

The Mayor and Commissioners of the Town of Elkton

MINUTES

October 15, 2014

The Mayor and Commissioners of the Town of Elkton (the “Board”) held their second regularly scheduled meeting in October on this date at 7:00 p.m. The following persons were present: Mayor Robert J. Alt; Commissioners Charles H. Givens, Sr.; Mary Jo Jablonski; Earl M. Piner, Sr.; Daniel R. VanReenen, Jr.; Town Administrator Lewis H. George, Jr.; Finance Director Steven H. Repole; Elkton Police Department Chief Matthew Donnelly; Administration Office Secretary L. Michelle Henson; and Town Attorney John P. Downs, Esquire.

Mayor Alt called the meeting to order and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

ACTION: The minutes of the October 1, 2014 meeting were approved on a motion made by Commissioner Givens. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Piner and approved by all present with no corrections or amendments.

ACTION: The financial report and the bills submitted for payment were approved on a motion made by Commissioner Jablonski. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Piner and approved by all present.

Discussion

Commissioner Givens requested receipt of the financial report prior to the scheduled meeting. Mr. Repole answered in the affirmative, stating Finance Department staff, in anticipation of a 2-week timeframe prior to the next meeting, included as much financial activity as possible.

Mayor Alt questioned the source of expense to Upper Bay Counseling. Mr. Repole responded Upper Bay Counseling conducted psychological review of Elkton Police Department candidates.

Mayor Alt questioned if the Clifton Gunderson firm was the Town’s auditor. Mr. Repole answered in the affirmative.

Mayor Alt questioned a payment of \$34,000 to Cecil County Government. Mr. George responded the payment was for tipping fees at the Cecil County Central Landfill.

VOTE: Mayor Alt, recognizing a motion and a second regarding the financial report and bills submitted for payment, requested a vote. The financial report and the bills submitted for payment were approved by all present.

Town Administrator's Report

Revised Petition for Annexation – YMCA of Cecil County, Inc. Regarding Property Identified as Tax Map 309 Parcel 100

Mr. George stated the Board previously accepted a Petition for Annexation from the YMCA of Cecil County. He stated the original petition contained an incorrect Deed reference, therefore, he was presenting a revised Petition, and requested the Board's acceptance.

ACTION: The revised Petition for Annexation by the YMCA of Cecil County, Inc., regarding property identified as Tax Map 309 was accepted on a motion made by Commissioner Givens and seconded by Commissioner Jablonski.

Discussion

Commissioner VanReenen, referring to the YMCA's tax exempt status, questioned if the Town's taxpayers would incur an additional burden as a result of the annexation. Mr. George stated law enforcement services to the YMCA could be considered an expense borne by taxpayers.

Commissioner VanReenen questioned if the YMCA would pay water and sewer fees. Mr. George confirmed the YMCA currently purchased water from the Town, and would connect to the Town's sewer service. Commissioner VanReenen questioned if the YMCA would pay hookup fees. Mr. George answered in the affirmative. Mayor Alt added the Major Facility Fees totaled \$123,000.

VOTE: Mayor Alt, recognizing a motion and a second regarding the revised Petition for Annexation requested a vote. The revised Annexation Petition for the YMCA of Cecil County was approved by all present.

Annexation A2-2014 YMCA of Cecil County, Inc. – Regarding Property Identified as Tax Map 309 Parcel 100 – Presented for Introduction

Mr. George presented Annexation A2-2014 – YMCA of Cecil County, Inc., for introduction. He stated the YMCA property consisted of approximately 34.6117 acres, located at the northeast corner of Maryland Routes 279 and 40.

Mr. George read a summary of Annexation A2-2014, a copy of which was placed in the record of the minutes.

ACTION: Annexation A2-2014 YMCA of Cecil County, Inc. – regarding property identified as Tax Map 309 Parcel 100, was accepted for introduction on a motion made by Commissioner Piner. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Jablonski and approved by all present.

Request of Thomas Jones for Removal of a Parking Space Adjacent to 105 South Street to Accommodate a Driveway Entrance

Mr. Tom Jones introduced himself to the Board. He stated the purpose of his appearance was to request the Board's approval to eliminate a parking space to accommodate the construction of a driveway adjacent to his building at 105 South Street. He stated the driveway would be for his use.

