



Town Council MEETING MINUTES

Monday, June 17, 2024 - 5:30 PM
Council Chambers, Easton Town Office
14 S Harrison Street

4:30 PM Workshop with Park Board.

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.

Park Board members present: Michael Brophy, Thomas Klein, James Perry, Director of Parks and Recreation, Lorraine Gould, Town Engineer Rick VanEmburch.

President Gunsallus called the workshop to order.

The Director of Parks and Recreation discussed the reason for tonight's workshop. She discussed a focus group with two residents from each ward and combining wards.

Mr. Tom Klein discussed the strategic plan for the Park and Recreation Department. He stated he would serve as a facilitator this evening.

Mr. Klein asked the council what they liked most about the park facilities.

Ms. Curry stated there is a cross-section of the variety of things available.

Mr. Abbatiello stated his children have graduated from one park to another and progressed through different parks.

Ms. Curry asked about what programs are available for the youth. Mrs., Gould discussed programs affiliated with the Department of Social Services.

Rev. Davis suggested programs, games and activities that may keep youth busy.

Mr. Gunsallus suggested anything that would promote a healthy lifestyle.

Security was discussed on the rails-to-trails.

Mr. Montgomery discussed possible bus trips that might be arranged by Parks and Recreation Department.

Rev. Davis suggested looking at recreation activities that may suitAbb everyone in the community.

Ms. Curry mentioned a dog park for the John Ford park open field.

Mr. Klein discussed promoting parks. Mr. Abbatiello suggested social media. Rev. Davis suggested an APP for reservations. Mr. Klein suggested payments on an APP as well.

Mr. Klein asked if the council thinks there needs to be more parkland. Pres. Gunsallus stated there has been mention of another park much like Idlewild Park, possibly on Dutchman's Lane.

Mr. Montgomery asked if the Park Board is considering park activities for adults.

Mr. Klein discussed a focus group to participate in park improvements; possibly two residents from each ward. He suggested including approximately 10 individuals.

Mr. Richardson stated that the Town has all the social media pages but more could be specialized to promote the parks.

Discussion occurred regarding increasing awareness of the parks.

Mr. Abbatiello stated that it would need to be updated.

Mr. Klein asked for thoughts regarding safety. Ms. Curry stated that there is an image problem regarding rails-to-trails.

Mr. Montgomery stated that the parks need to be updated and made foolproof for litigation.

Mr. Gunsallus discussed adding defibrillators and call buttons like those common at universities.

Mr. Abbatiello asked if the town is still working on markers. Mr. Richardson stated we are working on those.

Rev. Davis stated there needs to be ATVs that can ride the rails-to-trails during the day. He stated that residents need to be asked what they would like to see.

Mr. Montgomery asked what is offered for adults. Mr. Klein stated that adults have not been targeted.

Rev. Davis stated there is a senior population in Easton.

Mayor Cook mentioned an indoor sports complex.

Mr. Brophy stated that if we promote it, they will come.

Rev. Davis stated we should not look at the money but should look at the mission.

Discussion occurred regarding cameras and videotapes.

Discussion occurred regarding participants for a focus group. Mr. Klein suggested taking the questions and sending them out in wards to get perspectives.

Mr. Montgomery suggested going to churches to reach other minorities to get other perspectives.

Mr. Montgomery stated there is not a homeowner association for Stoney Ridge and they need more than a small neighborhood park.

It was the consensus that an hour for a meeting for the focus group would be sufficient. Maybe in July

or August prior to a council meeting was preferred.

Mr. Abbatiello suggested offering two dates.

President Gunsallus discussed how the meeting could be arranged for a small fee. Scheduling the meeting for a focus group was discussed.

Mr. Abbatiello stated the council will work on getting groups together.

The workshop adjourned at 5:23 p.m.

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

At 5:30 PM, President Gunsallus called the meeting to order.

Opening remarks and Pledge of Allegiance by Councilmember Curry.

Ms. Curry gave opening remarks and led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Minutes.

Minutes of the June 3, 2024 meeting.

Upon motion by Mr. Abbatiello seconded by Rev. Davis and carried unanimously, the minutes of the June 3, 2024 meeting were approved as written.

Municipal Official Items.

Items by Mayor Cook.

Mayor Cook updated on the hospital. She stated that the UMMS Board unanimously approved Shore Health's Plan last week for their financial funding.

