



Town Council MEETING MINUTES

Monday, June 16, 2025 - 5:30 PM
Council Chambers, Easton Town Office
14 S Harrison Street

4:30 PM Campaign Finance Workshop.

Mayor Megan JM Cook
President Don Abbatiello
Ms. Maureen Curry
Mr. Robert Rankin
Mr. David Montgomery
Rev. Elmer Davis

Also present was the Interim Town Manager, Mr. Alan Lowrey, Town Attorney Mrs. Sharon VanEmburch, and Town Clerk Mrs. Kathy M. Ruf.

At 04:30 PM, President Abbatiello called the meeting to order.

Discussion of Ord. 840, "AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF EASTON AMENDING CHAPTER 2 OF THE TOWN OF EASTON CODE TO ADD CAMPAIGN FINANCE PROVISIONS."

The Town Attorney, Ms. VanEmburch discussed the proposed Ordinance and suggested the Council go line by line through the draft legislation.

Mr. Rankin discussed adding a section addressing transparency and definitions. He sent suggested revisions regarding naming a treasurer to the Town office.

Mr. Rankin stated he is more about transparency rather than how much is contributed.

Discussion occurred regarding restrictions on campaign contributions. The Town Attorney stated that the ones she has researched mostly have a \$1,000 limit.

The workshop adjourned at 5:20 p.m.

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

At 05:30 PM, President Abbatiello called the meeting to order.

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

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

Approval of Minutes.

Meeting minutes from June 2, 2025.

Upon motion by Ms. Curry, seconded by Rev. Davis and carried unanimously, the minutes of the June 2, 2025 meeting were approved as written.

Municipal Official Items.

Items by Mayor Cook.

Mayor Cook reported that it had been a busy weekend in the Town of Easton. We had the No Kings Rally, the Tour de Talbot and The Pride Festival. she thanked EPD for their hard work and for keeping Easton safe. She stated that all events went smoothly and we've had good reports so far from the community. Mayor Cook thanked the Prager family for the First Responders Fifth Annual Appreciation Celebration. She thanked the first responders for their support. Mayor Cook reported that the Harrison Street paving is complete and the work at the corner of Goldsborough and Harrison should be finished by the end of the week. Mayor Cook reported that the Matthewstown Run Pavilion should be installed tomorrow and the Glebe Road sidewalk is scheduled to be completed this week. She thanked Public Works for all the great work that has been done. She reminded those listening that the Planning Commission has a workshop tomorrow and also on July 10 to discuss the Comprehensive Plan. She discussed the Planning Commission's upcoming agenda for June 24.

Mayor Cook asked for a Closed Session at the end of today's meeting.
Mayor Cook introduced and welcomed two of our newest police officers that recently graduated last week, Officer Parker and Officer Galan.

Confirmation of Easton Utilities Commissioner Appointment.

Mayor Cook asked for the appointment of Ms. Cheryl Jenkins to the Easton Utilities Commission. Ms. Jenkins will be replacing Buck Duncan who is finishing his second term. Ms. Jenkins has an extensive experience in HR and is senior HR business partner for the Boeing company's defense, space and securities divisions. Ms. Jenkins has a Bachelor's Degree in HR, a minor in finance and an MBA from the University of Maryland. Upon motion by Rev. Davis, seconded by Ms. Curry and carried unanimously, Ms. Jenkins' appointment was confirmed.

Items by Town Manager

Chief Lowrey, Interim Town Manager stated he has nothing at this time.

Items by Town Attorney.

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

Public Hearing.

5:35 p.m. The purpose of this hearing is to solicit public comment on Ordinance No. 842 which proposes amendments to Chapter 28 of the Town Code (Zoning). The purpose of the proposed amendment is to revise a portion of the Code which regulates the use "seafood processing."

At 5:37 p.m., President Abbatiello opened the 5:35 p.m., scheduled public hearing to hear comments on Ordinance No. 842 which proposes amendments to Chapter 28 of the Town Code (Zoning).

Zach Smith, on behalf of Mitch Hughes and Chesapeake Brand Seafood, was present to address the Ordinance. He stated the business cannot achieve zero odor standard. Mr. Smith stated that the system was installed last week. Mr. Smith stated that Chesapeake Brand Seafood employs 20 people. He stated that he hopes the Town can create a standard that keeps him operable. Mr. Smith stated that they think the odor is coming from the steaming operations and they have installed a system to address the odor. He stated the vendor will monitor the system and make tweaks where needed and solve the problem. He asked that the town revise the language to something that is achievable, address the concerns of the citizens but minimizes the effect of the business.

President Abbatiello asked for public comments.

Emily Stone, 417 S Aurora Street, lives across from the facility and has a young family. Ms. Stone stated that she hopes the council makes a decision that is for the betterment of everyone.

Douglass Kerr, 211 East Earle Avenue, stated that he's happy to hear the odor control system has been installed. He stated that the language passed in December is strong and enforceable.

Carla Howell, 311 S Aurora, lived here a long time, truly believes we can do better. She stated that the odor control is not 100%. Ms. Howell wants a peaceful and healthy standard of living.

Melissa Corley, 211 Stuart Street, stated Ord. 842 is too vague and does not right the wrong. She stated that Ord. 835 is stronger and solves the problem.

Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio, representing Talbot Waterman's Association, understands the concerns and respectfully respects that as you consider the legislation; consider a balanced approach that addresses the concerns of the watermen as well as the concerns of the neighbors.

Kim Givens-Neff showed his support for Mitch. She stated the town should be to blame as the location was approved for the business. She stated he is willing and eager to address the concerns of the neighbors.

Donna Ray Bramble, Bramble Body Shop, discussed the town issuing a permit for the business then asking them to move. She asked how businesses can trust the Town of Easton. Ms. Bramble asked the Town to think hard about their decisions.

Tom Richard, former pastor in Cordova stated his daughter, Sarah Hughes, is married to Mitch Hughes. He suggested the Town, the residents and the business work together.

Peter Maloney, 301 S Aurora Street, stated he has nothing against Mitch Hughes. He stated he does not want to see a small business fail. He stated that Ord. 842 is not enforceable. He stated they do not want to smell this or get used to the odor. He stated Ord. 835 states no odor detectable. Mr. Maloney stated this business is meat processing.

Ryker Chase, crabbed for Mitch Hughes, stated he would like to get into meat packing. He stated he is worried about setting a precedent for the eastern shore. He stated that being a waterman is tough right now. Mr. Chase stated that enforcing this ordinance may lead to the

businesses' demise as Mitch Hughes has invested in his business. Carolyn Johnson, Mitch Hughes' aunt, stated that the building was a canning processing building prior to the seafood and before that was milk. She stated that Mitch Hughes has been treated unfair and things have been said that are not true. Ms. Johnson stated that the council needs to think about this as there are people at the state that are very interested in this whole situation. At 6:09 p.m., President Abbatiello closed the public hearing.

Legislation.

Resolution No. 6206, as amended, "A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN OF EASTON REVISING THE TOWNS LICENSE, APPLICATION, PERMITS, INSPECTIONS, CERTIFICATE AND OTHER FEES."

Interim Town Manager stated that what is before the council this evening is an amendment as the Impact Fees needed to be revised.

Upon motion by Mr. Montgomery seconded by Ms. Curry and carried unanimously, Resolution No. 6206, as amended, was approved.

Ord. 840, "AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF EASTON AMENDING CHAPTER 2 OF THE TOWN OF EASTON CODE TO ADD CAMPAIGN FINANCE PROVISIONS."

Ord. 840 was tabled until further discussion. President Abbatiello stated there will be another workshop scheduled regarding this matter.

Ord. 842, "AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF EASTON AMENDING CHAPTER 28 OF THE TOWN CODE (ZONING) TO REVISE THE SUPPLEMENTAL STANDARDS PERTAINING TO THE SEAFOOD PROCESSING USE."

Mr. Rankin stated he recently visited Chesapeake Seafood and was pleased to see they have put the odor control system in place. He stated he is optimistic but we need to see how that plays out. He stated he appreciates all that have commented on both sides of this issue. Ms. Curry stated she has also met with the representative and she is in a wait and see mode. Dr. Montgomery stated he grateful to those who spoke this evening. He discussed finding a solution that is tolerable.

Upon motion by Dr. Montgomery seconded by Pres. Abbatiello and carried unanimously; Ord. 842, was not approved following a roll call vote 1 (in favor) to 4 (against) with Ms. Curry voting in favor of Ord. 842. President Abbatiello stated that Ord. 835 is upheld.

Rev. Davis stated we need to wait a couple weeks to see how this is mitigated.

Public Participation/Comments.

Pres. Abbatiello asked for public comments.

Vicki Caruthers, Idlewild Avenue, stated she has experienced odor from the seafood processing. She thanked the elected officials for agreeing to do this job.

Items by Members of the Council.

Mr. Rankin congratulated the Pride Festival and thanked EPD for managing and keeping everyone safe.

Dr. Montgomery thanked everyone in the room.

Dr. Montgomery stated he is the representative on the Talbot County Economic Commission. He reported on their recent meeting moving as the Town is moving forward on the Comprehensive Plan. The county is updating their Comprehensive Plan as well. The county is also appointing a Housing Coordinator. Talbot County Economic Commission is developing their own strategic plan.

Rev. Davis commended the community for diversity during these challenging times. He extended his gratitude to the Town of Easton employees for their dedication and hard work that helped to make Easton look their best as well as the Easton Police Department, who helped to keep all those participants safe. Rev. Davis thanked all those that participating this evening.

Pres. Abbatiello thanked the Prager family for donating \$500,000 to the training facility. He discussed recent events he attended. He stated he hopes the litigation this evening helps resolve the issue.

CLOSED SESSION: General Provisions Article § 3-305(b)(7) To consult with counsel to obtain legal advice on a legal matter.

At 6:39 p.m., upon motion by Rev. Davis, seconded by Dr. Montgomery and carried unanimously, Pres. Abbatiello moved into Closed Session General Provisions Article 3-305(b)(7) to consult with counsel to obtain legal advice on a legal matter.

At 7:42 p.m., upon motion by Rev. Davis, seconded by Dr. Montgomery, and carried unanimously, President Abbatiello moved out of Closed Session.

Adjournment.

At 7:43 p.m., upon motion by Ms. Curry, seconded by Dr. Montgomery and carried unanimously, President Abbatiello adjourned the regularly scheduled meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy M. Ruf, Town Clerk