



Town Council MEETING MINUTES

Monday, February 5, 2024 - 5:30 PM
Council Chambers, Easton Town Office
14 S Harrison Street

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

Mayor Megan JM Cook
Council President Frank Gunsallus
Ms. Maureen Curry
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.

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Closed Session Summary.

President Gunsallus read a statement regarding the Closed Session that was held January 16, 2024.

Opening remarks and Pledge of Allegiance by Councilmember Rev. Davis.

Rev. Davis gave opening remarks and led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Minutes.

Minutes of the January 16, 2024 meetings.

Upon motion by Ms. Curry seconded by Mr. Abbatiello and carried unanimously, minutes of the January 16, 2024 meetings were approved as written.

Municipal Official Items.

Items by Mayor Cook.

Mayor Cook gave an update on recent activities. She discussed the Martin Luther King Basketball Tournament.

Mayor Cook offered congratulations to Hugh Grunden, Easton Utilities President & CEO for his 40+ years at Easton Utilities. Mayor Cook stated that Mr. Grunden has made a lasting mark and we extend our heartfelt thanks for his countless contributions. She stated he plans to retire on July 1, 2024.

Mayor Cook discussed the ribbon cutting at the Dog Park on January 18. She stated the town has installed turf and benches and it is a remarkable park.

Mayor Cook discussed EV charging stations. She stated the town is looking at parking in general as well as proposed areas for an EV station. She stated that the kiosk is working in the town's parking lot across from the town office.

Senator Cardin visited Teddy Bear Fresh this morning. Mayor Cook stated they received 1 million dollars through a USDA regional facility and processing and 1 million from a USDA Emergency Rural Health grant and another 1 million in Congressionally Directed Spending through a USDA Community Facilities Grant in support of creating a regional facility that will help increase access to new markets for local farmers.

Mayor Cook reminded those present that the Fire and Ice Festival is this weekend. She stated there are maps on Discover Easton.

The Talbot County Municipalities meeting is scheduled for February 6 at 5:00 p.m.

Mayor Cook stated that the budget workshop schedules will be held in March.

Mr. Abbatiello discussed changes to the Rules of the Council regarding virtual meetings as well as disorderly conduct by the council.

Rev. Davis suggested putting due diligence in the Rules of The Council that addresses misconduct within the council. resemblance

Discussion of Attainable Housing Task Force.

Mayor Cook discussed a working group for attainable housing. She stated that it had been decided that only those that live in town be members of the Attainable Housing Task Force.

Items by Town Manager

Public Assembly Event: Easter Egg-Stravaganza, March 23 - 1-5pm

Upon motion by Mr. Abbatiello, seconded by Rev. Davis and carried unanimously, the Public Assembly Event: Easter Egg-Stravaganza, was approved.

Items by Town Attorney.

Planning Commission meeting Cannabis Legislation public hearing February 19.

Fire Board.

Present from the Easton Volunteer Fire Department, Inc. were President Richard Williams and Chief Sonny Jones.

Rich Williams stated that the day room is completed and was under budget.

Stews and Brews will be held on February 17. He thanked the Council for the doors on the station.

Introduced Administrative officers: Rich Williamson, President; Russel Miles, Vice President; Becky Caldwell, Secretary; Chris Hash, Treasurer; Ken Bush, Trustee; Sol James, Tim Knotts, Jeff Meintzer, JT Morris, Brett Whitehead, Trustees; Rev. Elmer Davis, Chaplain; Ken Bush, Parliamentarian.

Chief Sonny Jones introduced the elected Line Officers: JR Dobson, Asst. Chief; Daryl Caldwell, Captain; Justin Jones, 1st Lieutenant; Bill Keswick, 2nd Lieutenant; Mike Ziegler, 3rd Lieutenant; Cameron Chance, 4th Lieutenant; Grant Kirby, Ambulance Captain; Jason Spies, Chief Engineer; Adam Mayock, 1st Asst. Chief Engineer, Gordon Reyes-Seeber, 2nd Asst. Chief Engineer.

Chief Jones summarized the activities accomplished in 2023 including fire rescue calls, training, meetings, fundraising as well as other station duties and maintenance. The Department performed 300 hours standing by at the station, 118 community events. Chief Jones stated they have approximately 60 active members.

Chief Jones stated that their busiest days are and their busiest month is June.

Chief Jones discussed a cooling incident that occurred at the hospital. He stated they were successful in lowering the temperature in the hospital.

Chief Jones discussed a recent fire with two adjacent houses on Locust Lane.

He stated the Department has taken delivery of a new brush truck which replaces a 1989 vehicle as well as two new engines. Engine 63 has been dedicated to Mayor Willey and his service.

Daryl Caldwell discussed training before demolition at Doverbrook. Ladder training, smoke up inside, search and rescue took place.

Legislation.

Res. No. 6180, "A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN OF EASTON ADOPTING RULES OF PROCEDURE FOR THE EASTON TOWN COUNCIL."

Ms. Curry stated she has questions with Rules of the Procedure for the Easton Town Council as revised and drafted. Discussion occurred regarding the draft. The Town Attorney will revise and submit for review.

