



Town Council MEETING MINUTES

Monday, November 4, 2024 - 5:30 PM
Council Chambers, Easton Town Office
14 S Harrison Street

5:00 PM Police 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 Acting Town Manager, Mr. Alan Lowrey, Acting Chief Gregory Wright, Town Attorney Mrs. Sharon VanEmburch, and Town Clerk Mrs. Kathy M. Ruf.

At 5:00 p.m., President Gunsallus called the Police Board meeting to order.

Quarter 3:

Acting Chief Gregory Wright was present to discuss the Police Department activities. He stated it was a very successful Halloween. The Acting Chief discussed traffic concerns on Dutchman's Lane. He stated that their findings showed they were giving too much priority to bus traffic. He discussed shooting incidents and stated arrests have been made in both those occurrences. The Acting Chief discussed recruitment and hiring. He stated we recently re-hired Sgt. Eric Kellner.

Councilmember Abbatiello stated there was a lot of police activity in his neighborhood during Halloween.

At 5:07 p.m., President Gunsallus adjourned the Police Board meeting.

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.

Councilmember Abbatiello gave opening remarks and led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Minutes.

Minutes of the October 7, 2024 Regular Meeting.
Minutes of the October 7, 2024 Closed Session.
Minutes of the October 21, 2024 Regular Meeting.

Upon motion by President Gunsallus, seconded by Mr. Montgomery and carried unanimously, minutes of the October 7 and October 21, 2024, meeting were approved as written.

Municipal Official Items.

Items by Mayor Cook.

Mayor Cook reminded everyone that Veterans' Day is next weekend and the office will be closed. She stated that Operation Greenlight is this week from November 4 through November 11, and the Town of Easton is participating and encouraging residents to shine a green light in support of our veterans. She stated that the veterans that are employed by the Town of Easton will be highlighted this week.

Mayor Cook stated that Hometown Heroes will be taking place at the Blake Blackston Post #77 along Glenwood Avenue.

She stated that leaf season is occurring in Easton. She encouraged the community to leave leaves between the sidewalk and the curb and not rake leaves into the street. Waterfowl Weekend is coming up this weekend. Public Works has been out beautifying the town. She stated that a lot of the streets will be closed. She stated that there will be alternative transportation should they want to come into town.

Mayor Cook stated that the ADA ramp has been built at the Visitor's Center.
East End Small Area Plan Charette was two weeks ago with great attendance.
Tomorrow is Election Day. She encouraged women to get out and vote.
Mayor Cook stated she attended Rabbi Hyman's retirement party yesterday.
Mayor Cook also attended the Chamber Economic Symposium.

Items by Interim Town Manager

Approval for the Parks and Recreation Annual Plan for FY2025-6/26.

Upon motion by Mr. Abbatiello seconded by Ms. Curry and carried unanimously, approval for the Parks and Recreation Annual Plan was approved.
Rev. Davis asked about activities planned in the First Quarter.
Ms. Gould stated she is in the process of coming up with activities such as a Health Fair in July at Idlewild Park. She stated there will be National Night Out in August and an event in October for Halloween. She stated the Parks and Recreation Department is partnering with Talbot Thrive for bicycle activities.

Public Assembly Event: YMCA Turkey Trot 5K 11/28/24

Upon motion by Mr. Abbatiello, and seconded by Rev. Davis and carried unanimously, the Public Assembly Event: YMCA Turkey Trot was approved.

Public Assembly Event: Talbot Hospice - 5K Walk/Run 11/30/24

Upon motion by Mr. Abbatiello, seconded by Ms. Curry and carried unanimously, Public Assembly Event: Talbot Hospice - 5K Walk/Run was approved.

Items by Town Attorney.

The Town Attorney, Ms. VanEmburch stated she has nothing at this time.
Mr. Abbatiello asked about a workshop regarding annexations.
Mr. Montgomery stated he would like to discuss design guidelines and by-right development guidelines.
President Gunsallus stated a workshop would be scheduled for January 6.

Fire Board.

Chief Sonny Jones and Richard Williams, President, discussed activities. Chief Jones stated that past Chief Robbie Faulkner passed recently.
Groundbreaking for new training center.
Chief Sonny Jones discussed the statistical report for August through October 2024. He stated over 12,000 hours have been expended by volunteers while serving the department.
Talbot County and the state of Maryland have instituted a burn ban. He asked everyone to be diligent.
UTV being considered for park land.
1808 217 years.
Sonny's term over in December.
Rev. Davis thanked Chief Jones for his dedication.
Rev. Davis moment of silence for Robbie Faulkner.

Public Hearings.

