



Town Council MEETING MINUTES

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

5:30 PM: Call to Order by Acting Council President Abbatiello.

At 5:30 p.m., Acting President Abbatiello called the meeting to order.

Opening remarks and Pledge of Allegiance by Councilmember Montgomery.

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

Approval of Minutes.

Minutes of the June 20, 2023 meeting.

Upon motion by Ms. Curry, seconded by Rev. Davis and carried unanimously, minutes of the June 20, 2023 meeting were approved as written.

Municipal Official Items.

Items by Mayor Cook.

Mayor Cook stated she had recently attended the Maryland Municipal League Convention for a day and participated in a presentation on the Open Meetings Act.

On June 27, she went to Pennsylvania and toured the Sutphen manufacturing facility to view the trucks recently purchased for EVFD. She stated one truck was purchased by EVFD and the other by the Town.

Mayor Cook stated that Mike Thume, Town of Easton Maintenance employee, recently built a Little Library and it has been placed at the entrance to Moton Park.

Mayor Cook stated that during this evening's meeting, the Engineering Department will give updates on the Bond Projects.

Mayor Cook stated that Easton Police Department has graduated two officers. They are currently staffed with 42 officers with 48 available positions.

Mayor Cook stated that engineered wood fiber has been installed in some of the surfaces of the parks. She stated that 7000 tax bills have been folded, stuffed and mailed today. She discussed the Sustainable Communities application to the state.

Mayor Cook stated there is activity on the Housing on Hill on Locust Street.

EEDC Grant has advised that they have received a grant in the amount of \$99,000 which will be used for 14 trash cans, tree wells, wooden kiosk, and benches. She stated that \$20,000 will be set aside for merchants.

Mayor Cook extended thanks to Keller Williams and many others that helped with the plantings around the downtown.

Mayor Cook stated that Planning & Zoning is doing outreach for updates to the Comprehensive Plan.

She discussed a research survey that provided data stating there are concerns regarding the cost of housing as well as not enough housing.

Items by Town Manager

Public Assembly Event: Hispanic Heritage Month Event, 9/16/23

Public Assembly Event: Talbot Hospice 5K, 11/25/23

Upon motion by Rev. Davis, seconded by Mr. Montgomery and carried unanimously, Public Assembly Event: Hispanic Heritage Month Event, and Hospice 5K, were approved.

Public Assembly Event: Friends of Hospice Carols by Candlelight, 11/25/23

Carols by Candlelight Public Assembly Event was held for further verification regarding business and community concerns along N Harrison Street and how this may impact them.

Ms. Curry asked for clarification regarding closing the street.

Approval for EVFD Station 60 Engine Bay Doors Replacement.

Mr. Richardson, Town Manager, asked that this be tabled until further procurement measures are completed. He stated it may be 30-45 days before coming back before the council.

Items by Town Attorney.

The Town Attorney updated on the cannabis legislation. She stated that on July 1, it became legal in the state of Maryland. Ms. VanEmburch discussed zoning for growers and processors. She stated that Planning and Zoning will continue the discussion and have a recommendation. She stated there is time to get this figured out. Ms. VanEmburch discussed instituting a moratorium as did St. Michaels, Oxford and Talbot County. She recommends legislation such as an ordinance if that is considered.

Mr. Montgomery doesn't want to overload Planning & Zoning and suggests working in parallel with other jurisdictions.

Rev. Davis stated that the Town needs to keep an eye on other towns that enacted the moratorium. He stated he would like to see the outcome.

Mayor Cook stated MML is having a workshop on August 10 in Annapolis.

The Town Attorney stated we have about 60 days to enact moratorium.

Mr. Abbatiello suggested looking at what the other jurisdictions are doing in regards to moratoriums.

Petition for Annexation.

Annexation Application of Basi Brothers, LLC for their property located at 9719 Ocean Gateway (*to be referred to P&Z for recommendation*).

The Town Attorney discussed the property and the petition for annexation. She stated they are asking to be zoned General Commercial and is limited under what can be done under General Commercial. Ms. VanEmburch discussed the annexation process.

Mr. Montgomery discussed utilizing the staff for the process.

Ms. Curry stated she would prefer to find out more information about their plans for development.

The Town Attorney stated we will hold off forward this to the Planning & Zoning Department for review and recommendation.

Presentations.

Engineering Department to update on 2020 Bond Projects.

