



Salisbury Planning Commission **March 31st, 2026**

MINUTES

The Salisbury Planning Commission met in session on Tuesday, **March 31, 2026**. The meeting took place at 125 N. Division St, Room 301, with attendance as follows:

COMMISSIONERS:

David Chiddenton, Chair
Matt Drew, Vice-Chair
Latonia Ayscue, Open Meetings Delegate
Susan Rall (Absent)
Mike Piorunksi
Lynne Bratten
Anthony Dickerson

CITY STAFF

Nicholas Voitiuc, Director of DID
Betsy Jackson, City Planner
Zachary White, Associate Planner
Scarlett Liberto, Associate Planner
Henry Pearson, Associate Planner
Laura Ryan, City Attorney

1. CALL TO ORDER & ROLL CALL

Mr. Chiddenton called the meeting to order at 4:00PM. A roll call took place for the members of the commission. It was noted that Susan Rall was absent from this meeting.

2. COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMMENT REVIEW

Ms. Jackson began the comment review. She stated that she will go through each comment one-by-one in order to gather feedback on if and how the commission wants to address the comment within the plan.

1. MDP updated comprehensive plan requirements

Ms. Jackson said that she does not see a need to rewrite the plan based on the requirements that do not yet apply to them. Ms. Bratten and Mr. Chiddenton agreed that this does not need to change.

2. Include a table/matrix of correlates chapter titles with Maryland requirements

Ms. Jackson said that they include the requirements in each chapter rather than at the end of the plan. Ms. Bratten said that the rationale is logical.

3. Vision statement should include how things will be achieved

Ms. Jackson said that the comprehensive plan is not a strategic plan that gets overly specific. She said that specifying timelines may limit access to resources and funding.

4. "Vision Statement: ADD STATEMENT to: incorporate balance between growth & fiduciary duty to current and future citizens in improving and sustaining the City's built environment."

Ms. Jackson said that she believes that the current statement covers these things but they can rework it.

5. ADD STATEMENT: Vision should be to have a ONE SALISBURY mindset where inefficiencies caused by city/county boundary are removed and government services are efficiently delivered.

She said that this needs clarification. The city and county work together to do this but there needs to be consideration for incentivization for annexation. She asked if there are any proposals for changing the vision statement.

Mr. Drew said that he wants to see them aim for something. He thinks establishing a goal that by 2035, they reduce the number of enclaves by 50% would be a good idea. Ms. Jackson said that this could be a goal that they add to the land use chapter.

Mr. Piorunski said that they do not outline how the city will do what it says in its vision statement. He suggested adding that "executing the goals of the plan" will achieve the goals. Ms. Jackson said that they can but she does not know if it is necessary. Mr. Piorunski said that tourism is missing from the vision statement and asked if that should be a part of the plan. Ms. Jackson said that she sees tourism as part of the economic aspect.

Mr. Piorunski asked what Mr. Drew meant by the "One Salisbury Mindset." Mr. Drew said that there is inefficiency in the way that government services are delivered due to the way that city and county lines are drawn. Ms. Jackson asked how they would recraft the statement to reflect this. Ms. Bratten asked how that could be accomplished. Ms. Jackson said that this would need to be accomplished through annexation. She said that at least 25% of people in an area need to agree to annexation.

Ms. Jackson suggested that they add something about "the greater Salisbury area" to the last sentence. The commissioners agreed.

Mr. Piorunski said that he compared their plan to Cumberland's plan. He said their vision statement describes their community as they see it and reaffirms their commitment to their goals. He thinks that the vision statement should identify what Salisbury is and reaffirm the goals.

Change: The vision statement will be revised based on discussion.

6. Add detailed timeline for dates for each public participation meeting and outreach effort.

Ms. Jackson said that there are paragraphs on page 5 that detail the timeline. Mr. Drew said that they should add the work sessions and public comment that has occurred since the draft was written.

Change: Add the new public engagement that has occurred since the writing of the initial draft.

