



Town Council MEETING MINUTES

Monday, May 6, 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

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

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 April 9 Budget Workshop, April 10 Budget Workshop, April 15 Regular Meeting, April 15 Workshop with Planning Departments, April 17 Budget Workshop.

Upon motion by Mr. Abbatiello, seconded by Rev. Davis and carried unanimously, minutes of the April 9 Budget Workshop, April 10 Budget Workshop, April 15 Regular Meeting, April 15 Workshop with Planning Departments and April 17, 2024 Budget Workshop meetings were approved as written.

Fire Board.

Rich Williamson, EVFD President, thanked everyone for coming to the recent dedication at Easton Volunteer Fire Department.

Chief Sonny Jones presented the Fire Board report outlining incidents, company business, drills, training and fundraising. He discussed recent notable incidents. Chief Jones asked permission to take equipment to the MD State Fire Convention in Ocean City, Maryland, which takes place June 16 - June 21.

Upon motion by Rev. Davis, seconded by Ms. Curry, permission was granted.

Mayor Cook stated that everyone volunteers a lot of hours.

Municipal Official Items.

Items by Mayor Cook.

Mayor Cook stated that on April 16 MML President John Carroll stopped by for a tour of Easton and was impressed with the Town of Easton and all that is going on.

On April 20, EVFD recognized Mayor Willey and Jeff Parks at their dedication. She stated that the day room was dedicated to Jeff Parks as he was instrumental in the renovation to establish the room. She stated a fire truck was dedicated to Mayor Willey.

On April 25, Talbot Day, hosted by Talbot County, took place. She stated that Pres. Gunsallus and herself had recently met with Comptroller Brooke Lierman.

Mayor Cook thanked Talbot Interfaith Shelter for allowing her to judge their Lip Sync battle. She commended the participants.

On May 2, she attended the Talbot Business Appreciation Breakfast and on May 5 she was present for Talbot Rod and Gun Club's 90th Celebration.

Introduction of EPD Handlers Cpl. Ashley Bayne, Cpl. Anthony Cullings and retiring K-9 dogs.

Cpl. Cullings and Cpl. Bayne were present with K-9 Deets. Chief Lowrey stated they are retiring the dogs that are with EPD now.

Approval for Master Nicholas Leshers Eagle Scout Project as recommended by the Park Board, which consists of the construction of Interpretive Signage on the e/w segment of the rail-to-trail.

Master Nicholas Lesher discussed his Eagle Scout project. He stated his project consists of interpretive signage regarding the history of the railroad on the rails-to-trails. He stated it will consist of a concrete pad at Station Lane and Aurora Street. He will begin work as soon as approved.

Upon motion by Ms. Curry, seconded by Mr. Montgomery and carried unanimously, Master Leshers Eagle Scout project was approved.

FY2024/25 Budget Presentation.

Mayor Cook was present to discuss the 2024 Budget Proposal. Mayor Cook asked that the Public Hearing for the budget be set for May 20. Mayor Cook stated the town has shown consistent growth, a thriving downtown, wonderful amenities with a safe community and infrastructure. She stated the town has not raised taxes since 2008. Mayor Cook discussed the best parts of Easton, everything packaged together. She highlighted departments within the town and stated the town has the best workforce. Mayor Cook discussed making the streets safer with road improvements and hiring officers, as well as ongoing construction projects completed by Public Works. She stated the Town of Easton has been stewards of the taxpayers' money with the second-lowest tax rate and 1% growth rate. She discussed the accolades Easton has received and the contributing factors; strong management, a skilled, ambitious workforce, excellent resource management (grants, funding, partnerships, i.e. Talbot County, Easton Utilities, EEDC, EVFD). Since 2020, the town has benefited in over \$35 million in grants/funds. Mayor Cook discussed Mistletoe Hall with 6 of 13 lots sold and an expected generation of \$2.3 million in lot sales and the generation of over 300 jobs. She stated that we rely on taxes as well as other funding sources to help fund the expenditures in the town. She discussed the allocation of the ARPA funds and this year's budget, explaining the difficulty. Mayor Cook thanked the Department Heads, Town Manager and staff for the help received during the budget process which she started in December. The budget presented started with asks of \$31million with the final version being presented this evening. The tax rate will remain at \$52/\$100 assessed value but may see an increase in coming years to keep improvements and amenities at the current level. Mayor Cook outlined the future the Town of Easton is working towards - expansion of rails-to-trails, increased sidewalk coverage for future walkability, 197 acre Woodland Park offering wooded outdoors walking trails, Easton Point Waterfront project and an Indoor Athletic Complex. Pres. Gunsallus thanked Mayor Cook for her budget presentation and set the public hearing for May 20.

