



Meeting of the Town Council
October 9, 2023, 7:30 p.m.
Online by ZOOM Videoconference
Approved November 13, 2023

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

Mayor John 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 Treasurer Jean Moyer and several residents.

Approval of Agenda: Peter Nagrod moved to approve the agenda. Mary Warfield seconded the motion. Vote: 6-0.

Public Appearances: None

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer Jean Moyer reviewed the current state of Town accounts. She also explained that the current desktop version of Quick Books will no longer be supported. Jean will move the Town accounting to the online version at an unanticipated moderate increase in expense. Mayor Compton noted that the Town will purchase additional copies of Phil Edwards' "History of Washington Grove" books, frequently presented to new residents and to special visitors to Town, bringing inventory of volume 1 and 2 to about 50 each. Eva Patrone moved to accept the September Treasurers report. Christine Dibble seconded the motion. Vote: 6-0, report accepted.

Mayor's Report:

a. Kudos:

- To BluestoberFest 2023 organizers Lawren and Eric Selby and participants who again made this annual Grove music event successful.
- To Gateway Committee "Adopt-a-Road" volunteers for cleaning up trash along Railroad Street and Washington Grove Lane.

b. **Halloween Spooktacular** – (Haunted Forest): This event will take place on October 28.

c. **Holiday Show** - will be in person at the Town Hall on Saturday, December 9.

d. **Restoration of Chestnut Road** - Status: No work has taken place yet, but installation of a new larger culvert and road repaving are scheduled to for the coming week.

e. **Shared Use Pathway Report** - Mayor Compton referenced the written report provided by Jay Everhart of the Shared Use Pathway Liaison Committee and summarized the status of the project. He noted that Councilman Sydney Katz, at the behest of the Town, has undertaken to facilitate coordination with the MCDOT project team. The Town seeks assurances that

engineering of the preferred alignment will progress rapidly and lead to accurate cost projections to enable funding by the county in FY25.

- f. **Condition of the Sewer Line Lateral at 10 Center Street** - The Town engaged James A. Wheat Plumbing and a video examination has been received by us and sent to WSSC. A written report has not yet been provided. Property owner Stephen Shapanka said the verbal assessment on-site was that there was little evidence that lateral pipe had been compromised (no tree root invasion).
- g. **Speed Hump Signage** – New Signs on Ridge Road - The Town will put up 5 mph warning signs at the “temporary” speed hump on Ridge Road like those on Grove Road. The short four-foot high 4 x 4 wood posts will be the standard for Town signs.
- h. **Stormwater Infrastructure – Status** - Mayor Compton reviewed the Town Council discussion of the Soltesz recommendations at last month’s meeting and concurred with the proposal to proceed with developing a design/build RFP. Jason Mills of Soltesz should be approached to provide guidance in developing project parameters, including locations for culvert upgrades, swale improvements, bioswale installation, and the creation of one or more submerged gravel wetlands. Discussion was favorable, with specific recommendations that the RFP should incorporate professional evaluation and inspection during all aspects of construction.
Action: Recognizing that our ARPA funds must be committed to projects by December 31, 2024, a timeline to issue the RFP by year-end was adopted. Patty Klein and the Mayor will seek to engage Jason Mills to help in develop the RFP, which will involve contributions from representatives of the HPC and the Gateway, Woods, Forestry and Beautification, and other Committees.
- i. **Maintenance of Unoccupied Residences and Property – Status** - Mayor Compton reviewed his understanding of the discussion and action by the Council at the September meeting. John went on to report that the Town attorney is willing to come and talk with the Mayor and Council about how other municipalities have dealt with the same situation, but required some time to review Town Ordinances and our specific concerns. Mayor Compton is meeting next week with Marty and Jenny Long (402 5th Avenue) about the condition of their home and their intentions.

Discussion of concerns followed. Mary Warfield reported the County will not go inside a building unless it has been condemned, and she is concerned about health and safety issues. Her research discovered that some municipalities require vacant homes to be registered with the local government, and registration might include a fee, status of the electrical and water services. Other points raised included:

- Letting a mortgage holder know when a property is vacant.
- Reviewing our ordinances to see what violation may already be covered.
- Taxing the property owner.
- Taking the property owner to court (last resort).

Rob Gilmore stated the friendly approach will only go so far and the Town should do something about this issue.

Actions:

Mayor Compton will report back on his meeting with the owners of 402 5th Avenue, where he will address health and safety concerns and what the homeowners plans for the inside of the vacant residence.

