



Town Council MEETING MINUTES

Monday, May 16, 2022 - 5:30 PM
Council Chambers, Easton Town Office
14 S Harrison Street

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

Mayor Robert C. Willey
Mr. Al Silverstein
Mr. Don Abbatiello
Mr. Ron Engle
Rev. Elmer Davis
President Megan Cook

Also present was the Town Manager Mr. Don Richardson, Town Attorney Mrs. Sharon VanEmburch, and Town Clerk Mrs. Kathy M. Ruf.

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

Opening remarks and Pledge of Allegiance by Councilmember Abbatiello.

Mr. Abbatiello gave opening remarks and led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Minutes.

Meeting Minutes of May 2, 2022.

Upon motion by Mr. Engle seconded by Mr. Abbatiello and carried unanimously, minutes of the May 2, 2022 meetings were approved as written.

Meeting Minutes of May 11, 2022.

Upon motion by Mr. Engle seconded by Mr. Abbatiello and carried unanimously, minutes of the May 11, 2022 meetings were approved as written.

Municipal Official Items.

Items by the Mayor.

Mayor Willey stated that interest has been expressed by the Council in a tour of Poplar Island. He stated he would get a date and a means of transportation and let the council know the details.

Mayor Willey stated that there will be a vacancy on the Affordable Housing Board as a member is moving. He asked the council to submit the name of anyone that might be interested.

Items by the Town Manager.

Public Assembly Event:

EHS Class of 2022 Senior Parade - May 26, 2022, 3-5pm

Upon motion by Mr. Silverstein, seconded by Mr. Abbatiello and carried unanimously, approval was granted for the Public Assembly event as recommended by staff.

Items by the Town Attorney.

Nothing at this time.

Fire Board.

Mr. Rick Stacey, President, was present and discussed fundraising events. He stated they are planning an outdoor movie night. Although the logistics are not set in stone, they intend to hold the event at Triple Creek on Cordova Road. New bay doors will be installed tomorrow. Mr. Stacey stated that although the budget is still preliminary, he thanked the council for their support.

Chief CR Chance reported that the Tower had a minor incident and it has been reported. Chief Chance asked permission to take the equipment to Ocean City for the Annual Firemen's Association Convention and parade on June 22. Chief Chance stated they may have four new members tonight.

Police Board.

Chief Alan W. Lowrey discussed his Police Board report he submitted to the council by e-mail.

Chief Lowrey discussed the conviction of a recent murderer in Easton that was sentenced to life in prison.

Chief Lowrey stated he appreciates the department and the officers that investigated this murder.

Rev. Davis thanked Chief Lowrey for the report. He stated as we go forward we will improve on what we have. He asked that the Police Board meet at 5:00 p.m. in the future.

Chief Lowrey stated that Bamm Fest had a great turnout with police presence for interaction.

Presentations.

Mr. Al Bond, President & CEO, Avalon Foundation, Inc. to discuss Avalon Centennial Celebration.

Mr. Bond was not present. He extended apologies and stated he would be present at the June 6 meeting.

5:30 PM PUBLIC HEARING for FY2022/23 Budget.

Ord. No. 785, "AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF EASTON ESTABLISHING THE TOWN BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2023."

At 5:40 p.m., President Cook opened the 5:30 p.m. scheduled public hearing for the FY2022/23 Budget.

President Cook brought Ordinance No. 785, 786 and 787 to the floor for a first reading.

Mayor Willey opened the Proposed Budget presentation. He stated the council should give consideration to the proposed budget. He discussed the size of the budget and stated ARPA funds have heavily impacted what is proposed and will not be available after this year. Mayor Willey stated the insurance renewal has been countered and may be around 34%. He stated the Town of Easton receives first-class services from the Fire Department and Police Department and the Town needs to be labor competitive with their benefit package. He discussed the tax assessment and where we will be in the coming years. He stated salary increases and ARPA projects are included in the expenditures as well as broadband services we expect to assist Easton Utilities with. Expenditures included in this budget are for small business assistance as well as the fire department. He discussed the Capital Fund Expenditures, which includes police cars and a new fire engine. Public Works' budget includes a new garbage truck and a new street sweeper. The tax rate will remain at \$.52 per \$100 of assessment. Mayor Willey stated the Town of Easton rating remains at AA Outlook stable. Municipal tax rates for surrounding municipalities was discussed which shows the Town of Easton compares very favorably but may not be sustainable in the future. Mayor Willey stated he has been in discussions with the county for some time about the tax differential that he feels is not being calculated correctly. He stated that the cost of insurance has not been finalized and the cost may affect the budget. Mayor Willey stated that the pension plan and the OPEP is highly funded.