Items by Town Manager

Public Assembly Events:

EHS Class of 2024 Senior Parade, May 17 - 5pm

Academy Art Museum Juneteenth Celebration, June 22 12pm-4pm

July 4 Celebration/Carnival, June 21 - July 4

Backpack Giveaway/New Day New Start Behavioral Health, August 24

Hispanic Heritage Month - Chesapeake Multicultural Resource Center, September 14 11am - 6pm

Carols by Candlelight Plan A - Friends of Hospice, November 30

Public Assembly Events:

Upon motion by Mr. Abbatiello, seconded by Pres. Gunsallus and carried unanimously, the Public Assembly Events were approved.

Mr. Richardson asked that Carols by Candlelight be held to clarify a street closure.

Approval for purchase of seven Ford Police Interceptors.

Upon motion by Rev. Davis, seconded by Ms. Curry and carried unanimously, approval for the purchase of seven Ford Police Interceptors were approved.

Approval to accept bid as recommended by staff for the Design/Build Stream Restoration Project as submitted by Ecosystem Planning & Restoration in the amount of \$417,930.69. The Town Manager stated he would like this tabled to get clarification

Approval to accept bid as recommended by staff for Annual Mill & Overlay from David A. Bramble (Bramble) in the amount of \$367,136.

Upon motion by Ms. Curry seconded by Mr. Abbatiello and carried unanimously, approval to accept the bid as recommended by staff in the amount of \$367,136 was approved.

Approval to accept bid as recommended by staff for the Traffic Signal Controller for 5-Corners from Econolite in the amount of \$19,625.94.

Upon motion by Mr. Abbatiello, seconded by Ms. Curry and carried unanimously, approval to accept the bid as recommended by staff in the amount of \$19,625.94 was approved following a roll call vote.

The Town Manager stated he has a request from the Easton Police Department to purchase radios that are mounted in the seven new police cars. He stated the car radios are \$52,756.41 and would be funded from the vehicle purchase dollars. He stated this met ARPA funding and will comply with federal procurement policy. Chief Lowrey stated the cars are white with black graphics. Upon motion by Rev. Davis, seconded by Mr. Montgomery, approval was granted to purchase the radios.

The Town Manager, Mr. Richardson stated this is a friendly reminder that the Parks and Recreation Department is taking applications for soccer and baseball camps.

Items by Town Attorney.

Shore Health Development Rights Responsibility Agreement (DRRA).

The Town Attorney stated that the Corrigan and Trippe Annexation Public Hearing has been moved to June 3 to accommodate required notice to county and state agencies.

The Town Attorney updated on the amendment to the Development Rights and Responsibilities Agreement. She stated that this document will take items out of this DRRA and put them in a more specific Public Works Agreement. There are a couple of changes to the DRRA. The existing land use regulations have been updated so the DRRA has been updated to reflect those changes. The original pump station has moved which will be conveyed to the town at some point in the future. Shore Health has taken title to the property so it has been updated, as has the entrance to the Community Center. There are several utility specifics which will be moved to the Public Works Agreement. She stated that most is deletions and not additions. She stated that the most substantive change is the extension to 30 years when the town enters into the agreement. She asked that this DRRA Agreement be forwarded to the Planning Commission for a recommendation for consistency with the Comprehensive Plan and set a Public Hearing for June 3 at 5:40 p.m. She asked for questions.

