



Meeting of the Town Council
September 11, 2023, 7:30 p.m.
Online by ZOOM Videoconference
Approved October 9, 2023

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

Mayor John Compton not being present, Mayor pro tempore Barbara Raimondo called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. In attendance were Councilors Christine Dibble, Rob Gilmore, Peter Nagrod, Eva Patrone, and Mary Warfield. Also in attendance were Treasurer Jean Moyer and residents Jay Everhart, Patty Klein, and Joan Mahaffey.

Approval of Agenda: Peter Nagrod moved to approve the agenda. Mary Warfield seconded the motion. The Comprehensive Stormwater Management Plan discussion with Soltesz was moved to follow the Mayor's Report on the agenda. Vote: 5-0, as amended.

Public Appearances: None

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer Jean Moyer reviewed the current state of Town accounts. The August Treasurer's Report was discussed. The 150th Celebration financial report was presented. The Council reviewed the net profit from the souvenir and poster sales and direct donations received, and authorized these funds be donated to the Heritage Emory Grove Foundation once its non-profit tax status is confirmed by the IRS. Eva Patrone moved, and Christine Dibble seconded a motion to accept both reports. Vote: 5-0, reports accepted.

Comprehensive Stormwater Management Plan: Discussion of the Soltesz Assessment Report and Next Steps: Jason Mills from Soltesz gave a presentation of their written report "*Town of Washington Grove: Stormwater Management Assessment*". Jason took questions about the presentation and participated in a discussion of the cost of proposed reconstruction and installation in town of new drainpipes, bioswales, a submerged gravel wetland, and creation of regenerative step retention ponds in the West Woods.

Patty Klein and Joan Mahaffey, Woods Committee Co-Chairs, reported on discussions at the recent WC meeting. To execute the recommendations, a design/build RFP was proposed with the work divided into distinct project areas to obtain separate cost proposals. This would enable the Town to prioritize projects to utilize available ARPA and State Bond funds and prepare to look into additional funding sources that will be needed, particularly for work in the West Woods (estimated as much as \$3 million dollars). Because ARPA funds must be committed by the end of 2024, preparation of the RFP is a priority. To issue the RFP by year-end, engagement of Soltesz was proposed to ensure the technical details are adequately described, and our needs are clear. *Action: By consensus. the Council agreed that a draft umbrella RFP would be the joint responsibility of the Woods, Gateway, and Forestry and Beautification Committees, with others mentioned providing input - Dave Cosson, Peter Nagrod, Robert Johnson, and Bob Booher.*

Mayor's Report:

- a. **Kudos:** Mayor pro tempore Barbara Raimondo gave kudos to Ali Faupel, Joey Fones, Peggy Booher, and all responsible for the successful Labor Day events. Resident yoga instructor Rachel Schwartz was thanked for her free near-weekly classes for residents and appreciation given to Joan Mahaffey and Dave Cosson for pulling stilt grass in the East Woods. Rob Gilmore got kudos for starting a chess club in town, which is calling itself, what else, but "The Chess-Nuts".
- b. **Restoration of Chestnut Road – Status:** The drainage pipe under the road section being repaved at Pepco's expense has been recommended for enlargement in the stormwater management plan received from Soltesz. A proposal was requested and received from Pepco's repaving contractor for replacing the pipe of ~\$4500. A competitive proposal will be requested from the Town's contractor, RJ Landscapers.
- c. **Shared Use Pathway Report:** The Liaison Committee reported that Mayor Compton, Councilor Raimondo and Jay Everhart met with County Council Member Sydney Katz to discuss concerns about how MCDOT plans to proceed with the Washington Grove Connector following their recent update to the Planning Board. Councilman Katz has offered to help, and a video conference with him, town representatives and MCDOT staff has been scheduled for September 21st.
- d. **Condition of Sewer Line Lateral at 10 Center Street:** Town Clerk Kathy Lehman reported contacting four WSSC-approved plumbing companies. Two could do the necessary video inspections. A contractor will shortly be engaged to perform the work authorized by the Council.
- e. **150th Celebration Committee:** A repository of records, recordings, photos, etc. documenting the 150th events is planned by webmaster Christine Dibble to make them accessible on the Town website.
- f. **Speed Hump Signage – new signs on Ridge Road:** To better inform drivers, a speed limit signs indicating 5 MPH will be placed at the "temporary" speed bump on Ridge Road (the same as those at the bump on Grove Road).

