Town of Somerset
Special Town Council Meeting
January 20, 2026
Hybrid
(In-Person at Town Hall and Online via Zoom)
Agenda

---

1) **5:30pm** - Call to order and consideration of the agenda as presented
2) **5:31pm** - Public Comment Period

Public Hearings

3) **5:35pm** - Consideration of the tree removal application submitted by Ruth and Robert Albert for the property located at 4701 Falstone

Adjournment

4) **5:45pm** - Adjourn

Town of Somerset
Town Council Work Session
January 20, 2026
Hybrid
(In-Person at Town Hall and Online via Zoom)
Agenda

---

5) **5:45pm** - Call to order and consideration of the agenda as presented

Discussions, Presentations, and Reports

6) **5:46pm** - Presentation by resident Andrew Lewis on his proposal for a "TownStory" pilot
7) **6:05pm** - Building Report by the Town Permit Administrator
8) **6:10pm** - Town Manager's Report
9) **6:15pm** - Report on State housing legislation by the Town Attorney
10) **6:20pm** - Discussion on private summer camps operating in the Town of Somerset with the Town Attorney
11) **6:40pm** - Discussion on potential Code amendment on Confronting and Abutting Property Notification timing for Permit Application Hearings
12) **7:00pm** - Discussion on a potential Code amendment to introduce a Maximum Non-Vegetative Surface Area requirement or a Lot Coverage requirement
13) **7:20pm** - Discussion on a potential Code amendment to establish Charter Day in the Town of Somerset

Adjournment

14) **7:30pm** - Adjourn

Disclaimers

- **Executive Session:** The Council may entertain a motion in open session to enter into an executive session, in accordance with Section 3-305(b)(1)(7) of the Open Meetings Act (Maryland Code, General Provisions Article).
- **Twenty Minute Rule:** If the meeting is ahead of schedule, the Town Council may discuss agenda items before their allotted time but only if it is within twenty minutes of the scheduled time.

Definitions (in alphabetical order)

- **Adjourn**: The final closing of the meeting. Requires a motion, second, and vote.
- **Call to order**: The beginning of the meeting. The Mayor makes the call to order when the meeting time arrives and a quorum has been established.
- **Charter Amendment**: A formal revision or addition to the Town Charter.
- **Council Meeting**: A type of Council meeting where official business is conducted. Council Meetings do have a Public Comment Period and there are binding votes.
- **Consent Agenda**: A tool used to streamline the meeting by collecting routine, non-controversial items into a group to be passed with a single motion, second, and vote.
- **Consideration**: The Town Council considers a motion or recommendation. Consideration agenda items do not have a public comment period.
- **Consideration of the agenda as presented**: The Town Council either approves or amends the agenda via a motion, second, and vote.
- **Executive Session**: The meeting may be briefly closed to the general public so that legal advice from the Town Attorney may be received. Requires a motion, second, and vote.
- **Motion**: A formal proposed action or decision put to the Town Council by a Town Councilmember for a vote in the meeting.
- **Ordinance**: An ordinance is local law enacted by the Town Council authorizing general, uniform, and permanent rules of conduct relating to the corporate affairs of the Town.
- **Proclamation**: Proclamations are generally broad statements expressing the Town of Somerset's support for a particular issue or event such as Pride Month or Arbor Day.
- **Public Comment Period**: The public comment period is the time during which the Mayor and Town Council accept comments from the public on Town-related matters.
- **Public hearing/consideration**: The Town Council considers the approval, adoption or codification of an official item. Public hearing/consideration agenda items do have a public comment period.
- **Quorum**: The minimum number of Town Councilmembers that must be present at a meeting to make the proceedings of that meeting valid. The minimum number is three.
- **Resolution**: A resolution is a formal expression of opinion, will, or intent from the Town Council. In most instances, resolutions go into effect immediately.
- **Seconded**: A motion is seconded when a second Town Councilmember agrees that a proposed action or decision should be considered for a vote by the Town Council.

- **To Introduce**: The Town Council considers the introduction of a resolution, ordinance, proclamation, or charter amendment. Requires a motion, second, and vote. To Introduce agenda items do not have a public comment period.
- **Vote**: When a motion is proposed and seconded, the Town Councilmembers must vote Yes or No; or Abstain.
- **Work Session**: A type of Council meeting where no official business is conducted. Work Sessions do not have a Public Comment Period and there are no binding votes.

Feather & Assoc.

Tolbert V. Feather, Ph.D.
Advisors for: Landscape Development
Landscape Management, Plant Pest Management

Town of Somerset
4510 Cumberland Avenue
Chevy Chase, MD 20815

January 13, 2026

Tree Removal Permit – 4701 Flastone Avenue

I visited the site on Friday, January 9, 2026

The tree requested for removal is a mulberry with twin trunks 30” in diameter below the split trunks.

The tree is leaning and pushing a small retaining wall. There are 2 main leaders making the tree structurally unreliable.

I recommend removal.

Tolbert V. Feather





7826 Spout Spring Rd., Frederick, MD 21702, tfeather@xecu.net, 240 271 6749, Fax (301) 662-9315
MD Tree Expert License#880, ISA Certification #PD-0715, MD Pesticide Applicator#2070-5937

Dear Mayor, Council Members, select Committee Chairs, and Town Staff:

I am writing to share a packet of materials for your review concerning recent civic discussions in the Town of Somerset and a proposed set of small, time-limited pilots.

The enclosed materials grew out of the Cumberland Charette and related correspondence. Rather than advancing a specific policy position, these materials are intended to establish a clear, shared baseline: what has already occurred, why conversations of this kind often become difficult, and how the Town of Somerset might approach similar questions in a more structured and collaborative way going forward.

The packet is deliberately layered. If you read only one document, I would recommend starting with the short civic essay, ***"Patterns: Why Somerset Keeps Getting Stuck."*** It is designed to orient the reader to the frame. The remaining documents provide supporting context, applied examples, and a clearly bounded request for pilot authorization.

Two points of emphasis:

1. **These materials do not propose final solutions.** They are pre-engineering and pre-policy in nature, intended to clarify roles, sequencing, and decision-making before technical work begins.
2. **The requests that follow are limited and reversible.** The proposed *TownStory* and *SwimStory* pilots are small in scope, time-bounded, and designed to generate learning rather than lock-in. Approval would authorize experimentation, not commitment.

I am sharing this packet with you in your respective leadership roles so that you are aware of the framework being proposed and the reasoning behind it. I will attend the December 17, 2025 Town of Somerset Council meeting to request authorization for the pilots and to answer questions. I'd request approximately 10-15 minutes for a brief presentation and quick demonstration of *SwimStory*.

