



Minutes of the Town Council

May 8, 2023

Approved July 10, 2023

The regular meeting of the Town Council was held remotely via ZOOM Video Conferencing. The meeting was recorded.

Mayor Compton called the meeting of the Town Council to order at 7:35 p.m. In attendance were Councilors Dave Cosson, Christine Dibble, Sylvie Favret, Rob Gilmore, Eva Patrone, Barbara Raimondo. Also in attendance were HPC Chair Bob Booher and Treasurer Jean Moyer. In addition, over 15 Town residents were present.

Approval of Agenda: Eva Patrone moved to approve the agenda. Rob Gilmore seconded the motion.

Action: Voted 6-0, agenda approved.

Public Appearances: There were none.

Treasurer's Report:

Christine Dibble moved to accept the April Treasurer's report. Eva Patrone seconded the motion. Jean Moyer reported the following:

- Highway User Revenues were still lagging, and she will check in with the State about the status.
- The auditors have begun preparation for the audit of FY23.
- Wrinkles in implementing the new payroll platform, Rippling, have been ironed-out.

Action: Voted 6-0, report accepted.

Mayor's Report:

a) Kudos:

- To all who contributed their time and energy to the Lake clean up and the Woods workday.
- To the organizers of the Earth Day activities and participants who participated in spite of the rainy weather.

b) *MCDOT Washington Grove Connector design plan status:* In a public meeting presenting the work on the 15% engineering study, MCDOT showed a pathway from Brown Street that departed significantly from the routes presented to the Town and approved for engineering study by the Planning Board in 2021. Rather than connecting to the current end of Crabbs Branch, the pathway to Brown Street was shown as branching from a trail connecting Crabbs Branch and Amity Drive. The mayor reported he and residents reacted strongly in opposition to the proposed plan, noting that the Washington Grove Connector was funded for full design and construction, but the MCDOT study made it dependent on future approval of a

presently unfunded Crabbs Branch – Amity Road or trail project. Mr. Dan Sheridan, Chief of Transportation Engineering, agreed MCDOT would develop separate plans for a direct connection of Crabbs Branch to Brown Street before presentation of the engineering study to the Planning Board (expected in June/July).

- c) Montgomery County DOT has nearly completed work installing a larger cement culvert under Railroad Street which will drain storm water from Morgan Park. Additional grading in Morgan Park to facilitate flow into the new culvert may be necessary.
- d) *Elimination of USPS postal box rental fees – Status:* Mayor Compton reported he is still expecting implementation of the verbal agreement reached with the USPS in February to make post boxes rent-free to residents of Washington Grove.
- e) *EV Charging Station:* It is expected that it will be operational this month with a ribbon cutting on or about May 15th.
- f) *Presentation* on the native plant ecosystem by noted entomologist Dr. Doug Tallamy on May 31st at 7:30 pm in recognition of Earth Day, co-sponsored by the Woods Committee, Sustainability Committee, and Forest and Beautification Committee.
- g) *Music Weekend Plans:* Plans are progressing for this annual event on June 23-25.
- h) *Update from the 150th Anniversary Committee:* Co-Chair Meredith Horan reported things are going well. She explained some of the activities that will take place at The Circle.

Administrative Matters:

Reappointment of Jeff McCrehan to the Historic Preservation Commission for the three-year term June 1, 2023 – May 31, 2026: Barbara Raimondo moved to approve the mayor’s appointment of Jeff McCrehan to the HPC. Sylvie Favret seconded the motion.
Action: Voted 6-0, approved.

Unfinished Business

Resolution 2023-01 Acknowledging Washington Grove’s Racially Exclusionary Past:
Proposed amended version, discussion and possible adoption.

Barbara Raimondo introduced revised text and moved amendment of the Resolution. Eva Patrone seconded her motion. Barbara reviewed the revisions proposed, including that the supporting documentation would not be included, but instead be considered supplementary material to be kept available with the Resolution for reference and context. She urged the Council to stand united in support of the Resolution without further delay.

