

The Mayor and Commissioners of the Town of Elkton

MINUTES

June 25, 2014

A public meeting (workshop) of the Mayor and Commissioners of the Town of Elkton (“the Board”) was held on this date at 4:00 p.m. with the following persons present: Mayor Robert J. Alt; Commissioners Charles H. Givens, Sr.; Mary Jo Jablonski; Earl M. Piner, Sr.; and Daniel R. VanReenen, Jr.; Town Administrator Lewis H. George, Jr.; and Administration Office Secretary L. Michelle Henson. Also in attendance: Department Managers Jeanne D. Minner, Director of Planning; J. Daniel Handley, Director of Public Works; Mary Magaw, Director of Parks & Recreation; Charles Bromwell, Director of Zoning; Steven H. Repole, Director of Finance; Matthew Donnelly, Chief of Police; Laura Brown, Director of Human Resources.

Mayor Alt called the workshop to order at 4:00 p.m.

Mayor Alt recognized former Mayor Joseph Fisona in attendance.

Mayor Alt stated that he wanted to amend the protocol of the Mayor and Commissioners’ workshop meetings to include public comment, saying the Board needed citizen input regarding decisions.

Mayor Alt announced the Historical District Commission was scheduled to meet at 6:00 p.m.

Introduction – John Downs, Esquire

Mr. John Downs, Esquire, introduced himself, Ms. Lisa Hamilton, Esquire, Ms. Lisa Ogden, Paralegal, Ms. Rachel Ewing, Paralegal, Ms. Meredith Drews, Paralegal, and Ms. Jill Cottrell, Office Manager, to the Board. He stated he and his team looked forward to working with the Town.

Mr. George welcomed Mr. Downs and his team. Commissioners Givens, Jablonski, and Piner echoed Mr. George’s statements.

Discussion – Town Water Supply – Pond Concept – Ken Benner

Mr. Ken Benner, Area Manager, Severn Trent Environmental Services, introduced himself to the Board.

Mr. Benner stated the purpose of his appearance was to discuss with the Board a concept of connecting the ponds known collectively as Howards Pond, to be used as a containment area in the event of contamination of the Big Elk Creek, which could negatively impact the Town’s Water Treatment Plant (WTP). Noting the upcoming WTP race dredging project, he stated he also wanted to discuss replacing the gate valves at the

head of the race, leading to the WTP. He stated gate valves would be utilized to isolate the ponds and race during a storm event or other issue that could cause contamination, adding the gate valves would cost approximately \$12,000.00.

Mr. Benner, noting the cost of the valves was approximately \$12,000.00, stated the valves, when utilized to isolate from the race, would lower the Town's chemical and other treatment costs during and after rain events. He stated water clarity was affected by rain events, resulting in increased chemical use for water treatment.

Mr. George stated Mr. Benner's concept was to create a buffer for the WTP during rain events. He stated if the Board reached a consensus to move forward with the project he would request a proposal from KCI Technologies, Inc., the Town's engineering firm.

Commissioner VanReenen questioned if connecting the ponds would increase the Town's water supply. Mr. George answered in the negative, stating the concept to combine the ponds was to provide a holding area in the event the race needed to be isolated. He added the Town could not increase its water supply, as the Town received a set appropriation of water from the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE).

Commissioner VanReenen questioned the capacity of Howard's Pond once all ponds were connected. Mr. Benner stated the ponds were currently 5 feet deep, and added if the connected ponds were made 10 feet deep, the Town would have approximately 1 week of storage.

Commissioner Jablonski expressed support for investigation of combining the ponds.

Mayor Alt queried the Board for a consensus regarding investigation of combining the ponds. It was the consensus of the Board to support investigation of combining the ponds in order to provide a buffer area in the event of contamination of the race leading to the WTP.

Discussion – Information Technology Services

Mayor Alt, referring to a request from a citizen to update the Town's Information Technology (IT), stated he requested Mr. Devine's appearance to discuss the subject. Messrs. Mike Devine and Tom Hanson introduced themselves to the Board.

Mayor Alt questioned the feasibility of placing the Town's data on the "cloud". Commissioner Givens requested a definition of the cloud. Mr. Devine stated the concept of the cloud was actually a very large server that could be utilized to store data from multiple users.

Mr. Devine noted the Town recently upgraded all its computers, and an additional upgrade to utilize the cloud would be very expensive; adding that data storage on the cloud included a monthly fee.

Mayor Alt, referring Mr. Richard Lemen's previous suggestions for cost saving opportunities, asked if he had any comments regarding the issue. Mr. Lemen stated if the Town should investigate possibilities of sharing IT services with other municipalities.

Discussion ensued regarding nationwide trends of municipalities sharing services, such as IT, trash collection, etc.

Referring to the Events Calendar on the Town's website, Commissioner VanReenen stated he wanted to utilize the website to increase publicity for Town events. He stated he wanted to use the Elkton Chamber and Alliance to market Elkton.

Referencing the "Urgent Alert" area of the website, Commissioner VanReenen stated he wanted to utilize other social media to send residents important notices, such as road closures, weather updates, etc.

Discussion – Plans for Recreation / Community Center

Mayor Alt asked Ms. Mary Magaw, Director of Parks and Recreation, to join the discussion.

Commissioner Piner stated he requested the discussion regarding a Recreation / Community Center in order to provide Mayor Alt and Commissioner VanReenen history of the issue.

Commissioner Piner stated the previous Board set aside \$1.5 million for a Recreation / Community Center; subsequently reducing the amount to \$500,000. He stated the Board identified a site on Town-owned property on Route 40 and initiated site work and design.

