



Town Council MEETING MINUTES

Monday, July 15, 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, Chief of Police Alan Lowrey and Town Clerk Mrs. Kathy M. Ruf.

Opening remarks and Pledge of Allegiance by Councilmember Montgomery.

Mr. Montgomery gave opening remarks and led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Minutes.

Minutes of the July 1, 2024 meeting.

Upon motion by Ms. Curry, seconded by Mr. Abbatiello and carried unanimously, minutes of the July 1, 2024 meeting were approved as written.

Municipal Official Items.

Items by Mayor Cook.

Mayor Cook offered congratulations to Shore Regional Medical Center for recently receiving HSCRC 's approval. She stated this is their final hurdle, and they are working hard to make sure they move forward in a timely manner.

Mayor Cook stated that July is Parks & Recreation Month. She stated the Town of Easton is showcasing a number of town parks. She stated there are a variety of parks around Easton and she encouraged citizens to get out and enjoy themselves.

Due to the heat, the paving schedule is slightly off, but sidewalk repairs are happening around town, so please be cautious.

Mayor Cook stated that Click-to-Gov has been down but the ability to pay taxes with a credit card should be enabled by the end of the week.

EEDC would like to welcome Thomas Maglio as the Marketing & Events Manager for Easton EDC.

Mayor Cook reminded everyone that Plein Air is this week.

National Night Out will be held Moton Park on August 6 from 5:00 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.

Mayor Cook discussed updates on the website for councilmembers.

Mayor Cook read a statement regarding what happened over the weekend with the shooting of former President Trump. She stated that any act of violence is troubling and goes against the principles of democracy that we hold dear. She stated that regardless of political views, such actions should be held accountable and must be condemned. She acknowledged and thanked the law enforcement officers that intervened and local officers that put their lives on the line to protect each other. She asked that everyone stand united.

Appointment Confirmation for Ms. Emily Carey to the Historic District Commission.

Upon motion by Ms. Curry seconded by Mr. Montgomery and carried unanimously, the appointment confirmation for Ms. Emily Carey to the Historic District Commission was approved.

Items by Town Manager

Approval to award a bid to Blue Tech for upfits to the seven new police vehicles in the amount

of \$124,505.20.

Upon motion by Mr. Montgomery, seconded by Rev. Davis and carried unanimously, approval to award the bid to Blue Tech for upfits to seven new police vehicles was approved.

Approval to award bid from Sourcewell for two new dump trucks in the amount of \$205,659 each.

Upon motion by Rev. Davis President seconded by President Gunsallus and carried unanimously, approval to award the bid from Sourcewell for two new dump trucks was approved.

Items by Town Attorney.

The Town Attorney stated she has nothing at this time.

Presentations.

Police Board.

Chief Lowrey discussed the ICAC investigation. He stated the Task Force worked on the investigation that resulted in an arrest for child pornography as well as an illegal cannabis growing operation.

He stated that recruiting efforts will continue and that there are hiring two new applicants, which started July 1.

Chief Lowrey discussed the Child Advocacy Center where they are trained to interview children. He stated they are accredited and the cases for abuse have increased in 2024.

Rev. Davis discussed retiring and asked that replacements for those positions be considered six months before retirement.

Mr. Abbatiello discussed take home cars. He asked if the department is where we need to be. Chief Lowrey stated it does take them to where we need to be.

Mr. Montgomery asked if Chief Lowrey would be interested in having Coffee with a Cop at Homeowner's Associations. The Chief stated they absolutely would be interested.

Sean Lynn, Washington College and Ron Engle to present a demonstration of the Easton Interactive Traffic Dashboard.

Mr. Engle discussed creating a Highway Strategic Plan for Easton that will enable them to participate in the Maryland Highway Office Safety Grant Program. He stated it is an Interactive Traffic Dashboard. Mr. Engle stated it is live now for use on the Easton Police Department website and provides instant information from 2018 to the present. He stated this also provides a good tool for Planning and Zoning when they are considering development.

Mr. Engle introduced representatives from Washington College.

