



Town Council MEETING MINUTES

Monday, August 7, 2023 - 5:30 PM
Council Chambers, Easton Town Office
14 S Harrison Street

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

Mayor Megan JM Cook
Mr. Don Abbatiello
Ms. Maureen Curry
Mr. David Montgomery
Rev. Elmer Davis

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

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

Opening remarks and Pledge of Allegiance by Councilmember Curry.

Ms. Curry gave opening remarks and led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Acting President Abbatiello read a statement pertaining to the Closed Sessions that occurred July 17, 2023 and August 1, 2023 to discuss personnel .

Approval of Minutes.

Minutes from the July 17, 2023 meetings.

Upon motion by Mr. Montgomery seconded by Ms. Curry and carried unanimously, minutes of the July 17, 2023 meeting were approved as written.

Minutes from the August 1, 2023 meeting.

Upon motion by Mr. Montgomery, seconded by Ms. Curry and carried unanimously, minutes of the August 1, 2023 meeting were approved as written.

Municipal Official Items.

Items by Mayor Cook.

Mayor Cook asked for confirmation for Mr. Montgomery on the Economic Development Advisory Board for a two-year term and Ms. Curry on the Talbot County Tourism Board for a three-year term.

Upon motion by Rev. Davis, seconded by Acting President Abbatiello, Mr. Montgomery and Ms. Curry's appointments were confirmed.

Mayor Cook stated a new trash truck has arrived which will replace the 2011 truck. She stated it is a dumpster and a tipper and will be in service soon.

Mayor Cook stated that work continues with the Housing on the Hill project. The houses are back on their foundations and framing has begun. Rev. Davis asked for a timetable. Mayor Cook stated she will follow up.

DHCD is touring Easton on September 11 and visiting several projects. There will be approximately 150 people from around the country on three buses.

She stated that the slab for the comfort station at the dog park has been poured and site work is in progress.

Mayor Cook stated that Chesapeake National Recreation Area Legislation was introduced.

She stated the Town sent a letter in support of the legislation.

Mayor Cook stated that Easton Utilities is passing on the costs for EV charging station.

Mr. Abbatiello discussed charging at point of sale.

Ms. Curry asked that Mayor Cook reach out to Mr. Grunden at Easton Utilities.

Eagle Scout Brian Warner was awarded his Eagle Scout on Saturday. Brian gave a shoutout to Town staff for all their help.

Mayor Cook discussed National Night Out and thanked all those for their help. She stated that EPD and Parks and Rec did a lot of work and over 300 attendees were served.

Mayor Cook stated that she is working on the salary survey and packets will go out this week

to departments regarding job descriptions. The Council will be kept informed of the progress. The Parks & Recreation Department is doing renovations to Golton Playground. Chief Lowrey recognized Bryan Brothers for their assistance with K-9 Wayland. Officer Nicholas Lang was present with the K-9. Chief Lowrey introduced PFC Gregory Donald Hall and Mayor Cook administered the Oath of Office.

Confirmation of Appointments to Talbot County Tourism Board and the Economic Advisory Board.

President Cook asked for confirmation of Councilmember David Montgomery's appointment to the Economic Development Advisory Board and Ms. Maureen Curry's appointment to the Talbot County Tourism Board.

Upon motion by Rev. Davis, seconded by Acting President Abbatiello and carried unanimously, the appointments were confirmed.

Items by Town Manager.

Public Assembly Event: Backpack Giveaway/Community Resource, Idlewild Park 8/16/23.

Upon motion by Ms. Curry, seconded by Mr. Montgomery and carried unanimously, the Public Assembly Event: Backpack Giveaway/Community was approved.

Public Assembly Event: Ceremony to Commemorate Events of September 11, 2001, 9/11/23 - Gas Plant Memorial.

Upon motion by Ms. Curry, seconded by Mr. Montgomery and carried unanimously, the Public Assembly Event: Ceremony to Commemorate the events of September 11 was approved.

