



Minutes of the Town Council

June 12, 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 Christine Dibble, Rob Gilmore, Peter Nagrod, Eva Patrone, Barbara Raimondo, and Mary Warfield. Also in attendance were HPC Chair Bob Booher, HPC Alternate Marilyn Frey, PC member Georgette Cole, Treasurer Jean Moyer, and Marilyn Frey.

Regular Business

Approval of Agenda: Rob Gilmore moved to approve the agenda. Barbara Raimondo seconded the motion. There was a brief discussion about switching the Town's internet service provider from Xfinity to Verizon.

Action: Voted 6-0, agenda approved.

Public Appearances: There were none.

Treasurer's Report:

Christine Dibble moved to accept the May Treasurer's report. Peter Nagrod seconded the motion. Jean Moyer reported that income is on track, but unexpected tree removal has pushed that item over budget for FY23. Financial administration may go a bit over as well. There is money available in underspent categories.

Action: Voted 6-0, report accepted.

Resolution 2023-03, Budget Transfers FY2023 – Introduction and Action: Barbara Raimondo moved to introduce and approve Resolution 2023-03. Eva Patrone seconded the motion. Several budget transfers were proposed in this resolution, which is passed annually for accounting and audit reconciliation.

Action: Vote: 6-0, approved.

Mayor's Report:

- a) *Kudos* to all who organized and hosted two recent events; CircleFest and Yappy Hour at The Dog Spot.
- b) *EV Charging Station:* The station is up and running. The ribbon cutting on June 10th organized by the Sustainability Committee was well attended.
- c) *Chestnut Road at Center Street Restoration:* The repaving and restoration of the culvert will be repaired soon.

- d) *Hazard Signage on Washington Grove Lane:* MCDOT has agreed to install hazard signage at the large culverts entering the West Woods along Washington Grove Lane and will consider similar signage at the recently enlarged culvert under Railroad Street.
- e) *Chestnut Avenue Sewer Replacement:* Project is under way.
- f) *USPS Box Fees:* Currently, only the smallest box is being offered free to anyone with a renewal fee due for their box. This was not the understanding Mayor Compton had from when the USPS proposal to make boxes rent-free was accepted. He has raised this concern with the USPS Consumer Advocate and is waiting for the response from the USPS.
- g) *Shared Use Pathway report:* Mayor Compton showed diagrams of three new alternative pathway routes developed by the MCDOT 15% engineering study group. Bob Booher discussed pros and cons and suggested another option following the ~500 ft contour line should be considered. The Liaison Group will develop this option and suggest it to MCDOT study group. A presentation by MCDOT to the Planning Board at a July public meeting who is expected, when the Town will offer our own comments on the options proposed.
- h) *McCathran Hall Upgrades to Internet Service:* There will be a meeting this week to discuss upgrading internet service and WiFi performance. The plan is likely to switch from Comcast Xfinity (currently free) to Verizon FiOS (paid). Audiovisual upgrades in the main Hall and Council rooms to make possible effective hybrid meetings will also be discussed.
- i) *Whetstone Spring Restoration:* This long-planned project has now been started. A concept diagram showing the restoration plans will be distributed. Cost is estimated at about \$4,000.00. Stones and a capstone are being purchased, and RJ Landscaping has started work.
- j) *Sale of Lawn Mowers:* Because we have engaged a landscape contractor, the Town's inventory of groundskeeping equipment is no longer being used. The Mayor and Council had previously discussed and approved sale of larger items. Our two Hustler mowers were recently sold to RJ Landscape Contractors for \$2,000.00 each.
- k) *150th Anniversary Celebration:* Invitations to government officials to participate in the August events have been extended. Sylvia Appleby and Philip Winter have agreed to display their Washington Grove memorabilia and Craig English is making a commemorative poster.

Co-Chair of the 150th Committee Peter Nagrod noted that the celebration plans now have a lot of moving parts. *Additional volunteers will be most welcome to help make them a resounding success!*

- l) *Music Weekend* events will take place on June 23, 24, 25.

Unfinished Business

Community Solar Contract - Discussion and Approval: Mayor Compton proposed to execute subscriber agreements with Skyview to supply the Town's metered facilities (McCathran Hall, Maintenance Shop, Maple Lake) from a forthcoming community solar project (CSP) they will be managing. Questions raised earlier this year have been addressed. The agreements include a 10% discount to Pepco rates and may be terminated at will. The new CSP will be constructed at the Central Baptist Church in Derwood and is supported by funding from the Green Bank.

Peter Nagrod moved and Christine Dibble seconded approval of the contract with Skyview. There was discussion about the church's involvement and the Mayor clarified the Town is not in a contract with the church, but with the solar energy amalgamator, Skyview, who manages multiple CSP facilities. There was additional discussion about the mechanism of CS accounting, Rob Gilmore proposed the Town exercise the opt-out (within 45 days) provision to be subject to binding arbitration.

Action: 6-0, approved entering into the agreements.

Action: The Mayor will consult the Town Attorney and the Council will discuss the arbitration option in July.

Renewable Energy Conversion Incentive Pilot Program – Mayor Compton introduced this topic by explaining that:

- the cash incentive program idea was presented to the Town Council in April by the Sustainability Committee,
- \$20,000 to support it was added to the FY24 Budget at the Town meeting, and
- early implementation of a pilot program was desirable.

Referencing the program outline presented to the Council, Bob Booher offered a timeline for Council adoption by September, beginning with initial Council consensus at this meeting to consider a detailed program as early as July. Paul Patrone outlined the Sustainability Committee's concept to fund a pilot program if one is approved by the Town Council. He reviewed the incentive rebate pilot program that would encourage residents to switch from fossil fuels combustion to heat pumps and electric vehicles. There was a discussion about the following:

- Town administration of the incentive awards and the need for a responsible Town "approval officer" to insure accountability.
- The potential role of the Sustainability Committee in administering the program, possibly recommending individual applications for Town approval.
- Establishing qualifying criteria for applications and guidance for approving awards.
- Possibly relying on pre-award of Federal government incentives before Town approval.
- Assisting residents with navigating the daunting process of energy conversion and available assistance programs.

- Difficulty of qualifying residents as low to moderate income users.
- Creating a streamlined pilot program that can be expanded later.

Action: The Mayor and Council unanimously agreed to entertain a detailed motion to create the program as early as July. Barbara Raimondo will work with the Sustainability Committee on the proposal.

Other Regular Business

Town Council Reports – Of note:

- a) Woods – The “Homegrown National Park” presentation on May 31st by Dr. Doug Tallamy was great!
- b) RASEC – Storytelling events will be held in June and October.
- c) Recreational Facilities –The picnic table area has been greatly improved with wood chips and a border. New picnic tables will be considered.
- d) Recreation Committee – Emily Cavey will continue as Chair for the time being.
- e) Planning Commission – The Commission discussed the Montgomery County Accessory Dwelling Unit process and how to modify it to meet the Town’s needs.
- f) Gateway – New sign pieces with corrected text will be installed this month on the three “Welcome to Washington Grove” signs.
- g) Gateway – The Committee is organizing a volunteer Trash Patrol along Washington Grove Lane and Railroad Street. Volunteers are welcome!

Christine Dibble moved, and Eva Patrone seconded, approving the Council Reports and post them on the website. Eva Patrone seconded the motion.

Action: Vote: 6-0. Posting approved.

Approval of the Minutes: Minutes from the May 22nd meeting will be approved at the next meeting.

Next Meeting: July 10, 2023

Adjournment: There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:45 p.m.

Kathryn L. Lehman
Town Clerk