

The Mayor and Commissioners of the Town of Elkton

MINUTES

July 12, 2023

The Mayor and Commissioners of the Town of Elkton (the "Board") conducted a workshop meeting on this date at 12:00 p.m. The following persons participated in person or via computer: Mayor Robert J. Alt; Commissioners Jean A. Broomell, Charles H. Givens, Sr., Robert M. Massimiano and Earl M. Piner, Sr.; Town Administrator Lewis H. George, Jr.; Finance Director Steven H. Repole; Planning Assistant Quinn Krenzel; Director of Human Resources Andy Rodriguez; Director of Public Works J. Daniel Handley, PE; Public Works Infrastructure Coordinator Mark Turnbull; Chief of Police Carolyn Rogers; Assistant Town Administrator L. Michelle Henson; and Town Attorney John P. Downs, Esquire.

Mayor Alt called the workshop meeting to order at 12:00 p.m.

Discussion - Non-Sworn Personnel Collective Bargaining

Town staff members Mr. Matt Donnelly and Ms. Sabrina Scholl stated the purpose of their appearance was to discuss Collective Bargaining for non-sworn staff. Mr. Donnelly and Ms. Scholl were joined by Ms. Alexa Nelen and Ms. Denise Gilmore, representing the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME).

Mayor Alt stated he previously met with employees to discuss Collective Bargaining for non-sworn personnel, adding that he asked the group to bring the topic to the entire Board. Mayor Alt stated his first concern was if Collective Bargaining would benefit Town residents.

Ms. Gilmore stated Collective Bargaining provided employees with a voice, adding that it also provided respect. She stated Collective Bargaining improved morale as well.

Commissioner Broomell queried the group regarding the goal of unionization. Ms. Scholl stated the goal is to be treated with respect and dignity.

Commissioner Givens noted the initiation of Collective Bargaining for Police Officers occurred several years ago, and queried the reasons why non-sworn staff were requesting unionization at this time. He expressed his support for non-sworn staff presenting the Board with their concerns.

Commissioner Piner expressed support for all employees and echoed Commissioner Givens' query regarding what initiated non-sworn employees' decision to unionize.

Commissioner Broomell expressed support for open communication between the Board and employees.

Commissioner Broomell, noting Mr. Donnelly's previous role as Chief of Police, questioned if Police Officers voted to unionize based upon the way they were being treated. Mr.

Donnelly answered in the affirmative, adding that wages and lack of merit raises is the driving force behind non-sworn employees' move to unionize.

Mr. Donnelly stated non-sworn employees are asking for a process of evaluations. Commissioner Broomell questioned if that process is in place. Mr. Rodriguez answered in the affirmative.

Ms. Gilmore stated that there is rarely one incident that motivates employees to unionize. She stated AFSCME can provide a moderated forum in which staff can discuss safety issues and wages with management.

Commissioner Massimiano expressed his support for an open line of communication between staff and supervisors, and suggested periodic meetings.

Mr. George concurred with Mr. Donnelly, stating staff have received Cost of Living (COLA) increases, but not merit increases.

Ms. Gilmore stated staff wants a say in negotiating salary adjustments and also how the adjustments are distributed.

Discussion ensued regarding the Town's current pay scale.

Commissioner Broomell questioned if there were any other outstanding issues, such as equipment safety or benefits. Mr. Donnelly stated the goal is for open communication.

Commissioner Broomell queried if union membership provided staff with a voice. Mr. Donnelly answered in the affirmative.

Mr. Donnelly stated that an established wage plan provide for budgetary planning.

Ms. Gilmore stated a supermajority of staff desires unionization. She stated staff has voiced concerns regarding raises and performance issues.

Discussion ensued regarding evaluations within EPD. Chief Rogers stated that sworn Officers must meet standards within their contract to receive merit increases.

Mayor Alt expressed support for staff, stating that everyone should be treated fairly.

Mr. Denny Bird stated negotiated salaries would enable staff to plan their budgets.

Mr. Joe Stanley expressed concerns regarding lack of follow up regarding processing of evaluations. He stated that Collective Bargaining would assist staff in defining where they stand and where they are going, adding that the issue should not wind up with the Board, but should be addressed by management.

Ms. Nelen stated that staff expressed concerns regarding issues including promotions, training and safety equipment.

Commissioner Broomell questioned if a merit plan was adopted would staff continue with unionization. Ms. Gilmore stated there is a process in which employees will decide, adding that a union empowers staff.

Mr. Donnelly stated unionization would result in some changes, but that management would still have management rights. He stated Collective Bargaining would provide union members the ability to negotiate items that are specified in the contract.