These materials are provided in trust for review and discussion. I appreciate the time and care required to read them, and I respect that you may ultimately agree, disagree, or decline to proceed.

Thank you for your service to the Town of Somerset and for your willingness to engage thoughtfully with this work.

Sincerely,

Andrew J. Lewis
Member, Public Safety Committee
Town of Somerset
The Coherence Portfolio LLC
Designer, *TownStory* & *SwimStory*

Authorization Request: SwimStory & TownStory Pilot

Town of Somerset — Working Session Reference

---

1. What Is Being Requested

The request before the Mayor and Town Council is **authorization to proceed** with two small, time-bounded pilot efforts:

- **SwimStory** — a continuity and memory system for youth programs
- **TownStory** — a continuity and memory system for civic governance

Authorization is requested to continue these pilots **under an agreed-upon reporting and progress-update cadence**, so learning can proceed in an orderly, transparent way.

---

2. What Is *Not* Being Requested

This request does **not** ask for:

- Approval of permanent programs
- Adoption of policy changes
- Decisions on sidewalks, infrastructure design, or engineering
- Bypassing staff, committees, or Council authority
- Immediate approval of funding

The purpose of this authorization is to allow **learning before lock-in**, not to force outcomes.

---

3. Pilot Scope

SwimStory

- Applied at the scale of the **Somerset Dolphins** and youth programs
- Focused on preserving seasonal memory, transitions, and lived experience
- Designed in anticipation of the Dolphins' **50th Anniversary in 2026** as a gift back to the Town

TownStory

- Applied at the civic scale
- Focused on preserving the context and rationale behind local decisions

© 2026 Andrew J. Lewis / The Coherence Portfolio LLC. These materials are not for public circulation without prior written consent from Andrew J Lewis and/or The Coherence Portfolio LLC. All rights reserved. Shared with residents of The Town of Somerset, Maryland for civic learning and partnership.

- Intended to reduce re-litigation, escalation, and meeting fatigue

Both pilots are **small, reversible, and non-disruptive**.

---

4. Reporting & Oversight

If authorized, the pilots would proceed with:

- A mutually agreed reporting cadence
- Short written updates summarizing learning, not conclusions
- Opportunities for Council and staff to review progress

The Mayor and Council retain full authority to pause, modify, or discontinue the pilots at any time.

---

5. Funding (Subsequent Step)

A **$10,000 Innovation Grant** is requested now but not required to support the pilot phase as civic infrastructure.

- Funding is **not** requested for approval at this session
- Any funding request would follow the Town's normal process and timeline
- Authorization to proceed is independent of funding decisions

---

6. Purpose of This Request

The purpose of this authorization request is to:

- Allow The Town of Somerset and The Coherence Portfolio to test whether continuity and memory reduce conflict
- Preserve optionality before permanent commitments are made
- Support evidence-based governance rather than reactive debate

This request asks only for permission to learn — openly, transparently, and under Council oversight.

© 2026 Andrew J. Lewis / The Coherence Portfolio LLC. These materials are not for public circulation without prior written consent from Andrew J Lewis and/or The Coherence Portfolio LLC. All rights reserved. Shared with residents of The Town of Somerset, Maryland for civic learning and partnership.

SwimStory

A lightweight memory and continuity system for youth programs and civic communities

What SwimStory Is

SwimStory is a working digital system that captures short, human stories from youth programs (starting with swim teams) and preserves them as shared community memory.

It records:

- moments of effort, learning, and care
- transitions (new swimmers, seniors, coaches, seasons)
- informal knowledge that normally disappears between seasons

SwimStory does *not* track performance, scores, or metrics.
It records *meaning* — the part of community life that institutions consistently fail to see, measure, or retain.

The Problem SwimStory Solves

The *Town of Somerset* invests real money and volunteer energy into youth programs — including approximately *$30,000+ per year* in support of the *Somerset Dolphins* — yet has almost no durable way to understand what that investment actually produces over time.

What disappears each season:

- why decisions were made
- what worked and what didn't
- how kids experienced the program
- where trust was built or lost
- what adults quietly learned but never recorded

As a result, every new season starts thinner than the last.
The Town funds operations, but *forgets outcomes*.

This is not a failure of effort or care. It is a structural failure of memory.

Why the Town of Somerset Should Care

© 2026 Andrew J. Lewis / The Coherence Portfolio LLC. These materials are not for public circulation without prior written consent from Andrew J Lewis and/or The Coherence Portfolio LLC. All rights reserved. Shared with residents of The Town of Somerset, Maryland for civic learning and partnership.

The Town already funds youth programs.
What it does not fund — and currently lacks — is *institutional memory of what those programs actually produce*.

SwimStory:

- makes the Town's existing investments legible over time
- preserves context across leadership turnover
- reduces social friction and rumor-based conflict
- supports youth engagement without adding staff burden
- provides a continuity layer that existing systems do not offer

This is not an add-on.
It is *missing infrastructure*.

What Makes SwimStory Different

SwimStory is not another engagement tool or reporting requirement.
It is a *new category of infrastructure*.

- *Story-first, not data-first* — because meaning precedes metrics
- *Low lift* — short entries, optional participation, no training burden
- *Non-performative* — no likes, rankings, or gamification
- *Parallel to governance* — it does not manage people or decisions
- *Continuity-oriented* — it preserves context across seasons

SwimStory does not optimize programs.
It allows communities to *remember themselves* well enough to stop losing ground.

Proof of Capability (Why This Matters Now)

SwimStory is not a concept pitch.

- A working app already exists
- Real users are already interacting with it
- It is stable enough for demonstration and learning
- Its value is visible even before refinement

This matters because communities rarely ask for memory infrastructure.
They only recognize its absence once they experience continuity for the first time.

Once SwimStory is present, forgetting becomes visible — and expensive.

© 2026 Andrew J. Lewis / The Coherence Portfolio LLC. These materials are not for public circulation without prior written consent from Andrew J Lewis and/or The Coherence Portfolio LLC. All rights reserved. Shared with residents of The Town of Somerset, Maryland for civic learning and partnership.

The 50th Anniversary Context

SwimStory was designed specifically in anticipation of the *50th Anniversary of the Somerset Dolphins in 2026*.

Rather than marking that milestone only with celebration, SwimStory treats it as a moment of *return and stewardship* — an opportunity for the *Somerset Dolphins* to give something lasting back to the *Town of Somerset*, which has supported the program for five decades.

