



Town Council MEETING MINUTES

Monday, November 21, 2022 - 5:30 PM
Council Chambers, Easton Town Office
14 S Harrison Street

4:45 PM Re-Districting Workshop

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, Chief of Police Alan Lowery, Town Engineer Mr. Rick VanEmburch and Ms. Lorraine Gould for Town Clerk Mrs. Kathy M. Ruf.

At 4:45 p.m., the Town Attorney stated that the workshop this evening is for re-districting. Mrs. VanEmburch discussed the information provided by the Census and the way the Census is counted. She stated that the census comes up where the blocks are but do not necessarily follow where the town's districts are.

Mrs. VanEmburch discussed if by law, the Town is required to re-district. She stated that Ward 4 is still a minority majority ward. She discussed the deviation and stated the Town is barely under the 10%. She stated there is three areas the wards split a block; Bay Street, Hammond Street and Federal Street.

Mrs. VanEmburch discussed the proposal to make a change in Ward 1 or make the entire block Ward 4.

President Cook asked how the census makes a block. The Town Attorney stated that it is out of our control.

Mrs. VanEmburch stated the other 2 Wards have no population change. She described the second conflict on North Street and Elizabeth Street. She said there is just an auto service center there. Mayor Willey questioned why make the change if there is no population change. Mrs. VanEmburch stated you can't split a block.

Mrs. VanEmburch discussed the split between Ward 2 and Ward 3. She stated that they are proposing to amend to make the entire block Ward 2.

Mrs. VanEmburch discussed the block conflict where Ward 2 and 3 split. This conflict could affect the placement of The Greens.

The Town Attorney discussed the proposal to put the Royal Farms and the road in Ward 3 to make them contiguous.

Mrs. VanEmburch stated there may be some other things to consider, such as smoothing out the lines. She discussed the future of Easton Point and one side being one ward and the other side another. She discussed the buildout of approved developments and the way the populations are growing. She stated the block changes need to occur now but the other things can be held off.

Mr. Engle suggested waiting.

Rev. Davis stated he thinks it best to worry about what has to be done, and let the other changes occur when necessary.

Mayor Willey discussed the possibility of a fifth ward in the future.

It was the consensus to do the proposed block conflicts and the small changes as recommended by the Town Attorney.

The Town Attorney stated they will make the map changes, hold a public hearing and draft legislation.

The workshop was adjourned at 5:13 p.m.

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

At 5:30 p.m., 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.

President Cook stated that the Council met in Closed Session November 7, 2022 General Provisions Article 3-305(b)(3) to consider the acquisition of real property for a public purpose and matters directly related thereto in the Council's Chambers and (4) to consider a matter that concerns the

proposal for a business or industrial organization to locate, expand, or remain in the state. The council consulted with council and no action was taken.

Approval of Minutes.

Meeting minutes from 11/7/22.

Upon motion by Mr. Engle, seconded by Rev. Davis and carried unanimously, minutes of the November 7, 2022 meetings were approved as written.

Municipal Official Items.

Items from Mayor Willey.

Mayor Willey discussed the re-appointment of Mr. Gary Molchan, Board of Zoning Appeals and Ms. Victoria McAndrews, Planning and Zoning. He stated they had both been recommended by staff.

Upon motion by Mr. Silverstein, seconded by Mr. Abbatiello and carried unanimously, the re-appointments were approved.

Mayor Wiley discussed grants received for the Easton Police Department.

Items from the Town Manager.

Mr. Richardson updated and started that Public Works continues to collect leaves. He asked that the leaves be kept on the owner's property.

President Cook gave kudos to Public Works for their work on the rails-to-trails.

Mr. Silverstein asked that repairs be considered on the rails-to-trails from Goldsborough Street heading to the bridge where it seems to be breaking.

Mr. Richardson wished everyone a happy Thanksgiving.

Items from the Town Attorney.

The Town Attorney stated that the re-districting workshop had been held prior to the regular meeting this evening.