Christine Dibble inquired about previously proposed signage at McCathran Hall indicating that EV parking was not restricted during Hall events and will look into it.

- g. **Maintenance of Unoccupied Residences and Property – Status:** The County has initiated enforcement actions at 402 5th Avenue and 17 The Circle after complaints filed by town residents that the properties have been vacant for some time and are suffering building deterioration and grounds neglect.

The Council engaged in discussion of the current situation. Mary Warfield stated, that in addition to being eyesores, both properties represent fire and health hazards to

neighbors. She suggested it may be appropriate for the Emergency Preparedness and Safety Committee to get involved. Limitations of the County enforcement options were raised, including that the County apparently cannot enter the houses without owner approval unless they are sure the home is vacant. Discussion touched on whether the electricity and water remained in service, potential rodent infestation, exercising the Town's authority to hire a building or code inspector, establishing a written procedure for addressing vacant home situations, insurance, requiring registration of vacant homes, and employing existing ordinances to address these homes, and legal options.

Councilor Dibble stated the Council has an obligation to consult the Town Attorney. Rob Gilmore moved that the Town Council take all legal action in its power including filing suit to remedy compliance issues on the two properties.

Vote: 5-0, to take such legal action as necessary.

Actions: Mayor Compton will engage the Town Attorney to advise the Town Council. Peter Nagrod, Rob Gilmore, and Mary Warfield will draft procedures for addressing issues with vacant homes.

- h. **Stump Carving Proposal:** Cost estimates and funding such a project were discussed. *Action: Councilor Patrone will follow up with Tom Land, who originated the idea.*

Administrative Matters:

- a. Leaf Collection RFP: Rob Gilmore reported that GFL has signed the leaf contract for FY24. This the last optional renewal and the contract must be re-bid next year.
- b. Renewable Energy Incentive Pilot Program – Assign the Town Representative: Mary Warfield reported that Liz Gillanders has agreed to serve in this capacity. She moved to assign Liz as the Town representative for this program. Peter Nagrod seconded the motion.
Vote: 5-0, appointment approved.

New Business

Relocation of Utility Poles – Discussion: This matter was deferred since the homeowner at 102 Center Street did not attend the meeting.

Unfinished Business

As an update to removing the dumpster from the Commercial Corner, Peter Nagrod reported that the Planning Commission is seeking the owner's agreement that tenant trash would thereafter be placed and collected weekly from behind the building.

Regular Business

Town Council Reports – Of note:

- a. *Sustainability (Warfield)* – Pilot renewable energy program already receiving interest from residents. Will launch this fall.
- b. *Forestry and Beautification (Raimondo)* – Plans to plant 12 trees this fall.

- c. *EPSC (Patrone)* – Mayor Compton and EPSC Chair Dave Lutter met with Chelsea Morganti, the Director of Hazard Mitigation for Montgomery County, as part of the County’s work to update their hazard mitigation plan. Chelsea interviewed John and Dave on a range of issues, such as natural disaster risks and Town capabilities.
- d. *Planning Commission (Nagrod)* – Invitation that town residents provide input on proposed ordinance revisions to permit Accessory Dwelling Units, and attend an informational meeting now planned for the October 4th PC meeting.
- e. *Woods (Dibble)* – The Town approved bow-hunting period through January began with the opening of deer hunting season the Friday after Labor Day. The authorized bow hunters will advise us the night before they conduct hunting.

Approval of Minutes – Town Council meeting of August 14, 2023: Peter Nagrod moved to approve the August 2023 Town Council minutes. Mary Warfield seconded the motion.

There were no adjustments.

Vote: 5-0, approved.

The next meeting will be held virtually on Monday, October 9th at 7:30 p.m.

Adjournment: There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:00 p.m.

Kathryn L. Lehman
Town Clerk