Town Council
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, April 17, 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
Mr. Don Abbatiello
Mr. David Montgomery
Rev. Elmer Davis

Ms. Curry was excused and was present by Zoom.

Also present was the Town Manager, Mr. Don Richardson, Town Attorney Mrs. Sharon VanEmburgh, Finance Officer Carol Callahan and Town Clerk Mrs. Kathy M. Ruf.

6:00 PM Workshop:

6:00 Building Facilities Department

Trevor Newcomb, Director of Buildings and Facilities was present. He stated there were a lot of reductions in the operating side. He stated there were no significant cuts except for Station 60 and the amount allowed for HVAC repairs. Mayor Cook stated that next year, it will all be in the Finance Dept. Mr. Newcomb discussed recent costs of critical replacements. Rev. Davis asked how many work in his department. Mr. Newcomb stated that there are three additional employees. Rev. Davis asked if they are able to keep up with maintenance. Mr. Newcomb stated they are until something breaks down.
Mr. Abbatiello asked what Mr. Newcomb would like to see restored in his department and he said the funds requested for maintenance at EVFD.
Mr. Abbatiello asked if a leased vehicle would suffice for his request. Mr. Newcomb stated that would be the decision of the Mayor, Council and town manager.
Mr. Newcomb stated everything requested in the Capital Budget was cut.
President Gunsallus suggested restoring units for the server room. He stated if they went down, it would be critical and cost more than $9,000.
Mr. Montgomery discussed security for the town hall and asked if it is part of the Building and Facilities Department's budget.
Mr. Richardson stated it is not in this budget.
Mr. Newcomb discussed security for the council chambers.
Ms. Curry asked about damage on leased vehicles that use rails-to-trails.
At 6:27 p.m., Mr. Newcomb departed the workshop.

7:00 Building Code Department.

At 6:28 p.m., Mr. Diem, Building Official and Mr. Heckler, Plan Reviewer joined the workshop.
Mr. Diem discussed permits issued and the Schedule of Fees. He stated there is no Schedule of Fees changes this year. Mr. Diem stated that there are no Capital Requests.
Mr. Diem discussed Operational Expense. He stated they are completed on 131,900. Reduce that to 125,450. Submitted Operational Expense 108,950. If the Hospital project comes to fruition, an outside agency would be necessary for inspections. Mr. Diem stated those costs could be recouped through the DRRA.
Mr. Diem discussed the revenue and stated it is based on permits and historical data. He stated the revenue data is a percentage of history.
Mr. Diem discussed cross-training and the necessity to keep the Department current.
Mr. Abbatiello asked if future developments are included.
The Town Manager stated if all projects come into the permit department, they will be coming to the Mayor asking for help.
Mr. Diem stated he has met with the Town Attorney regarding future development.
Rev. Davis thanked Mr. Diem for his input and asked if there is anything he would like. Mr. Diem discussed staff issues and stated he has a part time Plan Reviewer that may need to be a full time position at some time.
Mr. Gunsallus asked if Mr. Diem has looked at software for permits. He stated that he will be brought in to the loop when it's necessary. He stated he is not in favor of electronic submissions.
Ms. Curry discussed miscellaneous benefits. Mr. Richardson stated that has to do with the Family Care Act that is in every department.
President Gunsallas asked about Impact Fees and the Tischler study.

Mr. Diem and Mr. Heckler departed at 7:03 p.m.
President Gunsallus asked for a five minute recess.

7:15 Planning and Zoning.

At 7:12 p.m. Miguel Salinas, Planning Director, joined the workshop. Mr. Salinas discussed the overview of what encompasses the Planning and Zoning Department. He stated a lot of their budget is driven by mandates. He stated that 82% of their budget is salaries. He discussed the increase in the amount of permits being handled.
Mr. Montgomery asked if there is enough in the budget requests for necessary studies. Consultant assistance was discussed.
Mr. Gunsallus stated he struggles to understand the degree of increases for department heads. He stated he sees the salaries had a significant increase in 2021.
Rev. Davis stated a lot of different things were done during Covid.
Mr. Richardson discussed the significant annual changes to keep up with the market. He stated there has also been turnover in this department and the numbers he is looking at represent three different individuals.
Mr. Abbatiello asked if there is anything he would like to add back. Mr. Salinas stated we may need to add in more for contractural services.
Mr. Salinas departed at 7:29 p.m.

7:30 Finance

At 7:29 p.m., Mrs. Carol Callahan, Finance Officer, discussed the Finance Budget. She discussed the budget expenditures.
Mr. Montgomery congratulated the Finance Department for their travel expenses.
Rev. Davis asked Mrs. Callahan about her participation with the budget. He asked why the Finance Department does not take the lead with the budget and is not more participatory.
Mayor Cook stated that technically, this is her budget. She discussed meetings.
Mr. Abbatiello asked about the sale of town property for $653,000. Mrs. Callahan stated that was the sale of property for Mistletoe Hall lots.
President Gunsallus asked where the legal fees for this department are coded to. Mr. Richardson stated the legal fees are not historically in the Finance Department. President Gunsallus asked for a line item for each department regarding legal fees. He stated he wants legal fees listed. Mr. Richardson stated a summary document could be drafted. He discussed having a staff position for legal services.
Mr. Montgomery stated that this is the only sensible way to do this. He stated he has no concerns.
Mrs. Callahan discussed the Edmunds system and what it lacked.
Mr. Messick discussed the new system versus the legacy system.
Rev. Davis stated he would have preferred to have known this before now.
Mr. Montgomery questioned if we could look into a system that does not offer tax bill services.
Mr. Connelly discussed a system that was looked at that cost approximately $1.5 million. He discussed the expectations for the software that was purchased.
Mr. Abbatiello reviewed the scenario.
Mayor Cook stated the Town needs to look at the best project and maybe consider taking the tax billing off the table.
Mr. Richardson stated that all departments will have an input on new software.
Mr. Abbatiello asked for a synopsis for salaries and their growth and what was officially approved.
At 8:18 p.m., President Gunsallus closed the Finance portion and asked for a five minute recess.

8:30 Administration

At 8:27 discussion occurred regarding the Administration budget.
Mr. Richardson gave a high level overview.
President Gunsallus asked why he was not involved despite having reached out and asking to be involved. Mr. Gunsallus discussed salaries for council and the amount of time he puts in. He suggested an increase in the salary for the Mayor due to her level of service.
Mr. Montgomery discussed the county putting a salary increase out for referendum.
Mayor Cook stated that during a difficult budget, she does not see a raise for her position.
Mr. Abbatiello suggested looking at other municipalities' salaries and the last time there was an increase.
Rev. Davis stated that Mr. Gould should be recognized appropriately for his 50 years of service.
Mr. Montgomery asked for consideration for office space for council instead of asking for a

pay increase.
At 9:19 p.m., President Gunsallus adjourned the workshop.

Adjournment.

At 9:20, President Gunsallus adjourned the workshop.

Respectfully submitted,

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Kathy M. Ruf, Town Clerk