



Town Council MEETING MINUTES

Monday, April 3, 2023 - 5:30 PM
Council Chambers, Easton Town Office
14 S Harrison Street

4:30 PM Joint Work Session Regarding Easton Point Boat Ramp.

Mr. Al Silverstein
Mr. Don Abbatiello
Mr. Ron Engle
Rev. Elmer Davis
President Megan Cook

Also present was the Town Manager, Mr. Don Richardson, Town Attorney Ms. Sharon VanEmburch, and Town Clerk Ms. Kathy M. Ruf.

From Talbot County: Councilmembers Ms. Lynn Mielke, Mr. Chuck Callahan, Ms. Keasha Haythe and Mr. Dave Stepp; County Manager Mr. Clay Stamp and Deputy County Manager Ms. Jessica Morris.

At 4:45 p.m., President Cook called the meeting to order and welcomed the County Council.

Joining the meeting at 4:50 p.m. was Mayor Robert Willey.

Mr. Richardson stated this meeting was facilitated to continue discussion on Easton Point and the redevelopment plans. Mr. Richardson displayed a Power Point presentation with the plan for Easton Point. Mr. Richardson discussed the Master Plan. He stated that the town has recently acquired the Southern States property and have started to make safety improvements. He displayed the rails-to-trails connectivity project. Mr. Richardson stated that Easton Point has been zoned MXW. He displayed the plans for the boat ramp relocation.

Discussion occurred regarding 925 Port Street, a house that Talbot County owns.

President Cook updated new members and stated the town wants conversations to continue.

Ms. Mielke stated that water levels are extremely high. Has this been taken into consideration and addressed? Ms. Mielke asked that noise from this development project may affect Woodland Farms, Waverly, Easton Village and Easton Club.

Mr. Engle stated that plans have changed.

President Cook stated there will be no commercial activity, but mostly a passive park.

Mr. Stepp asked what the plans are for the privately owned parcel. Mr. Richardson stated it is unknown but it has to conform to the MXW Zoning District.

President Cook stated the amphitheater lot may be filled in and graded over until the road is designed.

Mr. Callahan asked what the plans are for dredging. Mr. Richardson stated there are plans to dredge and, currently, the Town has an application to DNR.

Mr. Silverstein asked what the timeframe is if the county worked with the town for a new boat ramp and asphalt service.

Mr. VanEmburch stated that once the permits and designs are submitted, it could take approximately a year. He stated that once we have the permits, he hopes to break ground in a few months. He stated it would be on town property and a town boat ramp.

Mr. Silverstein stated that the intention is to get people and parking that is up and down Port Street off the road and have something better than what we currently have.

Discussion occurred regarding parcels that are owned by a private developer. The Town Attorney stated that those parcels are not in town limits, they have not been annexed into the town yet.

Mr. Callahan asked if this park is proposed to be commercial and recreational. President Cook stated that we are not sure but the town is proposing a boat ramp with slips and a restroom.

Ms. Mielke asked if there is a report regarding putting impervious surfaces on land that is prone to flooding.

The Town Engineer stated that they are working with MDE to secure permits. He stated they will address all the rules. He stated we have had a pre-application meeting with them.

Mr. Silverstein stated that if the property does not have commercial, there would be no tie-ups of boats and would not change what is currently there now.

Mr. VanEmburch stated that the goal is to make this boat ramp more like the Oak Creek boat ramp, which is concrete. He confirmed that it would be ADA accessible.

Mr. Callahan suggested keeping the existing parking and have another constructed as well.

President Cook discussed the proposed scenario of the town building a boat ramp and the county closing theirs.

Mr. Peper stated that a concern is the water depth. He suggested a MOU with dredging considerations.

Discussion occurred regarding 925 Port Street. Mr. Richardson stated that it is a contributing structure and the Mayor and Council have an interest in obtaining the property.

Mr. Callahan stated it is possible to work together and discuss the property.

Mr. Engle discussed the MXW Zoning and the process that was done with the county and the town working together.