Mayor Cook congratulated Chef Harley Peet for winning the prestigious James Beard award for the Best Chef of the Mid-Atlantic. She stated we are very happy for Blue Point for this accomplishment.

Mayor Cook stated that the town recently took part in a Strategic Leadership symposium, and we are currently working on a Vision Statement.

The Housing Task Force met on June 6. The next meeting is Tuesday.

Mayor Cook gave a shout-out to Jill Garvey for the EPD Torch Run and a walk and to the Easton Police Department.

Mayor Cook congratulated the Pride Center for the Pride Festival held in Easton.

Mayor Cook stated it is the job of the council members to listen to all the community and make sure all voices are heard. She discussed comments made that were hurtful to the LGBTQ community. She stated it is our responsibility to foster a climate of inclusion and divisive statements begin to tear at the fabric of our town. She stated as Mayor she is working to build a strong, vibrant town and as legislators, she hopes the council will support her in keeping Easton a wonderful place to live.

Presentation of Proclamation to Charles Jenkins for Years of Service.

Mayor Cook displayed a street sign for Charles Jenkins that will be displayed for his years of service.

Mayor Cook read and presented a Proclamation to Charles Jenkins for his years of service as a crossing guard for the Town of Easton.

Deputy Greg Wright and Chief Lowrey presented a Certificate of Appreciation to Mr. Jenkins for his time at the Easton Police Department.

Ms. Curry stated she was also at the Pride Festival and just missed Mayor Cook.

Mr. Montgomery stated he does not appreciate being chastised by Mayor Cook and he stated he does not think it is an appropriate role of a public official. He thinks it is distressing to try to make statements or opinions and take into a rational discussion. He stated he will not stop trying to get the point across he was trying to make.

Mayor Cook discussed keeping an open mind and stated everyone can find their community in the Town of Easton.

President Gunsallus stated he also attended but asked that the meeting move along.

President Gunsallus asked for questions for Mayor Cook. There were none.

Rev. Davis stated everyone needs to understand that the Town of Easton is big enough for everyone and the council is legislators. He stated that everyone needs to be careful of what we say. Rev. Davis thanked the Mayor for taking a stance.

Items by Town Manager

Public Assembly Events:

IBPOE of the World - June 30: 3pm

The Factory Arts Project - July 12-14, July 19-21: 7-10pm

For All Seasons Backpack Giveaway - August 20: 5:30 - 7pm

Upon motion by Mr. Abbatiello, seconded by Ms. Curry and carried unanimously, the Elks Parade was approved.

Rev. Davis asked that this request be more timely in the future.

Upon motion by Mr. Abbatiello, seconded by Ms. Curry and carried unanimously, the Factory Arts Project, was approved.

Upon motion by Ms. Curry, seconded by President Gunsallus and carried unanimously, For All Seasons Backpack Giveaway was approved.

Ms. Curry asked the Factory Arts Project to notify the tenants on Glenwood Avenue what is planned so they know in advance.

Items by Town Attorney.

The Town Attorney discussed addressing odors for businesses. She asked the council to look over her memo and recommend legislation.

Rev. Davis asked the council to look at the memo and make recommendations expeditiously and have enforceable legislation. He stated we need some action,.

The Town Attorney suggested the council make recommendations to her.

Mr. Abbatiello suggested a workshop with Mr. Tom Diem present.

Public Hearings.

cont'd. PUBLIC HEARING (annexation request) "FOR A PARCEL OF LAND LOCATED ON THE EAST SIDE OF OCEAN GATEWAY/US ROUTE 50, CONSISTING OF 17.329 ACRES OF LAND, MORE OR LESS."

Mr. Thomas was present to discuss the continuation of a Public Hearing for an annexation request.

President Gunsallus asked staff for direction.

Mr. Thomas, Town Planner, discussed the annexation request.

The Town Attorney discussed changes to the legislation. She asked that this not be voted on this evening.

Zach Smith provided updates. He spoke about increasing affordable housing. He stated that his client is agreeable to increasing 50% of affordable housing.

Mr. Abbatiello asked how long the affordability would last. Mr. Smith stated that the commitment is for 30 years when they are obligated to maintain the affordable housing status due to tax credits.