Rev. Davis asked if the fire apparatus was included and Ms. VanEmburch stated that it was not in there.

Ryan Showalter was present on behalf of Shore Health and stated that the request for fire apparatus was something that they heard but was not part of the DRRA due to budget constraints. He stated they are open to continuing conversations.

Mr. Abbatiello added that the current aerial tower is not due to be removed from service for at least 15 years and they were hoping for some time of commitment down the road.

Mr. Showalter stated he would pass that along.

Mr. Montgomery wanted assurance that the infrastructure would be under the current Easton Utilities tariff. Mr. Showalter assured that this would be the case.

Public Hearings.

5:40 PM PUBLIC HEARING to discuss amendments to the Building Code Ordinances (Ord. 812, Ord. 813, Ord. 814, Ord. 815, Ord. 816, Ord. 817, Ord. 818).

At 6:35 p.m., President Gunsallus opened the 5:40 p.m. scheduled public hearing.

The Town Attorney stated these seven ordinances are amendments to the Building Codes and the Residential Codes as well as the specialty codes and are State Mandated. She stated there are some local codes that are changing. She stated they are eligible for a vote. President Gunsallus asked if there were questions or concerns from the council or the public. There were none.

Upon motion by President Gunsallus, seconded by Mr. Montgomery and carried unanimously, President Gunsallus closed the public hearing at 6:37 p.m.

Legislation.

Ord. 812, "AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF EASTON AMENDING CHAPTER 6 BUILDING CODES OF THE TOWN OF EASTON CODE TO ADOPT THE INTERNATIONAL BUILDING CODE 2021 AND AMENDMENTS THERETO."

Upon motion by Rev. Davis seconded by Mr. Montgomery and carried unanimously, Ord. 812 was approved following a roll call vote.

Ord. 813, "AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF EASTON AMENDING CHAPTER 6 BUILDING CODES OF THE TOWN OF EASTON CODE TO ADOPT THE INTERNATIONAL RESIDENTIAL CODE 2021 AND AMENDMENTS THERETO."

Upon motion by Pres. Gunsallus, seconded by Mr. Montgomery and carried unanimously, Ord. 813 was approved following a roll call vote.

Ord. 814, "AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF EASTON AMENDING CHAPTER 6 BUILDING CODES OF THE TOWN OF EASTON CODE RELATED TO THE ELECTRICAL CODE."

Upon motion by Mr. Gunsallus seconded by Mr. Montgomery and carried unanimously, Ord. 814 was approved.

Ord. 815, "AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF EASTON AMENDING CHAPTER 6 BUILDING CODES OF THE TOWN OF EASTON CODE TO ADOPT THE INTERNATIONAL ENERGY CONSERVATION CODE 2021 AND AMENDMENTS THERETO."

Upon motion by Mr. Gunsallus seconded by Rev. Davis and carried unanimously, Ord. 815 was approved.

Ord. 816, "AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF EASTON AMENDING CHAPTER 6 BUILDING CODES OF THE TOWN OF EASTON CODE TO ADOPT THE INTERNATIONAL FUEL GAS CODE 2018 AND THE NFPA 58 LIQUEFIED PETROLEUM GAS CODE 2017 AND AMENDMENTS THERETO."

Upon motion by Pres. Gunsallus seconded by Mr. Abbatiello and carried unanimously, Ord. 816 was approved following a roll call vote.

Ord. 817, "AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF EASTON AMENDING CHAPTER 6 BUILDING CODES OF THE TOWN OF EASTON CODE TO ADOPT THE INTERNATIONAL MECHANICAL CODE 2021 AND AMENDMENTS THERETO."

