

Town of Easton Parking Workshop Summary

Date: December 1, 2025, 4:30 p.m. **Location:** Town of Easton Council Chambers, 14 S Harrison Street, Easton MD **Topic:** Proposed Changes to Parking (Pilot Program)

Attendees

- Mayor Megan Cook (Presenter), Town Manager Andrew Kitzrow
 - Chief Alan Lowrey and Deputy Chief Greg Wright (Town Police)
 - Sam Medail (CEO, Slice Technology)
 - Mike Whedon (President/COO, Slice Technology)
 - Mayor Megan Cook, Town Attorney Sharon VanEmburch, Town Manager Andy Kitzrow, Town Council Members President Abbatiello, Councilmembers Ms. Curry, Mr. Rankin (joined 4:42p.m.), Dr. Montgomery, Rev Davis , Town Engineer Rick VanEmburch and EEDC Executive Director Holly Dekarske and Town Clerk Kathy Ruf.
 - Town Staff
 - Representatives from Downtown Merchants
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Main Topics Discussed

1. Historical Context and Need for Change

- Paid parking has existed in Easton for over 80 years (since 1939/1940, originally \$0.10/hr., then \$0.25/hr. for 50+ years).
 - Existing meters are outdated, unreliable, unrepairable, and parts (for quarters) are unavailable.
 - Various attempts to modernize parking since 2018 included:
 - Contracting with Alleron (AI-based plate reading, kiosks in two lots)
 - Use of wayfaring maps and MEO (meter enforcement officer) app
 - Significant system issues: enforcement paused during COVID, disruptions from downtime, data loss.
 - Consultations with downtown merchants highlighted:
 - Ineffective/confusing current system
 - Need for easy-to-use parking
 - Desire to preserve free/short-term street parking for shoppers/diners
 - Keep employees/business owners from occupying prime short-term spots
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2. Overview of the Proposed Pilot Program

Duration:

- One-year pilot, targeting data collection from initiation through January 2027 (enforcement starting February 2026).

Scope:

- Encompasses all downtown street parking and 15 parking lots (13 downtown, 2 on east end).

Technology:

- "Scan to Park" platform (Slice Technology):
 - No app download or sign-in required.
 - Users scan QR code or text a number to initiate a session.
 - Real-time messaging customizable for events, holidays, or merchant promotions.
 - Demo signage displayed; live website at scantoparkeaston.com (currently in placeholder mode).

Parking Rules:

- **On-Street Parking:**
 - 2 hours free, 3-hour maximum (must scan in for any duration; no re-starting the clock by re-parking).
 - Pay \$8 for a third hour.
 - Enforcement zone covers main commercial area (details highlighted on map).
 - **Parking Lots:**
 - 6 lots (37% of 671 available spaces) remain free, all-day (do not require QR scan).
 - 2 "red" lots (library, Dover) are free with 3-hour limit (require scan).
 - Remaining 7 lots (372 spaces) are paid/day pass parking.
 - Day pass: \$10; hourly rates: \$2/hr for first hour, up to \$6 for three hours.
 - **Passes:**
 - Monthly standard pass: \$30 (all lots except 1 and 2)
 - Monthly premium pass: \$50 (includes all lots)
 - No annual pass (previously \$175/year).
 - Passholder benefit: Do not need to scan; license plate is recognized automatically.
 - Subscription auto-renews monthly.
 - Intended for employees, regular commuters, or those wanting higher flexibility.
 - No more bumper stickers; back-in parking allowed if the plate is visible.
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3. Enforcement Mechanics and Improvements

- Relies on plate scanning, zone tracking, and automated session enforcement:
 - Replaces previous labor-intensive methods (writing down tags by hand, physical ticketing, slow citation process).
 - Direct ticket printing by enforcement officers using portable printers.
 - Immediate QR code payment options for tickets.
 - Warnings and educational materials distributed during initial "no penalty" month (January).
 - Supports both on-foot and potential future car-mounted enforcement with license plate recognition systems.
- Enforcement hours: 8am–4pm, Monday to Saturday.
 - No enforcement after 4pm or on Sundays (e.g., no scanning required for dinner crowds after 5pm).
 - Publicly accessible info and flexible signage/messaging.
- **Addressing Community Concerns:**
 - Merchants' complaints about employees/business owners occupying premium street spots directly addressed by restricting on-street parking.
 - Emphasis on educating public, including business-card-sized guides for merchants to share.
 - Messaging and signage to be clear about the need to scan even for free time block.