In this sense, SwimStory is not a program add-on. It is a *gift of memory*:

- preserving the lived history of the Dolphins
- honoring volunteers, families, and swimmers across generations
- and converting a celebratory moment into durable civic infrastructure

This anniversary framing grounds SwimStory in gratitude and reciprocity, not novelty.

What SwimStory Is *Not*

- Not a performance tracker
- Not social media
- Not a reporting requirement
- Not a replacement for coaching, volunteering, or governance

SwimStory does not tell people what to do.
It prevents communities from having to forget what they already learned.

Why It's Being Piloted Now

SwimStory is being piloted alongside TownStory because both address the same structural failure: *forgetting*.

Together, they create a continuity layer that:

- captures lived experience early
- prevents escalation later
- reduces institutional load

Piloting now allows the *Town of Somerset* to learn:

- whether memory reduces friction

© 2026 Andrew J. Lewis / The Coherence Portfolio LLC. These materials are not for public circulation without prior written consent from Andrew J Lewis and/or The Coherence Portfolio LLC. All rights reserved. Shared with residents of The Town of Somerset, Maryland for civic learning and partnership.

- where it adds value
- how it fits local culture

The Ask (For Now)

Permission to continue piloting SwimStory in parallel with TownStory *under an agreed-upon reporting and progress-update cadence*, so learning can proceed in an orderly and transparent way.

A modest Innovation Grant request ($10,000) would support this pilot as civic infrastructure.
Funding can proceed through the Town's normal process.

© 2026 Andrew J. Lewis / The Coherence Portfolio LLC. These materials are not for public circulation without prior written consent from Andrew J Lewis and/or The Coherence Portfolio LLC. All rights reserved. Shared with residents of The Town of Somerset, Maryland for civic learning and partnership.

TownStory

A civic memory and continuity system for local governance

What TownStory Is

TownStory is a lightweight civic infrastructure that captures, preserves, and makes accessible the lived context behind local decisions.

It records:

- why issues arose
- how they were discussed
- what tradeoffs were considered
- what residents and officials learned along the way

TownStory does **not** decide outcomes, set policy, or replace formal records.
It preserves *context* — the human understanding that is usually lost once meetings end and emails stop.

The Problem TownStory Solves

Local governments routinely re-litigate the same issues because the reasoning behind prior decisions disappears.

What is typically lost:

- how a problem was framed
- what concerns were resolved
- what compromises were accepted
- what lessons were learned

As a result:

- debates repeat under new names
- staff and volunteers burn out
- trust erodes
- meetings grow longer and more adversarial

This is not a failure of governance.
It is a structural failure of **institutional memory**.

Why the Town of Somerset Should Care

© 2026 Andrew J. Lewis / The Coherence Portfolio LLC. These materials are not for public circulation without prior written consent from Andrew J Lewis and/or The Coherence Portfolio LLC. All rights reserved. Shared with residents of The Town of Somerset, Maryland for civic learning and partnership.

The Town of Somerset already maintains official records.
What it lacks is a durable way to retain *meaning* across time.

TownStory:

- reduces repetitive conflict and meeting fatigue
- preserves rationale across leadership turnover
- helps residents feel heard without escalating disputes
- supports staff by filtering unstructured feedback
- complements existing governance rather than competing with it

This is not about control.
It is about **continuity**.

What Makes TownStory Different

TownStory is not another engagement platform.
It is a **new category of civic infrastructure**.

- **Story-first, not data-first** — meaning before metrics
- **Parallel to governance** — it does not manage decisions
- **Low lift** — short, structured entries, no training burden
- **Non-adversarial** — designed to lower temperature, not amplify it
- **Continuity-oriented** — prevents forgetting rather than forcing consensus

TownStory allows a community to remember what it already worked through.

Proof of Capability (Why This Matters Now)

TownStory is not theoretical.

- It has already been piloted in Somerset through two TownStory cases
- Those pilots revealed why conflicts repeat even when intentions are good
- They demonstrated how preserved context reduces escalation

The value of TownStory becomes visible the moment people realize they no longer have to start from zero.

Relationship to SwimStory

TownStory and SwimStory address the same structural failure at different scales.

© 2026 Andrew J. Lewis / The Coherence Portfolio LLC. These materials are not for public circulation without prior written consent from Andrew J Lewis and/or The Coherence Portfolio LLC. All rights reserved. Shared with residents of The Town of Somerset, Maryland for civic learning and partnership.

- **SwimStory** preserves continuity in youth programs
- **TownStory** preserves continuity in civic governance

Together, they form a shared **continuity layer** — capturing lived experience early so it does not have to be reconstructed later.

What TownStory Is *Not*

- Not a substitute for Council authority
- Not a policy-making body
- Not a complaint system
- Not social media

TownStory does not tell the Town what to decide.
It ensures the Town does not forget what it has already learned.

Why It's Being Piloted Now

Somerset's recent civic experiences show that the cost of forgetting is rising.

Piloting TownStory now allows the Town to:

- learn without committing to permanent change
- reduce conflict before it escalates
- evaluate impact before scaling

This is a **bounded, reversible pilot**, not a structural overhaul.

The Ask (For Now)

Permission to continue piloting SwimStory in parallel with TownStory under an agreed-upon reporting and progress-update cadence, while learning continues.

A modest Innovation Grant request ($10,000) would support this pilot as civic infrastructure.
Funding can proceed through the Town's normal process.

© 2026 Andrew J. Lewis / The Coherence Portfolio LLC. These materials are not for public circulation without prior written consent from Andrew J Lewis and/or The Coherence Portfolio LLC. All rights reserved. Shared with residents of The Town of Somerset, Maryland for civic learning and partnership.

Pedestrian Ecology

Pedestrian Ecology is a practical framework for understanding streets, sidewalks, and public rights-of-way as *living civic systems*, not just transportation infrastructure. It integrates safety, accessibility, environment, and social life into a single, legible lens for local decision-making.

Core Idea

Pedestrian spaces function like ecological systems:

- They have *flows* (people, water, attention)
- They accumulate *stressors* (speed, obstruction, noise, neglect)
- They require *maintenance and feedback*, not one-time fixes

When designed only for vehicles or compliance, these systems degrade; when designed for human movement and care, they stabilize civic life.

What Pedestrian Ecology Adds

Pedestrian Ecology reframes common debates by shifting the question from:

“Does this meet the rules?”

to:

“How does this system behave for the people who actually use it?”

