



Town Council MEETING MINUTES

Monday, April 21, 2025 - 5:30 PM
Council Chambers, Easton Town Office
14 S Harrison Street

5:00 PM Police Board.

Police Board Report: Quarter 1

At 5:03 p.m., President Gunsallus called the Police Board meeting to order.

Deputy Chief Wright stated that he had forwarded the Police Board report for Quarter 1. He stated a new hire was in-processed today, Alex Zidani that will start the Academy in July. Deputy Chief Wright stated that the new K-9 is doing a great job and has been credited with six arrests. Mark Schinault, a young PFC officer, is the handler.

Gordon Lee retired and he was the previous Training Coordinator. Eric Kellner is the new Training Coordinator. He stated Officer Kellner is now an active member on the LGIT Law Enforcement Advisory Board. He talked about training that has been re-instated which reduces liability. Since the bicycle training class, there are new trained officers that will begin a 12-hour shift on bicycles starting in May.

Ms. Curry asked what is being spent on wading public attendees before the Council meetings. Deputy Chief stated he does not have that information now. Chief Lowrey stated he recollected that the cost is under \$10,000. Rev. Davis discussed safety measures and the sense of security that is vital.

At 5:12 p.m., President Gunsallus adjourned the Police Board meeting and stated the regular council meeting would reconvene at 5:30 p.m.

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 Acting Town Manager, Mr. Alan Lowrey, Town Attorney Mrs. Sharon VanEmburch, Deputy Chief Greg Wright and Town Clerk Mrs. Kathy M. Ruf.

At 05:30 PM, President Gunsallus called the meeting to order and read a statement saying he wanted to address the room. He stated that he submitted a request to the Attorney General related to the introduction of Ordinance No. 840 which pertains to campaign finance contributions. He stated he does not approve of Ord. 840 moving forward because of the potential conflicts of interest. He read his correspondence into the record and formally submitted the communication as part of the official record. Pres. Gunsallus stated he has contacted the Attorney General's office to request formal guidance on how to proceed appropriately. He asked the candidates to disclose their finances, both contributions and expenses with the state.

Dr. Montgomery stated that there is nothing in this ordinance that applies in this Ordinance, making it retroactive. He stated that municipal elections are not governed by the state; it's only state and county that are under the jurisdiction and municipalities run their own which is why we need to put in something different from what the state has. Discussion occurred on the state's website. Discussion occurred regarding filing campaign contributions on the state's website.

Mr. Abbatiello asked for clarification regarding the timetable for Ordinance No. 840. The Town Attorney stated that Ord. 840 is not intended for this election. The Town Attorney discussed Rule 21 of the Rules of the Council, which says that any member may request consideration of the presiding officer's decision. She stated that there is nothing that gives the Attorney General authority over how the council conducts business and there's nothing in the ordinance that makes it retroactive. Pres. Gunsallus stated he would like to have the ethics board make a determination on Ord. 840. The Town Attorney clarified that Ord. 840 is not being acted on tonight and that it is on the agenda as a

first reading.

Upon motion by Dr. Montgomery for a vote to overrule the chair, seconded by Ms. Curry, and carried 4 to 1 with Pres. Gunsallus voting no, Ord. 840 will remain on the agenda for introduction. Discussion occurred on supermajority.

Opening remarks and Pledge of Allegiance by Councilmember Rev. Davis.

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

Approval of Minutes.

Budget Workshop Minutes of March 26, 2025
Budget Workshop Minutes of March 27, 2025
Joint Workshop Minutes with County Council of March 31, 2025
Budget Workshop Minutes of April 2, 2025
Meeting Minutes of April 7, 2025
Closed Session Minutes of April 7, 2025

Ms. Curry asked about a letter of support that was considered in the minutes of the Joint Workshop with the County Council. Mayor Cook stated it would be forthcoming.

Upon motion by Mr. Abbatiello, seconded by Dr. Montgomery and carried unanimously, the minutes of the March 26, March 27, March 31, April 2, and April 7 were approved as written.