ARPA Funding Allocation Discussion.

Future and Previous Allocation Listing.

Mr. Montgomery suggested putting money into projects that may require tax increases. He stated that the council should take care of things we have to do instead of considering a tax increase.

Mr. Abbatiello asked Mr. VanEmburch to discuss the stormwater projects listed on the Government Project List.

Mr. VanEmburch discussed the increase in costs for ongoing projects.

At 7:00 p.m., Mr. Montgomery asked that the council take a five-minute recess.

President Gunsallus declared a five-minute recess.

At 7:02 p.m., President Gunsallus called the meeting back to order and resumed business.

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

President Gunsallus stated that Mr. Zimmerman asked to address the Council and he could do so

during the public/participation comments.

At 7:03 p.m., President Gunsallus opened the continued public hearing. Mr. Thomas, Town Planner, was present to discuss the amendments. Mr. Thomas stated that the Ordinance has been amended and the missing middle housing types have been removed. The rest of Ordinance 803 remains as originally proposed. The only comment from the Public Hearing in November was to increase the expiration date of a Planned Unit Development approval from two years to three years. Otherwise, no revisions have been made from the draft legislation sent to the council in November.

Mr. Abbatiello asked if there are many instances where extensions are necessary. Mr. Thomas discussed a recently reviewed apartment complex on Elliott Road that stated that another year would be helpful.

Mr. Montgomery asked about the process and asked for clarification of the language for proposals that have not had any action.

Mr. Abbatiello asked about the process of other municipalities. Mr. Thomas stated that it is all over the board.

President Gunsallus asked for public comment.

At 7:11 p.m., upon motion by Mr. Montgomery, seconded by Mr. Abbatiello and carried unanimously, President Gunsallus closed the public hearing.

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

Upon motion by Ms. Curry, seconded by Mr. Montgomery and carried unanimously, Ord. 803, "AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF EASTON AMENDING CHAPTER 28 OF THE TOWN CODE (ZONING)" was approved.

Park Board Overview.

Presentation of Annual Plan.

Michael Weise, Chair of the Park and Recreation Advisory Board was present to present the Annual Plan for 2024 for approval. He discussed how the Plan was structured.

Ms. Lorraine Gould, Director of Parks and Recreation, was present regarding the Park Board's Annual Plan.

Tom Klein discussed the Park Plan. He highlighted the importance of parks and recreation as well as the health and vibrancy of the community. Mr. Klein stated that Easton has 350 acres of park land. Mr. Klein discussed 2023 accomplishments: skatepark, dog park, acquiring Woodland Park, which all enhance the town. He stated that they want to plan and enhance Easton Point Park and Woodland Park as well as extend the rail trail.

Mr. Klein stated that June is National Parks and Recreation month, and they would like a fun, community-wide event.

He stated they want a proposal for a community park on the east side of Route 50 such as Idlewild Park. Mr. Klein stated that it would merit another nice addition for Easton.

Mr. Klein discussed the inventory and identified each park as well as the amenities within the park.

Mr. Weise asked the council to approve the Plan. They thanked the council for their continued support.

Ms. Curry asked about a dog park in John Ford Park.

Ms. Gould, Director of Parks and Recreation, stated that residents are permitted to take their pets and walk around the park. She stated the park is open for dogs but just not fenced in.

Mr. Montgomery asked about crossing on the bypass.

Mr. VanEmburch discussed SHA's crosswalk with a pedestrian crossing that is already planned. The trail will go from Glenwood through Moton Park.

Rev. Davis suggested meeting more frequently with the Park Board. Ms. Curry suggested meeting quarterly in a workshop.

Rev. Davis suggested putting the Park Annual Plan on the town's website.

Mr. Abbatiello stated that this was a great initiative to get this Plan completed.

Upon motion by Rev. Davis, seconded by Mr. Montgomery and carried unanimously, the 2024 Annual Park and Recreation Plan was approved.

Review of Invoices.

Invoices 1/3/24 - 1/31/24 totaling \$1,705,066.05.

Upon motion by Mr. Abbatiello, seconded by Ms. Curry and carried unanimously, invoices totaling \$1,705,066.05 were approved.

Public Participation/Comments.

There were no audience comments.

Items by Members of the Council:

Ms. Curry stated that the cups distributed this evening were from EPD as a gift from National Night Out.

Mr. Abbatiello thanked Ms. VanEmburch and President Gunsallus for their work on Rules of the Council.

Mr. Montgomery thanked everyone for the great work everyone is doing.

Rev. Davis thanked EVFD for awarding Mr. Abbatiello Firefighter of the Year. He stated he has helped him achieve some great things and he is grateful. He thanked everyone for their hard work on the Rules.

Mr. Gunsallus thanked the Fire Department for their support during a fire at his office. He encouraged everyone to look at their Fire Safety Plan and practice in case of an emergency.

Adjournment.

At 7:36 p.m. upon motion by Ms. Curry, seconded by Rev. Davis and carried unanimously, President Gunsallus adjourned the regularly scheduled meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy M. Ruf, Town Clerk