4. Budget, Revenue, and Financial Planning

- Current annual MEO and enforcement cost: ~\$150,000 (salary, benefits, insurance).
 - Current parking-related revenue: \$50–60K/year (from passes, fines, meters).
 - Goal: Cover enforcement costs first; surplus to be earmarked for parking-related capital improvements (e.g., Lot Two repairs).
 - Revenues to feed into the general fund; possibility of more detailed tracking or future enterprise fund if program proves effective.
 - All transactions auditable; data will be used for both operational and economic development tracking.
 - **Vendor Fee Arrangement:**
 - Slice Technology receives a 30% net revenue share (after hard costs/processing).
 - Town receives 70% of regular parking income.
 - Citations: \$5 per citation goes to the platform provider, remainder to the town.
 - Example: \$4 parking fee = \$2.80 town, \$1.20 Slice; \$500 handicap parking ticket = \$495 town, \$5 processor.
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5. Fees and Penalties

- **On-Street Parking Fees:**
 - Free for first 2 hours, \$8 for third hour (max 3 hours, no extensions).
 - **Lot Parking Fees:**
 - \$2 first hour, \$4 second, \$6 third; Day pass for \$10.
 - Monthly pass: \$30 (standard), \$50 (premium including lots 1 & 2).
 - **Citation/Fines:**
 - Standard municipal citations, processed via system.
 - Handicap parking fine proposed increase to \$500 (from \$150), though towing is not standard practice.
 - Potential for additional fines as needed (e.g., for sliding, extended stays).
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6. Signage, Communication, and Rollout

- Approximately 100 new signs planned, tailored for lot or on-street use.
 - Mockups evolving; suggestions for clear messaging (e.g., "2 Hours Free, 3 Hour Max").
 - Signage will not display enforcement hours/days to ease future changes; these will reside in the digital messaging.
 - Multiple methods to communicate changes and ensure public is well-informed:
 - Digital onboarding and educational phase in January.
 - Customized zone/lots messaging for special events, sales, free days.
 - Handouts and merchant tools to help guide customers/visitors.
 - Accommodation for non-smartphone users (flip phone via text message, town staff assistance, or using free lots).
 - Council suggested additional media/press involvement for wider awareness.
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7. Timeline and Next Steps

- Public hearing(s) scheduled to solicit wider input (at least one hearing after this workshop; suggestion to avoid only holding one during holiday retail rush).
 - January 2026: System and signage installation, public education, no-penalty trial enforcement.
 - February 2026 – January 31, 2027: Full pilot operational and enforcement phase.
 - Data to be collected throughout year for evaluation and decision by Feb 2027.
 - Potential for future expansion or permanent adoption based on results and community feedback.
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8. Outstanding Issues and Extended Discussion Points

- Bulk and nonprofit parking permit discounts: flagged for further council discussion.
 - Future budgeting: potential enterprise fund if system proves sustainable.
 - Accessibility for special-needs/elderly/non-tech users accounted for via multiple engagement channels.
 - Data privacy and collection for economic development discussed.
 - Signage feedback ongoing, with council input requested for clarity and legibility.
 - Downstream impacts (e.g., on farmers' market, library events, employee parking) discussed and solutions outlined.
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Action Items

1. **Refine signage:** Incorporate council, staff, and community suggestions for maximum clarity — especially on 2-hour free/3-hour max limits.
 2. **Finalize communication plan:** Develop press releases, media strategy, educational materials, and merchant kits for rollout in January.
 3. **Confirm permit bulk/discount options:** Council and staff to review potential policy for businesses/nonprofits.
 4. **Prepare for public hearing(s):** Schedule and announce at least one, preferably more, hearings for input, especially due to holiday season.
 5. **Confirm text/message workflow:** Ensure text-to-park is accessible and user-friendly, with lot/zone specificity.
 6. **Prepare technical/operational details:** Slice/Town to finalize MEO hardware, data management protocols, fee implementation and reporting.
 7. **Investigate future budgeting models:** Monitor the pilot to assess feasibility of a dedicated parking/enterprise fund for transparency.
 8. **Increase fine for handicap parking:** Review and move toward raising fine to \$500, pending follow-up discussion/approval.
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Follow-Up Items

- Supply workshop slides and documentation to council (via email), and upload supporting info to website as available.
- Gather additional input on permit options for organizations/employers (potential discounts/bulk processing).
- Council to set public hearing date(s) at regular meeting.
- Track assessment of farmer's market, library lot policy during the pilot.
- Budget projection analysis: quantify cars/fee scenario required for break-even (~\$150,000/yr target).
- Monitor all data, ticketing issues, and user feedback, with regular progress reports to council.