Sean Lynn, Washington College, GIS Program, ran through the application. He introduced Matthew Lewis from Washington College. He stated they are producing data regarding fatalities for the State of Maryland. He discussed using the latest technology that encompasses a lot of entities. Mr. Lynn discussed the parameters of the application. He stated that the overall dashboard tells a story of what is going on. Mr. Lynn stated he hopes it provides significant data and allows Easton to get the data they need.

Mr. Abbatiello stated that this is phenomenal data. He asked about crashes and traffic issues and how they might be edited in.

Mr. Lynn discussed processing the 2024 data. He stated that MSP is operating on new data stream. He stated they are moving towards simplification.

Chief Lowrey discussed the application further.

Jennifer Klug Vaccaro, Community Restoration Coordinator ShoreRivers, Inc. to discuss a program to provide free trees to residents of Easton.

Ms. Vaccaro and Matt Pluta discussed a new program that Shore Rivers has funding for. She stated Easton has been one of the focus points to creating shaded trees. She discussed funding from DNR.

She stated they can now plant trees on private property after residents opt in. Ms. Vaccaro asked for the council's help to get in touch with their constituents.

Mr. Abbatiello asked what size the trees are.

Ms. Vaccaro stated 4' to 8', native species. She stated there is an online form on shorerivers.org.

Ms. Curry discussed an apartment complex in her neighborhood and wondered how many trees they can receive.

Ms. Vaccaro discussed reaching underserved areas. She stated there is no cap on how many trees can be planted on a property.

Ms. Vaccaro discussed planting. She stated they do all the planting and make sure they are planted properly. She stated they also remain as a resource.

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."

At 6:12 p.m., President Gunsallus continued the public hearing for the annexation request. Zach Smith was present on behalf of the applicant, Corrigan and Trippe Ventures, LLC. He discussed their request to annex and apply for R-10 zoning. Mr. Smith stated that they are not seeking approval for a specific project as they do not know what the project will be. He discussed the applicant partnering with Talbot County Housing Authority. Density was discussed. Mr. Smith stated that they are proposing more affordable housing for Easton. He stated there could be 16 units per acre through the town's PUD process.

Mr. Smith discussed what may be needed for a feasible project. He stated that they anticipate traffic signals which may be required.

Matt Pluta, Choptank River Keeper, Shore Rivers discussed access to the amenities. He discussed the authority for the wetlands. and water sources that are flowing as well as the negative impacts on erosion.

Mr. Don Bibb, Talbot Housing Commission spoke in support of this project. He stated they are constantly looking for land to make attainable housing more of a reality for folks. making \$42,000 a year. He stated that it is the working class that are struggling. He asked the council to take into account what the population in this town needs. He echoed the need for attainable housing.

Mr. Jim Bent, Chair of the Affordable Housing Board, stated this property was looked at years ago. He discussed proposed projects. He stated that with all the developments, there are 37 units that may come in the pipeline. He discussed the median income and how they can afford what in rent.

James Carter, 607 Dutchman's Lane discussed housing needed in this time and stated that the homeless population here is bad. He stated that housing is needed.

Erin Saunter, Brant Court, Apartment 319, commented regarding Easton being an old town. She discussed the downtown

Stephanie Chester, read a letter regarding the council and what they promised and ran on during their election.

At 6:41 p.m., President Gunsallus closed the Public Hearing.

cont'd. 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 6:41 p.m., President Gunsallus opened the continued public hearing on Ordinance No. 822.

Town Engineer, Mr. VanEmburch discussed the history of the ordinance and the communities in the program. He discussed the education proponent and stated that it is for the best management practices. Mr. VanEmburch discussed only allowing rainwater in the storm drains.

Matt Pluta, Choptank Riverkeeper & Director of Riverkeeper Programs was present and stated he was in support of MS4 permits. He stated storm drains along streets is a direct conveyance into the water. He stated that here in Easton, it is the Tred Avon. He discussed sampling stations.

Swimming pools that are emptied at the end of summer were discussed and the chlorine that may be in the water. Mr. Pluta encouraged the council to adopt the ordinance and support it. He commended the Town Engineer.

At 6:53 p.m., President Gunsallus closed the public hearing.

cont'd. 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 6:53 p.m., President Gunsallus opened the continued public hearing.