It makes visible factors that are usually treated separately:

- Pedestrian safety and traffic calming
- Disability access and universal design
- Stormwater, trees, and ground cover
- Informal use patterns (children, elders, dogs, strollers)

Why It Matters

Traditional infrastructure processes tend to:

- Treat sidewalks as secondary to roads
- Address problems only after injury or complaint
- Fragment responsibility across departments

© 2026 Andrew J. Lewis / The Coherence Portfolio LLC. These materials are not for public circulation without prior written consent from Andrew J Lewis and/or The Coherence Portfolio LLC. All rights reserved. Shared with residents of The Town of Somerset, Maryland for civic learning and partnership.

Pedestrian Ecology instead:

- Treats walking as *foundational civic activity*
- Prioritizes *preventive safety* and lived experience
- Aligns public works, planning, accessibility, and environmental goals

The result is infrastructure that is safer, calmer, and more resilient, often without major capital projects.

How It's Used (Practically)

Pedestrian Ecology is not a theory exercise. It is used to:

- Diagnose problem areas before incidents occur
- Structure neighborhood charrettes and walk-throughs
- Translate resident experience into actionable guidance
- Support pilot projects and incremental improvements

In Somerset, it operates as a *translation layer* between citizen experience, TownStory documentation, and municipal decision-making.

Relationship to TownStory

- *TownStory* captures lived experience and narrative evidence
- *Pedestrian Ecology* organizes that evidence into spatial and systemic insight

Together, they allow towns to respond to problems *before* they escalate into conflict, injury, or litigation.

Status

- Framework: complete
- Use case: active (Somerset)
- Role: reference lens for pilots, charrettes, and incremental infrastructure decisions

© 2026 Andrew J. Lewis / The Coherence Portfolio LLC. These materials are not for public circulation without prior written consent from Andrew J Lewis and/or The Coherence Portfolio LLC. All rights reserved. Shared with residents of The Town of Somerset, Maryland for civic learning and partnership.



SOMERSET CIVIC PILOTS

Purpose : Request authorization for two small, time-limited pilots
Not to decide policy, engineering, or outcomes today

Key Line: This is a request for permission to learn,
not a request for commitment.

The Pattern Somerset Is Experiencing

Observation :

- ➔ Recent civic discussions are thoughtful, well-intentioned — and still exhausting
- ➔ Issues feel harder than they should

Key Insight:

- ➔ This is not a failure of people or values
- ➔ It is a recurring pattern when story and structure lose contact

Two Recent Experiences Made the Pattern Visible

TownStory #1:
Heritage Azaleas

Citizen story could not be fully heard by bureaucracy

TownStory #2:
Cumberland Charette

Citizen input overwhelmed the system

Conclusion: Same root cause, opposite failures

What’s Missing: A Shared Frame

Problem :

- ➔ We jump quickly to solutions without shared understanding
- ➔ This forces escalation instead of clarity

What’s Missing

- ➔ Lightweight civic memory
- ➔ A way to preserve context, rationale, and learning



Introducing Two Small Pilots

TownStory:

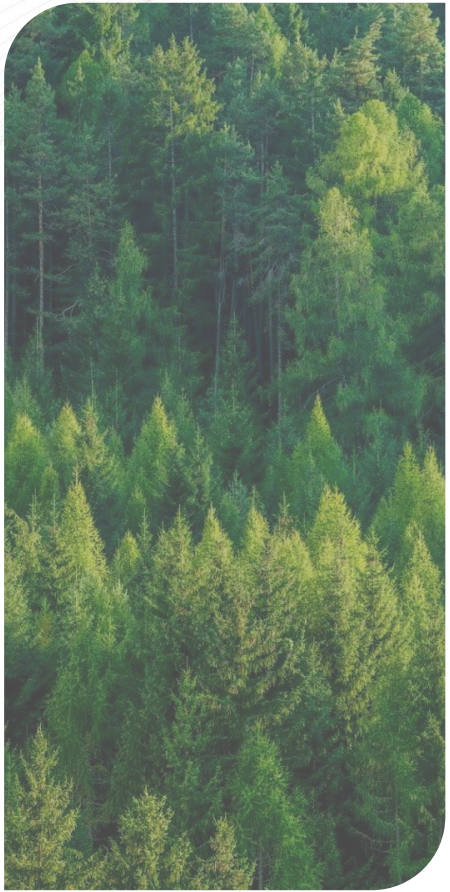
Civic memory and continuity for governance

SwimStory:

Community memory and continuity for youth programs

Shared Goal:

Reduce friction by preserving meaning early



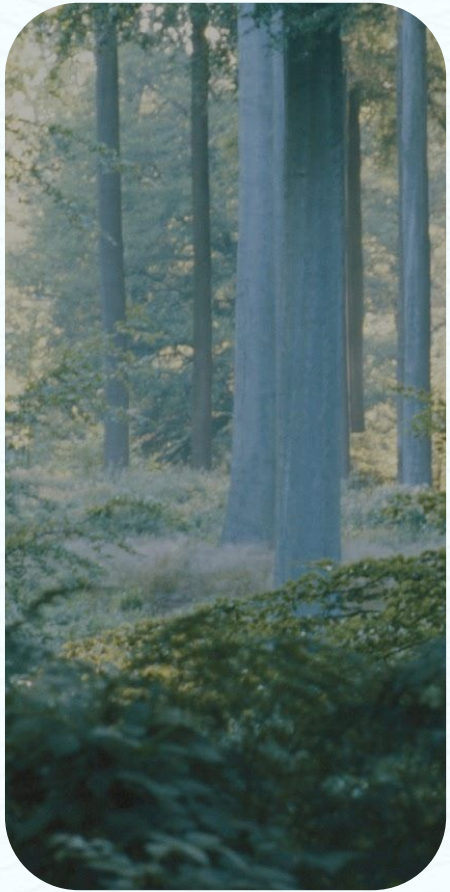
What These Pilots Are (and Are Not)

They Are

- ➔ Small
- ➔ Time-limited
- ➔ Reversible
- ➔ Parallel to existing governance

They Are Not

- ➔ Policy decisions
- ➔ Engagement platforms
- ➔ Replacements for staff or Council authority



Why SwimStory Is a Good Place to See This

Context :

- ➔ Designed for the Somerset Dolphins' 50th Anniversary (2026)
- ➔ A gift of memory back to the Town

Values :

- ➔ Makes existing investment legible
- ➔ Preserves transitions, effort, and learning
- ➔ Very low lift

Live Demo Pause
(2–3 minutes)

SwimStory Demo: :

- ➔ Show short story entry
- ➔ Show how memory accumulates over time

Instruction to Council :

- ➔ This is not a pitch — just a quick look at how the system works in practice.

