sad state of disrepair and its layout and size did not lend itself to use as a library facility.

The study quantified the space needs to traditional library functions but the authors went further in their thinking to consider other needs in the Town and the long term cost of operating a new library.

Between 2005 and 2010 two studies and two surveys had been done to figure out how to provide library services to the lower half of Northampton County. Nothing happened.

In the spring of 2010 the Friends took a leadership role and developed a long range plan for the library using the data from prior studies, applying the library standards of the Commonwealth and considering other needs in the community.

That study was completed in August of 2010 and presented to the Town Council in November. To date the Town has not settled on a location for a new library.

The plan includes space for public meetings, leisure seating for adults children and young adults, play areas, display space, computer and work areas, music and video viewing areas.

The Friends understand the desire for a place for young and old to gather. The Friends believe that the Library is that place and that the current plan provides space to meet those needs as currently planned or with minor modifications.

Again, the Friends strongly believe that the private proposal to redevelop the high school is an opportunity the Town should not let slip by.

The Friends would also ask those individuals who are interested in the development of a community center to join with us to find a location for the library, to help raise funds to make the library a reality and to encourage the Town Council to find a location so the library project can move forward.