Ms. Julia Foxwell, Blue Point Hospitality, representing Paul Prager, spoke in favor of the proposed development.

President Gunsallus left the public hearing open until August 5.

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."

Mr. Abbatiello discussed his concern regarding the number of units going into this development. He stated he will go along with the annexation. He stated that 50% of the housing must be attainable and clear-cut language in the annexation that this is what attainable is. He stated that regardless of what happens, whoever develops this, 50% has to be attainable. The Town Attorney clarified the provisions in the proposed legislation. Rev. Davis stated that it should be 100% affordable/attainable. He stated it should be all or nothing.

Mr. Montgomery is 100% in favor of this annexation. He stated he is concerned with the quality of the Tred Avon River.

Ms. Curry agreed with Mr. Montgomery. There is a process; an annexation, then the PUD process. She stated she would like the project to yield 120 to 150 units and she would prefer they all be affordable.

President Gunsallus discussed school systems and stated they do not build on projection but on current enrollment. President Gunsallus asked Chief Lowrey how many police officers may be needed if this annexation should be approved. Chief Lowrey discussed variables. He discussed additional stress on the hospital and stated that provisions should be in place when this project is complete.

Discussion occurred regarding access to Route 50. The Town Engineer stated that the town can have parameters such as right-in and right-out of the development.

Upon motion by Mr. Montgomery, seconded by Ms. Curry and carried unanimously, Resolution No. 6185 was passed 4-1 with Rev. Davis voting no.

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."

Upon motion by Mr. Montgomery, seconded by Ms. Curry and carried unanimously, Ord. 811 was approved 4-1 with Rev. Davis voting no.

Approval of the Annexation and Public Facilities Agreement.

Upon motion by President Gunsallus, seconded by Mr. Montgomery and carried unanimously, the Annexation Agreement was approved.

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."

Upon motion by Ms. Curry, seconded by Mr. Montgomery and carried unanimously, Ord. No. 822, was approved following a roll call vote.

Res. No. 6190, "A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN OF EASTON APPROVING RULES AND REGULATIONS FOR THE USE OF TOWN PARKS."

Upon motion by Rev. Davis, seconded by Mr. Montgomery and carried unanimously, Res. No. 6190, was approved following a roll call vote.

Public Participation/Comments.

Mr. Steve Mangassarian, S. Aurora Street, stated he was recently caught in a bureaucratic grinder, getting absolutely nowhere. He stated he reached out to his councilmember and after many weeks the problem was solved. He stated the council should be commended for constituent services. All you have to do is ask. Thank you.

Mr. Mangassarian discussed the goal for attainable housing. He discussed subsidies and suggested the town look towards other empty properties. He stated it is unfair to ask a developer that is committed to an asking price.

Mr. Buddy Cephas, Cambridge, Pres. ESAM, Board Member of MML, discussed trying to make a visit to all municipalities to say hello.

Mr. Don Bibb, Housing Commission of Talbot, thanked everyone for their support for the Doverbrook project.

Items by Members of the Council:

Ms. Curry, stated she has nothing.

Mr. Abbatiello discussed the Affordable Housing Board and stated this is a volunteer group to work and maintain homes for people that need help. He stated that attainable housing is not going to be solved by one project.

Mr. Montgomery agreed with comments regarding the work of the Affordable Housing Board. Rev. Davis stated affordable housing needs to be addressed now. He stated it has not been addressed and will take time. He stated that we do need it and there needs to be drastic changes for the betterment of all people in our community. Rev. Davis stated that there are those that work here and can afford to live here. Pres. Gunsallus stated he concurred. President Gunsallus discussed the assassination attempt on President Trump. He encouraged everyone to rebuke inflammatory rhetoric and encouraged everyone to keep a cool head. He implored those listening to consider how others want to be treated. He stated we must continue to be the shining example for the rest of the world.

Adjournment.

At 7:33 p.m., upon motion by Rev. Davis, seconded by Mr. Montgomery and carried unanimously, President Gunsallus adjourned the regularly scheduled meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy M. Ruf, Town Clerk