



Town Council MEETING MINUTES

Monday, March 3, 2025 - 5:30 PM
Council Chambers, Easton Town Office
14 S Harrison Street

4:30 PM Workshop: Planned Redevelopment (PR) Overlay District Workshop.

PR Overlay District Options.

Mayor Megan JM Cook
Council President Frank Gunsallus
Ms. Maureen Curry
Mr. Don Abbatiello
Mr. David Montgomery
Rev. Elmer Davis

At 4:30 p.m., President Gunsallus called the workshop to order.

Also present was the Acting Town Manager, Mr. Alan Lowrey, Town Engineer Mr. Rick VanEmburch, Town Attorney Mrs. Sharon VanEmburch, Director of Planning and Zoning Mr. Miguel Salinas, Town Planner Mr. Lynn Thomas, Planning and Zoning Commissioners Mr. Frank Klein, Philip Toussaint, and Town Clerk Mrs. Kathy M. Ruf.

Mr. Thomas gave a Historical Overview of the Planned Redevelopment District in the Zoning Ordinance. Mr. Thomas showed the Planned Redevelopment District and discussed parcels with development potentials.

Discussion occurred regarding defining a threshold that would make it necessary to come before the council for approval.

Mr. Thomas discussed the options and the challenge in determining what the threshold would be.

Mr. Thomas discussed what the staff is leaning towards for a recommendation.

Mr. Abbatiello stated he thinks we should keep the PR District but give the council the opportunity to be a part of the approval process for large projects.

Mr. Thomas discussed food trucks and the specificity they are permitted.

The Town Attorney stated the next step would be to receive feedback.

Mr. Abbatiello stated he would like to hear numbers.

The Town Attorney stated they could come back to the council with a recommendation.

Mr. Toussaint stated any enhanced communication would be appreciated as communication is key. He stated he welcomes setting up a program for interaction.

At 5:33 p.m., President Gunsallus recessed the workshop to convene into the regular meeting.

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

At 5:38 p.m., 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 February 17, 2025 meeting.

Upon motion by Ms. Curry, seconded by Mr. Abbatiello and carried unanimously, the minutes of the February 17, 2025 meeting were approved with a correction as submitted by Ms. Curry. She stated she was not present for the February 17, 2025, meeting.

Municipal Official Items.

Items by Mayor Cook.

Mayor Cook stated that Public Works is prepping to get the ball fields ready. She stated that the North Easton Sports Complex fields have been completed this week and the staff is working at Idlewild Park. She stated that Opening Day for baseball will be March 29 and Opening Day for softball will be April 12.

Mayor Cook discussed ongoing projects and stated that sidewalk construction is occurring on

South Aurora Street as well as the Goldsborough and Harrison traffic signal replacement project. She stated that there is a traffic conversion project at five-corners. Thank you to Easton Utilities for the fiber network back to the town office.

Re-Appointment of Board of Canvassers for a two-year term.

Mayor Cook asked for confirmation for the following re-appointments to the Board of Canvassers:

- Jim Bent
- Jennifer Williams
- Beverly Kario

Dr. Montgomery asked if there is an effort to appoint from different parties. Mayor Cook stated that the Town of Easton elections are non-partisan. Upon motion by President Gunsallus, seconded by Mr. Abbatiello and carried unanimously, the appointments were confirmed.

Confirmation of Pete Leshner's Appointment to Easton Utilities Commission for a six-year term.

Mayor Cook stated she is pleased to make the appointment of Mr. Pete Leshner to the Easton Utilities Commission. Mayor Cook outlined Mr. Leshner's accomplishments.

Pres. Gunsallus asked if this position was openly advertised? Mayor Cook advised that this is an appointment to a board, not a job. He asked if Mr. Leshner will be stepping down from the County Council? Mayor Cook stated she did not believe so.

Ms. Curry moved for approval.

Mr. Abbatiello asked if there is any legal issue with serving on the Utilities Commission and being a member of the County Council.

The Town Attorney Ms. VanEmburch stated she just became aware of the appointment and is scurrying for an answer. She stated that the Maryland Constitution does prohibit a person from holding two offices of trust and profit. She stated that the County Council is clearly a position of trust and profit and the question is whether an Easton Utilities Commissioner is an office of trust and profit. She stated there are factors, case law and an AG opinion that goes through that. She stated she has not had a chance to go through everything to make that determination. She stated it relates to the duties of that person but she has not had the chance to really dive into to determine. Ms. VanEmburch stated that she thinks we would get to the conclusion that it is not a second office of trust and profit, but she does not know at this moment.

President Gunsallus stated that he is not comfortable taking this to a vote and thinks the matter should go before the County and Town Ethics Commission to make sure that this checks out. He stated that Mr. Leshner cannot have two masters and he thinks there may be a conflict. Pres. Gunsallus stated he would like to hold until both of those Town and County Ethics Boards have been consulted regarding this.

