



Town Council MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, January 2, 2024 - 5:30 PM
Council Chambers, Easton Town Office
14 S Harrison Street

4:30 PM ARPA Workshop.

Mayor Megan JM Cook
Council President Frank Gunsallus
Mr. Don Abbatiello
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.

Ms. Curry was excused.

President Gunsallus called the workshop to order.

President Gunsallus discussed the requests from the ARPA funds. He asked for comments from the Council. The requests total \$4,593,997. He stated the total available is \$1,632,808.

Rev. Davis stated the request from ARETE Beauty Supply is for \$60,000 and he would like them to be considered.

Mr. Richardson stated that Homes Across America also has a request for \$200,000.

Charlie Connolly, Assistant Finance Director, discussed the deadlines. He stated that all funds must be obligated or a purchase order issued to a vendor for those funds by December 31, 2026.

Mayor Cook asked Mr. Connolly to discuss how the businesses used their funds.

President Gunsallus stated that funds that could be considered are those projects that have not been funded previously.

Town Engineer Rick VanEmburch discussed a stream restoration project that could be considered.

He stated the design/build could be broken out for just design.

Mr. Montgomery stated that he is in favor of a large capital expenditure that the town may have to fund eventually.

Mr. VanEmburch stated that the stream restoration projects design and build are about \$700,000 each.

Rev. Davis stated he thinks the stream restoration projects should be considered and the businesses that didn't get money the first round be considered for funding.

Mr. Abbatiello stated his first concern is local government, such as the fire department and the police department.

President Gunsallus asked how long it would take for the stormwater projects.

Mr. VanEmburch discussed the timeline for the design/build for the stormwater projects.

It was the consensus of the council to fund the design/build for the stormwater projects.

Mayor Cook discussed the distribution of funds.

Rev. Davis asked Mr. Richardson to update the requests.

Mr. Richardson discussed a metal detector and the cost for the yearly lease. He stated a policy would have to be established and staff during after-hour meetings.

Mr. Montgomery stated he would feel safer with a sworn, trained officer present.

President Gunsallus stated that he is in favor of the \$700,000 for the Golton project. Mr. Richardson will update the requests list and an additional workshop will be scheduled for the ARPA requests.

At 5:19 p.m., President Gunsallus adjourned the workshop meeting.

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

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

Reading of Closed Session Summary from 12/18/23 meeting.

President Gunsallus read a Closed Session Summary from the December 18, 2023 meeting.

Opening remarks and Pledge of Allegiance by Councilmember Abbatiello.

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

Approval of Minutes.

Minutes of the December 18, 2023 meetings.

Upon motion by Rev. Davis seconded by Mr. Abbatiello and carried unanimously, minutes of the December 18, 2023 meetings were approved as written.

Municipal Official Items.

Items by Mayor Cook.

President Gunsallus read a message from Carolyn Jafee regarding First Night Talbot thanking Mayor Cook and her husband Landy for their help New Year's Eve.

Mayor Cook wished everyone a Happy New Year. She stated the town has a lot to be proud of. She discussed the Indoor Sports Complex Fly Through and how it is envisioned.

Mayor Cook stated that the ESAM met online on December 12. The next meeting is January 12, 2024, at Fisherman's Inn.

Mayor Cook discussed Easton Police Department's events and the new vehicles. She stated they were quite impressive.

Mayor Cook stated she has been meeting with UMMS staff regarding their Certificate of Need. She stated she will keep everyone informed about the progress.

Mayor Cook discussed the skate park ribbon cutting. She stated the Dog Park would be opening soon. Mayor Cook stated that it is remarkable to have the staff we have.

Mayor Cook discussed the highs of the Town of Easton Departments.

Mayor Cook invited everyone to the MLK basketball tournament for their 15-year anniversary. She stated it is put on by the Town Parks and Recreation Department as well as other community police departments.

Mayor Cook stated that the turkey drop went well for employees, retirees and Boards and Commissions.

Items by Town Manager

Town Manager, Mr. Richardson stated he has nothing for this evening.

Items by Town Attorney.

Town Attorney, Mrs. VanEmburch stated she has nothing at this point.

Public Hearings.

CONT'D. PUBLIC HEARING to solicit public comment on various proposed amendments to Chapter 28 of the Town Code (Zoning)

Ord. 803, "AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF EASTON AMENDING CHAPTER 28 OF THE TOWN CODE (ZONING)."

- to be continued until February.

President Gunsallus asked for any public comment.