Mr. George stated he and Chief Donnelly met with Mr. Jones regarding the request. Chief Donnelly stated he had no issue with the proposed driveway.

Mayor Alt expressed concerns regarding sight distance with respect to backing a vehicle from the driveway onto South Street. Referring to the Board's suspension of parking enforcement through 2014, Mayor Alt cautioned that the Board's subsequent decision could increase parking on South Street. Mr. Jones stated the proposed driveway was similar in design and sight distance to numerous driveways throughout the Town.

Commissioner Piner, referring to subsequent application of paint to the curbs adjacent to the driveway, expressed concerns the painted lines could impact adjacent parking spaces.

Commissioner VanReenen questioned if the Board could reverse its decision in the future. Mr. Jones questioned if the Board removed driveways in other circumstances.

Commissioner Jablonski stated the proposed driveway was approved by the Zoning Director, adding the purpose of the Board's discussion was to approve or deny the request for elimination of a parking space.

ACTION: The request of Thomas Jones for removal of a parking space adjacent to 105 South Street to accommodate a driveway entrance was approved on a motion made by Commissioner Jablonski and seconded by Commissioner Givens.

Discussion

Commissioner Piner reiterated Mayor Alt's concerns regarding sight distance with respect to backing a vehicle from the driveway onto South Street. He repeated his concerns regarding loss of adjacent spaces subsequent to painting of the curbs. Mr. Jones stated the space was more than adequate, and was similar to driveways throughout Town.

Commissioner Givens questioned if the Board could table the decision until a sight visit could occur. Mr. Jones expressed his desire to complete the project soon.

VOTE: Mayor Alt, recognizing a motion and a second regarding the request to remove a parking space adjacent to 105 South Street to accommodate a driveway entrance, requested a vote. The request to remove the parking space adjacent to 105 South Street to accommodate a driveway entrance was approved by all present.

Old Business

Mayor Alt, referring to the Town's ongoing Water Audit, stated he spoke with the Departments of Public Works (DPW), Administration and Finance to formulate a plan to confirm that all buildings connected to Town water were metered, and that all meters were working properly. Noting the importance of the audit, and a recent presentation regarding anticipated State regulations pertaining to stormwater management, he asked the Board for support in order to mobilize staff in order to conduct water meter and stormwater inspections in a timely fashion. Recognizing staffing restraints, he asked the Board to consider contracting local plumbers to assist in meter and stormwater inspection.

Mr. George concurred with Mayor Alt's comments regarding staffing shortages. He stated the Town had approximately 6,500 water/sewer customers, noting inspections of each meter would take considerable effort and staff hours.

Mayor Alt stated the Town needed to identify all consumption of water, including use that was unbilled, such as non-profits and churches, stating the only way for the Town to identify lost water was to account for all water produced.

Mayor Alt stated he recently spoke with Delegate David Rudolph regarding the Town's recent discussions regarding a solar farm. He stated Delegate Rudolph noted recent changes pertaining to solar energy, and requested that staff follow up with the delegate prior to moving forward with the solar farm. He added that Delegate Rudolph was always looking out for the Town.

Mayor Alt, referring to the recent Road Restoration Project, asked staff to confirm requested work at a property on South Tartan Drive was completed.

Mayor Alt, referring to a recent citizen inquiry which initiated a request for a meeting of the Town's Ethics Commission, stated the commission was scheduled to meet on October 15, 2014 however the meeting had to be rescheduled due to a member's illness.

Mayor Alt, referring to the citizen query and subsequent discussions, reiterated his previous request that if a citizen had any concerns regarding a Board member's activities, that person should contact the Ethics Committee via the Administration Office.

Commissioner VanReenen stated citizens should bring their concerns to Mayor & Commissioners meetings, and be directed from there.

Commissioner Givens concurred with Mayor Alt's comments, stating a Mayor & Commissioners meeting was not the venue at which citizens should take "pot shots" at Board members.