Mr. Tom Alspach, 295 Bay Street, Easton offered drawings regarding 11 three-story towers of residential dwellings, 240 dwellings, 500 cars directly exiting on Route 50 with no traffic signal. He stated there are a lot of dwellings squeezed into a dangerous road. He asked the council to give careful consideration. He suggested a fee in lieu to the Affordable Housing.

Terrance Bernard, Dutchman's Lane, discussed traffic on Route 50.

The President of the Council stated that the public hearing would remain open and comments will be received until the next meeting

5:35 PM PUBLIC HEARING to discuss and receive public comments on Ordinance No. 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."

At 6:10 p.m., President Gunsallus opened the Public Hearing related to Illicit Discharges.

The Town Attorney discussed the proposed ordinance. She stated it is part of the MS-4 Program. She stated Mr. VanEmburch developed the ordinance.

Mr. VanEmburch, Town Engineer stated it is a requirement of the state, Maryland Department of the Environment. He stated that it states that anything that is not stormwater, rainwater, cannot enter the storm drains. Mr. VanEmburch discussed exemptions and stated he will be in contact with representatives from the state to allow the modifications proposed.

Commercial car washes and commercial power washers were discussed.

Mr. VanEmburch stated he had used Salisbury as a guide and he will check with them.

Rev. Davis discussed enforcement and penalties. He stated we need to make the entire town aware. Mr. VanEmburch discussed doing an outreach campaign.

President Gunsallus asked for audience comments.

Mr. Stephen Mangassarin discussed Section 3-9 which essentially puts everyone that power washes out of business. He suggested the ordinance be studied and re-written.

Mr. Joe Minarick, 128 S Harrison Street, discussed using a Clorox product to wash house

which is used to get mold off.

Mr. Tarrance Bernard, Dutchman's Lane, discussed progression and changes. He stated information needs to go out to the public for information.

Pres. Gunsallus asked Mr. VanEmburch to talk to Salisbury.

Pres. Gunsallus stated he will leave the record open for further comments.

5:40 PM PUBLIC HEARING to discuss the request of Lane Engineering LLC (The Applicant) on behalf of NAI Saturn Eastern, LLC (The Owner) and Miller Development Corporation, for a proposed Planned Unit Development (PUD) - Infill. The property is located at 139 N Washington Street.

At 6:26 p.m. President Gunsallus opened the Public Hearing.

Mr. Thomas discussed the Planned Unit Development Infill Application and what is proposed for 139 S Washington Street. The Planning Commission reviewed the application at their May 16 meeting and voted unanimously to approve the sketch subdivision plat and asked the council approve the PUD application. Mr. Thomas stated that the PUD project is consistent with the Town's Comprehensive Plan supporting many goals.

Mr. Brett Ewing, Lane Engineering, was present.

Ryan Showalter, on behalf of Miller of Bethesda discussed the proposed project and introduced the applicants.

Mr. Showalter stated the Historic District approved the demolition of the Safeway site.

Mr. Showalter discussed the future use of a grocery store. He stated that the covenants on this property limit the use of a grocery store. He discussed nearby grocery opportunities. He discussed the open space opportunity, The Mews which will be open to the general public. Brett Ewing discussed the site plan. Impervious surfaces were discussed. He stated they had met with Easton's fire chief and the layout was approved.

Mr. Ewing stated that the plan does not require off-street parking as there are two spaces allowed per unit which are provided as well as two car garages.

He stated that the town's public works will not serve trash service, as they will provide tipper cans with standard to keep cans in garages.

Mr. Ewing discussed underground chambers within the alleys of the community with stormwater runoff.

Maurice Walters, architect, discussed the housing types and the site plan for the project. He stated the townhomes are in groups of four. Mr. Walter discussed the designs and the open space.

Rev. Davis stated he has concerns regarding the parking. He stated he would like to see the applicant purchase some of the nearby parking spaces. He stated he does not think there is enough open space. If there is not enough open space, there should be a contribution to a park or open space.

Mr. Abbatiello discussed the parks that are being used for open space. He stated there needs to be some public space or contribution to Easton's Parks and Recreation. He stated he also has concerns regarding affordable housing.

Rev. Davis stated he does not agree with private trash pickup. He stated he likes the design and concept.

Mr. Ewing stated the group will get together to address affordable housing.

Ms. Curry stated she has issues regarding the lack of affordable housing and public space. She congratulated the owner and developer for choosing Easton.

