



Town Council MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, January 3, 2023 - 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.

Opening remarks and Pledge of Allegiance by Councilmember Silverstein.

Councilmember Silverstein gave opening remarks and led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Minutes.

Minutes of the December 19, 2022 regularly scheduled meeting.

Upon motion by Mr. Silverstein, seconded by Mr. Engle and carried unanimously, minutes of the December 19, 2022 meeting were approved as written.

Municipal Official Items.

Items by Mayor Willey.

Mayor Willey discussed the need to look for commission candidates. He stated one is an alternate for the Board of Zoning Appeals as well as a member for the Historic District Commission.

Mayor Willey stated that several members of the staff had gotten together to discuss funds Senator Cardin has advised may become available for infrastructure projects. He stated the projects may be divided into four categories. Mayor Willey advised that he will get clarification when he speaks to Senator Cardin's office on Thursday. He stated that the projects have been divided into parks, housing, public safety and roads. Mayor Willey stated that the government has a total of 5 billion dollars.

Mayor Willey discussed some of the proposed projects.

Rev. Davis asked what the criteria is for funding. Mayor Willey stated the information will be forwarded to the council.

Items by the Town Manager.

Easton Point Park Plan Recommendation.

Mr. Richardson discussed the concept plan for the Easton Point Park Plan which has been approved by the Park Board and subsequently by the Planning and Zoning Commission. He stated it includes the addition of the Southern States property. He discussed ongoing improvements.

President Cook asked for questions.

Mr. Silverstein discussed the bond that was directed to Easton Point. He stated that we bonded 7 million dollars for the park. Mr. Richardson stated that the bond was taken out in 2020 for 7 million; \$675,000 of that was allocated for park type projects. He stated it was not exclusive to Easton Point but much was directed towards Easton Point. Mr. Silverstein asked what has been spent. Mr. Richardson stated that 3.2 million has been spent with 3.8 million remaining that needs to be spent by October 2023.

Mr. Abbatiello asked if the boat ramp that is being designed would replace the boat ramp that is on Port Street. Mr. Richardson stated those discussions have not been concluded.

Upon motion by Mr. Engle, seconded by Rev. Davis and carried unanimously, Easton Point Park Concept Plan recommendation was approved as recommended by staff.

Approve bid for the 2023 and 2024 Grass Cutting Services.

Mr. Richardson stated that four bids have been received. The recommendation was to award the bid to Good Life Property Maintenance for the total amount of \$165,600.

Upon motion by Mr. Silverstein, seconded by Mr. Engle and carried unanimously, the approval bid for the 2023 and 2024 Grass Cutting Service from Good Life Property Maintenance was approved.

Mr. Richardson stated that Public Works will be collecting Christmas trees. They are also still picking up leaves.

Items by the Town Attorney.

Nothing at this time.

Public Hearing.

5:35 PM Public Hearing to receive comments on Ordinance No. 793.

At 5:42 p.m., President Cook opened the 5:35 p.m. scheduled public hearing on Ordinance No. 793.

Mr. Richardson stated the realtor has availability for the councilmembers to tour the property on January 6, 9 or 12 to view the property.

Mr. Thomas Alspach, 295 Bay Street, speaking on behalf of Talbot Preservation Alliance, stated a lot of the community did not have notice. Mr. Alspach stated that they are urging the council to proceed with the purchase of the property. He stated there is not an understanding of what is planned for the property. Mr. Alspach stated it will relieve some concerns regarding the development of parcels, and traffic congestion. He urged the council to go forward and secure the property for purposes of use by the community.

President Cook stated that the purchase of the property is contingent on funding from the state.

Mr. Alspach asked what the state might impose on the park land.

President Cook stated it must remain as open space.

Mr. Richardson clarified that this is a partnership between Talbot County and the State of Maryland Department of Natural Resources.

There being no further comments, at 5:50 p.m., President Cook closed the public hearing.

Legislation.

Ordinance No. 793, "AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF EASTON AUTHORIZING THE TOWN OF EASTON TO PURCHASE A 197.6734 ACRE PARCEL OF LAND ALONG OXFORD ROAD (MAP 42 PARCEL 45) FOR A PARK."

Mr. Silverstein stated he has questions. He asked why the purchase price is not stated. The Town Attorney stated that the Agreement of Sale is an attachment to the Ordinance as Exhibit A. Mr. Silverstein stated that the Mayor stated that the Town would contribute \$100,000. He asked what fund that would come out of. Mr. Richardson stated that this funding is directed toward the 2020 Bond which is intended for park improvements. Mr. Silverstein asked if the county's contribution was a written agreement or a verbal agreement. Mr. Richardson stated that there was a letter that went with the request to the State of Maryland committing their contribution. Mr. Silverstein questioned Section 4 authorizing the Mayor to be able to make changes. The Town Attorney discussed the flexibility. Mr. Silverstein questioned Section 5 giving the Mayor the authority to sign agreements. The allocation of funds was discussed such as a lapse in funding. Mr. Silverstein discussed the timeline and questioned the process. Mr. Silverstein stated he had expressed an interest in seeing the property in December. He questioned if the Ordinance could be held and wondered why information had not been conveyed to him.

Upon motion by Mr. Silverstein, seconded by Mr. Abbatiello and carried unanimously, Ordinance No. 793, "AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF EASTON AUTHORIZING THE TOWN OF EASTON TO PURCHASE A 197.6734 ACRE PARCEL OF LAND ALONG OXFORD ROAD (MAP 42 PARCEL 45) FOR A PARK" was approved following a roll call vote.

Public Participation/Comments.

Items by Members of the Council:

Mr. Silverstein wished everyone a Happy New Year. He stated he appreciates the efforts the staff have put in to get this done.

Mr. Abbatiello welcomed Rev. Davis as the new Chaplain of the Easton Fire Department.

Mr. Engle stated he was absent from First Night Talbot. He stated it was raining at his residence but he understood there was an overwhelming success.

Rev. Davis wished everyone a Happy New Year.

Rev. Davis stated people need more information regarding the benefits and the formidable plans for this property. He stated having more information may ease some of the concerns.

President Cook wished everyone a Happy New Year.

Adjournment.

At 6:00 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