President Cook set the re-districting public hearing for December 19 at 5:35 p.m. to consider changes in the wards.

Fire Board.

President Stacey stated the Christmas lights at the stations are about 99% completed and will be turned on Thanksgiving night. He discussed their next major fundraiser, Stews and Brews, which is scheduled for February 18, 2023. He stated they have formed a 501C3 for Friends of Easton Fire Department, which will receive donations for their training facility.

Chief C.R. Chance stated his term as Chief is coming to a close and it has been an honor to be the Chief and has enjoyed working with the Mayor and Council. He discussed a points committee to help with retention of members. Chief Chance stated they have two new pieces of apparatus due in the first quarter of the year.

President Cook thanked Chief Chance for his service.

Presentations.

Mr. Mike Starling, Transmitter Radio 91.7, Cambridge, to discuss a new license granted by the FCC in June 2022.

Mr. Starling was not present.

Discussion regarding request for Doverbrook funding.

President Cook discussed the recommendation from the County Council to award the Doverbrook project \$250,000 contingent upon the Town matching those funds. She stated she would like to present the Town's contribution out of the ARPA funds to the County Council.

Mr. Silverstein stated the Town should consider at least \$500,000 as the project is in the community.

Mr. Engle suggested \$250,000 which he stated is a good investment.

President Cook stated additional funds can be awarded later.

Rev. Davis stated other projects may need to be funded.

President Cook stated the funds could come from the Affordable Housing funds and not the ARPA money. She stated the funds in the Affordable Housing funds are approximately \$800,000.

Mr. Richardson stated there are encumbrances that are not considered in that balance.

Mr. Abbatiello stated he thinks the Affordable Housing Board could support the \$250,000. He discussed a loan to the contractor which could be paid back.

Mayor Willey stated he feels a waiver of permit fees will be forthcoming.
Mr. Richardson stated that the Town of Easton has never ventured into loans and borrowing, but if it's the council's direction, it could be considered.
Mr. Silverstein asked what the cost of the renovations to the homes is.
Mr. Richardson discussed the cost of the properties and renovations.
Mr. Silverstein stated he can't understand the accounting. He stated he finds it incredible that we can't fund a project with more money that will provide 14 more homes. He stated he is disappointed.
President Cook stated that ARPA funds can be considered later.
Mr. Engle discussed starting off with \$250,000. He stated it is a good amount and he is asking the developers to sharpen their pencil.
Rev. Davis stated that affordable housing is a big issue. He stated that the town has a responsibility to the residents in the community. He discussed using the ARPA money and having nothing left for future needs. He questioned the amount in the Affordable Housing account.
Mr. Abbatiello stated that he thinks \$250,000 is a good start and the matter can be revisited. He stated he would like to get an opinion from the Affordable Housing Board.
Mr. Abbatiello stated that he has spoken with the Chairman of the Affordable Housing Board, Mr. Jim Bent and he thought starting with \$250,000 was a good place to start.
Upon motion by Mr. Abbatiello, seconded by Mr. Engle and carried unanimously following a roll call vote, it was the consensus to support the Doverbrook project with an initial contribution from the Affordable Housing funds in the amount of \$250,000.

Public Participation/Comments.

There was no comments from the audience.

Items by Members of the Council:

Mr. Silverstein wished everyone a happy, healthy and safe Thanksgiving.
Mr. Abbatiello echoed those wishes and thanked those that would be working on Thanksgiving.
Mr. Engle congratulated Public Works on the rails-to-trails. He asked parents to be mindful of their children.
Rev. Davis wished everyone a happy Thanksgiving.
President Cook wished everyone a happy Thanksgiving and congratulated the new county council members that were recently elected. She stated we look forward to working with them in the future.

Adjournment.

At 6:42 p.m., upon motion by Mr. Silverstein, seconded by Mr. Engle and carried unanimously, President Cook adjourned the regularly scheduled meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy M. Ruf, Town Clerk