Town Council
MEETING MINUTES
Monday, August 4, 2025 - 4:30 PM
Council Chambers, Easton Town Office
14 S Harrison Street

4:30 PM Workshop: Campaign Finance

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

President Don Abbatiello
Ms. Maureen Curry
Mr. Robert Rankin
Mr. David Montgomery
Rev. Elmer Davis

Mayor Cook was excused.

Also present was the Town Manager, Mr. Andy Kitzrow, Town Attorney Mrs. Sharon VanEmburgh, and Town Clerk Mrs. Kathy M. Ruf.

President Abbatiello called the workshop to order at 4:36 p.m.

Town Attorney Ms. VanEmburgh discussed the draft legislation. She discussed changes that were previously considered.

Discussion resumed on Section 2-58 Restrictions on Use of Campaign Funds. The council suggested adding signs to that section.
Council discussed 2-59 Campaign Finance Reports. The Council suggested adding “by the candidate” to C as well as adding “if applicable” to D(1). Everyone was in consensus with other timing of reports.
For 2-59E, it was decided that receipts would not be necessary for documentation of loans for each report, but candidates should save receipts in case they are audited in the future. The loan documentation and bank statement with final report should be sufficient.
Section 2-60 Independent Expenditures. 48 hours to file seems too short. That section was changed to one week. Also, it is necessary to have the campaign materials have an authority line and a disclaimer that they are not made in coordination with a candidate.
Section 2-61 Violations and Penalties. Any fines must be paid before seated and sworn in. In B, add business, organization, or political committee not just person.

Rev. Davis asked that the council be given the opportunity to look at the draft legislation again and have feedback from their constituents.
President Abbatiello stated the council can look at the proposed legislation, then a public hearing could be set at the upcoming council meeting.

At 5:06 p.m., President Abbatiello recessed the workshop and stated that the regular meeting would convene at 5:30 p.m.

5:30 PM: Call to Order by President Abbatiello.
At 5:30 p.m., President Abbatiello called the meeting to order.

Closed Session statement from 7/21/25 meeting.

Closed Session Summary.
President Abbatiello read the Closed Session Summary from July 21, 2025 into the record.

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

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

Approval of Minutes.

Meeting minutes from 7/21/25.

Upon motion by Mr. Rankin seconded by Rev. Davis and carried unanimously, minutes of the July 21, 2025 meeting were approved as written.

Municipal Official Items.

Items by Town Manager.

Mr. Kitzrow gave Town of Easton updates and stated that the East Avenue storm drain improvement project has begun. He stated there is visible progress at the UMMS Shore Health System hospital site with construction going vertical. Mr. Kitzrow advised that the Town has taken delivery of a new automated trash truck and it is in operation this week. He invited everyone to National Night Out, which will occur at Moton Park Tuesday August 5, from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Zoning Certificate Request for Amplified Music at Tidewater Inn.

Mr. Kitzrow discussed the Zoning Certificate request. The wedding is scheduled for August 31, 2025. Mr. Kitzrow stated that the bride did outreach efforts to neighbors, letting them know of their scheduled wedding and there were no concerns from those that responded. Ms. Curry discussed her concerns. Her recommendation was not to approve her request. Mr. Montgomery thought the ordinance regarding noise would be enforced although the council granted an exemption for this earlier in the year with a late-night party at the Hummingbird Inn. He thought the request would have to be approved or a good reason given why it was not.
Mr. Rankin does not oppose. He stated that the applicant should continue to reach out to the neighborhood and local businesses.
Upon motion by Dr. Montgomery, seconded by Mr. Rankin, the exemption was granted 3 to 2 with Ms. Curry and Mr. Abbatiello opposing.

Memo from Mayor Cook regarding Boards and Commissions (re)Appointments.

Upon motion by Ms. Curry, seconded by Mr. Rankin and carried unanimously, Jennifer Williams was re-appointed to the Housing Authority, and the Ethics Commission.
Upon motion by Rev. Davis, seconded by Ms. Curry, James Carr was appointed to the Historic District Commission for the remainder of a three-year term expiring June 28, 2026.

Items by Town Attorney.

