



Town Council MEETING MINUTES

Monday, November 18, 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
Mr. Don Abbatiello
Mr. David Montgomery
Rev. Elmer Davis

Maureen Curry was excused.

Also present was the Acting Town Manager, Mr. Alan Lowrey, Town Attorney Mrs. Sharon VanEmburch, Deputy Chief Greg Wright, Town Planner Lynn Thomas, Director of Planning and Zoning Miguel Salinas and Town Clerk Mrs. Kathy M. Ruf.

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

Opening remarks and Pledge of Allegiance by Councilmember Dr. Montgomery.

Councilmember Dr. David Montgomery, gave opening remarks and led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Minutes.

Meeting minutes from November 4, 2024.

Upon motion by Mr. Montgomery, seconded by Mr. Abbatiello and carried unanimously, minutes of the November 4, 2024 meeting were approved as written.

Municipal Official Items.

Items by Mayor Cook.

Mayor Cook stated that Easton Utilities recently hosted the Town of Easton and Easton Utilities Joint Annual Meeting. Mayor Cook stated that she had gone up in the bucket truck with Dr. Montgomery.

She stated that Public Works will be putting up holiday lights in the coming week for Christmas. She stated that the Christmas Parade will be December 7.

Mayor Cook congratulated Easton High School Clay Shooting Team.

Mayor Cook welcomed back Sgt. Kellner to the Town of Easton. She congratulated the Waterfowl Festival for a successful weekend. She stated that Public Works will be busy planting 95 trees as well as working to install water fountains in the parks.

Items by Interim Town Manager

Public Assembly Event: Easton Holiday Parade - December 7, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.

Upon motion by Mr. Montgomery seconded by Rev. Davis and carried unanimously, the Public Assembly Event: Easton Holiday Parade was approved.

Items by Town Attorney.

Easton Economic Development Corporation Update.

4th Quarter 2024.

Ms. DeKarske, Executive Director gave an update on the Accommodation Tax Status. She

stated that there are new businesses on the first block of East Dover Street store fronts filled. She said the request for the increase has met reluctance from state representatives. She discussed the temporary ADA access installed by the Town as well as walkway improvements. She stated there are now two entrances to the Visitor's Center. She discussed new restaurants downtown as well as other businesses. The Market at Dover Station, Hambleton House Catering and Events, Nest Home, Fur Babies Pet Resort and Port Street Commons are all new businesses. Ms. DeKarske stated they have two applications for Mistletoe Hall Commerce Park.

They are researching funding options for the crab processing facilities conversion. Ms. DeKarske stated they are working with a recreation business on a location in Easton, potentially Waterside Village. She stated that EEDC is researching revitalization funding for Talbot County Historical Society.

Kurt Fuchs of Easton Utilities has joined the board.

There will be a public meeting December 3 at the library for input regarding Talbot County accommodation tax.

Ms. DeKarske discussed funding sources and their 2025 changes as well as marketing. She stated they are working on Fire and Ice as well as Stews and Brews which is scheduled for February 15 at the firehouse.

Mr. Abbatiello thanked Ms. DeKarske and her staff for their help during the Waterfowl Festival.

Public Hearings.

(cont'd.) PUBLIC HEARING to solicit public comment on Ordinance Number 835, which proposes amendments to Chapter 28 of the Town Code (Zoning). The purpose of the proposed amendments is to revise the Code to specifically regulate seafood processing uses. President Gunsallus read the rules for public hearings and for speaking.

At 5:53 p.m., President Gunsallus brought the continued public hearing to the floor to receive comments on Ordinance Number 835 which is to revise the Code to specifically regulate seafood processing uses.

Zach Smith, on behalf of Mitchell Hughes and Chesapeake Brands Seafood apologized for not being present at the last public hearing. He stated they understand that something needs to be done but they need to keep this business viable. He stated they do not prefer to relocate. He stated that Mitchell has made a significant investment in that space. Mr. Smith stated that a number of employees walk to work. Mr. Smith discussed an odor control solution. He stated they are still waiting on additional information.

Mr. Smith suggested moving forward and omitting the language for existing retroactive uses.

Carla Howell, 311 South Aurora Street, stated that January 2026 is a long time off. She stated it would be marvelous to put in a filter system.