5:35 PM Public Hearing to solicit public comment on Ordinance No. 835, which proposes amendments to Chapter 28 of the Town Code (Zoning) to revise the Code to specifically regulate seafood processing uses.

President Gunsallus read a statement regarding public comment.

At 5:50 p.m., President Gunsallus opened the 5:35 p.m. scheduled public hearing on Ordinance No. 835.

Mr. Salinas discussed recommended changes regarding seafood processing. He stated the language is like the standards of cannabis. He said it would give seafood processing businesses a year to comply. He discussed the recommendation forwarded from the Planning Commission.

Ms. Curry asked what is considered bulk in the legislation.

Mr. Montgomery asked about Section I and asked if that use would be restaurants.

Mr. Salinas discussed businesses that would have to comply.

Rev. Davis advocated businesses having to comply within six months instead of a year. He stated that seafood processing should be prohibited in the BC zoning.

Mr. Abbatiello stated that this has been going on for a long time. He stated that other seafood businesses may be affected.

Ms. Curry asked if there is any solution other than legislation. She suggested going to the state and helping them move to another site.

Mr. Montgomery discussed finding out what the cost burden would be and what significant economic impact would be imposed on businesses.

Mr. Abbatiello stated that we need to work on the odor.

Mr. Salinas stated that the use was allowed by right for the existing businesses.

President Gunsallus opened the floor for public comments.

Alex Haschen, 301 S Washington stated he is building a home in the impacted area. He stated he liked the idea of finding the business a new home. He stated he wanted to make sure his quality of life is not impacted.

Carla Howe, 311 S Aurora discussed the stench during the summers. She said the owners have been getting away with this for some time.

Philip Burnell, 303 S Aurora Street discussed being in the Historic District. He stated he couldn't understand how this business was allowed to open and operate. He stated he is not respected as a taxpayer.

Doug Kerr, 211 East Earle Avenue, stated they are new residents to Easton. He stated the stench from this seafood makes him ill. He stated he agrees that the business should be moved.

Glenn Klakring, 225 S Aurora Street, stated he looked at the Zoning Ordinance and questioned this seafood processing business being a permitted use. He stated that the council should either enforce them to clean up the business or make them move to another location.

Tom Alspach, on behalf of Sea Watch, discussed their processing facility. He discussed how their business may be impacted and how the new regulations could affect their business. He discussed the language in the proposed legislation. He stated it could be detrimental if imposed on their plant.

Bruce Cole, 5 Wrightson Avenue, Cole Seafood stated how this is worded is going to affect him. He stated it would cost him \$100,000 to put in a hood.

Jessica Cale, 211 East Earle Avenue, discussed the stench at the processing plant which carries as far as Idlewild Park. She stated she appreciated the opportunity to speak up.

President Gunsallus read a letter into the record from Peter Maloney, 301 S Aurora Street, wrote a letter in support of Ordinance No. 835.

President Gunsallus read a letter into the record from Zach Smith, Esq. regarding Ordinance No. 835 on behalf of Mitchell 104 Maryland Avenue. He stated it will cause significant costly measures. He discussed building this business at his location.

Philip Burnell, 303 S Aurora Street, discussed the owner's rights.

Carla Howell, 311 S Aurora Street, responded to the letter from Zach Smith, Esq. She stated the community should look out for each other,

Glen Klakring, 225 S Aurora Street, discussed the business owner and attorney's letter and stated it was a threat.

President Gunsallus left the public hearing open.

5:40 PM Public Hearing to solicit public comment on the request of Michael T. Hall on behalf of Somerset Well Drilling Co., Inc. for a Zoning Map amendment for an 8.348 acre parcel of land located at 28580 Mary's Court in Talbot Commerce Park.

At 6:49 p.m., President Gunsallus opened the Public Hearing.

Miguel Salinas discussed the zoning map amendment request. He discussed asking for the growth allocation from the county. He stated the applicant has requested re-zoning of the property.

Town Attorney, Ms. VanEmburch issued the Oath for any persons giving testimony.

Brendan Mullaney, Esq. discussed the applicant requesting reclassification of the property from the current designation of A-1 (Agricultural) to the BC (Business Commercial) Industrial Zoning District. He stated it is consistent with the balance of Talbot Commerce Park.

President Gunsallus asked for questions. There were none.

The Town Attorney stated, like a PUD, she will need a consensus.

Mr. Montgomery discussed having a legal justification.

At 7:01 p.m., upon motion by Mr. Montgomery, seconded by Mr. Abbatiello and carried unanimously, President Gunsallus closed the public hearing.

The Town Attorney stated she will draft legislation and Finding of Facts to be acted on.