Letter from Easton Planning and Zoning Commission Chair regarding proposed PUD-General Application for Fox Chase Estates.

The Town Attorney, Ms. VanEmburgh discussed the PUD application for Fox Chase Estates. She stated that the Planning and Zoning Commission recommended denial of the application as it is inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan. She stated that the letter to the council reflects the denial.
President Abbatiello stated that the applicant's attorney is present if anyone has any questions for the applicant's attorney. Mr. Wagner is present as well.
Rev. Davis stated he needs more time to review this to get clear understanding.
Ms. Curry stated there is a workshop planned.
The Town Attorney Ms. VanEmburgh, stated there may not be enough time at the workshop to discuss this denial.
Dr. Montgomery suggested we hear from the Chair of the Planning and Zoning Commission.
Mr. Abbatiello stated that he would like to give the council a chance to look over the letter.
Dr. Montgomery acknowledged that we received the letter.

Fire Board.

Chief JR Dobson was present and discussed statistics. Daryl Caldwell updated on the training ground. The facility will serve Easton and surrounding communities, including police, fire and EMS, with features like moving walls, simulation capabilities and a centralized training space. The department is on pace for 1,000 incidents in 2025.
The beer fest fundraiser has been canceled due to a conflict for vendors.

Presentations.

Proclamation recognizing William W.W. "Buck" Duncan for his distinguished 12-year term as Commissioner for Easton Utilities.

President and CEO John Horner gave comments regarding Mr. Duncan's selfless leadership Buc Duncan gave to Easton Utilities.
Councilmember Curry presented WW "Buck" Duncan with a Town of Easton proclamation for his service to the Easton Utilities Commission.
Mr. Duncan was present and gave comments regarding his tenure as Commissioner.

Oath of Office to be administered to Shirl Jenkins for a six-year term on Easton Utilities Commission.
Ms. Shirl Jenkins was present to take the Oath of Office for her term on the Easton Utilities Commission fora six-year term.

Mr. Don Bibb, Executive Director of the Housing Commission of Talbot County to discuss the redevelopment of the Doverbrook Apartment Project.
Mr. Bibb was present to discuss the redevelopment of Doverbrook. Ms. Jennifer Williams, Chairperson, was also present.
Mr. Bibb stated they are in the middle of a debate about a policy change related to how vouchers are issued for that project. He stated they have received no comments from the public. A public hearing was scheduled for July 28, although it was postponed. HUD determined there was a significant amendment which requires an additional 45 days for public comment. He stated they are waiting for a response from HUD. HUD determined that it had to be advertised in the newspaper. Mr. Bibb stated that most of their client base relies on social media, which resulted in 145 applications within a three-day period. HUD said it has to go out to public comment. He is asking for intervention from HUD.
Ms. Curry asked if it had been advertised in the newspaper. Mr. Bibb stated they have.
Ms. Williams stated that there has been no public comment.
Mr Bibb stated there are 64 total units available. He stated everyone would still need to meet eligibility requirements.Mr. Bibb stated 24 were previous tenants; most received vouchers and moved to other locations.
Rev. Davis asked when the property will be ready for residents. Ms. Williams stated they have been ready since April but it is really in HUD's lap.
Mr. Bibb stated the worst-case scenario would be September 21 or September 22.
Mr. Bibb stated they are ready to move forward and open the wait list and fill those units within 30 days.
Ms. Williams suggested asking state representatives to intervene.
Rev. Davis asked that they reach out to the public regarding the situation.

Ms. Holly DeKarske, Executive Director, to give update on EDC and Strategic Plan.
Holly DeKarske and Tom Klein were present to discuss the Easton Economic Development Corporation and introduced the Strategic Plan.
Ms. DeKarske stated the Board has elected an Executive Committee. They have put together a list of the first 100 days.
Ms. DeKarske discussed the Easton EDC FY2026-2028 Strategic 100-day plan with four main priorities: business, retention, expansion and recruitment to make Easton a premier destination.
Ms. DeKarske stated they want to be pedestrian-friendly as well as provide guest transportation.
Ms. Curry asked that the Board members in attendance this evening be recognized.

Review of Invoices.

Invoices from 7/1 - 7/31/2025 totaling $3,249,020.88.