7. Add explicit policy language framing the Comprehensive Plan around efficient delivery of government services, incremental development, and long-term fiscal sustainability of infrastructure to guide annexation, zoning, capital investment, and transportation decisions.

Ms. Jackson said that they can add language to the intro for this. The commission agreed.

Change: Add a sentence about this to the introduction.

8. Add renter data to narrative on pg. 12

Ms. Jackson said that this is in the plan.

9. Include references to other city plans

Staff had the opinion that strategic plans should be considered separately and should not be attached as an appendix. Mr. Piorunski said that they do reference other plans. Ms. Jackson agreed but said that there is no comprehensive list of the plans.

Mr. Piorunski asked if the introduction should have a list of accomplishments between the last plan and this one. Ms. Jackson said that this is a forward-looking plan so they had not done that. Mr. Piorunski said that this could be an exercise in determining how effective their last plan was. Mr. Drew said that they had talked about the last plan at the focus groups and that feedback had been included in the plan.

10. Likes discussion about clustering development, should be downtown focus

Ms. Jackson said that this is a plan for the entire city and they resisted focusing on the downtown. They are not ignoring it, just trying to encompass the entire city.

11. Plan should say how we want growth to happen instead of treating it as 'fait accompli'

Ms. Jackson said that she used the Here is Home program as a growth indicator due to the state's Sustainable Growth initiatives. The state has issued housing targets that could evolve into requirements. There has been conversation about the plan only addressing housing for current citizens, but this ignores that people from the surrounding area come to Salisbury and ignoring our place in the community is not a good idea.

12. Explain how housing supply has increased as a result of Here is Home

She suggested adding this to the housing chapter.

Change: Add explanation to housing chapter.

13. Add page noting voter participation historic data

14. Include historic voter turnout data for Salisbury and discuss the linkage between suffrage, civic engagement, and annexation. Residents in unincorporated enclaves lack voting power and may be less invested in community outcomes; eliminating enclaves improves both service efficiency and democratic participation.

Ms. Jackson said that the second part of this can be included in the annexation enclave elimination discussion but voter participation data is not usually added. Mr. Drew said he is fine with removing this.

Change: Add a link to the inability to vote in the annexation section.

15. Directly address legacy 'flag-pole' annexations that create enclaves and inefficient service delivery. Establish a framework prioritizing elimination of enclaves, smoothing municipal boundaries, and encouraging development patterns that generate sufficient value per acre to cover long-term infrastructure maintenance.

Ms. Jackson said that completing eliminating flagpole annexations could be counterproductive because these are required to annex some properties. Flagpoles are already discouraged but can be helpful in eliminating enclaves. Mr. Drew asked if it is illegal in Maryland to annex beyond a growth area. Ms. Jackson said that it is and that annexed properties must be adjacent to the city boundary. Mr. Drew said he is fine to pass on this.

16. Shift infrastructure financing away from reliance on federal/state grants and bond funding toward increased property tax revenue generated by higher-value development.

Ms. Jackson said the plan is often used to support requests for grant funding and so she doesn't recommend this as a goal of the plan. Mr. Drew said he is fine with that.

17. Revise impact fee policy so fees are proportionally lower in high-value infill areas and higher in low-value, infrastructure-intensive areas to cover future infrastructure maintenance costs.

Ms. Jackson said that code provides exemptions for infill development. They could add incentives for infill redevelopment in targeted areas but there would need to be more research into how to do that. Mr. Piorunski said that this plan should call out the need to do this. They should take this opportunity to identify areas where they want this to happen. Ms. Bratten said that they should not be putting policy in the comprehensive plan. Mr. Piorunski said that this can be a strategy that does not say exactly how they will do it.

Change: Add a strategy to address incentivizing infill development without developing an explicit policy.

18. Include land use/zoning plan

Ms. Jackson said that they received advice from their MDP rep that they should not put zoning in the comprehensive plan. This would restrict the future rezoning process.