Recommendation from Easton Park Advisory Board regarding Field Use Fees.

Town Manager Mr. Richardson asked that the Field Use Fees recommendation be tabled until further clarification.

Items by Town Attorney.

The Town Attorney, Ms. VanEmburch stated she has nothing at this time.

Fire Board.

Present from Easton Volunteer Fire Department were: Chief Sonny Jones, Daryl and Laurie Caldwell and Brett Whitehead. President Stacey sends his regrets for not being present due to a family matter. 2 engines arrived. finalizing lettering. training then in service mid-September.

Discussed fundraising events. golf tournament, beer fest, Oct 29 9am class taught by MDE on electrical vehicle and battery fires.

Need for membership, always need for volunteers.

severe weather approaching this evening. areas prone to flooding, rescue drivers. Turn around, don't drown and become stranded.

Chief Jones discussed statistics. Jan 1 - July 31, 547 emergency calls. 14.6% false alarms.

Presentations.

Easton EDC Interns Zach Spofford & Dre Brown to present Comprehensive Plan Survey.

Interns Zach Spofford and Dre Brown were present and discussed their Comprehensive Plan survey. They stated they did in-person interviews and an online survey. They collected data between June 1 and July 31, 2023. They presented a Comprehensive Plan Survey that outlined demographics, impressions of Easton as well as the issues Easton is facing.

Entertainment and more housing options were the outliers that had the most responses for things that could be changed in Easton. Businesses or improvements suggested for Easton were recreation activities, shopping, entertainment, restaurants, as well as bike lanes and a dog park. Top golf and affordable housing were listed among other requests.

Mr. Jim Bent, Affordable Housing Chair to give update on Affordable Housing Programs.

Mr. Jim Bent was present to discuss the Affordable Housing Programs.

Mr. Bent updated on the Affordable Housing Fund and discussed the houses on The Hill.

Mr. Bent discussed the Affordable Housing Funds and the expenses that come out of that.

Mr. Bent presented a renovation application log. He stated they have 32 homes in Easton, 24 grants, 16 no-interest loans and 1 loan.

Mr. Bent discussed renovation programs that have included replacement of windows, doors, failing HVAC, roof replacement, siding and weatherization, a disability ramp and plumbing and

electrical upgrades. He stated there had been one applicant that passed away and the money had been paid back due to the sale of the property.

Mr. Bent updated on the home purchase program. He discussed the Chapel Road house, as well as homes that have been renovated.

Mr. Bent stated that a \$5000 grant is available to help with closing costs for eligible town of Easton employees as well as EUC and Easton Police Department employees purchasing homes in Easton.

Legislation.

Resolution No. 6168, "A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN OF EASTON AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION OF A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WITH THE EASTON VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT (EVFD) REGARDING A PROPOSED TRAINING FACILITY."

Ms. VanEmburch discussed the history of Lot 8

Daryl Caldwell, Easton Volunteer Department Captain, stated that fundraising efforts are going well. He stated they have had donations as well as contractors offering services.

Firefighter Brett Whitehead was present and stated they are continuing fundraising efforts. He stated that the project's infrastructure should start in October or November.

Mr. Whitehead stated that they have succeeded at 29.5% of their fundraising efforts. He stated \$1 million has been obligated from the Clark Foundation. The grant application went to the State Appropriations for \$500,000. He stated they can go to contractors based on what is committed. Capt. Caldwell discussed coordinating with police entities for their needs. He stated the facility as planned can seat 120 people. He stated the classrooms will have removable walls. The facility can also help with recruitment.

Upon motion by Rev. Davis, seconded by Mr. Montgomery and carried unanimously, Resolution No. 6168, "A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN OF EASTON AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION OF A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WITH THE EASTON VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT REGARDING A PROPOSED TRAINING FACILITY" was approved.

Resolution No. 6169, authorizing the abatement of Real Property Taxes totaling \$36,440.16.