Municipal Official Items.

Items by Mayor Cook.

Mayor Cook gave updates on town projects. She stated that the Complete Streets project is moving forward with stakeholder meetings coming up in May and possibly a council presentation on May 19. Sh stated that the study will be completed by the end of the fiscal year. On April 10, the County hosted their Community Appreciation Breakfast at the Tidewater. She stated that UMMS Shore Regional Health was an award recipient along with the town and county for retaining the hospital in Easton. Mayor Cook stated past town council members were invited that helped with this endeavor.

Confirmation of Appointment to the Waterfowl Festival Commission.

Mayor Cook asked for confirmation of Dennis Cassidy to the Waterfowl Festival Commission. Upon motion by Ms. Curry, seconded by Mr. Abbatiello and carried unanimously, Mr. Cassidy's appointment was confirmed.

Mayor Cook gave a shout-out to Easton Utilities. She stated that Hagerstown was hit by a storm which knocked out the power to over 7000 of their customers. Hagerstown reached out to Easton Utilities and requested crews for mutual aid and assistance. In response, two line trucks with five line workers left early on Easter to help. We at the town and Easton Utilities are appreciate of their commitment to not only our residents but to those in need across the state. Mayor Cook stated that Easton Utilities employees were featured on the local news. Mayor Cook congratulated Maryland's Terps Lacrosse team that finished 10 and 2. Mayor Cook quashed rumors that her and Mr. Abbatiello are not related, either by blood or marriage.

FY2025/26 Budget Presentation.

Mayor Cook presented the FY2025-2026 Budget Presentation and asked that the Budget Public Hearing be set for May 5, 2025. She discussed the vision and projects and the service of the departments of the Town of Easton. Mayor Cook stated that the vision is "to be the best place to live and work on Maryland's Eastern Shore." She stated that taxes in Easton have not been raised since 2008. Mayor Cook stated that Easton is a premier destination on Maryland's eastern shore. She discussed the commitment to finishing the ARPA-funded projects that are still underway. She discussed the goal to increasing walkability and connectedness throughout town. Mayor Cook discussed the partnership with Easton EDC. She discussed the Park Department expenditures and amenities. Mayor Cook stated that Easton is a special place. She stated that it is time to focus on maintaining what we have. This year's budget is slightly less than last year but it is balanced, and strives to maintain service, support our staff, and focuses on the tools and equipment and training needed to do the job well. She is proposing the same tax rate of \$.52 per \$100 of assessed value in the FY26 Budget. Mayor Cook stated that as we look ahead, our paths are clear. To continue

building on the progress we've made to care for the investments entrusted to us and to deliver on the priorities that matter most to our residents.
Mr. Abbatiello asked if the budget would be posted. Mayor Cook stated it has been posted on the Town's website, all 150 pages.
President Gunsallus set the Budget Public Hearing for May 5, 2025 at 5:40 p.m.

Items by Town Manager

Acceptance of the Audit as presented by CliftonLarsonAllen LLP.
Upon motion by President Gunsallus, seconded by Mr. Abbatiello, the audited financial statements as presented by CliftonLarsonAllen LLP were accepted.

Items by Town Attorney.

Ms. VanEmburch, the Town Attorney, stated that the Easton Village MOU for Vicker's Park should be forthcoming but the HOA has asked for additional time.
The Town Attorney reminded the President of the Council to read the Closed Session Summary from the April 7 meeting.
President Gunsallus read the Closed Session statement.

Presentations.

Proclamation in Honor of Roger Bollman's Service to the Town of Easton.
Mayor Cook presented a Proclamation in Honor of Roger Bollman's service to the Town of Easton.
Mr. Bollman gave remarks and stated he had tremendous help especially from the Public Works.