The Pattern Somerset Is Experiencing

Reframe :

- ➔ Somerset does not have a sidewalk problem
- ➔ Somerset has a movement ecology problem

Why This Matters:

- ➔ Shared frames reduce polarization
- ➔ Technical expertise works better after alignment

The Ask

The Ask

- ➔ Authorization to continue both pilots
- ➔ Under agreed reporting and progress cadence

What This Preserves:

- ➔ Council authority
- ➔ Optionality
- ➔ Learning before lock-in

Closing Line: This asks only for permission to learn — openly, transparently, and together.

TO:	The Town of Somerset Council
FROM:	Steve Surko
DATE OF MEMO:	January 14, 2026
SUBJECT:	Monthly Building Report

= Update

4722 Cumberland Ave.

At the November 4, 2024, Town Council Meeting, the Town Council approved a variance application for six variances related to the established building line (EBL) of the property. The architect has submitted a concept plan to make several additions to the existing house. The staff has reviewed the plans and provided comments to the architect. No building permit application has been filed.

4822 Cumberland

At the May 5, 2025, Town Council Meeting, the Town Council approved a building permit for a 2-story addition on the back of the house. Following County DPS approval of all required permits and verification that there were no unauthorized changes to what the Council had approved, the Town issued its Building Permit on June 17, 2025. Sediment Control installed. Met with contractor on site on June 18, 2025. Canopy tree fell in front yard on June 29-30, 2025. Town Staff facilitated safe removal of honeybees by Montgomery County Beekeepers.

Project is anticipated to take approximately 8 months.

Homeowners submitted a revised permit application on September 25, 2025 to replace the approved raised patio with a smaller deck. The Town Council approved the revised permit application on October 20, 2025.

4905 Cumberland Ave.

At the May 6, 2024, Town Council Meeting, the Town Council approved a building permit application for the construction of a new house. At the February 24, 2025, Special Town Council Meeting, the Town Council approved a permit amendment application. Garage passed Wall Check on May 19, 2025. New service lines installed. Construction of house and detached garage complete. Following site check, homeowner lowered height of a portion of the retaining wall to conform with the plans (and avoid obstructing stormwater flow down the hill). The driveway was built higher than defined in the plans. Meetings held with DPS to assess impact of the as built driveway on stormwater management. At the September 2, 2025, Town

Council Meeting, the Town Council denied request for approval of the as built condition of the driveway.

Building Permit Administrator worked with homeowner to coordinate corrective driveway work with DPS. On September 30, 2025, DPS confirmed that the homeowner does not require a new permit.

On December 8, 2025, the homeowner reported that he is having an issue with his concrete contractor to correct the driveway. If this is not resolved shortly, the homeowner will hire a new contractor in January.

On January 11, 2026, the homeowner reported that a new concrete subcontractor will start work on correcting the driveway the week of January 19. TBPA will provide onsite feedback as appropriate.

4911 Cumberland Ave.

Request for permit to build an enclosed bridge over the existing breezeway between the house and garage submitted on July 23, 2025. No variances or stormwater management plan required. At the August 26, 2025, Town Council Meeting, the Town Council approved the building permit application for the addition to the house.

4906 Dorset Ave.

Driveway replacement with permeable pavers. Neighbors notified. Permit administratively approved on December 19, 2025. Code Enforcement Officer verified apron concrete mold on January 13, 2026.

4911 Essex Ave.

Combined double lot. Architect shared concept drawings with Town Staff on January 7, 2026.

4917 Essex Ave.

Replacement of existing pool approved administratively. No increase in impervious surface area. Construction in progress. Staff addressed steel plates in Town's right-of-way and unshielded port-a-potty.

4712 Falstone Ave.

At the April 7, 2025, Town Council Meeting, the Town Council approved a Building Permit Application for a new house. Following County DPS approval of all required permits and verification that there were no unauthorized changes to

what the Council had approved, the Town issued its Building Permit on June 5, 2025. Pre-construction site meeting was held on June 3, 2025. Sediment Control installed.

Asbestos found (basement tiles). Abatement completed on June 14, 2025 in accordance with Maryland Dept of the Environment regulations.

New house framed up. Contractor replaced portion of damaged sidewalk with crushed stone and safety matting for pedestrians. Notified contractor of concerns with tolerance of pre-fabricated modules and their installation. Height Check required. DPS bracing inspection expected week of August 18.

Contractor poured temporary concrete sidewalk on September 3, 2025. Contractor reminded the next day to follow the approved Parking Plan (limiting on street parking to 3 vehicles unless prior approval secured from Town). Contractor explained that the sidewalk was not sufficiently set for vehicles to drive over and park on site. Contractor reminded on September 7, 2025 to keep the Town's right-of-way clear so the sidewalk remains safe for pedestrians and dogs.

On October 6, 2025, the contractor asked about extending the permeable driveway to add a parking spot in the front yard. There are no stormwater management concerns.

Town Staff addressed repeated issues with contractors parking on Falstone in violation of the approved parking plan (i.e., too many vehicles, illegal side of the street, and blocked traffic without prior arrangement).

Town Building Permit Administrator reminded contractor of height check requirement.

Height Check completed on November 17, 2025 by CP Johnson & Assoc. With a pre-development elevation at the front of the house of 294.68', the as-built house has a peak elevation of 32.82' and a mean elevation of 27.12'.

At the December 15, 2025, Town Council Meeting, the Town Council approved permit modification to add permeable parking area to the front. At the January 5, 2026, Town Council Meeting, the Town Council conditionally approved permit modification to add a replacement retaining wall and new fence. Outstanding neighbor questions were addressed on January 13, 2026.

4906 Falstone Ave.

At the September 9, 2024, Town Council Meeting, the Town Council approved a building permit application for an addition (remove the existing deck at the left rear

of the house and to construct an enclosed addition at the same location) to the existing house. Drywell installed, landscaping complete, grass growing.

COMPLETE. No damage to public right-of-way.

4803 Grantham Ave.

Afnan & Co purchased this property for infill development. The developer has shared their concept with Town Staff and neighbors. The stormwater management plan has evolved in response to feedback from the TBPA.

5522 Greystone St.

At the May 5, 2025, Town Council Meeting, the Town Council approved a building permit to install hardscape features in the front and backyards and to construct a pool deck. The Town Council imposed a condition that the front landscaping be completed within 45 days. Town Building Permit Administrator met onsite with the landscape architect and construction crew on May 19, 2025. Hardscaping essentially complete. 1700 gal. RainHarvest tank installation in progress. Infinity pool/jacuzzi lifted into the rear yard on June 26, 2025. Front yard landscaping completed on July 1, 2025.

Site visits have confirmed the proper installation of the rain tank. Functional check remains to be conducted.