Mayor Compton will also attempt to meet with the owner of 17 The Circle.

Mayor Compton will also draft a policy procedure for vacant homes that can be used whenever a problem arises, with the assistance and review of our Town Attorney.

Renewable Energy Incentive Pilot Program – Status - Sustainability Committee Chair Bob Booher reported a few residents have expressed interest in applying for the awards for both heat pump installation and electric vehicle purchases made since July 1. He indicated that program award applications were now available and review would begin in the coming month. He also announced an informational meeting for residents describing the cash award program, and other tax credits for EV and heat pump purchases, which is planned for October 28th at 10 am in McCathran Hall.

Administrative Matters:

a. Renew consent for the Community Garden (Edible Garden) - The Sustainability Committee submitted a proposal to renew authorization of the Community Garden (Edible Garden) for another two years. The Mayor and Council discussed aspects of the garden successes noted in the written proposal. There was discussion of the use of low quality garden produce, with Bruce Daggy explaining that product bruised or not good enough to donate was offered to garden volunteers, residents or given to the wildlife. Peter Nagrod moved and Mary Warfield seconded authorizing continued Community Garden operations for two years ending October 31 2026 at the present tennis court location, including 20% additional cultivated land. This resolution supplants the 18-month trial operational period approved by the Council in June 2022.

Vote: 5-0 (Councilor Warfield having left the meeting), approved continued Community Garden operation.

b. Update of Hall Rental Regulations clarifying that collection of recyclables is required – The Mayor and Council discussed inconsistent recycling collection by users of McCathran Hall. Councilor Raimondo proposed new language be added to the existing Hall Rental Regulations to clarify that recycling is required for all Hall users. She introduced Resolution 2023-08: Regulations for the Rental of McCathran Hall (updating the existing language in Resolution 2015-08). Councilor Patrone seconded.

Vote: 5-0, Resolution adopted.

New Business

Leaf Composting Proposal from the Sustainability Committee – Discussion - Mayor Compton asked Kitty Seiferlein to explain the Committee’s proposal that the Town explore recycling leaves into compost rather than having them removed off-site. They proposed a small-scale pilot leaf composting project to evaluate the practicality of composting recycled Town leaves near the Maintenance Shop. Leaves would be dumped by our landscape contractor into one to three composting bins and coffee grounds (no food) would be collected from town residents for incorporating into the compost. The pilot would evaluate the effectiveness of compost

production by early summer and provide an estimate for the volume of leaves per square foot that could be composted.

Barbara Raimondo moved to approve a trial leaf composting project on Town land located near the Maintenance Shop. Christine Dibble seconded the motion. Patty Klein stated her concern over the potential for conveying non-native invasive plants into the woods.

Vote: 4-0 (Councilors Gilmore and Warfield having left the meeting).

Unfinished Business

None

Other Regular Business

Town Council Reports – Of note:

- a. *Lighting (Raimondo)* – Significant progress made with Pepco to establish procedures for municipal purchase of streetlights. The Committee is seeking documentation on the age of Town streetlights to use to establish their value.
- b. *Forestry and Beautification (Raimondo)* – Twelve trees and two bushes were planted.
- c. *Sustainability (Warfield)* – The County Council passed a gas-powered leaf blower ban. It will be phased in, banning sales in July 2024 and banning their use in July 2025. Rebates for equipment may be offered.
- d. *Woodward Park (Patrone)* – Eva met with playground equipment vendors to assess playground status and needs. An ad hoc workgroup is being created to consider how best to spend ~\$30,000 in FY25 (\$15K Town funds and \$15K Program Open Space matching funds).
- e. *Planning Commission (Nagrod)* – An informational meeting on the proposal to permit Accessory Dwelling Units took place at the regular PC meeting October 4th. Several significant questions and suggestions emerged, and the Commission will be considering these during further review of their draft zoning revisions proposals.
- f. *Woods (Dibble)* – A project is in progress proposing to restore Maple Spring. Inclusion of the Spring within the Maple Lake fence is being debated.

Barbara Raimondo moved to approve the October 9th Council Reports and post them to the website. Eva Patrone seconded the motion.

Vote: 4-0, approved for posting.

Approval of Minutes – Peter Nagrod moved to approve the minutes from the September 11 meeting of the Town Council. Christine Dibble seconded the motion.

Vote: 4-0, Minutes approved.

Next Meeting – Virtual on Monday, November 13 at 7:30 p.m.

Adjournment: There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:45 p.m.

Kathryn L. Lehman
Town Clerk