19. Pemberton Growth Area inclusion

Ms. Jackson stated that changes to the growth area can only be done through the comprehensive plan process. If someone brings a request to expand the growth area, she feels it should be considered by the Planning Commission. It is the opinion of staff that if the area will be developed whether it is annexed or not, it would be better to have the development on public water and sewer.

Mr. Drew said he finds it strange that they are expanding the growth area for a single site and not look at an entire region. He would prefer to keep the boundary where it is. The commission expressed agreement with Mr. Drew and decided not to add this to the growth area.

20. Designate Marley Manor area high-density residential

Ms. Jackson stated that the request was made before the updated the draft plan was released and that this concern has already been resolved.

21. Expanding growth area is incompatible with city goals

Ms. Jackson said that she does not believe that expanding the area is incompatible with all city goals. Not all goals are aligned because there are many different stakeholders.

22. Explain why annexation has "slowed considerably"

Ms. Jackson said that determining this will be difficult. She believes that this is due to economic factors which have also stalled development. She said that they can conduct further research, but that it is unlikely it would result in information that would change the goals and strategies in the plan.

23. Table 3-5 should include the Central Business District and remove the exclusion of improved parcels under 5 acres to reflect redevelopment and incremental densification potential of existing built lots.

Staff did not recommend changing the development capacity analysis (DCA). Redoing it would likely not result in more accurate results while taking a significant amount of time.

Mr. Drew said that this is included in Table 3-4 but not included in the DCA. Ms. Jackson said that the table is used to show what can go where and what the densities are. This was different than the DCA.

24. Rewrite the first paragraph of 'Development Capacity – Growth Area' to emphasize infill and redevelopment as the primary growth strategy and limit expansion to cases that improve service efficiency and fiscal outcomes.

Ms. Jackson said that this is okay, but they need to consider everything. She said that the sentence could emphasize infill redevelopment, extensions of public services to existing developments, and projects that address and identify needs in the community. The commission liked that addition.

Change: Reword/Add sentences that “emphasize infill redevelopment, extensions of public services to existing developments, and projects that address and identify needs in the community.”

25. Explicitly state that police and fire service delivery is inefficient due to enclaves and irregular boundaries, and that annexation should be used strategically to improve response times, coverage, and staffing efficiency.

Ms. Jackson said she does not recommend this change. Police and fire have their own metrics and formulas for service delivery. Mr. Drew said that he has lived in Salisbury for 35 years and

there is always a fight about the cost share for providing services. He says that this is a solution. Ms. Jackson said that they can solve the problem through fixing the city boundaries.

Change: Add the resolving of this issue as a benefit of addressing the annexation/city boundaries issue.

26. Inconsistencies with population projection calculations

Ms. Jackson said that this was due to a misunderstanding of table 3-3. This table shows two (2) scenarios for population projections.

27. Table 3-4 incorrectly lists Central Business District density at 60 units/acre. This significantly understates actual and achievable density. Staff should correct this using observed development patterns and realistic redevelopment potential.

Ms. Jackson said that this assumption was done because much of the CBD is not developable. This number was a standard used for consistency. Mr. Drew asked to add an asterisk to the table stating that the actual density is likely substantially lower than this number. Ms. Jackson said that she misunderstood the comment and did not realize that Mr. Drew was implying that the actual density was lower than 60.

Change: Add asterisk to the table recognizing that the actual density is likely to be far less than 60/acre.

28. Integrate fiscal metrics into Table 3-5, including estimated value per acre, estimated infrastructure maintenance cost per acre, and net fiscal productivity per acre for each land use category.

Ms. Jackson said that this would require extensive work and an outside contractor. She suggested adding this as a recommendation or strategy rather than doing it in the plan. Mr. Drew said that this relates to the previous issue of being able to target high value areas for infill development.

Change: Relate this back to the redevelopment incentivization/encouragement.

Ms. Bratten asked about the Here is Home program. Ms. Jackson said that this is a closed program that is not accepting new applications. She is using the projects in the pipeline for data projection.