Ms. Marilyn Neal, Executive Director, Neighborhood Service Center to discuss budget shortfall.
Ms. Neal was present to discuss the Neighborhood Service shortfall. She stated they are looking for \$33,000 to continue their operations. She stated they did not get the usual Federal funding. She stated she is present to answer any questions from the council.
Ms. Curry asked for clarification regarding the NSC funding request.
Ms. Neal stated she is providing services with discretionary funding. Ms. Neal stated that the number of families receiving services is increasing with 68% of families living in Easton.
Rev. Davis asked if there is funding in the FY2025 Budget. c
Mayor Cook discussed a commitment from the Affordable Housing Board, \$5000 from Easton Utilities and Town of Easton funds that will make up the \$33,000.

Legislation.

Ord. No. 839, "AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF EASTON ESTABLISHING THE TOWN BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2025/26.
Pres. Gunsallus introduced Ord. 839. He set the public hearing for May 5, 2025 at 5:40 p.m.
Ms. Curry discussed the decrease in benefits. Mayor Cook stated that the Town did not make the OPEB payment for civilians.

Ord. No. 841, "AN ORDINANCE TO PROVIDE FOR THE RAISING BY TAXATION THE AMOUNT NECESSARY TO PAY THE ORDINARY EXPENSES OF THE TOWN OF EASTON AND TO PROVIDE FOR THE PAYMENT OF INTEREST ON THE VARIOUS BOND ISSUES AND THE REDUCTION OF CERTAIN BONDS AND NOTES FOR THE PERIOD OF TWELVE MONTHS AND SETTING THE INTEREST AND PENALTY FOR DELINQUENT BILLS, COMMENCING ON JULY 1, 2025 AND ENDING JUNE 30, 2026."
Pres. Gunsallus brought Ord. No. 841 to the floor for introduction.

Ord. No. 840, "AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF EASTON AMENDING CHAPTER 2 OF THE TOWN OF EASTON CODE TO ADD CAMPAIGN FINANCE PROVISIONS."
Pres. Gunsallus brought Ord. No. 840 to the floor for introduction.
The Town Attorney stated there are a lot of jurisdictions that have implemented like provisions.
Rev. Davis stated this gives everyone a chance for transparency.
President Gunsallus set a workshop for May 19 at 4:30 p.m.

Public Participation/Comments.

Mr. Richard Esola, 29200 Holly Road, asked why it was so urgent to put the drafting of Ordinance No. 840 in the press.

It was acknowledged that participation comments are to hear concerns and take them into consideration and not to answer questions.

Mr. McBride, a student at Washington College, discussed his concerns with Ord. 840.

Ms. Judy Esola, 29200 Holly Road, questioned why Ord. 840 has been brought up now. She stated that campaign finances should be transparent. She stated she questions the character of the Town of Easton right before an election.

Mr. Terrance Bernard, Easton, Maryland read comments from Shari Wilcoxon regarding state campaign guidelines and state laws.

Dr. Montgomery asked that the record reflect that Ms. Wilcoxon does not live within the town limits.

Ms. Catherine Nobles, 7310 Dale Ave. discussed a video and stated the people of Easton are interested in what's happening in the town.

Mr. Noah Matten, 128 S West Street, stated he is perplexed with the proposed legislation regarding financial reporting.

Mr. Wes Hagood, 29716 Janets Way, asked why Ordinance No. 840 is being introduced at this time and encouraged everyone to use the state's campaign reporting website.

Ms. Tina Grace Jones, 29424 Whitetail Drive, Cordova, discussed the timeline for financial disclosure on the state website.

Items by Members of the Council:

Ms. Curry thanked Rev. Davis for his beautiful opening remarks. Ms. Curry asked that for a calendar note for May 15, at 7 pm. She stated she is hosting a meeting at EVFD regarding Chapel Farms neighborhood.

Mr. Abbatiello attended Coffee with a Cop. He discussed various food distributions throughout town to help those less fortunate.

Dr. Montgomery thanked Rev. Davis for his remarks. He discussed financial reporting.

Rev. Davis stated that strength lies in integrity, which is everything.

Pres. Gunsallus thanked EEDC and all those involved with the Easter Egg hunt. He thanked all those that attended tonight's meeting.

Adjournment.

At 7:27 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