Robert Miller takes projects very seriously. He discussed his history in Easton and Royal Oak. He stated this project has a tough economic needle and stated that the site is really challenging. Mr. Miller stated that any additional economic burden will likely challenge the project.

Mr. Montgomery complimented the architect. He discussed parking and stated the problem is something the town needs to address. Mr. Montgomery asked if the traffic survey was characterized as a D.

Mr. Dillon McAndrew, Lenhart Traffic Concepts, Washington discussed the service in the town of Easton and stated that highway requirements are met.

President Gunsallus asked for public comment.

Ms. Winters, Worcester County, owns the corner of West and Bay. She discussed the lot lines.

Mr. Ewing, stated they will keep the retaining wall and the owner will be able to keep their deck.

Mr. Abbatiello asked if the sidewalks will remain. Mr. Ewing stated they will be ADA compliant and they will remain or be made better.

President Gunsallus stated the public comment will be left open until the next public meeting.

5:45 PM cont'd. PUBLIC HEARING "ON THE PETITION OF SHORE HEALTH SYSTEM, INC. TO ENTER INTO AN AMENDMENT TO AN EXISTING DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES AGREEMENT."

At 7:21 p.m. President Gunsallus opened the 5:45 p.m. scheduled public hearing.

The Town Attorney stated that the UMMS Board approved the DRRA and the county council enacted legislation to approve this legislation.

Ms. Jen Voshell, 201 Spring Drive asked if there will be any allocation of funds to increase public transportation to the new hospital.
Mr. Richardson stated there are no funds to increase public transportation in this DRRA at this time.
President Gunsallus asked if there are council comments.
Mr. Montgomery asked if this is the last time this will come before the council.
Mr. Richardson stated that this is the last time the council will see this in this form.
Mr. Montgomery asked if the council will see the hospital plan.
The Town Attorney stated that the Planning Commission has reviewed the site. She discussed what will come before the council.
Mr. Abbatiello asked if the town has contributed any funds to the hospital at this point in time.
The Town Attorney stated staff time. Mr. Richardson stated there have been no town funds contributed.
At 7:26 p.m., President Gunsallus closed the public hearing.

5:50 PM PUBLIC HEARING to obtain views of citizens regarding Ord. 824, "AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF EASTON TO CARRY FORWARD CERTAIN CAPITAL FUND EXPENDITURES INTO FISCAL YEAR 2025."

At 7:27 p.m., President Gunsallus opened the 5:50 p.m. scheduled public hearing.
Mr. Richardson discussed the list of projects the staff is working on.
President Gunsallus asked for comments from the council.
President Gunsallus asked for public comment. There was none.
At 7:28 p.m., President Gunsallus closed the public hearing.

Legislation.

Res. No. 6185, "A RESOLUTION TO ANNEX A PARCEL OF LAND OWNED BY CORRIGAN & TRIPPE VENTURES, LLC LOCATED ON THE EAST SIDE OF OCEAN GATEWAY/US ROUTE 50, CONSISTING OF 17.329 ACRES OF LAND, MORE OR LESS, INTO THE TOWN OF EASTON AND TO PROVIDE FOR THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF THE ANNEXATION."

President Gunsallus read Res. No. 6185 into the record. He stated this will be open for public comment until July 1.

Ord. 811, "AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF EASTON AMENDING THE OFFICIAL ZONING MAP OF THE TOWN OF EASTON TO APPLY THE R-10A RESIDENTIAL ZONING DISTRICT TO CERTAIN LOTS OR PARCELS OF LAND ANNEXED TO THE TOWN OF EASTON BY RESOLUTION NO. 6185 LOCATED TO THE EAST OF OCEAN GATEWAY/US ROUTE 50 CONSISTING OF 17.329 ACRES OF LAND, MORE OR LESS."

President Gunsallus read Ord. 811 into the record.
President Gunsallus stated Ord. 811 will be acted on July 1.

Approval of the Annexation and Public Facilities Agreement.
Not acted on at this time.

Ord. No. 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."

President Gunsallus read Ord. No. 822 into the record.
President Gunsallus stated that Mr. VanEmburch will be reaching out to Salisbury and will provide an update in advance of the upcoming meeting. President Gunsallus stated this will be on the next meeting agenda.