Rob Gilmore urged unanimous approval of the amendments. Eva Patrone expressed the view that whatever the intentions of those making Town decisions in the past, various actions were taken which had effects and consequences, and we should acknowledge these and declare our intentions to do better.

Some additional language changes regarding the text referencing Jim Crow policies, and the last bullet of paragraph D. were discussed, moved for revision, and separately approved.
Actions: Voted 6-0, to revise the amended text.

Paula Puglisi expressed her disappointment with the fact that this document was again being picked apart when it should be up for a vote. After further discussion whether to continue debate, the Council voted to on making the proposed amendments to the original Resolution.

Action: Vote: 6-0, Resolution amended as proposed.

It was moved and seconded to approve the Resolution as amended.

Action: Voted 6-0, Resolution adopted.

An Incentive Program for Residents to Convert from Fossil Fuels to Renewable Energy: Sustainability Committee proposal to mitigate the Town's greenhouse gas and carbon footprint.

Mayor Compton explained the Sustainability Committee (SC) was present at this meeting to report the results of their study and analysis of the Town's greenhouse gas emissions and to describe actions the Town should take to reduce our carbon footprint.

Chair Bob Booher began by outlining the SC proposal for a pilot renewable energy conversion incentive program as one of actions the Town should consider in order to meet reduced carbon emission targets over the next 10 years. The SC proposed a pilot program which would award residents up to \$1500 for:

- a) converting their fossil fuel-based heating and cooling to high-efficiency electric systems,
- or
- b) purchasing all electric vehicles, and
- c) using a renewable-energy-sourced electricity supplier.

The SC intends to propose to the Annual Town Meeting on May 13 that \$20,000 be added to the FY25 Town Budget to be available for a pilot incentive program which would be created by the Town Council.

Paul Patrone gave a brief presentation of the greenhouse gas emissions findings which show that making a meaningful reduction in carbon emissions in the Grove will necessitate converting as rapidly as possible our many residential fossil fuel-powered HVAC systems and vehicles to renewable energy sources. An incentive program would potentially be an effective way the Town could promote such conversions by offering assistance and information to aid residents in making the changes in conjunction with cash incentives

(which would be in addition to the financial incentives offered by the state and federal governments).

Discussion included:

- The financial impact of a \$20K addition to the budget on Town tax rates and cash reserves.
- Waiting for the incentive program to be more fully developed before adding money to the budget.
- The wisdom of acting as soon as possible (i.e., in FY25) rather than delaying until FY26.
- Existing Federal tax credits and Maryland rebates, the latter being taxable.

Action: Mayor Compton asked for a sense of the Council about adding to the \$20K to the budget and committing to establishing a Pilot Incentive Program. All six Councilors were in favor of the action.

Town Council Reports – Mayor Compton reviewed the following noteworthy items:

- *Woods* – 13 trees will be planted in the East Woods on May 12th.
- *Woods* – Invasive plant control treatments will be completed in late spring.
- *Forestry and Beautification, Woods, Sustainability* – A webinar addressing the interrelationship between native plants and animals and the impact of invasive species, their control, and related topics is scheduled for May 31st.
- *Lake* – Lake clean-up took place on April 15th and 16th.
- *Recreation* – Staffing for Summer In The Parks is nearly complete, with 10 registered campers to date.
- *Gateway* – A proposal to provide the owner of the Commercial Corner \$2800 for the removal of the dumpster.

Action: Voted 6-0, reports approved for posting.

Approval of the Minutes: Barbara Raimondo moved, and Eva Patrone moved approval of the April 10, 2023 minutes of the Town Council.

Action: Voted 6-0 approved.

Next Meetings:

- May 13, 2023 -- Annual Town Meeting
- May 22, 2023 -- Regular Town Council and Organizational Meeting
- June 12, 2023 -- Regular Town Council Meeting.

Adjournment: There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Kathryn L. Lehman
Town Clerk