5411 Surrey St.

A fence permit application for replacement was issued administratively on April 15, 2025. Joint project with neighbor.

Checking on status.

5400 Trent St.

On May 16, 2025, the property owners filed a variance request with the Town of Somerset for an addition on the existing house, which is non-conforming to the Town's EBL. The proposal requires four (4) variances. The Council approved the variance requests on July 7, 2025.

5520 Trent St.

A concept plan has been submitted to enlarge and cover a new front porch and to build a carport on the side of the existing house. Town Staff has sent initial review comments to the architect. No building permit application has been filed.

Homeowners submitted permit package on August 8, 2025. No variances or stormwater management plan required. At the September 2, 2025, Town Council Meeting, the Town Council approved the building permit application for the addition to the house.

County-approved plans submitted on October 16. Town Building Permit Administrator verified that they were essentially consistent with the Town-approved plans (minor correction of left side setback, within Code).

5401 Uppingham St.

At the February 24, 2025, Special Town Council Meeting, the Town Council issued a continuance on this project to provide additional time for consideration of stormwater management. Following resolution of questions, the Town issued its Permits on March 14, 2025. Construction continues.

Framing complete. Windows installed. Installation of interior services in progress.

Conducted walk through with Architect on August 8, 2025.

Homeowners moved in on or about November 1, 2025 while construction wraps up. Town Staff addressed a Verizon line posing a safety hazard across the sidewalk.

Site visit with architect on January 9, 2026 verified that siding was within required side setback. Permeable driveway and rear patio are the major outstanding items to be completed. Project extension may be required.

5524 Uppingham St.

Fence replacement. Neighbors notified. Permit administratively approved on December 5, 2025.

Stephen Surko, PE (Retired)
Town Building Permit Administrator

Town Manager's Report
Prepared for the January 20, 2026 Work Session

To: Mayor Jeffrey Slavin, Council President Robin Barr, Councilmember Debbie Heller, Councilmember Kabir Kumar, Councilmember Shannon Rovak, Councilmember Rohit Khanna, and the Residents of Somerset
From: Town Manager Elvin "EJ" Hardwick, MPA

Table of Town Projects

Title: Title of project
Description: Description of project
Funds Committed: Funds committed to the project via signed proposals/contracts, if applicable
Status: Status of project
Contractor/Vendor: Outside contractor/vendor, if applicable
Note: This is not a comprehensive list of all projects, though it does contain many of them. Additionally, this table only lists "projects" and does not include the day-to-day operations and administrative functions of the Town of Somerset.

Title	Description	Funds Committed	Status	Contractor/ Vendor
Cumberland/ Surrey Reconstruction	Reconstruction of the intersection of Cumberland/Surrey to bring it into compliance with current regulations.	$57,750.00 (ARPA)	Survey complete, work on the data for the layouts and grading in-progress, preliminary drawings anticipated for completion by the end of **February 2026**. Aiming for project completion date of **June 2026**.	Dewberry
Cumberland/ Deal Sidewalk Connection	Construction of a new sidewalk connecting the sidewalks along Cumberland/Deal.	$53,750.00 (ARPA)	Survey complete, work on the data for the layouts and grading in-progress, preliminary drawings anticipated for completion by the end of **January 2026**. Aiming for project completion date of **June 2026**.	Dewberry
Essex Sidewalk Reconstruction	Construction of a replacement sidewalk along the frontage of 4825 Essex Avenue.	$43,750.00 (ARPA)	Survey complete, work on the data for the layouts and grading in-progress, preliminary drawings anticipated for completion by the end of **January 2026**. Aiming for project completion date of **June 2026**.	Dewberry
Cumberland Sidewalk Extension Charette	Dewberry and the Town hosted a public charrette to garner input for potential sidewalk extension. The next step is for the Public	$65,900.00 (ARPA)	Charrette hosted on **December 1, 2025**. A meeting of the Public Safety Committee and Dewberry is being scheduled. Will either be late **January 2026** or early **February 2026**.	Dewberry

Title	Description	Funds Committed	Status	Contractor/ Vendor
	Safety Community and Dewberry to meet and discuss community response/potential next steps.			
Town-wide Curb Ramp Replacement	Construction of replacement sidewalk, curb ramps, and curbs at each of the twenty-five intersection crosswalks, the two school driveway crosswalks, and at the intersection of Falstone/Greystone.	No funds yet committed	Task Order pending as the Town of Somerset and Dewberry are prioritizing other projects at this time. It is likely that the earliest a Task Order would be issued is **June 2026**.	Dewberry
Town-wide Curb Replacement	Replacement of all header curbs with combination curb and gutter along both sides of the street throughout the Town.	No funds yet committed	Task Order pending as the Town of Somerset and Dewberry are prioritizing other projects at this time. It is likely that the earliest a Task Order would be issued is **June 2026**.	Dewberry
Pool Bridge Restoration	Restoration of Bridge MS-01 Falstone Avenue/Little Falls Branch. Restoration will include steel beam end repairs, replacement of timber decking, repointing of stone fascia mortar, and addressing drainage at the south end of the bridge. The bridge restoration design work will utilize the AASHTO LRFD Bridge Design Specifications (8th Edition, November 2017).	$80,778.00 (ARPA)	Inspection field work has been completed, the updated inspection report is under review, and the development of the bridge restoration plans is ongoing. The updated inspection report and the bridge restoration plans deliverables are anticipated for completion by the end of **January 2026**. The preliminary timeline is to select a contractor at the **March 2, 2026 Council Meeting** with field work to begin **March 2026** and take an expected five weeks to be completed in **April 2026.**	Dewberry
Replacement of Creekside Pool Fence	Removal and disposal of the existing wood fencing, metal fence for the wading pool, metal fence for the snack bar deck entrance, and end chain link section	$31,750.00	On-site meeting with Contractor held to discuss logistics, staging, and parking. The permitting process is in progress and materials will be delivered no later than the end of **January 2026**. Field work to begin **February 2026** and take	Superior Fence and Rail