Commissioner Givens questioned the status of the pedestrian bridge on Delaware Avenue. Mr. George stated the project was currently in the design phase with the State Highway

Administration (SHA). He stated he would get a current update during a scheduled meeting with SHA on October 15th.

Commissioner Givens questioned the status of the Wawa project on Route 40. He stated he was aware of issues related to delivery truck access to the Wawa from Landing Lane. Ms. Henson responded the developer was also in discussions with SHA regarding ingress and egress issues.

Commissioner Givens, referring to a citizen's concerns regarding loitering at a nearby community center, questioned if the issue had been discussed with the center's coordinator. Mr. George stated they had not yet met regarding the issue.

Commissioner Piner stated the recent installation of "pedestrian crossing" signage at East High Street and Howard Street was effective.

Commissioner Piner, referring to an email from Mr. Richard Lemen regarding initiation of an "Employee of the Month" award, expressed support for the activity. He provided a list of suggestions regarding determination of the award, a copy of which was placed in the record of the minutes.

Commissioner Piner questioned if DPW had preventive maintenance policies/procedures in place and asked if the department had a log of equipment and vehicle maintenance. Mr. George stated he would request follow up from the Director of DPW.

Commissioner Givens concurred with Commissioner Piner's query. He stated this issue was a good example for the need of a Central Purchasing Agent, stating equipment and vehicle maintenance records would fall within this employee's job description.

Commissioner Jablonski, referring to the October 3rd "First Friday" event, held in conjunction with the Elkton High School Class of 1984 reunion, stated the events were very successful, bringing many people to the downtown. She thanked the local businesses for participating in the events.

Mayor Alt's Report

Mayor Alt, referring to the Board's previous discussions regarding rescinding the Town's Taxicab Ordinance, stated the ordinance, which was written long ago, contained provisions that were already addressed at the State level. He asked the Board to consider moving forward with rescinding the ordinance. Mr. George stated he would initiate the process to repeal the ordinance.

Mayor Alt, referring to Commissioner Piner's comments regarding recent installation of pedestrian signage at East High Street and Howard Street, asked Mr. George to initiate repainting of Town crosswalks to enhance motorist awareness. Commissioner Givens requested the installation of a second crosswalk sign at Howard Street to enhance pedestrian safety during baseball season.

Mayor Alt asked Mr. George to follow up with SHA regarding a request for maintenance of the bridges at North Street and Bridge Street.

Mayor Alt announced Trick or Treat activities were scheduled for October 31, 2014 from 6:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m., which mirrored Cecil County's schedule.

Mayor Alt stated he attended a meeting of the Rotary Club on Tuesday October 14th, and advised the Board the group would welcome all guest speakers.

Mayor Alt advised the Board that meetings with Department Managers would be scheduled for the Fiscal Year 2016 Budget. Referring to previous charitable donations, Mayor Alt asked that requests for donations be made as early as possible in order to have line-item information.

Mayor Alt, referring to Commissioner Jablonski's comments regarding the success of downtown events, expressed support for continuing community events. He requested the creation of a checklist that event organizers could utilize to assist the Town in itemizing costs associated with event support.

Mayor Alt stated he received a request for a public announcement of the Town's fund balances. He listed the following balances: Revenue \$600,000; Expense \$430,000; he noted he expected the General Fund balance to fall to approximately \$1 million. He listed the Water Fund balance at \$1.5 million and \$7 million in the Sewer Fund. He noted the balance of the Major Facilities Fund was \$5.5 million. He stated the Town's debt obligation, due to the Wastewater Treatment Plant ENR/BNR upgrade was \$15 million. He added the Town was currently undergoing its yearly audit.

Commissioner Jablonski's Report

Commissioner Jablonski thanked Mayor Alt for providing the financial information.

Commissioner Jablonski, referring to the Board's previous discussions regarding the Town's Charter and Code, requested a comprehensive review and update to the document by a Code specialist. Mr. George stated he would contact Codification specialists with a request for a proposal to conduct a review and update of the Town's Charter and Code.

Commissioner Jablonski announced the annual Halloween Parade was scheduled for October 24th. She stated the event grew each year, with hundreds of children and many floats.