Upon motion by Ms. Curry, seconded by Mr. Montgomery and carried unanimously, invoices totaling $3,249,020.88 were reviewed.

Public Participation/Comments.
Terrence Bailey, stated February 14 is the 208th birthday for Frederick Douglass. Mr. Bailey discussed plans for a parade and fireworks.
Dr. Montgomery discussed the steps for a firework display. Mr. Bailey stated he hopes to have it over the Tred Avon River from a barge for all those on The Hill to view.
Dr. Montgomery and the Town Attorney will work on a list of what needs to be done for Mr. Bailey's review. Mr. Abbatiello stated Fire Marshall approval may be necessary as well.

Ms. Emily Stone, 417 S Aurora Street, questioned how Easton cooperates with ICE. Deputy Chief Wright stated they have no notice regarding ICE, they have no investigation with them and they are

not involved in any apprehension. He discussed outreach efforts to the community.
Mr. Kitzrow suggested reaching out to local state officials to voice their concerns.

Lisa Stone, 204 Brookletts Avenue, stated she understands tht this is a federal program and discussed that tax dollars are being used to disrupt the community. She asked the council to make a statement regarding the disruption of our community by masked invaders.

Committee Reports by Members of the Council.

Ms. Curry, attended Talbot County Economic Development and stated that they are embarking on a strategic plan for tourism as well. Ms. Curry stated she looks forward to bringing knowledge and expertise to that group. She commended Tom Klein on his help with EEDC's strategic plan.
Mr. Rankin, stated he attended a Talbot County worksession last week to discuss the potential formation of a Senior Citizens Task Force that would be tasked with evaluating and making recommendations to the county council regarding housing, transportation and meals. He discussed an upcoming meeting this Thursday with a report to come to the council.
Dr. Montgomery commented on the culture and friendliness of the EU employees.

Items by Members of the Council.

Ms. Curry stated she feels obligated to mention she is distraught over the apprehension of Daniel Fuentes. She stated she feels that this administration has turned their back on honest, hardworking people like her father that came here to make a better life for their family. Ms. Curry stated she does not have any answers but she plans to put pressure on regarding his situation.
Mr. Ranking reminded National Night Out tomorrow evening. He stated this is a great opportunity to support the community. Mr. Rankin thanked EVFD for all the great work they are doing. He stated it is important they are supported. He stated we are also fortunate to have Easton Utilities. He discussed a recent tour. He addressed the issue with ICE that has sparked outrage and fear. He asked the community to continue to contact representatives.
Dr. Montgomery welcomed Mr. Rankin on the golf team.
Dr. Montgomery stated there is a review of the Comprehensive Plan tomorrow at 2:00 p.m. He stated he would like to see a way for law-abiding citizens to gain their status to live in the United States and become part of our community.
Elmer Davis thanked Easton Utilities for their leadership insight and the recent appointment of Shirl Jenkins. He discussed ICE's apprehension of citizens and stated that one should never live in fear. He stated it is vital that this community come together for the betterment of the community. Rev. Davis clarified the Town of Easton is not working with ICE. He discussed community outreach talking to the hispanic and latino communities.
Pres. Abbatiello thanked everyone for their comments and prayers. He said these are troubling events. He stated there is something wrong with the system. President Abbatiello encouraged those to write to their representatives to change the law if they are unhappy with what is going on and how things are being handled.
President Abbatiello reminded everyone to come together tomorrow night at Moton Park 5-8 and support our police and other representatives.

CLOSED SESSION: General Provisions Article § 3-305(b)(4) To consider a matter that concerns the proposal for a business or industrial organization to locate, expand, or remain in the State.

At 7:15 p.m., upon motion by Mr. Rankin, seconded by Ms. Curry and carried unanimously, President Abbatiello moved into Closed Session.

At 7:51 p.m., upon motion by Rev. Davis, seconded by Dr. Montgomery and carried unanimously, President Abbatiello moved back into the regular meeting.

Adjournment.

At 7:51 p.m., upon motion by Rev. Davis, seconded by Montgomery and carried unanimously, President Abbatiello adjourned the regularly scheduled meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

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Kathy M. Ruf, Town Clerk