Ms. Bratten suggested that they open the meeting to public comment. Mr. Chiddenton agreed and opened the floor to public comment.

Public Comment

Robert Taylor of Salisbury approached the podium. He said that the city staff has done a good job with the plan and addressing the comments. He said that the comprehensive plan is not a place to insert things that the city council should legislate on. It is also not a place to insert generalities such as "fiduciary duty" and "One Salisbury Mindset." He said that things like reducing enclaves is a legal matter but they cannot do it in the comprehensive plan. He spoke about the parking issue in the CBD. He said that Salisbury is one of the poorest cities in the state for its size and that must be considered.

John Grout spoke on behalf of the Wicomico Environmental Trust. He said that the city staff had concluded that the growth needs of the city could be accomplished without expanding the growth area. He said that more than 98% of the needed housing units can be fit into the city limits, and the remaining 2% can be accomplished through annexation. He said that the proposed developments would have environmental and traffic impacts. They would also place additional demand on city services. He commended the commissioners for prioritizing the interests of the citizens and rejecting the proposals.

Charles Stakeman spoke on behalf of the Wicomico Environmental Trust and the Friends of the Nanticoke River. He said that it is troubling that the city is ignoring its own plan to not expand the growth area at the request of two developers. He said that the City's arguments changed over the last week, from the developer's arguments to their own arguments for affordable housing. He asked what would happen if more requests were made before the plan was adopted.

Elise Trelegan spoke on behalf of the Green Team. She said she is passionate about smart growth and environmental priorities. She thanked the city for incorporating community feedback into the plan. She spoke about the importance of densifying downtown. She agreed that the future growth area would go against this goal.

Mike Folkoff spoke on behalf of WET. He said he was concerned about downtown. He said that when he first arrived in town, he heard about plans to develop downtown more, but it has not happened. He spoke about massive developments that have been proposed downtown. He said that there is little in the plan about the downtown area. He said he believes it is important to incorporate more about the downtown into the plan because what happens downtown impacts the entire City.

Daniel Moreno-Holt spoke. He compared this plan to the Mead and Hunt draft. He said that the city had removed the Land Use plan from the draft. He thinks that not including the land use plan will be useless for rewriting the zoning code. He said that the Cumberland plan has a proposed land use plan and proposed land use categories. He said that including previous master plans is important as well. He said that he does not think that the city has backed up claims about the need for downtown parking and that adopting a laissez-faire approach has worked in other cities.

Judith Stribling spoke on behalf of NRCAC. She said she is pleased that the commission has decided against expanding the growth area. They have spent a lot of time looking at growth patterns in the city and they believe that expanding the growth area can hurt the agricultural land in the county. She believes that the current growth area is expansive but protects the county from sprawl.

Sheila McQuinn of Salisbury spoke about the Canal Woods project. She spoke about the new Canal Park development. She said that preserving cultural resources is important. She said that density impacts culture. She said that Europe has shown that too much density too quickly can erode culture. She said that attention needs to be given to the ephemeral aspects of the community.

Bruce Robson spoke about the vision statement and recommending adding the words "The city will meet the future by...". He said that focusing on the living environment of the city is important.

Joe Chadwine highlighted the importance of density downtown and the need for housing. He said he comes from Pittsville which is a rural area. The only way to keep rural areas is to densify urban areas. He asked the board to think about AI. He said that AI is bad for the environment and he does not want it in his community. He said that AI is taking entry level jobs and hurting Gen Z. He said that tourist jobs are

not supposed to be long term jobs and that everyone cannot be a farmer either. He wants to examine how we can embrace the future without losing humanity and leaving people behind.

Carol Dunahoo spoke on behalf of WET and the Friends of the Nanticoke River. She said that they are pleased to endorse virtually all of the recommendations in the plan. She said they prefer their version of the vision statement. She said the proposed expansion of the growth area concerned them and that the city has said the right things in the plan but might do the opposite in some cases. She said the discussion today was encouraging. She asked if we will let the comprehensive plan gather dust like the last plan or will they take the opportunity to face the challenges in Salisbury by supporting the community. She is encouraged by their discussion today that the comprehensive plan can prove to be an engine for that kind of progress. She encouraged the commission to adopt by-laws to govern procedures and encourage public engagement.