Commissioner Givens' Report

Commissioner Givens expressed support for the efforts required to complete the water audit.

Commissioner Givens stated he attended a recent event in which Mr. Jimmy Nicholson was honored at Minihane's Irish Pub. He congratulated Mr. Nicholson and commended the Minihane's for the event.

Commissioner VanReenen's Report

Commissioner VanReenen concurred with Commissioner Piner regarding an Employee Recognition program. He suggested a facet of the program would include encouragement of employee suggestions to save money.

Commissioner VanReenen asked the Board to consider term limits, such as 12 years, for elected officials in order to encourage turnover, and questioned if other municipalities had term limits.

Commissioner VanReenen, referring to previous discussions regarding amending the date of the Town election, suggested moving the date to the 3rd Tuesday in April.

Commissioner VanReenen questioned if the Town Code contained language pertaining to accountability for Elected Officials. Mr. Downs stated the Town's Code of Ethics pertained to accountability for Elected Officials.

Commissioner VanReenen expressed concerns regarding use of fund balance to balance budgets, stating the Town would exhaust its reserves in the long term, and asked how the Board planned to replenish the funds. Noting rising costs, such as a recent increase in natural gas fees amounting to approximately \$40,000 per month, he expressed concerns for diminishing revenue sources, such as elimination of parking meters.

Commissioner VanReenen stated his projections indicated the Town would run out of money in approximately 5 ½ years, noting he would not favor increased taxes. He requested that the Board discuss changes to the current Budget such as hiring freezes. He stated grass season was coming to an end which would eliminate the need for hiring additional DPW staff.

Mayor Alt interjected that DPW would need staff to upgrade storm drains, as well as perform general maintenance tasks, adding the Board could make these decisions. He stated the Town's expenses were mainly due to operational and payroll costs.

Regarding payroll, Commissioner VanReenen stated the Elkton Police Department (EPD) and DPW had budgeted positions that he felt did not need to be filled.

Mayor stated the Town was bare-boned regarding personnel, noting he expected a request for 8 – 10 new staff for DPW during upcoming Budget discussions. He questioned the number of Officers EPD was short. Chief Donnelly responded EPD was short by 8 Officers.

Mayor Alt stated the Town currently employed 2 less employees than in 2002, during which time the population was approximately 10,000, adding the Town's current population is almost 16,000.

Commissioner VanReenen reiterated his concerns that the Town continued to borrow from the General Fund.

Mayor Alt stated he did not favor cutting staff, adding that the Board could amend the Budget at any time.

Commissioner VanReenen stated he did not want to cut staff but wanted to ensure there was no duplication of jobs. He expressed support for a maintenance log for DPW, adding that efforts should be in place to save fuel use and improve staff efficiency.

Mayor Alt asked Commissioner VanReenen if he had a long term plan regarding the Town. Commissioner VanReenen stated the Board needed to make hard decisions regarding economic development. He expressed support for either hiring an Economic Development staff member, or an official request of an Economic Development plan from the Elkton Alliance.

Commissioner Piner stated he did not support a hiring freeze or halting promotions. He stated he did not support term limits. He stated when an official was reelected, the voters approved of their service. He stated the Town had new leadership and a new direction, stating the Board had input as well.

Commissioner VanReenen, referring to the discussion regarding promotions, stated EPD Officers received evaluations every 6 months, adding all Town employees should receive evaluations.

Public Comment

Mr. Anthony Lesico introduced himself to the Board. He stated he was the Manager of the 7-11 store, located near the Elkton Municipal Building.

Mr. Lesico stated the purpose of his appearance was to thank the Board for the positive changes he saw occurring in Elkton. He stated his store benefitted greatly from the North Street Senior Apartment project, and expressed hope that new development in the Town would continue. He expressed appreciation to the EPD for prompt assistance when needed.

Mr. Lesico pledged support for Elkton and the Board.

Mr. Joseph Piner introduced himself to the Board. He stated he was an independent documentary film producer, and stated the purpose of his appearance was to show a clip of his film "Free Spirits – Saving America's Wild Horses". He provided a synopsis of his film, a copy of which was placed in the record of the minutes.