The Town Manager, Mr. Richardson stated that the Public Hearing on Ordinance No. 787 and Resolution No. 6154 will be held June 6.

President Cook asked for questions. There were none. She stated this is a public hearing on Ordinance No. 785, 786, and comments will be heard.

President Cook stated the public hearing would be continued at the next meeting. She stated email and public comments can be received for the next meeting.

Mayor Willey stated if there are any questions, they may give him a call or send him an email.

Ord. No. 786, "AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF EASTON TO CARRY FORWARD CERTAIN CAPITAL FUND EXPENDITURES INTO FISCAL YEAR 2023."

President Cook introduced Ord. No. 786 for a first reading.

Ord. No. 787, "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, 2022 AND ENDING JUNE 30, 2023."

President Cook brought Ord. No. 787 to the floor for a first reading.

Resolution No. 6154, "A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN OF EASTON REVISING THE TOWNS LICENSE, APPLICATION, PERMITS, INSPECTION, CERTIFICATE AND OTHER FEES."

President Cook read Resolution No. 6154 into the record. She stated the council has some questions regarding the resolution. President Cook stated a public hearing would be set to hear comments on Resolution No. 6154. She set the public hearing for June 6 at 5:40 p.m.

Legislation.

Ord. 784, "AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF EASTON PROHIBITING RETAIL ESTABLISHMENTS IN THE TOWN FROM PROVIDING CUSTOMERS WITH SINGLE USE DISPOSABLE PLASTIC BAGS AND PROVIDING FOR EXEMPTIONS FROM THE PROHIBITION AND PENALTIES FOR VIOLATIONS."

The Town Attorney stated that the ordinance is simple. She stated that comments have been received.

The President of the Council stated that the definition of re-usable needs to be included.

President Cook brought Ordinance No. 784 to the floor for a first reading.

Mr. Abbatiello asked if anyone has made an effort to reach out to the Chamber of Commerce and businesses.

The Town Attorney suggested reaching out to the media.

She set the public hearing on Ordinance No. 784 for June 6, at 5:45 p.m.

Mr. Silverstein asked that the council have time to review the legislation. He stated that the public hearing should be placed on social media and in the newspaper as well.

Rev. Davis asked that anyone that is affected have notice and give feedback to the council so an informed decision can be made.

Public Participation/Comments.

Plastic Free Easton was present and stated they are happy the council is considering legislation regarding disposable plastic bags. She stated they know this is a long process. She discussed the environmental impacts of plastic bags.

Items by Members of the Council:

Mr. Silverstein attended multicultural festival, BAMM Festival last weekend. He discussed the Talbot County Suffrage marker that was placed on the Mary Jenkins house. He stated he went to the EVFD Banquet.

Mr. Abbatiello had a great time at the BAMM Festival. He appreciated being invited to the Talbot County Suffrage movement. He stated that Ward 2 Comprehensive Plan meeting will be held at Easton Fire Department, Thursday, May 26 from 6 to 8 p.m.

President Cook stated that all residents are welcome to attend any of the Comprehensive Plan meetings.

Mr. Engle stated the BAMM Fest was a lot of fun watching kids having a great time.

Rev. Davis stated that Ward 2 Comprehensive Plan meeting will be held on May 19, at 6 p.m., Ward 1 will be held May 24 at 6 p.m., at the Fire Department, and if you miss the May meetings, the Ward 4 Comprehensive Plan meeting will be held June 2 at 6 p.m. at the Fire Department.

Adjournment.

At 5:59 p.m., upon motion by Mr. Silverstein, seconded by Mr. Abbatiello and carried unanimously, President Cook adjourned the regularly scheduled meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy M. Ruf, Town Clerk