Commissioner Broomell thanked everyone for attending the meeting, stating she had a better understanding of the process.

Commissioner Givens thanked everyone in attendance, adding that it would be beneficial to know what to expect regarding salaries from year to year. He expressed support for regular evaluations.

Mayor Alt stated the Board will discuss an amendment to the Town Charter to include non-sworn personnel vs. requiring employees to follow steps to bring the matter to referendum.

Mr. Rodriguez expressed support for initiation of a merit procedure.

Mr. Rodriguez questioned if AFSCME staff are paid by the entity. Ms. Gilmore stated AFSCME operates as a non-profit.

Commissioner Piner stated the Board will follow up with Counsel for guidance.

Mr. Donnelly, referring to his participation in the FBI Academy in 2007, stated a discussion regarding employees' desire to unionize typically arose from underlying issues.

Mr. George stated that all employees are critically important to the Town, and thanked them for their service.

Chief Rogers queried what would happen if a staff member opted to not join the union. Ms. Gilmore answered that the employee would be considered a non-member.

Ms. Gilmore asked the Board to consider amending the Charter to provide for Collective Bargaining vs. taking the matter to referendum in order to expedite the process.

Discussion - Enterprise Fleet Management - Tyler Anderberg

Mr. Tyler Anderberg, representing Enterprise Fleet Management, introduced himself to the Board. He stated the purpose of his appearance was to discuss administration of the Town's vehicle fleet. Mr. Anderberg provided a Power Point overview of services offered by Enterprise Fleet Management, a copy of which was placed in the record of the minutes.

Mr. Anderberg stated the goal of fleet management is to lease fleet vehicles, replacing the fleet every 5 years. Mayor Alt questioned if it would increase the Town's costs to lease vs. purchase. Mr. Anderberg answered in the negative.

Mr. George questioned if Police vehicles would be included in the fleet program. Mr. Anderberg answered in the positive. Mr. George questioned if Enterprise would outfit the Police vehicles. Mr. Anderberg stated the Town would utilize its own vendor to outfit Police cars.

Discussion ensued regarding in-house maintenance vs. using dealer services.

Chief Rogers questioned if Enterprise had encountered supply chain issues regarding vehicles. Mr. Anderberg stated Enterprise has a vast network of vehicle suppliers.

Chief Rogers questioned if Enterprise determined the make and model of vehicles that the Town could lease. Mr. Anderberg answered in the negative.

**Discussion - Rate and Method of Apportionment Regarding Special Tax District
Craig Heron and Kimberly Min**

Mr. George stated that the Rate and Method (RMA) is the amount that will be charged to residential, commercial, sports and recreational vehicle properties within the Special Tax District (the District).

Ms. Kimberly Min, Esquire, and Mr. Craig Heron, representing Whiteford Law, the Town of Elkton's counsel regarding the District associated with the Southfields Planned Unit Development (PUD), introduced themselves to the Board.

Also in attendance were Ms. Jennifer Dierksen, representing Davenport & Company, the Town's financial advisor, and Mr. Chris Sheehan, representing Mesirow, financial advisor to Sideline Properties, developer of the planned Sports Plex.

Ms. Min stated the Town previously passed Resolution R8-2020, establishing the District and the RMA. She stated the RMA determines how the special taxes are allocated. She stated that Real Property taxes collected from commercial and residential properties within the District will generate revenue to offset infrastructure costs. Ms. Min further stated that a subsequent resolution will be drafted and presented to create the bonds associated with the planned Sports Park, adding that the bonds will be repaid from the District as well.

Ms. Min stated the RMA has been amended, as the property originally identified as a marina was originally included in the District, however the property is now identified as Recreational Vehicle (RV) use, and is included the remaining uses, which include retail and hotel, as a separate allocation. She stated that the amended apportionment changes and adjusts the maximum tax for each property designation. She further stated a supplemental resolution would be drafted to reflect the amended RMA.

Mr. George questioned if Ms. Min would draft the supplemental resolution. Ms. Min answered in the affirmative.

Ms. Min stated a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is required between the Town and Sideline Properties in the event the Town takes title to the property upon which the Sports Plex is planned. She stated that while Town-owned property is tax-exempt, the MOU provides for the Town's payment of Real Property taxes on the parcel that is in the District in order to fund debt service on the bonds.

Mr. Sheehan stated the purpose of the Town taking title to the property does not financially obligate the Town. He stated the MOU is a contingency document that does not financially obligate the Town.

Ms. Diercksen stated the maximum amount of Real Property Taxes associated with the planned Sports Plex property would be \$166,000 to \$297,000 per year. Ms. Min stated this is an obligation that the Town would guarantee if it takes title to the property.

