



Town Council MEETING MINUTES

Monday, September 18, 2023 - 5:30 PM
Council Chambers, Easton Town Office
14 S Harrison Street

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

At 05:29 PM, Acting President Abbatiello called the meeting to order.

Opening remarks and Pledge of Allegiance by Councilmember Curry.

Acting President Abbatiello gave opening remarks and led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Minutes.

Minutes of the September 5, 2023 meeting.

Upon motion by Mr. Montgomery, seconded by Rev. Davis and carried unanimously, minutes of the September 5, 2023 meeting were approved as written.

Mayor Cook to administer Oath of Office to Council President-Elect Frank Gunsallus, IV.

Mayor Cook administered the Oath of Office to Frank Gunsallus, IV, President-Elect, for the remainder of a four-year term which expires May 2025.
President Gunsallus gave remarks.

Municipal Official Items.

Items by Mayor Cook.

Mayor Cook stated that on September 13, the Smart Growth Committee approved the Sustainable Easton Boundary modifications which make the added parcels eligible for the incentive programs.

On September 11, the Town hosted a group from the Council of State Development Agencies. They toured sites with HUD visiting Housing on the Hill, Critchlow Adkins, Channel Marker, Talbot Senior Center and St. Vincent DePaul. She stated that the tour included 150 people from around the country.

Mayor Cook gave a bond project update. She stated the Pump Truck at North Easton Park. Paving is beginning tomorrow to be completed by the end of the week.

Town departments are working hard at Hunters Mill Park playground, Brewers Lane Dog Park and restrooms, and Southern States has been demolished and is complete. She stated they are getting things done. Mayor Cook thanked everyone for their hard work.

Mayor Cook stated that the light at North Easton Park has arrived and the foundation for the storage buildings is being constructed.

Mayor Cook stated the County is to hold a joint meeting before the County's municipality meeting combined at 4:00 pm at the Library to discuss ARPA funds for Doverbrook, and the relocation of efforts for the residents and the timeline.

Mayor Cook congratulated EVFD for a successful golf tournament.

Thank you to the candidates for the Special Election last week. Thank you to citizens who voted. Thank you to Mr. Abbatiello for stepping in Acting as Council President.

Discussion of Eagle Scout Project from Charlie Kaminkas - Matthewstown Run Park Benches.

Mayor Cook presented the Eagle Scout project from Charlie Kaminkas. She stated he hopes to construct benches on Fisher Range Road. Mayor Cook stated the proposed project is to be constructed with pressure treated lumber on a concrete pad. She stated that the Park Board has reviewed the project and recommended approval during their August meeting.

Mr. Kaminkas discussed his project and his aspirations of becoming an Eagle Scout.

Upon motion by Mr. Abbatiello, seconded by Rev. Davis and carried unanimously, the Eagle Scout Project as proposed from Charlie Kaminkas was approved.

Items by Town Manager

Town Manager, Mr. Richardson offered congratulations to Council President Gunsallus.

Public Assembly Events:

Carols by Candlelight - 11/25/23

Winter Farmer's Market - 12/23 - 4/13/24

Carols by Candlelight from Friends of Hospice has developed a "Plan B" with Town and EPD and EEDC. EPD recommends approval. Councilmember Montgomery expressed his displeasure and wished that "Plan A" be considered instead. Carla Wieland Cherry representing Hospice spoke on behalf of Plan B as they moved forward with the advertising. She thanked Mr. Montgomery for his comments and support.

Upon motion by Mr. Abbatiello, seconded by Rev. Davis and carried unanimously, Carols by Candlelight Plan B was approved.

Mr. Richardson discussed the Winter Farmer's Market.

Upon motion by Mr. Montgomery, seconded by Rev. Davis and carried unanimously, Winter Farmer's Market was approved.

Recommendation from Town Engineer regarding S Washington Street Parking Time Limit Modification.

Mr. Richardson presented the Engineering departments request to remove time limitation for parking.

Upon motion by Mr. Montgomery, seconded by Rev. Davis and carried unanimously, the recommendation from the Town Engineer regarding S Washington parking time limit modification was approved.

Items by Town Attorney.

Town Attorney, Ms. VanEmburch had nothing at this time.

Presentation.

Presentation of Proclamation for Frederick Douglass Month.

Representatives of the Frederick Douglass Historical Society Committee and Board members were brought forward to receive a proclamation read by Councilmember Abbatiello. Frederick Douglass Day is Saturday in downtown Easton with a parade and speeches along with programs at the library, a children's village, and food.

Public Hearing.

Public Hearing to discuss Ordinance Number 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."

At 6:01 p.m., President Gunsallus read Ordinance Number 799 into the record and opened the hearing for Public Comment. Ms. Van Emburch provided background on the ordinance. She indicated that the Planning Commission made a unanimous favorable recommendation at their August 17 meeting. Mr. Abbatiello suggested pushing the approval out another six months due to council absences. Ms. Van Emburch advised that this was possible. Mr. Abbatiello also suggested that ownership of businesses be local. Ms. Van Emburch advised this would emulate the liquor licensing. Rev. Davis suggested perhaps staying with a nine-month moratorium until additional information could be received by the State of Maryland. Mr. Montgomery suggests that further delay will save lives.

