Town Council
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, April 9, 2024 - 6:00 PM
Council Chambers, Easton Town Office
14 S Harrison Street

6:00 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 VanEmburgh, and Town Clerk Mrs. Kathy M. Ruf as well as Department Heads.

At 6:00 p.m., President Gunsallus called the meeting to order.

6:00 PM Workshop:

6:00 EEDC

Holly DeKarske, Executive Director, was present to discuss the submitted budget for EEDC. Members of EEDC's Board were present as well. She stated it is the same as last year. She stated they also submitted their strategic plan. Ms. Curry asked if the budget as submitted was a draft. Ms. Curry asked if EEDC's staff is responsible for requesting grants. Ms. DeKarske discussed the application process. Rev, Davis asked about EEDC raising money. Mr. Montgomery asked how the Visitor's Center is staffed. Ms. DeKarske stated there is a part-time person and the regular staff fills in. She discussed sponsorship and fundraising efforts. Mr. Abbatiello asked how many employees there are for EEDC. Ms. DeKarske stated there are three full-time and one part-time, as well as volunteers. Mr. Abbatiello asked what could be added in should there be a wish list. Ms. DeKarske stated advertising and marketing as well as bringing back Taste of Easton for Easton's restaurants Rev. Davis asked about the economic impact to Easton. Ms. DeKarske discussed in-town events as Gunsallus expressed that he appreciates the EEDC budget as presented. Mr. Montgomery stated he has concerns regarding EEDC. The town is providing 80% of funding. He stated he would like to see some functions to be done in-house. He stated this is a great deal of money and have Economic Development return to the private sector. Mr. Montgomery suggested reducing and phasing out the town's contribution and receiving money from the private sector.
Mayor Cook stated that he appreciates Mr. Montgomery's comments. She discussed EEDC's functions.
Mr. Montgomery discussed bringing the town's contribution down to approximately $250,000.
Mr. Richardson discussed the history of the EEDC Department.
Rev. Davis discussed accountability and communication going forward.
Mr. Abbatiello stated that events in Easton are attended by other communities.
At 6:47 p.m., Ms. DeKarske and board members departed.
President Gunsallus called for a five minute recess.

6:30 IT Department

Scott Messick, IT Director and Joey Faulkner were present to discuss the Information Technology budget as submitted.
At 6:53 p.m., President Gunsallus reconvened.
Mr. Messick discussed a correction in their budget for the Google contract. He stated the first year would be $42,000 for one year, $24,077 for the second year, plus $18,000 for level 256 encryption.
Mr. Montgomery stated he would like to see what is being spent on parking lot enforcement versus parking revenue.
Rev. Davis stated the town needs to make up its mind. Do we want parking downtown or do we want to enforce parking?
Mr. Messick stated that if you don't have parking and you don't enforce parking, you will not have parking.
Mr. Abbatiello asked where Lot 3 and Lot 6 are located. He suggested taking $42,000 out of the budget until we see where the parking issue is going.
Mayor Cook stated that the development of Lot 3 and Lot 6 is upcoming.
Ms. Curry asked if the state is renewing with Google.
President Gunsallus asked for clarification regarding network switches and firewalls.

Rev. Davis asked when the fourth person in IT was budgeted.
Rev. Davis asked how it was budgeted.
Mr. Messick discussed the duties and user base that has grown.
Mayor Cook stated that 2023 salaries are slightly under budget.
President Gunsallus asked if IT has looked into extended warranties to get more than three years out of the PCs.
President Gunsallus asked for clarification regarding OPEB.
Mr. Montgomery asked about overtime.
Rev. Davis suggested overlapping employees to cover most of the time necessary.
President Gunsallus stated the IT Department had a 14% increase over last year.
At 7:49 p.m., Mr. Messick and Mr. Faulkner exited.
President Gunsallus asked for a five minute recess.

7:00 Parks and Recreation

At 7:54 p.m., President Gunsallus reconvened the workshop.
Ms. Gould, Director of Park and Recreation was present with Town Engineer Mr. VanEmburgh.
Ms. Gould discussed the soccer program and the equipment requested. She stated they have 18 parks and three employees and equipment is necessary. Ms. Gould stated that if she could restore any capital projects, she would like the mile markers reinstated on the rails-to-trails.
Mr. Montgomery asked about professional services which went down and contractual services that increased. He asked for clarification regarding contractual services.
Grass cutting completed by Parks and Recreation was discussed. Rev. Davis asked why we get contractors to cut grass and if it's cost-effective.
Town Engineer Rick VanEmburgh stated it is seasonal work.
Mr. Abbatiello asked how many employees are in the line item for salaries. She stated that there are three full-time employees as well as her Director's salary.
Rev. Davis stated he would like to see more activities in the parks.
At 8:11 p.m., Ms. Gould departed the meeting.

7:30 Engineering Department

Rick VanEmburgh, Director of Engineering, discussed the operating account for the department. He recommended Kody Cario's promotion to Director of Engineering Department and add an additional person for the CAD work. He stated he has a lot of experience in projects and some designs could then be done in-house and become more efficient.
Rev. Davis asked what Kody's span and control of work would be versus what he does now.
Discussion occurred regarding Mr. VanEmburgh's purview.
Mr. Abbatiello asked how many work in the Engineering Department. He stated there are six and possibly an additional CAD technician.
Mr. Richardson discussed the hospital and the county joining in the study.
Dues and publications were discussed. Mr. VanEmburgh discussed software that is used by several entities that will help our inspection program. He stated it would offset the ESRI program that would help to organize.
Mr. Montgomery discussed salaries.
Mr. Abbatiello asked if there is anything Mr. VanEmburgh would like to see re-instated. He stated he would like to have a street study.
Mr. VanEmburgh discussed the Engineering Capital Expenses.
President Gunsallus asked why new trucks have window tint and stated it doesn't seem like a good use of taxpayers' money. He has been questioned about contractors.

8:00 Public Works

At 8:43 p.m., Mike Dickerson joined the meeting and stated he has four categories.
Recycling costs were discussed. Mr. Montgomery asked about collection for recycling services and how it is treated. Mr. VanEmburgh stated that the Republic would come in and do a presentation as well as it can be set up to view their facility. Mr. VanEmburgh stated that about 100 tons a month go to the recycling facility,
Mr. Dickerson discussed cutting grass. He stated that the town public works department cannot keep up with all the grass cutting. He discussed subcontracting out the grass cutting.
Mr. Dickerson suggested finding a way to recoup some of the costs incurred with materials and repairs due to Easton Utilities' projects.
Mr. Dickerson discussed replacing the oldest automation truck.
Mr. Dickerson stated he is happy with how the budget looks for public works.
Mr. Gunsallus asked about department category code changes. Mr. Richardson discussed.

Adjournment.

At 9:53 p.m., President Gunsallus adjourned the regularly scheduled meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

____
Kathy M. Ruf, Town Clerk