Discussion - Amendment to Town of Elkton Charter Article C8-23 Contributions to Singerly Fire Company

Mayor Alt stated he previously met with Messrs. Sam Goldwater and Robert Muller to discuss ongoing financial issues of Singerly Fire Company. He stated that financial projections indicate that Singerly will begin drawing from savings in 2027 and will be bankrupt by 2032 without increased financial support from the Town.

Mr. Goldwater stated Singerly has begun reducing services and equipment in an effort to cut costs.

Mayor Alt stated Mr. George is drafting a Resolution in order to increase the Town's annual contribution to Singerly.

Mr. Muller stated Singerly is requesting an increase in the Town's annual contribution from \$150,000 to \$1.2 million

Mr. George stated the annual contribution is based upon State of Maryland Real Property annual assessment data.

Mayor Alt queried the Board for a consensus regarding increasing the Town's annual contribution to Singerly. It was the consensus of the Board to increase the Town's annual contribution to Singerly.

Mr. George stated he would present the Resolution at an upcoming meeting of the Board.

Discussion - Water and Sewer Rates

Messrs. Ryan Flickinger and Kevin Nyamumbo appeared on behalf of KCI Technologies, the Town's Engineer.

Messrs. Jason Taylor, Gary Gutierrez, Ernie Griffin, Mark Szela, Dwayne Lowry and Jerry Shupe appeared on behalf of Inframark, the Town's Water Treatment Plant (WTP) and Wastewater Treatment Plan (WWTP) operator.

Mayor Alt stated the Board reduced water and sewer rates several years ago, however operation and other costs are increasing, necessitating a discussion regarding potential rate increases.

Mayor Alt, referring to the Town's annual water audit, expressed his reluctance to raise water and sewer rates until all potential lost revenue is accounted for.

Mr. George stated KCI Technologies and other entities are involved in investigating sources of unaccounted water.

Mr. Turnbull requested installation of master meters at shopping centers and apartment complexes, stating that a master meter can capture leaks prior to meters installed at individual stores or apartments, adding that this is helpful data for the water audit.

Discussion ensued regarding meter placement at large user locations.

Mr. Lowry suggested implementing zone metering to observe water usage in areas to determine above average draw. Mr. Turnbull stated he met with LB Water, the Town's meter vendor, regarding initiation of meter zones.

Mr. Flickinger noted that the cost of water production is expected to increase exponentially in the next decade.

Mayor Alt stated the Board recognized the current and impending issues, noting that the Town received a rate increase from Artesian Water, the Town's backup water supplier.

Discussion ensued regarding sediment buildup in the raceway that feeds supplies the Town's WTP. Mr. Turnbull suggested insertion of a pipe into the raceway that provided cleanouts. He stated this would provide the ability to keep the WTP running in times of high turbidity, negating the need to rely on the backup interconnection with Artesian Water.

Mr. George noted that the cost of improvements associated with installation of a pipe may exceed the cost of purchasing water from Artesian.

Mr. Lowry stated Inframark could conduct a cost analysis to determine if the installation would exceed the cost of purchasing water from Artesian.

Mr. Shupe stated Inframark is currently recruiting staff with the goal of operating the WTP and WWTP 24 hours per day.

Mayor Alt requested assistance from Inframark regarding enforcement of regulations associated with Industrial User Permits.

Commissioner Broomell questioned the status of the UV system at the WTP. Mr. Szela stated the project was completed, adding that delays in the project were the result of plant design.

Mr. Shupe stated the WWTP experienced high Nitrogen levels in 2022, the result of failing aeration discs which could not be replaced in a timely manner due to supply chain-related issues. Mr. Shupe stated the next project at the WWTP will involve installation of UV filters, and pledged \$171,000 on behalf of Inframark to assist with the purchasing of the equipment for the project.

Mayor Alt thanked everyone who attended the workshop meeting.

Mayor Alt stated the Elkton Music Hall is scheduled to open on July 15th. He expressed his desire for the Town to purchase tickets for employees if requested.

Hearing no additional business to come before the Board, Mayor Alt adjourned the workshop meeting at 2:47 p.m.

L. Michelle Henson
Assistant Town Administrator

A VIDEO RECORDING OF THIS MEETING RETAINED AT THE ADMINISTRATION
OFFICE

Note: The minutes of regularly scheduled public meetings conducted by the Mayor and Commissioners of the Town of Elkton, following their approval, are posted at www.elkton.org. The minutes, in hard copy format, are retained indefinitely by the Town of Elkton, Administration Office, 100 Railroad Avenue, Elkton, Maryland 21921.