



Town Council MEETING MINUTES

Monday, August 19, 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 Attorney, Mrs. Sharon VanEmburch, and Town Clerk Mrs. Kathy M. Ruf.

The interim Town Manager, Mr. Alan Lowrey was excused.

At 5:30 p.m., President Gunsallus called the meeting to order. He announced that the upcoming meeting will be held on Tuesday, September 3rd. He read a Closed Session Summary from the previous meeting.

Opening remarks by Councilmember Curry and Pledge of Allegiance.

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

Approval of Minutes.

Meeting minutes of 8/5/24.

Upon motion by Mr. Abbatiello, seconded by Mr. Montgomery and carried unanimously, minutes of the August 5, 2024 meetings were approved as written.

Meeting minutes of Closed Executive Session 8/5/24.

Upon motion by Mr. Abbatiello, seconded by Ms. Curry and carried unanimously, minutes of the August 5, 2024 Closed Session meeting were approved as written.

Meeting minutes of Special Meeting 8/12/24.

Upon motion by Ms. Curry seconded by President Gunsallus and carried unanimously, minutes of the August 12, 2024 Special Meeting were approved as written.

Gunsallus, Montgomery

Municipal Official Items.

Items by Mayor Cook.

Mayor Cook stated that we have great news as the Town sold 123 S Locust Street, the fourth of the six houses on Housing on the Hill.

Mayor Cook reminded those present that part of the rail-to-trail will be closed for the annual repaving.

Mayor Cook stated that Ms. Gould reminded everyone that there are bricks for the Memorial Walk for sale. She stated you can purchase them online for \$50.

Mayor Cook reminded everyone to be mindful as Talbot County Public Schools go back to school in a week. She asked that everyone be patient and give yourself a little extra time.

Appointment Confirmation for Easton Utilities Commissioner.

Upon motion by Mr. Abbatiello seconded by Rev. Davis and carried unanimously, the

appointment confirmation for Cheryl Palumbo for the Easton Utilities Commission was approved.

Items by Interim Town Manager

Public Assembly Event, Ceremony to Commemorate the Events of September 11, 2001
9/11/24 - 8:30a.m. Gas Plant

Mayor Cook asked for approval for the public assembly event for the September 11 Commemorate event.

Upon motion by Mr. Abbatiello seconded by Rev. Davis and carried unanimously, the Public Assembly Event Ceremony to Commemorate the events of September 11, 2001 was approved.

Items by Town Attorney.

The Town Attorney Ms. VanEmburch stated she has nothing at this point.

Ms. Holly DeKarske, Executive Director to update Mayor and Council on EEDC.

Ms. DeKarske was present and gave Easton EDC updates. She discussed the retail market study that contains information regarding retail needs for not only Easton but also Talbot County. She stated that the report also contains information on the housing market for Easton and surrounding counties. Ms. DeKarske stated that Project Restore application has been approved for \$300,000, the maximum award which has to be spent within 18 months. She discussed staff changes as well as Easton Crossing and Silo Square which will be a mixed-use development at the former Perdue property. She stated that the MHAA grant or the Visitor's Center has been extended. Ms. DeKarske gave downtown marketing updates. She stated that they are working with EPD on making improvements to the current Special Event permits as well as working on the parking kiosks. She discussed the distribution of brochures and stated they are expanding the reach to Spanish speaking residents. Ms. DeKarske stated they are working on the Easton Visitor Center as well as the Housing Taskforce. Ms. DeKarske discussed grants and funding sources. She discussed upcoming events.

Mr. Montgomery asked if Ms. DeKarske has plans for Dover Station, the former Roofing Center building. She responded that the Planning Department has those plans.

Ms. Joan Brooks with members of American Legion Post 77 to discuss Hometown Heroes.

Ms. Joan Brooks, with members of American Legion Post 77 was present and discussed the Hometown Heroes Banner Program. She stated the program gives awareness in the community and honors past and present members of the Armed Forces, First Responders and their family members. Ms. Banks stated Post 77 was established in 1920. She stated her father served the United States in World War II.

Ms. Banks stated they are asking for approval, and no funding except for the use of a bucket truck. She stated that each individual that sponsors the flag will be responsible for their flag. She stated that they intend to install them throughout Ward 4, but they could eventually broaden the locations. She stated The Hometown Heroes Banner Program honors veterans, both living and deceased, and active-duty members of the Armed Forces from Talbot County. Each banner features the individual's photo, name, branch of service and/or credentials.