Adjourn.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy M. Ruf, Town Clerk

Meeting adjourned with thanks to all presenters and confirmation of next steps before commencing regular council meeting.

Town of Easton Council Meeting Summary

Date of Meeting: December 1, 2025, 5:30 p.m. **Location:** Town of Easton Council Chambers
Presiding: Council President Don Abbatiello. **Attendees Noted:** Mayor Megan Cook, Council Members Ms. Curry, Mr. Rankin, Dr. Montgomery, Rev. Davis, Town Manager Andy Kitzrow, Town Attorney Sharon VanEmburch, Chief of Police Alan Lowrey, Town Clerk Kathy Ruf

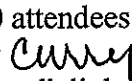
1. Opening Proceedings

- **Call to Order:** Council President Abbatiello opened the meeting.
- **Opening Prayer** Led by Robert Rankin, expressing gratitude for the Thanksgiving season and community.
- **Pledge of Allegiance:** Led by Council member Robert Rankin
- **Approval of Minutes:**
 - Attainable Housing Task Force Workshop
 - November 17th Council Meeting

Upon motion by Ms. Curry, seconded by Mr. Rankin, the minutes from the Attainable Housing Task Force Workshop and the November 17, 2025 Council meeting were unanimously approved.

2. Mayor Cook's Announcements and Updates

Presented by Mayor Cook

- **Upcoming Events:**
 - **Holiday Parade:** December 6, 2025
 - 5:30 PM: Santa arrives at Thompson Park
 - 6:00 PM: Tree lighting
 - 6:30 PM: Parade begins
 - **Workshops & Hearings (all held at town chamber):**
 - December 8 (4:30 PM): Joint Planning & Zoning Workshop — East End Small Area Plan
 - December 9 (6:00 PM): Public Hearing on Comprehensive Plan
 - December 15 (4:30 PM): Continuation of Attainable Housing Task Force Workshop
 - **Past Events:**
 - Parking workshop hosted earlier at 4:30 PM
 - Attended East End Neighborhood Association Tree Lighting (Approx. 50 attendees despite cold weather) — Mayor, Rev. Davis, Ms. ~~Curry~~ 
 - Carols by Candlelight event well attended
- **Thanks:**
 - Public Works for holiday decorations and lights
 - Community volunteers
- **Grants and Recognition:**
 - **Highway Safety Improvement Grant Awarded:**
 - **Total Project Cost:** \$211,334
 - **Grant Covers:** ~90% (\$190,000+)
 - **Purpose:** LED speed signs at 20 intersections where rail trail crosses Aurora Street; pedestrian safety enhancement
- **Board/Commission Appointments:**
 - **Gary Molchan:** Reappointed to Board of Zoning Appeals (serving since 2011)
 - **Michael Ports:** Reappointed to Planning and Zoning Commission, 5-year term

Upon motion by Ms. Curry, seconded by Mr. Montgomery and carried unanimously, the re-appointments were confirmed.

3. Proclamation: Festival of Trees – 40th Anniversary

Read by Council Member Montgomery; Accepted by Friends of Hospice representatives Mrs. Leslie Ware and Mrs. Midge Menzies

- **Overview:**

- Recognized November 29–December 2, 2025, as Talbot Hospice Appreciation Days
- Festival of Trees supports Talbot Hospice Foundation; raised \$3.7 million since 1981
- Events include Gala, Carols by Candlelight, Santa’s 5K Run, Poinsettia and Luminary Sales
- 2025 marks 40 years of service

- **Friends of Hospice Remarks:**

- Volunteer-driven, established 1985
 - Focus: Raise funds for hospice care, increase community awareness
 - Emphasizes compassion, dignity, and end-of-life support
 - Noted new events such as Carols by Candlelight (now in its sixth year)
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4. Town Manager and Attorney Reports

a. Town Manager (No formal report)

- A lighthearted mention of the Town Manager’s preparations for the upcoming holiday parade.