Mr. Rick VanEmburch, Town Engineer, discussed 2020 Bond Projects. He stated they are not working on only Bond Projects but that that is what he will discuss tonight. Mr. VanEmburch stated Project Manager Kody Cario and Parks and Recreation Director Lorraine Gould is also present. He stated all projects are park related and distributed all around the town of Easton. Mr. VanEmburch discussed the rails-to-trails and stated that most of the trail was funded through state grants. He showed slides where public works installed storm drains. He showed ongoing projects as well as recently completed projects done through bond funding. He stated safety and privacy fencing was provided near the hospital on the rails-to-trails.

Mr. VanEmburch discussed storage buildings at North Easton Park that will replace dilapidated buildings. He stated Trevor Newcomb from Buildings and Facilities is managing the building portion and the Engineering Department is doing the site work.

Kody Cario discussed what a pump track is which he stated will help to develop skills.

Port Street underground infrastructure and John Ford Park access Norris Taylor Drive extension projects were displayed.

The Public Works storage yard fence and gate will also be a part of this funding.

Pervious pavers at the rails-to-trails parking lot were installed for the rails-to-trails parking area.

Mr. VanEmburch discussed additional projects as well as completed bond projects. He stated approval needs to be received from the FAA before additional field lights are installed at North Easton Park. Mr. VanEmburch displayed the boat ramp and road design near the previous Southern States building. He stated they hope to do a boat ramp, something similar as the boat ramp in Royal Oak. He displayed the kayak launch access project which is what is funded. He stated the North Easton Park Entrance Wall/Gate will be constructed by Public Works. Mr. Cario discussed the kayak launch trail and the North Easton Park pump Track. The next project discussed was the Matthewstown Run Park sidewalk. He stated Public Works will do the construction in August or September. Hunter's Mill Playground will be in production in August or September.

Mr. Abbatiello asked if there will be a water fountain. Mr. VanEmburch stated there is water there and whatever funds are left over, water fountains can be purchased.

The comfort station at Brewer's Lane Dog Park is the last project proposed.

Ms. Curry commented that the amount of work is amazing.

Designation of July as Park and Recreation Month.

Acting President Abbatiello presented Director of Parks and Recreation, Ms. Lorraine Gould a Proclamation recognizing July as Park and Recreation Month.

Easton Volunteer Fire Department Chief Sonny Jones and President Rick Stacey to give an overview of new engines.

President Rick Stacey and Chief Sonny Jones announced that EVFD and the Town of Easton went to Pennsylvania to get two pumpers. replacing 20 year old trucks. Engine 63 1000 gal tank, will be out of station 60; Engine 67 will be located at station 66. He stated these pumpers were three years in the making, with hundreds of man hours that went in the design and manufacturing. He stated Sutphen will train the EVFD engineers.

Chief Jones stated this is not their first purchase with Sutphen. He stated it is a family owned and operated company that fabricated and built metal. Chief Jones reported that they have had very little problems in the past.

Chief Jones encouraged the council to stop by the Fire station anytime. He stated the pumpers will go back to PA to have tools professionally mounted with hopes that the equipment will be in service late August.

Chief Jones discussed the amount of fire calls attended to in June.

Public Participation/Comments.

There were no audience comments.

Review of Invoices.

Invoices 6/7/23 - 6/28/23 totaling \$1,063,620.93.

Upon motion by Ms. Curry, seconded by Rev. Davis and carried unanimously, invoices totaling \$1,063.620.93 were approved.

Items by Members of the Council:

Ms. Curry wished America a Happy Birthday.

Mr. Abbatiello heard from Wes Moore at MML. Mr. Abbatiello stated there are a lot of opportunities in Easton to help the community.

Closed Session General Provisions Article 3-305(b)(4) To consider a matter that concerns the proposal for a business or industrial organization to locate, expand, or remain in the State.

At 6:53 p.m., upon motion by Ms. Curry, seconded by Rev Davis and carried unanimously, Acting President Abbatiello convened in Closed Session.

At 7:00 p.m., upon motion by Mr. Montgomery, seconded by Ms. Curry and carried unanimously, Acting President Abbatiello re-convened into Open Session.

Adjournment.

At 7:00 p.m., upon motion by Ms. Curry, seconded by Mr. Montgomery and carried unanimously, Acting President Abbatiello adjourned the regularly scheduled meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy M. Ruf, Town Clerk