Commissioner Piner, reiterating his desire to move forward with a Recreation / Community Center, stated he investigated corporate sponsors of the facility; noting the economy impacted the finances of potential supporters.

Commissioner Piner stated the facility could be a simple pole barn to start; a place where Parks and Recreation program participants could be sheltered from the weather.

Mayor Alt concurred with Commissioner Piner's statements, expressing support for moving forward with a facility. He expressed concerns that the department operated at a loss.

Discussion ensued regarding previous considerations of utilizing existing facilities in the area, such as the Cecil County YMCA facility and Elkton Armory.

Ms. Magaw stated the Parks and Recreation Department had a clear need for a facility, especially in bad weather. Regarding expenses vs revenues, she noted that many Parks and Recreation programs provided a service to low-income children, adding that running programs in a break-even mode would exclude many low-income residents.

Commissioner Piner concurred with Ms. Magaw's comments, stating taxpayers should have access to Town recreation programs. Commissioner Givens agreed with Commissioner Piner's comments.

Commissioner Jablonski agreed with Commissioners Piner and Givens, stating the Cecil County Boys & Girls Club operated 4 facilities in Cecil County, offering a total of 24 summer camp scholarships to young people in the county, adding that 18 of those scholarship applications came from Elkton. She noted that upon its opening, the Elkton Boys & Girls Club had 3 honor roll students enrolled, adding that number increased to 33 by the end of 2013.

Discussion ensued regarding programs aimed at promoting activities to young people. Commissioner Piner reiterated his statement that he wanted to start with a facility to get program participants out of harsh weather.

Discussion – Municipal Parking Lot – Parking Meters

Commissioner Jablonski stated she requested a discussion of parking meters in the North Street Municipal lot, as well as parking meters in general.

Mayor Alt noted the Town's employment base was much different 20 years ago, adding that recent economic conditions created a loss of business downtown. He expressed support for increasing traffic downtown. Commissioner Jablonski suggested eliminating the 2-hour parking limit in the downtown area.

Commissioner Jablonski noted the North Street Municipal lot, which contained 30 parking spaces, was the only municipal lot in which meters were installed. She stated the lot generated approximately \$3,000 per year in meter revenue.

Discussion ensued regarding the anticipated departure of the current Parking Enforcement Officer, and if the position should be filled. Discussion continued regarding costs associated with parking enforcement vs. removal of meters.

Mayor Alt stated he would support removal of the meters to encourage visitors to downtown. Commissioner Jablonski interjected that the current meters were obsolete, and parts were increasingly difficult to obtain.

Mr. George stated the Board that now was an opportune time to remove the meters and leave the Parking Enforcement Position unfilled.

Commissioner Piner questioned if the current 2-hour parking limit should be amended or eliminated in order to encourage downtown visitors to stay longer.

Discussion ensued regarding use of on-street parking by employees of downtown businesses.

Mayor Alt queried the audience for comments regarding the discussion.

Mr. Bob Litzenberg stated the Town of North East did not have meters or parking limits, saying the local Police Chief noted parking limits were bad for downtown businesses. Mayor Alt stated employees of downtown businesses should be reminded to utilize municipal lots.

Ms. Ingrid Rautenberg, co-owner of Minihane's Irish Pub, agreed with Mayor Alt regarding utilization of municipal lots, adding that lighting in the lots should be upgraded.

Mayor Alt queried the Board for a consensus regarding removal of meters and the 2-hour parking limit.

Commissioner Jablonski expressed support for removal of the meters and 2-hour parking limit on a trial basis.

Commissioner Givens concurred with Commissioner Jablonski but expressed concerns that downtown employees would use the parking spots. Commissioner Piner stated that Union Hospital's management would assist the Town in reminding staff to utilize municipal lots.

Commissioner VanReenen concurred with Commissioner Givens' concerns regarding abuse of on-street parking by employees.

Mr. Downs suggested the Board consider extending the parking time limit vs. elimination, as employees would be less likely to utilize on-street parking. Mr. Downs stated patrons of businesses such as Minihane's and a nearby barber shop needed additional parking time. Commissioner Piner concurred, noting the impact of 2-hour parking limits on patrons of the L'Oreal Salon.

Chief Donnelly noted that parking enforcement would not be consistent without a dedicated Parking Enforcement Official.

General Discussion

Ms. Jeanne Minner, Director of Planning, stated the owners of Minihane's Irish Pub planned an expansion of their restaurant, to include outdoor seating. She stated the plans included possible leasing of 9 parking spaces located in the North Street Municipal Parking Lot in order to provide steps leading to the outdoor dining area. She stated the owners planned on obtaining State of Maryland grant funding, the terms of which required the Board's support and approval of the project via resolution, which would be presented at the July 2, 2014 Mayor & Commissioners Meeting.

Ms. Minner stated discussions with the owners of Minihane's resulted in a review of the North Street Municipal Lot and recognition of needed upgrades. She stated the report regarding the need for upgrades would be included as support for the Minihane's Irish Pub grant application.

Commissioner Jablonski, referring to Ms. Minner's comments about the request to lease 9 parking spaces, questioned if the Board would be discussing the request.

Discussion ensued regarding the terms of the lease. Mr. Downs suggested that the lease be written for specific periods of time.

Mayor Alt queried the Board for a consensus regarding initiating a lease with the owners of the Minihane's Irish Pub regarding 9 spaces in the North Street Parking Lot. It was the consensus of the Board to initiate the lease agreement.

Hearing no additional business to come before the Board, Mayor Alt adjourned the workshop at 6:00 p.m.

L. Michelle Henson
Administration Office Secretary

AN AUDIO RECORDING OF THIS MEETING IS RETAINED AT THE
ADMINISTRATION OFFICE