b. Town Attorney (Ms. VanEmburch)

Two Key Items:

- **Annexation—Taylor Family Application:**

- Need to schedule a public hearing; earliest possible date is January 20, 2026 (due to advertising requirements)
- Noted missing data on proposed property use from applicants
- Planning Commission does not recommend annexation without further information

- **Zoning Text Amendments:**

- Memo from Lynn Thomas regarding pending zoning amendments (includes “priority redevelopment” and auto-repair use on Creamery Lane)
- Earliest possible public hearing: January 5, 2026
- Discussion on whether to coordinate public hearings for zoning text amendments and primary overlay district or to workshop further

Consensus:

- Council will review materials, discuss with Mr. Thomas, and decide scheduling at next meeting
 - Priority given to expediting the “priority redevelopment” issue due to long delay
 - Community meeting requirements also under review
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5. Guest Presentation: Talbot Family Network (TFN)

Presenter: Nancy Andrew, Executive Director

Introduction to Talbot Family Network:

- **Role:** Local Management Board for Talbot County per Maryland statute; operating since late 1990s
- **Board Composition:** Half local agency heads (schools, social services, etc.), half community members

Community Needs Assessment (FY23–24):

- **Process:**
 - Surveys, focus groups, resource mapping, annual indicator review
 - Collaboration with other agencies: Neighborhood Service Center, Mid-shore Behavioral Health, etc.
 - Emphasis on state-mandated indicators and locally significant trends
- **Top Priorities Identified:**
 - Kindergarten readiness
 - Mental health and emotional trauma (especially youth)
 - Childhood poverty (including affordable housing and childcare)
 - Persistent racial and ethnic disparities in all indicators

Key Data Highlights:

- **Childhood Poverty:**
 - 10.1% of households below poverty line (relatively stagnant)
 - **ALICE households:** Nearly 40% (those “working poor” close to but above benefits threshold)
 - Food insecurity: 41% of food-insecure households ineligible for SNAP benefits
- **Housing Instability:**
 - Increase in homeless students (doubled since 2021, over 280 students in 2025)
 - Notable racial disparities in home ownership and housing cost burden
- **Mental Health:**
 - Youth mental health — chronic sadness and hopelessness (over 70% for LGBTQ students per survey)
 - Demand for school-based mental health growing
- **Education:**
 - Dropout rates improved to zero last year after targeted intervention
 - Persistent racial disparities in test performance
 - Chronic absenteeism: 1,200 chronically absent students in 2025 (20% in elementary, 34% in high school)
- **Health & Safety:**
 - Infant mortality improved; low-birth-weight babies and prenatal care remain concerns
 - Decline in juvenile crime, but parental incarceration is racially disproportionate
 - Increase in child maltreatment cases requiring full investigation (spiked during pandemic)
- **Regional Data (Mid-shore Behavioral Health 2025 Needs Assessment):**
 - Top 5 local concerns (Talbot): Affordable housing, childcare, transportation, poverty, career readiness
 - Talbot’s affluence masks persistent inequities for lower-income and rural residents
- **Overarching Themes:**
 - Persistent racial and ethnic inequities in all domains
 - Rising “working poor” population; systems-level solutions needed
 - Some bright spots: strong graduation rates, low unemployment, low juvenile crime
- **Resources:**
 - QR codes provided for full slide decks from both TFN and Mid-shore Behavioral Health for those wishing further study

Discussion Following the Presentation:

- **Council Questions:**
 - Request for emailed copy of data/presentation
 - Praise for information and invitation for follow-up presentations
 - **Critical Feedback from Council Dr. Member Montgomery:**
 - Concerns expressed about perceived bias and emphasis on race in TFN programming (highlighting “Conversations on Race” and DEI initiatives)
 - Suggested family structure (two-parent families) as a key unexplored factor in child poverty
 - Expressed skepticism about neutrality and effectiveness of TFN’s prioritization of racial disparities
 - **TFN Executive Response:**
 - Acknowledged the comments; offered to meet to discuss further
 - Noted that disaggregated data requirements and many program directions originated under both Democratic and Republican state administrations
 - Reminder that a diverse board guides program direction
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6. Legislation and Upcoming Public Hearings

a. Talbot Lane Residential Parking Recommendation

- **Ordinance 847:** Introduced by President Abbatiello for a first reading.
- **Issue:** Request to add Talbot Lane (behind Art Academy, between South Street and Talbot Street) to Residential Parking District 1.
- **Background:** Construction activities and spillover from art academy events are causing congestion; street is very narrow; most homes have no driveways.
- **Proposal:** Permit 2-hour free parking (8 AM–6 PM, Mon–Sat); unlimited residential permit parking; visitor’s passes available.
- **Next Steps:**
 - Not eligible for vote yet.
 - **Public Hearing scheduled:** December 15, 2025
 - Will be combined with other parking amendments discussions

b. Other Parking Legislation

- **Ordinance 848:** Introduced by President Abbatiello for a first reading.