Mayor Cook stated that there is a workshop prior to the next council meeting on January 16 regarding zoning. President Gunsallus stated that concerned residents can send an email with concerns or comments.

5:35 PM PUBLIC HEARING to discuss the request of Ryan D. Showalter & Brendan S.

Mullaney on behalf of Thomas R. Cohee (applicant) for a proposed Critical Area reclassification of property located at 28580 Mary's Court, also known as Tax map 25, Parcel 46, Lot 20.

At 5:42 p.m. President Gunsallus opened the 5:35 p.m. scheduled public hearing.

Joe Mayer from the Planning Department discussed the application for Lot 20, 28580 Mary's Court. He stated what they are planning to do is combine two lots and rezone Lot 20 to be able to build on it. He stated it would go through the normal approval process. He stated it would come in as an ESDR, then a sketch plan and scrutinized, then through the Planning Commission, then to the Development site plan where it is approved by all the agencies.

Mr. Abbatiello asked if the town had reclassified critical area prior to this application.

The Town Attorney discussed the history of prior applications.

Mr. Mayer discussed the process of stormwater management.

Ryan Showalter, on behalf of the applicant, outlined the critical area boundary. He discussed the growth allocation award and the 10% award. He stated the application has an unanimous recommendation from the town and county for the allocation award.

President Gunsallus asked for public comment.

Mr. Terrance Bernard, Easton, Maryland asked what this development is.

President Gunsallus clarified it is on St. Mary's Court.

Upon motion by Mr. Abbatiello, seconded by Rev. Davis, President Gunsallus closed the public hearing.

Legislation.

Ord. 802, "AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF EASTON AMENDING CHAPTER 5 OF THE EASTON TOWN CODE REGARDING BICYCLES AND SIMILAR DEVICES."

President Gunsallus brought to the floor Ordinance No. 802. He stated there is further information from Talbot Thrive and EPD. Ms. Curry is not present .

Chief Lowrey stated he met with Ms. Curry and Talbot Thrive. He stated there was discussion regarding a dismount area in the Historic District. Chief Lowrey stated that Ms. Curry will discuss with fellow councilmembers.

Talbot Thrive was present and discussed their thoughts and recommendations regarding safe, outdoor mobility for everyone..

Heather Grant, executive Director Talbot Thrive, stated they are recommending a safer place for people to walk. She stated that it is problematic with bicycles and pedestrians on sidewalks.

Ms. Grant discussed proposed changes to Ordinance No.802. She stated that it is not good to mix pedestrians and cyclists except where bicyclist are 18 or younger.

Rev. Davis stated this is getting too far in the weeds. He suggested enforcing the rules we have.

Ord. No. 807, "AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF EASTON GRANTING THE APPLICATION OF THOMAS R. COHEE FOR GROWTH ALLOCATION UNDER THE PROVISIONS OF THE EASTON ZONING ORDINANCE."

Upon motion by Mr. Montgomery, seconded by Rev. Davis and carried unanimously, Ord. No. 807 was approved following a roll call vote.

Public Participation/Comments.

Mr. Bernard asked for clarification on Ordinance No. 802. He discussed an unsafe scenario in town with bicycles.

Items by Members of the Council:

Mr. Abbatiello wished everyone a Happy New Year. He stated that 2024 will present itself with a lot of challenges as well as opportunities.

Mr. Montgomery wished everyone a Happy New Year and hopes that we will work together for the betterment of the town.

Rev. Davis discussed the Crab Drop and wants the citizens to know that this is a great place to live and raise their family. He stated he enjoys working for the citizens of our community. He stated he intends to continue to keep Easton a safe place to live. Rev. Davis thanked all employees and every department head for all the work done last year. He stated the town is better together.

President Gunsallus wished everyone Happy New Year. He stated he couldn't attend the Crab Drop this year.

Closed Session General Provisions Article 3-305(b)(1) to discuss the appointment, employment, assignment, promotion, discipline, demotion, compensation, removal, resignation, or performance, evaluation of appointees, employees or officials.

At 6:16 p.m., upon motion by Rev. Davis, seconded by Mr. Abbatiello, and carried unanimously following a roll call vote, President Gunsallus convened into Closed Session to discuss personnel..

At 6:48 p.m., upon motion by Rev. Davis, seconded by Mr. Montgomery and carried unanimously, President Gunsallus went out of closed session and reconvened into Open Session.

Adjournment.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy M. Ruf, Town Clerk