Carolyn Johnson, who works at Chesapeake Brands Seafood, stated this has been a commercial building forever. Mitchell has always wanted to be a good neighbor. Ms. Johnson stated that he wants to be compliant.

President Gunsallus stated the public hearing would be left open until the next meeting.

5:35 PM PUBLIC HEARING to solicit public comment on Ordinance Number 833, "AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF EASTON AMENDING CHAPTER 6 BUILDING CODES OF THE TOWN OF EASTON CODE TO ADOPT THE INTERNATIONAL SWIMMING POOL AND SPA CODE AND AMENDMENTS THERETO."

At 6:03 p.m., President Gunsallus opened the public hearing.

Mr. Diem was present to discuss the proposed Ordinance. He stated it has been adopted by the State of Maryland and needs to be adopted by the end of the year. Mr. Diem stated the state adopted that in December 2023, which covers safety and design of pools and spas. He stated that this is very enforceable as written. Mr. Diem stated that this will bring the town into compliance. He stated this is a step in the right direction to keep residents safe.

Pres. Gunsallus asked if this code will apply to HOA and private pools. Mr. Diem stated it will apply to all pools constructed in the Town of Easton.

Mr. Montgomery asked Mr. Diem if the new code requires barriers. If they put the lockable cover on a spa or automatic cover on an inground swimming pool, it alleviates the need for fenced in yard. Mr. Diem stated that residents should consult with the Building Department before installing a pool. He said ask questions first and the Building Department will help.

Mr. Abbatiello asked when it will go into effect. Mr. Diem stated it needs to be in effect by December 31, 2024.

At 6:11 p.m., President Gunsallus closed the public hearing.

Legislation.

Ord. 833, "AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF EASTON AMENDING CHAPTER 6

BUILDING CODES OF THE TOWN OF EASTON CODE TO ADOPT THE INTERNATIONAL SWIMMING POOL AND SPA CODE AND AMENDMENTS THERETO."

Upon motion by Mr. Abbatiello, seconded by Rev. Davis and carried unanimously, Ord. 833 was approved following a roll call vote of those members present.

Ord. 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."

President Gunsallus continued the public hearing and left this ordinance open until December 2.

Ord. 836, "AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF EASTON GRANTING THE APPLICATION OF SOMERSET WELL DRILLING CO., INC. TO REZONE PROPERTY LOCATED AT LOT 20 IN THE TALBOT COMMERCE PARK (MAP 25 PARCEL 46 LOT 20) FROM AGRICULTURAL (A-1) TO BUSINESS COMMERCIAL (BC)."

Upon motion by Mr. Abbatiello, seconded by Rev. Davis and carried unanimously, Ord. 836 was approved.

Public Participation/Comments.

No one was present to address the council.

Items by Members of the Council:

Mr. Abbatiello offered best wishes for a Happy Thanksgiving. He wished those serving in the military, a safe return home. He stated he had a great time at Waterfowl.

Dr. Montgomery echoed sentiments about Thanksgiving. He stated that those service members not able to be home will hopefully be served a good meal. He stated he is pleased how we are moving toward a resolution for the seafood processing business.

Rev. Davis wished everyone a safe and happy Thanksgiving. He stated he is grateful for the Waterfowl Festival. Wants to speak to constituents. Rev. Davis stated that he hears Ward 4. He stated we need to work collaboratively and make sure the people that live in that community be heard and continue to strive forward for the betterment of the town of Easton.

Pres. Gunsallus celebrated the Waterfowl Festival. He wished everyone a happy Thanksgiving.

President Gunsallus bragged on his lama mater, Easton High School Football which is one step closer to the state title.

President Gunsallus made a motion to move into Closed Session General Provisions 3-305(b)(7) to consult with counsel to obtain legal advice on a legal matter.

At 6:20 p.m., upon motion by Rev. Davis, seconded by Mr. Montgomery and carried unanimously, President Gunsallus moved into Closed Session.

At 6:54 p.m., upon motion by Mr. Montgomery, seconded by Rev. Davis and carried unanimously, President Gunsallus reconvened into the Regular Meeting.

Adjournment.

At 6:55 p.m., 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