Ms. Mielke asked if there is a report on 925 Port Street. She asked if there was a recommendation from the Historical Society regarding the property.

Ms. Cassandra VanHooser discussed a report regarding 925 Port St and the history.

Mr. Callahan stated they will go back and digest the information He stated he sees no hiccups.

Mr. Stamp stated that the previous council had met and discussed drafting a MOU. He suggested Easton draft the MOU and share with the current county council.

President Cook stated the town wants to continue the conversation and suggested the county and the town keep the lines of communication open.

5:30 PM: Call to Order by President Cook.

At 05:30 PM, President Cook called the meeting to order.

President Cook stated that prior to the regular meeting this evening, the Town Council hosted the County Council and staff for a joint work session regarding Easton Point boat ramp.

Opening remarks and Pledge of Allegiance by Councilmember Engle.

Mr. Engle gave opening remarks and led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Minutes.

Minutes of the March 20, 2023 meeting.

Upon motion by Mr. Silverstein, seconded by Mr. Engle and carried unanimously, minutes of the March 20, 2023 meeting were approved as written.

5:35 PM Joint Work Session with County Council regarding Growth Allocation.

The application is requesting 8.348 acres of growth allocation from the Town of Easton to change a portion of the Critical Area designation from Resource Conservation Area (RCA) to Intensely Developed Area (IDA). Lot 20 (Tax Map 25, Grid 22, Parcel 46) is 8.35 acres and is designated as RCA. If approved, the growth allocation will allow the property to be developed for commercial use as a part of Talbot Commerce Park.

At 5:35 p.m., President Cook opened the application request regarding 8.348 acres of growth allocation.

Miguel Salinas, Director of Planning, offered the difference in RCA, LDA and IDA.

Request from Talbot County which is stipulated in their code.

Brennan Carlton, Town of Easton already utilized under Growth Allocation

Introduce Ryan Showalter.

consolidate Lot 16 and Lot 20. Business Zoning Classification. can't apply until it has growth allocation. approve re-zoning and apply growth allocation.

There were no questions from the County Council.

There were no audience comments.

The Town Attorney will re-advertise for additional public hearing in the future.

Brennan Tarleton, Planning Officer, stated that in order to move forward, there would need to be an introduction of legislation, public hearing process, a vote to approve, and then the decision forwarded to the Town of Easton.

Mr. Callahan thanked the council and stated that these joint workshops need to occur more often. He stated there is a lot of development happening.

The county council members departed the meeting at 6:00 p.m.

Municipal Official Items.

Items by Mayor Willey.

Confirmation of Boards and Commissions.

Mayor Willey asked for the confirmation of Dudley Greer to the Historic District Commission.

Upon motion by Mr. Silverstein, seconded by Mr. Engle and carried unanimously, the appointment was confirmed.

Mayor Willey asked for confirmation of Jennifer Williams and Lou Dorsey, for Election Board of Canvassers.

Upon motion by Mr. Silverstein, seconded by Mr. Engle and carried unanimously, the re-appointments were confirmed.

Mayor Willey asked for confirmation for the re-appointments of Roy Cowdrey, Otis Sampson and Sindy Reyes to the Affordable Housing Board.

Upon motion by Mr. Silverstein, seconded by Mr. Engle and carried unanimously, the re-appointments were confirmed.

Mayor Willey stated he has met with officials working on Cambridge Harbor and they want to work collaboratively on events and scheduling. Mayor Willey asked for the appointment of Lee Gordon to the Easton Utilities Commission for the remainder of Rodanthe Hanrahan's term which expires April 2027.

Upon motion by Mr. Silverstein, seconded by Mr. Engle, Ms. Gordon's appointment was confirmed.

Approval of Master Bodey A. Richardson's Eagle Scout Service Project for a kayak launch at Easton Point Park.

Upon motion by Rev. Davis, seconded by Mr. Engle and carried unanimously, the service project for a kayak launch Eagle Scout project as submitted by Master Bodey Richardson was approved.

Items by the Town Manager.

Approval for bid for Traffic Signal Conversion & Upgrade.