President Gunsallus opened the floor for public comment.

Mr. Noah Matten, 128 S West St, wants to know why there is a moratorium on any application. He suggests business plans be allowed to be submitted so that they could be on file. He believes that would be a good way to insure that we do not drive business to Caroline or Dorchester Counties.

Rev. Davis suggests that the moratorium would allow for a level playing field; allowing all entities to have an opportunity.

Mr. Abbatiello asked Ms. Van Emburch if someone could receive a license from the state

even if Easton did not allow submission of a license.

Ms. VanEmburch suggested that further review of the state mandates be done.

President Gunsallus advised he would also like to see the ability for submission of business plans for review.

Ms. VanEmburch can fill in what she said here. She suggested that the wording did not need to be modified to accommodate it.

Mayor Cook asked about licensing which had been granted by the state.

Mr. Montgomery asked if it would be in order to approve the Ordinance today. Mr. Abbatiello suggested we should wait until all council members could be present. Rev. Davis agreed.

Council President Gunsallus made a motion to shorten the moratorium to six months and postpone voting in one month was seconded by Mr. Abbatiello. Mr. Abbatiello and President Gunsallus voted yea, Mr. Montgomery and Rev. Davis voted nay.

The Town Attorney suggested renewing the motion when there is a full council due to the tie in the vote.

Rev. Davis stated he wants to see where we stand in January 1 with the state of Maryland.

President Gunsallus made a motion to table the vote until the October 16 meeting seconded by Mr. Abbatiello and carried unanimously.

President Gunsallus left the record open and encouraged written comments until October 16.

Request for PUD Amendment for the Rise Up Coffee Property.

Letter from Planning & Zoning Commission regarding material Amendment to PUD - Rise Up Coffee Roasters.

The Town Attorney stated Rise Up Coffee has requested an amendment to their PUD. She stated that Planning & Zoning has reviewed the request and forwarded it to the council. She stated the applicant requests a November 6 public hearing and vote. The Town Attorney suggested 5:35 p.m.

Mr. Salinas advised the council about changes to the PUD request. Refrigeration and Dry Storage have been requested. Mr. Abbatiello motioned that the request be returned to the Planning Commission for their October meeting, seconded by Rev. Davis and carried unanimously.

President Gunsallus made a motion to schedule the public hearing for November 6, seconded by Mr. Abbatiello and carried unanimously.

Public Participation/Comments.

Mr. Kevin Bateman approached the podium, congratulated President Gunsallus. He discussed the hospital situation as well as the doctor/specialist shortage. Mr. Bateman stated that the community deserves better.

The Town Attorney stated that the UMMS/Shore Health has submitted plans and they are on the Town's ESDR schedule for zoning consideration next week.

Items by Members of the Council:

Mr. Abbatiello congratulated President Gunsallus and thanked Mr. Bateman for his comments and agreed. He stated they are understaffed. He reminded everyone about Frederick Douglass Day on Saturday.

Mr. Montgomery thanked Mr. Abbatiello for his work as Acting President and welcomed President Gunsallus. He also thanked Mr. Bateman and concurred. Mr. Montgomery emphasized that Easton needs physicians and nurses.

Rev. Davis also congratulated President Gunsallus and thanked Mr. Abbatiello. He also thanked Hospice and further concurred with the comments of the other council members regarding the hospital that will serve our needs.

President Gunsallus thanked everyone in the town for maintaining sanity. He further condemned the negativity. He stated that positivity prevailed. He also encouraged citizens to become engaged with the Town and Council. He further met with Mr. Wagner and expressed his feelings. He also suggested that we review the comments and ensure that everything is set right. President Gunsallus thanked his family for the opportunity.

Review of Invoices.

Invoices from 8/2/23 - 8/30/23 totaling \$2,718,700.21.

Upon motion by Rev. Davis, seconded by Mr. Abbatiello and carried unanimously, invoices totaling \$2,718,700.21 were approved.

Executive Session.

Upon motion by Rev. Davis seconded by Mr. Abbatiello and carried unanimously, Council moved in to closed session.

General Provisions 3-305(b)(4) to discuss a business wanting to locate, expand or remain in the State.

At 6:31 p.m., upon motion by Rev. Davis, seconded by Mr. Abbatiello and carried unanimously, President Gunsallus moved into Closed Session following a roll call vote of those members present.

At 6:46 p.m., upon motion by Mr. Abbatiello, seconded by Mr. Montgomery and carried unanimously, President Gunsallus moved into Open Session following a roll call vote of those members present.

Adjournment.

At 6:47, upon motion by Mr. Montgomery, seconded by Rev. Davis and carried unanimously, President Gunsallus adjourned the regularly scheduled meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy M. Ruf, Town Clerk