Title	Description	Funds Committed	Status	Contractor/ Vendor
	along the trail. Installation of industrial grade aluminum fence, two self-latching gates for wading pool, and self-latching double gate for snack area.		an expected two weeks to be completed that same month.	
New Streetlight at Warwick Lane/ Cumberland intersection and three outstanding streetlight conversions	Installation of a new streetlight over the crosswalk at Warwick Lane/Cumberland to increase visibility of pedestrians at night. Conversion of three streetlights missed by Pepco during initial conversion phases.	$5,877.00	New streetlight scheduled to be installed **January 19, 2026**. The three outstanding streetlights are scheduled to be converted **January 23, 2026**.	The Traffic Group, Pepco
Street Sign Replacement and Refurbishment	Replacement and refurbishment of all street signs using a survey conducted by The Traffic Group.	$26,249.75	Signs identified as Cracked, Illegible, and Faded by The Traffic Group have been replaced. Next is replacement of the remaining signs (excluding the signs on Dorset and Cumberland installed prior to the 25-26 School Year as well as the two new Tree City USA signs). Additionally, two new No Parking signs (between 5525 and 5527 Surrey and 5516 Uppingham) and new signage at the Devon/Dorset, Warwick Lane/Cumberland intersections will be installed. Manufacturing of the remaining signs has begun with delivery in three to four weeks. Depending on scheduling, installation should occur sometime in the following two weeks. Completion is expected by the end of **February 2026**.	The Traffic Group, Shannon-Baum
Placement of New and Restoration of Existing Street Markings	Restoration of faded street markings and painting of new street markings using a survey conducted by The Traffic Group.	$19,895.75	Two phases of markings have been completed. Proposal has been executed for a third phase. The work is being scheduled for **February 2026**, with some of the work potentially going into	The Traffic Group, Corporate Maintenance Group

Title	Description	Funds Committed	Status	Contractor/ Vendor
			March 2026.	
Speed Hump, Rumble Strip Restoration and Pot Hole Fixes	Restoration of speed humps and rumble strips, repair of potholes.	No funds yet committed	This work is weather dependent. A proposal has been executed so work can begin in the Spring 2026. Likely the earliest work could begin is **March 2026**.	The Traffic Group, LCS Property Services
Pedestrian Scale Lighting Consultation	Development of a study for the potential implementation of pedestrian scale lighting in the Town of Somerset.	$19,400.00	Kick-off meeting hosted on **December 5, 2025**. The Winter Survey is completed, the Spring Survey is scheduled for **June 2026**. Final document expected **July 2026**. Evari has provided two deliverables: a Final Townwide Streetlight Database GIS and Excel and a Digital Twin EvariLUX Model of the Town's Streetlight System. They have also provided a Community Survey and Engagement webpage that will be shared with the Town.	Evari GIS
Development of *Woodlands Stewardship and Care Plan for Vinton Park*	Development of a plan that guides the Town in maintaining and preserving Vinton Park's natural aesthetic beauty, its forest, its wetlands, and its habitats.	$200.00	The Maryland Department of Natural Resources Forest Service conducted a site visit of Vinton Park and Somerset Park (the park that borders Vinton Park and is owned and maintained by Somerset House). The Town Arborist has completed the questionnaire and the Parks and Natural Resources Committee has been sent the questionnaire. **Once the PNRC completes the questionnaire, the next step is for the Town Council to discuss the contents of the questionnaire to be sent to the Forest Service.**	Maryland Department of Natural Resources Forest Service
Online Permitting System	Development of an online permitting system that will transition that will completely overhaul the permitting process both for residents and for Town Staff.	$5,400.00	Town Manager and Deputy Town Manager have undergone Administrator Training. GoGov is building the first iteration for internal review which will be followed by Staff Training. The system is currently planned to launch in **February 2026**.	GoGov
Resident	Development of a resident	$8,400.00	GoGov and the Town are currently	GoGov

Title	Description	Funds Committed	Status	Contractor/ Vendor
Request Center	request center where residents can make requests, receive a request number, and be updated on their request through a portal accessible on computers and mobile devices.		prioritizing the Online Permitting System. Once the Online Permitting System is launched, attention will change to focus on the Resident Request Center. The center is currently planned to launch in **April 2026**.	
Project Management System	Development of a project management system to keep an active and evolving list of the various Town projects.	No funds yet committed	The project will be given priority once the Online Permitting System and the Resident Request Center have both been launched. In keeping with the cadence of the prior two, a tentative goal of launching a project management system has been set for **June 2026**. In the interim, this report is being improved to serve a similar purpose.	Pending
Grant Applications	Town Staff has applied for three grants: the Sustainable Maryland Action Grant from Sustainable Maryland, the Local Government Energy Modernization Grant (L-GEM) from the Maryland Energy Administration, and the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) from the Maryland Energy Administration.	N/A	All three grants have been successfully applied for. On **January 15, 2026**, the Maryland Energy Administration informed the Town that its EECBG application was approved. The grant is in the amount of $41,230.00 which will be used for a Municipal Facilities Decarbonization Feasibility Study for the Somerset Town Hall and the Public Works Garage. The Town should receive notice on the SM Action Grant by the end of **January 2026** and on the L-GEM grant sometime prior to **July 1, 2026**.	SustainErgy (for EECBG only)
Composting Pilot at the Somerset Pool	A pilot program was conducted to test the feasibility of extending Somerset's compost service to the Somerset Pool.	$386.04	Following the close of the 2025 Pool Season, Town Staff prepared an assessment for the Environment Committee and the Pool Committee. **The Committees will review and discuss so as to be able to make a potential recommendation on composting at the Somerset Pool for the 2026 Pool Season**.	Compost Crew

Title	Description	Funds Committed	Status	Contractor/ Vendor
Safe Sidewalks Day	The Town conducted its inaugural Safe Sidewalks Day the week of October 20, 2025 resulting in the clearing of overgrowth from sidewalks, street signs, and intersections for both public safety and accessibility.	$15,328.53 or $34.06 per household	A report is being finalized to submit to the five Committees that submitted the proposal to the Town Council (Parks and Natural Resources Committee, the Public Safety Committee, Equity and Inclusion Committee, Pool Committee, and Swim Team Committee). The report will be sent to the Committees by **January 23, 2026**.	TrueView Landscaping, Print1
Publishing of the *Town of Somerset Sustainable Landscapes Operations and Maintenance Manuel*	Development of a comprehensive maintenance plan to protect the Town's investment in conservation landscaping.	$14,000.00	A 95% complete draft was sent to Town Staff for review with the final 5% of content needing to be provided by Town Staff. Town Staff finalizing edits and additions with the first complete draft expected **February 2026**.	Groundsmith Collective
Town Entrance Beautification	Beautification of the various Town entrances through landscaping, hardscaping, signage, and other potential miscellaneous improvements.	No funds yet committed	Once the *Town of Somerset Sustainable Landscapes Operations and Maintenance Manuel* is published, it will be used as a guide to develop a beautification plan for each Town entrance with planning expected to start in **March 2026**.	Pending
Sidewalk Regrading, Rectification of Sidewalk Water Pooling Spots	Some sidewalk spots in Town have one (or both) of the following issues: 1) Sidewalk spots have unsafe drop-offs due to erosion, potholes, or natural topography. 2) Sidewalk spots pool water and do not properly drain during rain events. The sidewalk spots need to be regraded and/or be provided a way to drain water during rain events.	No funds yet committed	A Request for Proposal (RFP) is being prepared to be published in **February 2026**.	Pending