Revising general parking provisions—public hearing scheduled for December 15, 2025
- **Resolution 6215:** Introduced by President Abbatiello for a first reading.

Revising license/permit/inspection/fee schedule (including parking-related fees/fines)—public hearing December 15, 2025
- **Potential conflict for retailers discussed:** December 15 is within peak holiday season; provision made to continue hearing into January if input is insufficient.

c. Annexation & Zoning Amendment Public Hearings

- Taylor Family annexation public hearing set for January 20, 2026 (pending receipt of additional information).
 - Further scheduling of zoning text amendments review/workshop/public hearing to be decided at upcoming meetings.
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7. Public Participation & Comments

- **Greg Zimmerman:** Announced community comprehensive plan discussion, December 2 at 6:30 PM at Talbot Senior Center (includes presentation on form-based zoning).
 - **Hal DeBona (South Street resident):** Raised ongoing parking issues, especially during Art Academy events; emphasized need for enforcement for any parking amendments to be effective.
 - **No additional comments from the public.**
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8. Committee Reports and General Council Items

- No formal committee reports.
 - Reminder issued regarding holiday parade (EEDC liaison).
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9. Council Member Comments

- **Ms. Curry:** Congratulated Festival of Trees, recognized significant contributions by Friends of Hospice.
 - **Mr. Rankin:** Thanked public commenters, praised Talbot Hospice and town staff for leaf pick-up, appreciated community spirit during Thanksgiving.
 - **Dr. Montgomery:** Encouraged participation in comprehensive plan review (especially “municipal growth” and “traffic” sections); extended wishes for positive holiday (Advent) season.
 - **Reverend Davis:** Thanked attendees of East End tree lighting and Carols by Candlelight; highlighted significance of hospice work, encouraged public to check holiday trash schedules and help neighbors.
 - **President Abbatiello:** Praised community volunteers; noted Thanksgiving service and food drives; acknowledged his wife’s birthday.
 - **General notes:** Council banter regarding parade logistics and vehicle selection for parade participation.
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Action Items

1. **Schedule of Public Hearings:**
 - *Parking and Fee Legislation (Ordinances 847, 848, Resolution 6215):* December 15, 2025
 - *Taylor Family Annexation Hearing:* January 20, 2026 (pending required applicant information)
 - *Zoning Amendments Hearing:* Scheduling pending further council review/discussion at the next meeting
 2. **Follow-ups on Presentations:**
 - Nancy Andrew (Talbot Family Network) to email full presentation to council and provide additional materials upon request.
 3. **Events/Activities:**
 - **Holiday Parade:** December 6, 2025 (Thompson Park, 5:30–6:30 PM)
 - **Talbot Senior Center Comprehensive Plan Meeting:** December 2, 2025, 6:30 PM
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Follow-up Points & Next Meetings

- **Next Council Meeting:** December 15, 2025
 - Focus on residential parking, parking fee amendments, and related issues (public hearings scheduled)
 - Continuation of Attainable Housing Task Force workshop prior to meeting
- **Information Pending:**

- Taylor Family Annexation: Awaiting applicant's property use proposal prior to public hearing
 - Zoning text amendments: Council review and further questions to Mr. Thomas; recommendation to be finalized at next meeting
 - **Follow-up invitations:**
 - Council members invited to provide feedback and questions regarding Talbot Family Network data/presentation for future sessions
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Adjournment

President Abbatiello noted personal gratitude and well-wishes for the holiday season.

No further business conducted.

- At 6:29 p.m., upon motion by Rev. Davis seconded by Dr. Montgomery and carried unanimously, President Abbatiello adjourned the regularly scheduled meeting.
- Respectfully submitted,

Kathy M. Ruf, Town Clerk