Dr. Montgomery stated he may have to recuse himself due to the fact he is a close, personal friend of Mr. Leshner's. He stated he thinks he would be a great addition to the Utilities Commission. He stated he would like to have an opportunity to have some discussion with Mayor Cook and in this case, Mr. Horner or just with the Mayor. Hopefully, in an Executive Session to hear her thoughts on the candidates rather than having one candidate put in front of them. Dr. Montgomery stated he would like to have the opportunity to discuss potential appointees privately as an employment matter to get the views of the council members. Mayor Cook discussed the process and stated her and Mr. Horner meet several times and go over a number of recommendations and resumes.

Dr. Montgomery stated he hopes there is an opportunity when the time comes for the town manager position.

Mayor Cook stated there will be an opportunity when the interview process is set up for department heads as well as the council to meet the candidates.

Mayor Cook stated she will sit down with the council prior to introducing the candidates.

Rev. Davis stated he does not have any issues with Mr. Leshner but he thinks it is best to wait to hear what the Town Attorney offers to make sure the town is ok. He stated that perhaps we could call a special meeting to make sure we are on the right side of the law. He stated he would like to make sure we are in compliance.

Ms. Curry stated we should have the Town Attorney suss this out. She asked if there is anywhere in the Town Charter that the council has the responsibility for personnel or board appointments.

The Town Attorney stated the Mayor makes the appointment and the council confirms.

Pres. Gunsallus stated that the council's advice is to get this sussed out and consult the ethics boards to make sure everything is done correctly.

Rev. Davis asked for clarification on what is going to happen.

The Town Attorney stated that she took direction that she needs to get a response back on whether there is any legal issues for Mr. Leshner serving those two offices.

Ms. Curry stated that if there is a ruling from the AG there may not be a need for the Ethics

decision.

The Town Attorney stated she will get an answer this week and the appointment can be addressed at the next meeting pending the Town Attorney's review.

Mayor Cook reminded the listening audience that the next meeting is Tuesday, March 18.

Items by Town Manager

Interim Town Manager Mr. Alan Lowrey stated he has nothing at this time.

Items by Town Attorney.

Town Attorney Ms. VanEmburch stated she has nothing at this time.

Update from Easton Economic Development Corporation (EEDC).

Reports and statistics regarding visitors to Easton.

Ms. Holly DeKarske, Executive Director, gave downtown updates and discussed upcoming events. She stated they are trying to change the weekend date of Chesapeake Fire & Ice. She discussed marketing and sponsorship trade packages. She stated they are researching digital marketing packages that utilizing geofencing. She stated that Jim Marvel was elected to the Board of Directors, Tom Klein has been elected Vice Chair and Jessica Mumbulo has been elected Secretary. She stated they are creating a Main Street Committee for Main Street requirements and oversight. Ms. DeKarske discussed projects. She stated they have had a lot of activity with new businesses relocating/expanding and opening businesses. Dr. Montgomery asked for data regarding the benefits of those coming to town and their spending.

Legislation.

Ord. No. 837, "AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF EASTON AUTHORIZING THE TOWN OF EASTON TO ACCEPT A PARK AND VARIOUS ROADS WHICH ARE PART OF EASTON VILLAGE ON THE TRED AVON RIVER FROM EASTON VILLAGE LLC."

President Gunsallus brought Ordinance No. 837 to the floor for a first reading.

The Town Attorney Ms. VanEmburch stated this is a first reading. She stated that sometimes there are roads from developers that have to be accepted when after they are brought to town standards.

Ms. Curry asked for a public hearing to give the residents a chance to voice their opinion.

Pres. Gunsallus set the public hearing for March 18.

Public Participation/Comments.

Mr. Steve Mangassarian, South Aurora Street, discussed the Farmer's Market and parking constraints on Harrison and Washington Street. He suggested moving the Farmer's Market and gave proposed sites. He asked the council to take under advisement the consideration of moving the Farmer's Market to West Street due to safety concerns and traffic congestion.

Ms. Erin Saunter, Brant Court, Apartment 319, discussed traffic and arteries where vehicles are traveling through town.

Items by Members of the Council:

Ms. Curry reminded everyone that two weeks from today is St. Patrick's Day and she hopes to see everyone at the St. Patty's festivities. She stated the next council meeting will be Tuesday, March 18. Mr. Abbatiello stated that the volunteers we have, seem to give up a lot of their time. He stated their names seem to be popping up everywhere; Tom Kline, Jim Bent, Otis Sampson, to name a few, are on different Boards and Commissions. He hopes there are more volunteers that become interested in serving.

Dr. Montgomery stated he may be marching in the St. Patrick's Day Parade with St. Andrew's Society in light of his Scottish Heritage.

Rev. Davis stated he has no comments.

President Gunsallus stated he has one update to announce and that is he is going to have a son.

Adjournment.

At 6:32 p.m., upon motion by President Gunsallus, seconded by Dr. Montgomery and carried unanimously, President Gunsallus adjourned the regularly scheduled meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy M. Ruf, Town Clerk