Town of Somerset
Ordinance to Amend Building Regulations
(Lot Coverage)

Resolution No.:
Introduced:
Adopted:
Effective Date:

AN ORDINANCE TO ADD REQUIREMENTS FOR LOT COVERAGE

WHEREAS, Maryland Code, Local Government Article, Section 5-202, as amended, grants to the legislative body of every incorporated municipality in Maryland general power to pass such ordinances not contrary to the Constitution of Maryland, or the public general law, as deemed necessary in order to assure the good government of the municipality, to protect and preserve the municipality's rights, property, and privileges, to preserve peace and good order, to secure persons and property from danger and destruction, and to protect the health, comfort and convenience of the citizens of the municipality;

WHEREAS, Maryland Code, Local Government Article, Section 5-211, as amended, authorizes the legislative body of each municipal corporation in the State of Maryland to make reasonable regulations concerning buildings to be erected within the limits of the municipality, including a building code and the requirement for building permits;

WHEREAS, Maryland Code, Land Use Article, Section 20-509 grants to the legislative body of incorporated municipalities in the Maryland-Washington Regional District general power to adopt building regulations for the protection of the public health, safety, and welfare; the preservation, improvement, and protection of lands, water, and improvements in the municipal corporation; and to regulate the construction, repair, or remodeling of buildings on land zoned for residential uses at it relates to fences, walls, hedges, and similar barriers; signs; residential parking; residential storage; the location of structures, including setback requirements; the dimensions of structures, including height, bulk, massing, and design; and lot coverage, including impervious surfaces;

WHEREAS, Section 83-17 of the Town Charter authorizes the Town Council to pass ordinances not contrary to the Constitution and laws of the State of Maryland or the Town Charter, as it may deem necessary for the good government of the Town; for the protection and preservation the Town's property, rights, and privileges; for the preservation of peace and good order; for securing persons and property from violence, danger, or destruction; and for the protection and promotion of the health, safety, comfort, convenience, welfare, and happiness of the residents of the Town and visitors thereto and sojourners therein;

WHEREAS, after proper notice to the public, the Town Council introduced the following Ordinance in public session assembled on the ____day of _____, 2026;

WHEREAS, to comply with Maryland Code, Land Use Article, Section 20-509, on the ____day of _____, 2026, a copy of following Ordinance was submitted to the Montgomery County Council for its comments;

WHEREAS, the Montgomery County Council indicated receipt of the draft on the ____day of _____, 2026 and provided no comments;

WHEREAS, the Town Council considered the following Ordinance in public session assembled on the ____day of _____, 2026;

WHEREAS, upon consideration of the testimony and evidence presented at the public hearing, the Town Council finds that the ordinance as hereinafter set forth is necessary for the good government of the Town; for the protection and preservation the Town's property, rights, and privileges; for the preservation of peace and good order; for securing persons and property from violence, danger, or destruction; and for the protection and promotion of the health, safety, comfort, convenience, welfare, and happiness of the residents of the Town and visitors thereto and sojourners therein.

NOW, THEREFORE, the Town Council does hereby adopt the foregoing Ordinance.

BE IT ORDAINED AND ORDERED, this ____day of _____, 2026, by the Town Council, acting under and by virtue of the authority given it by the Maryland Code and the Town Charter that the Code of Ordinances is hereby amended as follows:

* * *

§ 112-2 **Definitions.** As used in this Part **1**, the words set forth below shall be defined as follows:

* * *

<u>"Building coverage": The area of a lot occupied by a building, including an accessory building, and their roofed projections such as a porch, patio, deck, or steps. Building coverage does not include paved areas such as a driveway, walkway, or parking pad; a bay window measuring ten (10) feet in width or less and three (3) feet in depth or less; a swimming pool; or an uncovered porch, patio, deck, or steps.</u>

* * *

<u>"Front Yard": The area defined by the front lot line, the front building line, and the side lot lines, excluding areas covered by porches (roofed or without roofs, enclosed or open), steps, stoops, decks, and terraces; and for corner lots, both yards adjacent to a street.</u>

* * *

<u>"Impervious surface": Any surface that does not allow stormwater to pass through, including, but not limited to the roof area of buildings; the surface area of asphalt, concrete, and gravel, but excluding the surface area of pervious pavers.</u>

“Non-vegetative surface”: Any surface that is not vegetative, including, but not limited to, asphalt, concrete, stone, gravel, sandstone pavers, and the like.

* * *

§ 112-14 Building requirements; stormwater drainage.

* * *

E. Other requirements.

* * *

(7) Lot Coverage.

[these are options to consider; there can be one or multiple approaches]

(a) Maximum Non-Vegetative Surface Area, Front Yard. The non-vegetative surface area in a front yard shall not exceed thirty-five (35) percent of the area of the front yard.

(b) Maximum Non-Vegetative Surface Area, Total Lot Area. The non-vegetative surface area of a lot shall not exceed sixty (60) percent of the area of the lot.

(c) Building Coverage. The building coverage of a lot shall not exceed thirty (30) percent of the area of the lot.

(d) Impervious Surface Area. The impervious surface area of a lot shall not be increased to exceed thirty (30) percent of the area of the lot.

[optional scaling language:]

The maximum coverage shall vary by lot size as follows:

(1) Lot area less than 6,000 square feet: thirty (30) percent.
(2) Lot area equal to or greater than 6,000 square feet: thirty (30) percent of the lot area, less 0.001 percent for every square foot of lot area exceeding 6,000 square feet.

* * *

AND BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED AND ORDERED, by the Town Council, acting under and by virtue of the authority granted to it by the Maryland Code and the Town Charter, that:

1. If any part or provision of this Ordinance is declared by a court of competent jurisdiction to be invalid, the part or provision held to be invalid shall not affect the validity of the Ordinance as a whole or any remaining part thereof; and

2. This Ordinance shall take effect on the _____ day of _____, 2025 (36 calendar days after approval by the Mayor).

ATTEST: TOWN OF SOMERSET

_____ _____

E.J. Hardwick, Manager/Clerk-Treasurer
Town of Somerset

Robin Barr, President
Town Council

Approved:

_____ Date: _____

Jeffrey Slavin, Mayor
Town of Somerset

Bold and Underline indicates new material
~~Strikethrough~~ indicates material deleted
* * * indicates material unchanged