Upon motion by Pres. Gunsallus seconded by Mr. Abbatiello and carried unanimously, Ord. 817 was approved.

Ord. 818, "AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF EASTON AMENDING CHAPTER 6 BUILDING CODES OF THE TOWN OF EASTON CODE TO ADOPT THE INTERNATIONAL PLUMBING CODE 2021 AND AMENDMENTS THERETO."

Upon motion by Pres. Gunsallus seconded by Ms. Curry and carried unanimously, Ord. 818 was approved.

5:45 PM PUBLIC HEARING to discuss Ordinance No. 819 (Purchase Policy).

At 6:41 p.m. President Gunsallus opened the public hearing to discuss Ordinance No. 819. Mr. Richardson stated this is an auditor comment received on our audit adding a statement on our own Procurement Policy acknowledging the Federal requirement which would state the town would follow the Federal Guidelines regarding procurement and bidding process including the federal code of regulations.

Rev. Davis asked what policy was followed prior to this. Mr. Richardson stated it would have been the same provisions.

President Gunsallus asked for public comment. There was none.

At 6:43, upon motion by President Gunsallus seconded by Rev. Davis and carried unanimously, President Gunsallus closed the scheduled public hearing.

Ord. 819, "AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF EASTON AMENDING THE PURCHASING POLICY OF THE TOWN CONTAINED IN CHAPTER 2 OF THE CODE OF THE TOWN OF EASTON TO ADDRESS FEDERAL GRANTS."

Upon motion by Mr. Montgomery, seconded by Ms. Curry and carried unanimously, Ord. 819 was approved.

Ord. 822, "AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF EASTON ADDING A NEW CHAPTER 6C OF THE CODE OF THE TOWN OF EASTON TO ADOPT PROVISIONS RELATED TO ILLICIT DISCHARGES."

Mr. VanEmburch discussed the Illicit Discharge Ordinance. He gave a brief overview regarding the MS-4 Program. He stated it requires a variety of stormwater provisions. He stated the ordinance defines what illicit discharge is and essentially, it is everything but stormwater and not allowed to go into our system. He discussed what is exempt. President Gunsallus set the Public Hearing for June 17 at 5:35.

Review of Invoices.

Invoices from 4/11/24 - 4/24/24 totaling \$1,223,610.94.

Upon motion by Ms. Curry, seconded by Mr. Abbatiello and carried unanimously, invoices totaling \$1,223,610.94 were approved.

Public Participation/Comments.

There were no public comments.

Items by Members of the Council:

Mr. Abbatiello stated that he appreciates the Illicit Discharge Ordinance and hopes that there would be consideration for an odor ordinance as well. He echoed mayor's comments from Mayor Cook's budget presentation and concurred that the Town's greatest resource are the employees. He thanked all those involved in the budget process.

Mr. Montgomery thanked Mayor Cook for her outstanding presentation. She was the keynote speaker at the Talbot Rod and Gun club. He stated that anyone that would like to drop by are welcome to come out. Mr. Montgomery thanked Colin Jones for coming to Easton Club, which went on an extensive tour of the golf club and examined problems that were identified and educating Mr. Montgomery regarding stormwater and septic systems.

Rev. Davis thanked the Mayor for the presentation and answering some of his questions. He discussed a recent meeting with the Engineering Department and some of his constituents. He discussed the smell and odor of the crab processing facility on Maryland Avenue. He stated we should make a change.

Ms. Curry stated she would be happy to help Rev. Davis.

The Town Attorney stated she will do research to see how the concerns can be addressed. She discussed existing businesses.

Pres. Gunsallus thanked Mayor Cook on her budget preparation. There will be a task force on attainable houseforce on May 9 and public participation is encouraged.

Adjournment.

At 7:08 p.m., upon motion by Mr. Gunsallus seconded by Mr. Montgomery and carried unanimously, President Gunsallus adjourned the regularly scheduled meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy M. Ruf, Town Clerk