Mr. VanEmburch stated this is an upgrade to an existing system and put cameras on the traffic signals.

Mr. Richardson asked that the recommendation be delayed and the upgrade tabled.

Approval to accept bid for the Design Project for Norris Taylor Drive Extension.

Upon motion by Mr. Silverstein, seconded by Mr. Abbatiello and carried unanimously, approval to accept the bid for the design project from Lane Engineering for Norris Taylor Drive Extension was approved.

Approval to accept bid for the design project for Rails-to-Trails - East Side.

Upon motion by Mr. Silverstein, seconded by Mr. Abbatiello and carried unanimously, approval was granted to accept the bid from KCI in the amount of \$176,700 for the design project for the rails-to-trails east side. Mr. Richardson stated there is \$180,000 for this project.

Items by the Town Attorney.

Request for Public Hearing for consideration of Revisions to the Zoning Code and Subdivision Regulations.

President Cook set a workshop for the annual review of the Zoning Code as well as a comprehensive review, for Monday, May 1, at 5:00 p.m.

Presentations.

Ms. Holly DeKarske, Easton Economic Executive Director to present St. Patrick's Day winners.

Ms. DeKarske was present with the winners from the St. Patrick's Day Parade.

Best Marching Band: Easton Middle School

Best Float: Presbyterian PreSchool

Best Golf Cart: Talbot County Free Library

Potato Race: Town of Easton Starch Your Engines

Ms. DeKarske stated there will be an Easter Egg Hunt Saturday at the Talbot County Courthouse, with story time at the library.

Mr. Jim Bent, Easton Affordable Housing Chair to discuss Home Purchase Assistance Program.

Mr. Bent was present to discuss the Easton Affordable Housing Board Home Purchase Assistance Program.

He stated the Affordable Housing has put together a program for a grant up to \$5,000.

The grant would be for Town of Easton employees, Easton Utilities, Police Departments and volunteers with EVFD. The grant of \$5,000 would be to help with closing assistance and downpayment, making it easier to purchase homes in Easton. Mr. Bent stated this is somewhat mirroring a program the county has for First Responders.

Mr. Abbatiello thinks it is a really important program to have police and fire members that are able to live in Easton.

Mr. Bent needs to discuss the procedure to make this work. Mr. Silverstein asked if it would come back before the council for approval.

Rev. Davis asked that the information be available for everyone.
Mr. Bent stated that \$25,000 needs to be made available to fund the program from the funds they currently have.

Review of Invoices.

Review of invoices totaling \$1,485,068.37.

Upon motion by Mr. Silverstein, seconded by Rev. Davis and carried unanimously, invoices totaling \$1,485,068.37 were approved.

Public Participation/Comments.

Mayor Willey stated tomorrow, the council will get copies of the proposed budget. Mayor Willey asked that the council review what is proposed. He stated the capital budget has been severely cut. Mayor Willey stated that approving \$284,000 for a design study is questionable as it won't be looked at for some time.

Mayor Willey stated that there is a letter regarding 925 Port Street from the county stating they are not interested in turning the property over to the town. He stated he would forward the letter to the council.

President Cook stated those funds have been allocated from the bond money for the design study that was approved.

Items by Members of the Council:

Mr. Silverstein reminded everyone to be considerate of everyone outside now that the weather is improving and the community is using the rails-to-trails.

Mr. Abbatiello asked that everyone be considerate of workers at retail establishments that are now promoting the reusable bags.

Mr. Engle stated he is also happy about the bag ordinance. He stated he would like to have the Economic Development buy the bags in bulk to help retailers.

Rev. Davis stated he experienced not having a bag. He stated he is appreciative of the rails-to-trails.

Rev. Davis stated that it disturbs him that departments include items that Mayor Willey is not in favor of. He stated that a house divided, does not stand.

Adjournment.

At 6:33 p.m., upon motion by Mr. Silverstein, seconded by Mr. Abbatiello and carried unanimously, President Cook adjourned the regularly scheduled meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy M. Ruf, Town Clerk