5:45 PM Public Hearing to solicit public comment on Ordinance No. 834, "AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF EASTON AMENDING THE ARPA BUDGET AND OBLIGATING ARPA FUNDS BY APPROVING A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WITH THE PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT."

At 7:02 p.m., President Gunsallus opened the public hearing regarding the ARPA.

President Gunsallus asked for public comment. There were none.

President Gunsallus asked for a motion to close the public hearing.

At 7:03 p.m., upon motion by Mr. Gunsallus, seconded by Mr. Abbatiello and carried unanimously, President Gunsallus closed the Public Hearing.

Legislation.

Res. No. 6202, Authorizing the Finance Officer to make abatements requested by Talbot County totaling \$14,391.00.

Upon motion by Ms. Curry, seconded by Mr. Abbatiello and carried unanimously, Res. No. 6202, Authorizing the Finance Officer to abate taxes requested by Talbot County was approved following a roll call vote.

Ord. No. 832, "AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF EASTON AMENDING CHAPTER 2 ARTICLE VI OF THE TOWN OF EASTON CODE TO UPDATE THE TOWN'S ETHICS PROVISIONS."

Upon motion by Mr. Abbatiello, seconded by Mr. Montgomery and carried unanimously, Ord. No. 832 was approved.

Ord. No. 834, "AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF EASTON AMENDING THE ARPA BUDGET OBLIGATING ARPA FUNDS BY APPROVING A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WITH THE PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT."

Rev. Davis expressed his concerns regarding spending the ARPA funds in the allotted time.

Upon motion by Ms. Curry, seconded by Rev. Davis and carried unanimously, Ord. No. 834 was approved following a roll call vote.

Ord. No. 835, "AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF EASTON AMENDING CHAPTER 28 OF THE TOWN CODE (ZONING) TO ESTABLISH A SEAFOOD PROCESSING USE AND SUPPLEMENTAL STANDARDS PERTAINING TO THE USE."

Mr. Abbatiello asked for consideration how this Ordinance would not affect other businesses. Ms. Curry discussed other businesses steaming crabs for retail sales. She stated that what Chesapeake Brands does is in the wholesale distribution of seafood product. She asked that consideration be given to Chesapeake Brands to move them out of town.

Mr. Montgomery discussed re-structuring the ordinance to restrict seafood processing in BC zoning.

The Town Attorney discussed alternatives to the language in the Ordinance.

Ms. Curry discussed retail versus wholesale.

Mr. Montgomery discussed controls that would have to be put into place and reasonable costs for businesses.

Ms. Curry stated she will work with Ms. DeKarske EEDC and the Department of Commerce to help them consider re-locating.

Ord. No. 835 was tabled.

Review of Invoices.

Invoices from 10/2/24 thru 10/30/24 totaling \$1,401,079.91.

Upon motion by Ms. Curry, seconded by Mr. Montgomery and carried unanimously, invoices totaling \$1,401,079.91 were approved.

Public Participation/Comments.

Stephanie Chester, Trappe, discussed where the Arc is being built. She asked where a crosswalk could be put. She discussed dangers with crossing the street.

Items by Members of the Council.

Ms. Curry stated Happy Waterfowl Festival week. Wished her mother that will be 94 years old this week a Happy Birthday. She discussed the service for Fr. Nash.

Mr. Abbatiello reminded everyone that tomorrow is election day and next Monday is Veterans' Day. Mr. Montgomery stated the service was wonderful for Fr. Nash as well as Rabbi Hyman's retirement celebration.

Rev. Davis stated that seven banners have been installed on Glenwood Avenue. The next shipment will be here tomorrow. He thanked the residents for the robust discussion on Ordinance No. 835. Rev. Davis stated we need to find a way to assure residents in Ward 4 that we are here and listening to their concerns.

Rev. Davis congratulated Mr. Abbatiello for climbing 110 stories in Ocean City. He stated he is

grateful that Mr. Abbatiello is still in shape. Rev. Davis stated he is thankful for Hometown Heroes. He thanked Blake Blackston for their attention to the banners and heroes.

President Gunsallus stated it was a privilege to attend Stage Fright at the Avalon. He stated they did an outstanding job. President Gunsallus thanked EPD for safe streets during Halloween. He stated he also attended the celebration for Rabbi Hyman. He encouraged everyone to get a limited edition hat at the Waterfowl Festival. President Gunsallus wished a Happy Birthday to his father on his 63-year-old birthday.

Adjournment.

At 7:41 p.m., upon motion by President Gunsallus, seconded by Rev. Davis, President Gunsallus adjourned the regularly scheduled meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy M. Ruf, Town Clerk