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After showing the film clip, Mr. Piner requested use of the Elkton Municipal Building Community Room to provide a free screening of his film to the community. Mayor invited Mr. Piner to schedule the showing in the Elkton Municipal Building Community Room.

Mayor Alt, referring to the drug disposal box located in the Elkton Municipal Building atrium, asked Mr. George to investigate placement of a continuously running public service announcement regarding drug abuse. He suggested Mr. Piner could assist in the project.

Mr. Dwight Hair expressed support for Commissioner Piner's suggestions regarding an Employee of the Month award. He stated the Town employed many good employees.

Mr. Hair commended Mayor Alt for the way he conducted the meetings. Referring to the Board's discussions, he suggested certain topics would be better addressed at workshop meetings.

Mr. Hair stated he recently received a "robo-call" regarding a recent issue involving Commissioner Mary Jo Jablonski, and expressed concerns regarding the content of the recorded message. He stated the message inferred Commissioner Jablonski inappropriately assisted a local business with attempting to obtain a State loan in order to pay its outstanding taxes.

Mr. Hair stated he purchased a home owned by the business owner for the amount of taxes owed, subsequently settling the issue. He stated he contacted the State of Maryland Office of Housing and Community Development to confirm the State did not issue any funds to assist in paying the outstanding taxes.

Mr. Hair expressed support for Commissioner Jablonski, stating she was an honest and motivated individual.

Mayor Alt thanked Mr. Hair for his statements, and asked him to provide any applicable information to the Ethics Commission. He stated the Cecil Whig had requested and was providing information regarding the issue.

Mayor Alt stated the issue was becoming an "anchor" which drew in many people, and expressed his opinion that the issue would be resolved quickly by the Ethics Commission.

Mr. Ron Wardrop presented Certificates of Appreciation to the Board and other members of the Town's Administration. He presented a painting to Mayor Alt, stating the items were from he and his wife.

Mr. Robert Litzenberg, referring to the water audit and stormwater inspection project, stated several houses in the Elkton Heights neighborhood had downspouts connected to the sanitary sewer. Mayor Alt stated addressing this type of situation was part of the project.

Mr. Litzenberg requested a list of entities in Town that received but did not pay for water and sewer services.

Mr. Litzenberg requested a quick resolution to the current issue before the Ethics Commission.

Mr. Litzenberg commended the Board regarding discussions among the members.

Ms. Danielle Carroll concurred with Mr. Hair's statements regarding discussion topics, saying certain discussions should be conducted in a workshop setting.

Ms. Carroll, referring to Commissioner VanReenen's comments regarding staff levels, stated additional entry level hiring with diminished leadership could have a negative result. She suggested input from Department Managers regarding staffing needs. She stated she supported growing businesses in Town but expressed concern that cutting staff would negatively affect the Town's appearance.

Ms. Carroll, noting her banking background, expressed appreciation for Mayor Alt's announcement of the Town's financial status.

Ms. Carroll, noting the anticipated loss of \$25,000 in revenue from parking meters, noted the cost of Parking Enforcement was approximately \$30,000. She suggested discussion of the Budget should be done in a workshop setting.

Regarding Economic Development, Ms. Carroll stated the Elkton Alliance was providing economic development service to the Town via a budget that was cut by 50%, stating she as a banker recognized that business needs investment in order to grow.

Mr. Ed Ginder stated he was a member of the Town's Planning Commission, and referring to Commissioner Givens' query regarding the status of the Wawa, stated the developer was currently working with SHA regarding tanker truck deliveries from Route 40.

Motion for a Closed Meeting

ACTION: Pursuant to State Government Article § 10-508 to discuss (1) (ii) any other personnel matter that affects one or more specific individuals; Commissioner Jablonski made a motion for a Closed Meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Givens and approved by all present.

Mayor Alt announced that the public meeting would not reconvene.

Hearing no additional business to come before the Board, Mayor Alt adjourned the meeting at 9:16 p.m.

L. Michelle Henson
Administration Office Secretary

Mayor & Commissioners Meeting Minutes
October 15, 2014

AN AUDIO AND 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.