This concluded the public engagement portion of the meeting.

Mr. Piorunski asked about the occupation characteristics. He said that the percentages in the 2nd column did not add up to 100 and were exceeding 100%. The city has a poverty of 30% but the population is described as working in professional and managerial careers. He wondered if they are missing something in the data. Ms. Jackson said the data is from the American Community Survey (ACS).

Change: Review the employment data, change if needed or explain why it adds up to over 100%.

29. Add a goal recognizing and supporting induced economic benefits from Salisbury University, TidalHealth, and other anchor institutions, ensuring these benefits offset infrastructure and service costs.

Ms. Jackson said that infrastructure maintenance falls on the city but the developers pay for the infrastructure itself. Mr. Drew said that he would like to understand what the induced economic benefit of the entities are. Ms. Jackson said that this may exceed the scope of the plan but that they could add a goal. Mr. Drew said he is fine with leaving that out.

30. Recognize the city's reliance on river-based transportation and industry and establish funding mechanisms for dredging and river maintenance from properties and businesses that benefit from river access.

Ms. Jackson said that the Army Corps of Engineers maintains the waters and that she does not know what they can promise. Ms. Jackson said that she is speaking to Mike Dunn about the economic issues.

Change: Reference the Port of Salisbury study.

31. Leverage Maryland Broadband Cooperative assets to promote data center and digital infrastructure development within Salisbury.

Ms. Jackson said that staff does not recommend promoting data centers. The potential negative impacts to residents are too great to not proceed with caution.

Mr. Drew said that Maryland Broadband Cooperative extended a fiber network through Salisbury. He said that there are things that the city could do to leverage that infrastructure.

Change: Add language to encourage new beneficial development and digital infrastructure in Salisbury.

32. Explain why only Perdue Farms is highlighted. Add a table listing the top 10 private employers ranked by number of employees, annual revenue, and annual property tax contribution.

Ms. Jackson said that she got this data from SWED. The commission agreed with keeping it in.

33. Add measurable economic development goals for the next 10 years, such as job creation, tax base growth, redevelopment acreage, and increases in value per acre.

Ms. Jackson said that ABCD and SWED were invited to comment on the plan and might have something to help with this.

Change: Reach out to relevant organizations see if there are any additional goals to address this comment.

34. Pg. 14 discussion about encouraging urban redevelopment lacks strategies

Ms. Jackson said that reevaluating the zoning code is the best way to encourage redevelopment. Mr. Drew asked if there are opportunities to target certain areas for use by specific users. Ms. Jackson said that it might not be appropriate to get to that level in the plan. She said that having a goal to do an analysis to inform the zoning code would be appropriate. Mr. Piorunski said he would like to see how they can create new jobs. Ms. Jackson said that they have implementation strategies that can encourage jobs. Ms. Bratten said that SWED could have a role in this. She said that they brought in many important companies and industries to Salisbury.

More specific in the implementation strategies.

Ms. Jackson said that being overly specific is not the intent of the plan. She said that incentives or partnership could be helpful. Ms. Bratten said that they need to create the economic conditions. Ms. Bratten said that she thinks that SWED should have more of a role in this process. Mr. Piorunski mentioned clean manufacturing technologies such as turning pulp into insulation. He said that he thinks working with partners to bring in clean manufacturing companies could be a good idea.

Change: Add goal or strategy to encourage green manufacturing.

35. Recognize SU's planned performing arts center in the former library

Change: Add more information about the performing arts center.

36. Address dilapidated housing in historic districts by reforming preservation regulations to reduce repair costs, allow flexible rehabilitation options, and prevent deferred maintenance and abandonment.