Rev. Davis stated he thinks this is a great endeavor. He stated he will vote in support of Ms. Banks' endeavor.

Pres. Gunsallus stated he supports and may purchase two.

Mr. Montgomery would like to see more throughout town. Ms. Brooks stated they will extend and take charge of this project. Mr. Montgomery discussed fundraising for those families that may not be able to afford their banners.

Ms. Brooks has the support of Post 77. She stated that once they are done, there will be a major celebration. She stated that Post 70 will join forces.

Ms. Curry stated she would like to see this town wide.

Upon motion by Mr. Abbatiello, seconded by Ms. Curry and carried unanimously, approval was granted for Ms. Brooks to implement the Hometown Heroes program.

Rev. Davis asked for an update in the near future.

Legislation.

Ord. 827, "AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF EASTON GRANTING THE APPLICATION OF NAI SATURN EASTERN, LLC AND MILLER DEVELOPMENT CORP. FOR A PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT UNDER THE PROVISIONS OF THE EASTON ZONING CODE"

President Gunsallus brought Ordinance No. 827 to the floor

Mrs. VanEmburch discussed the conditions that are part of the ordinance. She stated the ordinance could be acted on because there was a public hearing.

Mr. Abbatiello discussed his reasoning for voting for the application. His comments were as follows:

1. Safeway has been empty since 2017. This is an infill project that would add to the downtown not detract as an empty storefront might.
2. Parking was raised as a concern and the loss of the parking lot. I followed up on a number that was mentioned several meetings ago during the public comment phase of this PUD. There are over 550 parking spots in the downtown area. That does not include on-street parking.
3. Another grocery store was raised as an option, and I understand that there is a real need for a grocery store that residents can walk to. The issue is the current owners are not willing to sell to a developer if the plan is to bring a rival grocery store to that location.
4. Traffic was a third concern raised by constituents. While the 33 units will add to some traffic in the area, it will be significantly less than what was there when Safeway was open with customers going in and out of the parking lot during store hours and probably similar to the number of cars now using the parking lot.
5. Finally, we get to affordable housing and this was the toughest issue for me to contend with. None of these units will be affordable. We need housing for seniors, we need apartments that don't charge \$1600 for one bedroom. But when you look at the sale price of the property, there is no way for a developer to purchase the land and keep the units affordable.

Mr. Abbatiello thanked Mr. Miller, the developer to listening to the council's concerns and supporting an infrastructure project to provide necessary workforce housing to town employees at another location.

Upon motion by Ms. Curry, seconded by Rev. Davis and carried unanimously, Ordinance No. 827 was approved.

Res. 6195, "A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN OF EASTON AMENDING THE TOWN OF EASTON, MD DEFINED CONTRIBUTION 401(a) RETIREMENT PLAN."

Upon motion by Ms. Curry, seconded by Rev. Davis and carried unanimously, Res. 6195 was approved.

Public Participation/Comments.

Mr. Feehley addressed the council regarding growth and the council's responsibility to protect his health, safety, comfort and convenience, welfare and happiness.

Mr. Ira Lednum, Elizabeth Street asked where the police patrol was. He discussed the Blue Moon Sale at Bountiful's and stated that he couldn't even get out of his neighborhood. He stated he can't even get out of his neighborhood. He asked the council to think about the elderly residents.

Ms. Erin Saunter, 29568 Brant Court, discussed having people in single family housing versus apartments and condominiums. She stated there needs to be a way to get around town. She asked the council to be intelligent in our designs.

Items by Members of the Council.

Ms. Curry thanked Mr. Lednum for coming out this evening. She stated she did visit Elizabeth Street this weekend. She stated she has a meeting set up to discuss parking with the owner of Bountiful.

Mr. Abbatiello stated the concert series on Saturday was great. He reminded everyone that there are students going back to school next Tuesday as well as walkers and those students waiting for buses.

Rev. Davis thanked Post 77 for their presentation. He thanked all those that came with their comments.

Pres. Gunsallus thanked Chief Lowrey for stepping in for Interim Town Manager.

Adjournment.

At 6:40 p.m., upon motion by Pres. Gunsallus seconded by Rev. Davis and carried unanimously, President Gunsallus adjourned the regularly scheduled meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy M. Ruf, Town Clerk