Upon motion by Ms. Curry, seconded by Rev. Davis and carried unanimously, Resolution No. 6169, authorizing the abatement of real property taxes totaling \$36,440.16 was approved.

Ordinance No. 799, "AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF EASTON ADOPTING A TEMPORARY MORATORIUM ON THE APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL OF, CONSTRUCTION OF, EXPANSION OF, PROCESSING OF, OR ISSUANCE OF BUILDING PERMITS FOR THE OPERATION OF A BUSINESS ENGAGED IN THE GROWING, PROCESSING, AND/OR SELLING OF CANNABIS WITHIN THE TOWN OF EASTON FOR A PERIOD OF NINE (9) MONTHS PENDING CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION OF REVISED ZONING ORDINANCE PROVISIONS AS THE TOWN COUNCIL MAY CONSIDER ADVISABLE TO PROMOTE THE PUBLIC HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELFARE."

Acting President Abbatiello brought Ordinance No. 799 to the floor for a first reading.

Town Attorney Ms. VanEmburch discussed holding a public hearing when there is a full council.

Acting President Abbatiello set the public hearing for September 18 and referred this to Planning & Zoning for a recommendation.

Ordinance No. 800, "AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF EASTON AUTHORIZING THE TOWN OF EASTON TO SELL LOTS 2 AND 3 AT MISTLETOE HALL COMMERCE-BUSINESS PARK TO APEG INTERNATIONAL, INC."

Acting Council President Abbatiello brought Ordinance No. 800 to the floor for a first reading. Town Attorney Ms. VanEmburch stated a public hearing could be scheduled as had been done before with the other lots that were purchased.

Acting Council President Abbatiello scheduled the public hearing for August 21, 2023 at 5:35 p.m.

Review of Invoices.

Review of accounts payable invoices from 7/5/23 - 7/26/23 totaling \$2,160,013.80.

Discussion occurred regarding the charging station installed at Brewer's Lane at Easton Utilities.

Mr. Montgomery asked how much we have paid for that so far.

Mr. Richardson stated that we have not paid anything so far as there has not been an invoice received from Easton Utilities. He stated the charge is about \$900.

Mr. Montgomery asked where the funds will come from as he could not find a line item in the budget for that charge. Mr. Richardson stated there is no line item and it is a new condition we need to figure out. He stated there is no source of revenue to offset those costs.

Mr. Montgomery asked if we could cover up the charging stations until we sort this out. He stated that his concern is that this is open ended and he is concerned about what we might be paying next month.

The Town Manager stated that the Mayor is working on a solution moving forward.

Mr. Montgomery stated that he is concerned that the council is properly authorizing payments.

Rev. Davis discussed his concern with planning this out.

Mr. Richardson stated that previous discussions entailed turning the charging stations over to the Town. He stated this needs to be figured out.

Rev. Davis stated conversations might have been better to have had before determination is made.

Mr. Abbatiello asked for clarification regarding the Easton Utilities bill. Mayor Cook stated the Town received the bill a few weeks ago.

Ms. Curry suggested working with Easton Utilities regarding the electric service.

Mayor Cook stated she has known since the end of June, beginning of July there would be a bill forthcoming.

Rev. Davis asked if the invoice register includes pension payments or if it is separate.

Mr. Richardson stated that this includes all transactions during that period.

Mr. Montgomery stated he did not find any pension payments on the payment register.

Mr. Richardson stated he would review that with the Finance office but they should include all payments.

Upon motion by Ms. Curry, seconded by Rev. Davis and carried unanimously, invoices totaling \$2,160,013.80 were approved.

Public Participation/Comments.

There were none.

Items by Members of the Council:

Acting Council President Abbatiello reminded those interested in running for council president, the deadline for obtaining and turning in nominating petitions is August 14.

Adjournment.

At 6:48 p.m., upon motion by Mr. Montgomery, seconded by Rev. Davis and carried unanimously, Acting President Abbatiello adjourned the regularly scheduled meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy M. Ruf, Town Clerk (approved 8/21/23)