Ms. Jackson said that in-kind repairs do not require historic district approvals and the Commission has been flexible. She thinks that the plan already handles these issues.

37. Include a specific strategy for who will educate residents on housing rights

Ms. Jackson said that HCDD and other organizations provide information. She thinks this may be a level of specificity that could restrict funding. Ms. Bratten said that HCDD has renter and landlord handbooks.

38. For each of the five identified impediments, include an action plan, timeline, and measurable performance indicators.

Ms. Jackson said that an analysis is done every 5 years accompanied by a consolidated action plan as a part of the CDBG grant process. Staff at the Maryland Department of Planning have indicated that referencing that plan is sufficient.

39. Define what constitutes 'housing problems' for renters and provide an implementation plan to increase homeownership and reduce over-reliance on rentals, with metrics and timelines.

Ms. Jackson said that the housing problems are identified in the plan. Adding an implementation plan would likely be too specific.

40. Change "consider incentives" to "implement incentives" on pg. 42

Ms. Jackson thinks saying "consider and implement... as appropriate" can be a compromise.

41. Substitute "high quality" for "safe, decent, and sanitary"

Ms. Jackson said that she understands why high quality would be more desirable terminology, but they specifically chose this language to mimic the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) definition. This is more practical in terms of implementation.

42. Emphasize providing more housing in walkable areas to reduce car dependence and support neighborhood vitality.

Ms. Jackson said that the plan does do this but it would be more easily accomplished through zoning and allowing a mix of uses. Mr. Piorunski asked about the Transit Oriented Development plan but Ms. Jackson said that there are likely no areas in the city that qualify.

43. Create a stand-alone section detailing a phased, hybrid implementation plan for form-based zoning, including priority areas, timeline, and next steps.

She thinks that more research needs to be done for form-based zoning before incorporating it into the plan. Mr. Drew asked if they have anything that will be stopping them from adopting it in the future. Ms. Jackson said that she did not think so.

44. Provide performance metrics for each housing assistance program, including historic effectiveness and 10-year goals.

Ms. Jackson said that the comprehensive plan is not the place to evaluate this programming.

45. Provide metrics on special needs populations served in Salisbury and compare them to regional benchmarks.

Ms. Jackson said that this data may be difficult to find but that staff will research it.

Change: Add special needs population data if available.

Ms. Bratten left the meeting at 6:50 PM.

The commission decided to pause for a break.

Ms. Jackson requested that they finish with the Water Resources Element so that she can bring the consultant to the next meeting if needed.

46. Add wastewater implementation strategies: Total Suspended Solids (TSS), Biological Oxygen Demand (BOD) monitoring, testing and penalties for industrial users; discharge permit issuance and review; identify historic homes which may have active septic (if any); active outreach to replace lead service lines and establish approved vendor list and cost estimate for homeowners, consider cost sharing.

Ms. Jackson said that she reached out to the consultant and that the monitoring standards are code requirements that are not needed in the plan, the discharge permits are done by the State, they are not aware of any homes with lead pipes, replacing lead lines is already included in the comprehensive plan, and establishing a vendor list is too detailed for a plan to include.

47. Set targets for the water quality improvement in the river

Ms. Jackson said that the State of Maryland sets Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) and targets so that is outside of the scope of the municipal comprehensive plan. Mr. Drew said that they reached the TMDL in Queen Anne's County which triggered a moratorium on development. Ms. Jackson said that the city has not reached that level.

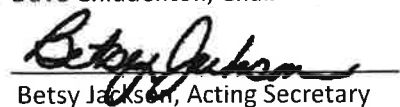
Discussion and next steps:

Ms. Jackson asked if they can finish the work session at the next meeting scheduled for April 9, 2026 meeting. The commission agreed.

Adjournment:

Chair Chiddenton entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Dickerson entered a motion to adjourn, it was seconded by Mr. Piorunski and duly carried.


Dave Chiddenton, Chair


Betsy Jackson, Acting Secretary

7/7/26

Date

6/15/2026

Date

