



Approved December 11, 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 7:38 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: Eva Patrone moved to approve the agenda as amended. Peter Nagrod seconded the motion.

Vote: 6-0, Agenda adopted.

Public Appearances: There were none.

Treasurer's Report:

- a. *October Treasurer's Report:* Peter Nagrod moved to accept the October Treasurers report. Eva Patrone seconded the motion. Treasurer Jean Moyer reported all is well with the Town accounts. She also explained she negotiated a better Money Market rate from PNC bank (over 4%). She addressed a couple of line items in the report and reviewed the Fund Balances Worksheet.
Vote: 6-0, report accepted.
- b. *FY 2023 Audit:* Jean Moyer reported the FY23 audit was submitted to the Town. Mayor Compton asked Council members to review the audit and the management letter for the December meeting. An auditor will attend the meeting if questions are raised by Councilors before then.
- c. *Action Hauling Contract:* Jean Moyer reviewed the current lease agreement, noting the renter always pays the annual fee late. The current \$1500 annual fee hasn't been raised in many years. Mayor Compton explained the history of Town acquisition and annexation of the property and the lease to Action Hauling.

Rob Gilmore discussed his proposed revisions to the contract that includes increasing the fee to \$2,000, requiring quarterly payments, and introducing late payment surcharges. There was a discussion that included the following:

- Location of the rental property.
- Regular payments.
- The unsightly condition of the property.
- Which building sits on the land.
- Reviews of the contract by HPC and PC.
- Making changes to the contract now.

- The need to develop a broader strategy for improving the area of the Commercial Corner.

Peter Nagrod moved to approve the contract as proposed by Rob Gilmore. Rob seconded the motion.

Vote: 6-0, contract approved.

Mayor's Report:

- a. *Kudos:*
 - i. To the ghouls, gals, and guys who put together the 2nd Annual Halloween Spooktacular fun - and turning the woods near the Gazebo into a Haunted Forest. Mayor Compton showed the video produced by Montgomery Municipal Cable.
 - ii. To Meredith Horan and Wendy Harris (and all the 150th Anniversary Committee) for organizing and hosting the final event of our 150th Anniversary Celebration year, the presentation by Don Housley on the history of native Americans in North America, Montgomery County, and Washington Grove.
 - iii. To the Green Team and the Sustainability Committee for achieving the award of "Sustainable Maryland Certification" (Bronze level) for Washington Grove.
 - iv. To all the Woods Committee volunteers who contributed to the West Woods workday last Saturday, collecting trash from throughout the woods. They did a great job.
- b. Holiday Show: The show will be in person this year on December 9 in McCathran Hall.
- c. 2021 Equity and Inclusion Survey Results: Virtual presentations 3 and 4 by RASEC on December 20 and 27. A report to the Town Council and residents is expected by the December 11 Town Council meeting.
- d. Restoration of Chestnut Road – Status: The new culvert and repaving is completed.
- e. Pilot Leaf Composting Project – Status: The leaf composting project has been started near the Maintenance Building.
- f. LGIT Hazard Evaluation: The first walkthrough since 2019 was completed; we are waiting for the report.
- g. McCathran Hall Sprinkler System: The long-awaited pipe replacement will take place during the weeks after the Holiday Show.
- h. Shared Use Pathway report: The Mayor reported that that MCDOT has acknowledged the Washington Grove Connector pathway and a potential Crabbs Branch connection to Amity Drive are not linked together. They are proceeding with engineering for two alternative alignments developed with the input of the Town. A status report meeting with MCDOT will take place on December 11 under the auspices of County Councilor Sidney Katz.

- i. Stormwater Infrastructure RFP – Update: Jason Mills from SOLTESZ will help with development of our design/build RFP to refurbish and improve runoff west of Grove Avenue. The Mayor and Council discussed the meaning of a design/build project, how to ensure quality work, and hiring a reliable general contractor.
- j. Maintenance of Unoccupied Residents and Property – Status: Mayor Compton reported that he met with the residents at 402 5th Avenue. The grounds and exterior of the property have been cleaned up in response to enforcement actions by the County. Also discussed were potential health and hazardous conditions from the interior clutter of furniture and other items. The owners stated their goal is to sell the home in the spring.

Mayor Compton would like a few members to work on creating policies and procedures to provide guidance for dealing with maintenance concerns for properties in town.

Rob Gilmore reminded the Council and Mayor of previous Council action requesting the Town attorney to review the Town ordinances that pertain to this issue, and asked when the Town Attorney can deliver written review to the Council.

Action: Mayor Compton will ask the Town attorney if she can get something done by the December meeting.

Administrative Matter:

Tree limb pruning: Mayor Compton reported he discussed with several residents the Town's policy of generally not trimming Town tree limbs. They were concerned that tree limbs overhanging their property endangered their homes. He reviewed State law where a tree owner was not liable for damage to adjacent property from falling tree limbs, and that property owners could trim encroaching tree branches as long as the health of the tree was not compromised.

Action: Mayor Compton has asked the Forestry and Beautification Committee to draft a Policies and Procedures, for consideration by the Town Council, which can be used to inform residents.

New Business

There was none.

Unfinished Business

Prospects for Carving a Tree Stump in Woodward Park – Update: Christine Dibble reported she received a favorable response about this project. Mayor Compton believes this should be considered as an outdoor art installation to beautify the Town. The Council recommended that interested residents assemble a small committee to determine what this project would look like, and to request ideas and proposals from potential carvers including sketches for review.

Other Regular Business

Town Council Reports – Of note:

- a. *Woodward Park (Patrone)* – The Playground Work Group has discussed improvements, including removal of several existing pieces, purchase of one or several new pieces, upgrades to meet ADA guidelines, and a variety of desirable maintenance reports. They also discussed budget money, Capital Improvements, ADA Audit, and not removing any equipment without public input.
- b. *Woodward Park (Patrone)* – Proposed project to create a carved tree-stump art piece. See Agenda item 6 for details.
- c. *Emergency and Safety (Patrone)* – Dave Luter has stepped down as chair. The Committee is looking for someone to take his place. Many thanks to Dave for his time and leadership of the Committee.
- d. *Recreation (Patrone)* – Emily Cavey has stepped down after a long time as chair. Many thanks to Emily for her hard work. Co-Chairs are being explored - it seems it may take two to replace Emily!
- e. *Planning Commission (Nagrod)* – Revisions to the draft Accessory Dwelling Units Zoning Text Amendment are under discussion, including incorporating size limitations on detached ADUs like those adopted by Montgomery County and some of the recommendations from the HPC.

Christine Dibble moved to approve the Town Council Reports for posting on the website.

Peter Nagrod seconded the motion.

Vote: 6-0, approved for posting to the website.

Approval of Minutes – It was moved and seconded to approve the October 13, 2023 Town Council meeting.

Vote: 6-0, Minutes approved.

Next Meeting – Virtual on Monday, December 11 at 7:30 p.m.

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

Kathryn L. Lehman
Town Clerk