Res. No. 6187, "A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN OF EASTON AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION OF A DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES AGREEMENT AMENDMENT BETWEEN THE TOWN, SHORE HEALTH SYSTEM, INC., AND TALBOT COUNTY RELATED TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF A REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER."
Upon motion by Mr. Abbatiello, seconded by Ms. Curry and carried unanimously, Res. No. 6187 was approved.
Mr. Showalter, on behalf of Shore Health System, thanked the Town of Easton for their support.

Ord. No. 824, "AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF EASTON TO CARRY FORWARD CERTAIN CAPITAL FUND EXPENDITURES INTO FISCAL YEAR 2025."

Upon motion by Mr. Abbatiello, seconded by Rev. Davis and carried unanimously, Ord. No. 824, was approved following a roll call vote.

Res. No. 6188, "A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN OF EASTON REVISING THE TOWNS LICENSE, APPLICATION, PERMITS, INSPECTIONS, CERTIFICATE AND OTHER FEES."

Mr. Richardson discussed updates to the Schedule of Fees.

President Gunsallus asked for questions or concerns from the council.

Mr. Abbatiello asked that this be published as a public hearing to hear comments and acted on at the next meeting.

Res. No. 6189, "A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN OF EASTON APPROVING AND ADOPTING THE FIRST AMENDMENT TO TOWN OF EASTON, MARYLAND EMPLOYEES' PENSION PLAN 2021 RESTATEMENT."

Mr. Richardson stated there had been a workshop on these changes.

Upon motion by Rev. Davis, seconded by Mr. Montgomery and carried unanimously, Res. No. 6189 was approved.

Public Participation/Comments.

President Gunsallus opened the floor for public comments. He stated there is a three-minute rule.

Tina Grace Jones, Co-founder Delmarva Pride Center, thanked the town for helping host the Pride Festival this weekend. She discussed the economic return on the festival.

Alison Sanford, 108 Hughlett Street, thanked all those that attended the festivities. She discussed being called antithetical to society.

Rebecca Hutchison, Clinical Social Worker in Easton, thanked everyone for the support of the council and community. She discussed the NHS of Great Britain and their research.

Tim McNeal discussed traffic and drivers in his neighborhood that are speeding in his neighborhood.

Jen Voshell, 201 Spring Drive, spoke regarding American College of Pediatrics and their data. Ms. Voshell thanked the council that attended the festival. She asked if affordable housing has been defined.

Lauren Fierman, 341 N Washington Street, discussed the American College of Pediatrics and what they support.

Jen Wagner, 214 Madison Avenue, St. Michaels owns a business in Easton. Ms. Wagner stated she has deep ties in this community. She discussed the last meeting. Ms. Wagner called for resignations.

Shari Wilcoxon, Waverly Road, discussed a letter she sent to the council in January regarding the Pride parade. She asked the council who represents those that don't want to see the Pride Festival to move the festival/parade to West Street. She asked who represents those that don't want their family subjected. She asked that the council represent everyone.

Conchetta Gibson, 7401 Ocean Gateway, Vice Chair, Pride Festival, discussed rhetoric from the council and her disability.

Joyce Dowling, Cambridge, stated she supports all the Pride Festival and LGBTQ people. She stated there was no trans ideology at the Festival.

Terrance Bernard discussed underlying events during the Pride Festival.

Gary Tuti, discussed being called divisive.

William Dowling, Cambridge, discussed being called a pedophile.

Tina Grace Jones, stated she is a transgender woman. She stated she has never harmed anyone. She suggested everyone getting to know her.

Items by Members of the Council:

Ms. Curry thanked everyone for being here tonight and stated she attended the event this weekend.

Ms. Curry discussed Mary Rogers Day.

Mr. Abbatiello stated that regardless of the opinions, the council does read and listen to the public.

Mr. Montgomery objected to personal attacks which exclusively came from the audience. He stated the escalation of this issue into personal attacks should cease and is unbecoming and unprotective.

Rev. Davis thanked everyone for their passion for the Town of Easton. He urged residents to prioritize safety to ensure Easton remains safe. He stated he is on the team to do the right thing.

President Gunsallus thanked everyone for attending this evening's meeting. He stated he was glad everyone had a good time.

President Gunsallus reminded everyone there is a workshop regarding odors June 28, at 4:00 p.m.

Adjournment.

At 8:35, upon motion by Mr. Abbatiello, seconded by Mr. Montgomery and carried unanimously, President Gunsallus adjourned the regularly scheduled meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy M. Ruf, Town Clerk