



Meeting of the Town Council
December 11, 2023, 7:30 p.m.
Online by ZOOM Videoconference
Approved January 8, 2024

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, Peter Nagrod, Barbara Raimondo, and Mary Warfield. Also in attendance were Treasurer Jean Moyer and Planning Commission Chair Georgette Cole.

Approval of Agenda: There was a motion and a second to approve the agenda. Mayor Compton made one addition.

Vote: 4-0, as amended.

Public Appearances: There were none.

Treasurer's Report:

a. *November 2023 Treasurer's Report:* It was moved and seconded to accept the November Treasurer's report. The line items for the Historic Preservation Commission Secretary and for Highway User Revenue, and use of the funds were discussed.

Vote: 4-0, Treasurer's Report accepted.

b. *FY 2023 Audit:* No questions were raised concerning the Audit itself. The current auditor contract with Lindsey and Associates has ended. A request for Proposal for a new Auditor contract will be reviewed in February. There was discussion about whether using a different auditor would be good fiscal policy.

Vote: 4-0, Audit report accepted.

Mayor's Report:

a. *Kudos:* To all the participants and organizers of the very successful Holiday Show on December 9th.

b. *Another WSSC sewer refurbishment project is planned for the spring (March 2024) –* Sewer mains on segments of Chestnut Avenue, 6th Avenue, Pine Avenue, Washington Grove Lane and several others will be re-lined with minimal disruption by accessing through the existing manholes. Some laterals to property lines will also be lined and several may have clean-outs installed. A walk-through last week identified a few trees that will be protected during the work.

c. *Sprinkler pipe replacement in McCathran Hall is scheduled for this and next week. –* The Hall ceiling below the damaged pipe will be removed by Town personnel to allow access, the pipe segment replaced by the contractor, and the ceiling re-installed.

- d. *Resolution of problems converting to no-fee post boxes.* – Difficulties changing existing PO boxes to no-fee boxes were addressed with the USPS Consumer Advocate. Staff at our post office report that our long-time Postmaster was retiring (Ms. Lee). Christine Dibble suggested that the Town Council do something to show our appreciation and she agreed to suggest something appropriate.
- e. *Renewable Energy Conversion Incentive applications.* – The first several applications have been approved by the Sustainability Committee and reviewed by Town representative Liz Gillanders, the Treasurer and the Mayor. A few inconsistencies and improvements in the supporting documentation have been noted and the application process will be adjusted accordingly.
- f. *Shared Use Pathway Report – Update from MCDOT on alignments and progress on engineering design:* The latest meeting update with MCDOT took place this morning. Documents for reference were included in the Council Packet. There was discussion of the two routes studied that directly connect the end of Brown Street to the current end of Crabbs Branch and are supported by the Town. The alignment with the least environmental impact is also the easiest to engineer and least expensive (Option 6). The Town will support funding this route in the MCDOT 2025 Capital Improvement program. It was suggested that The City of Gaithersburg and Heritage Emory Grove get involved as well.
- g. *2021 Equity and Inclusion Survey Results.* – The public presentations and discussions concluded last month. Public meetings with data and analysis have been completed. Paula Puglisi, RASEC Chair, reported they are incorporating feedback into a report to residents. Their report of the survey data and recommendations will be delivered early next year.
- h. *Stormwater Infrastructure RFP. – Update.* – The group is working on the RFP and they are on track for completion by next month.
- i. *Proclamation honoring our 150th Anniversary presented by the County Council.* Peter Nagrod, Barbara Raimondo, Meredith Horan, and John Compton attended a meeting of the County Council where they accepted the proclamation.
- j. *150th Anniversary video by Maryland Municipal Cable.* – Mayor Compton showed the video produced by MMC. Videos, including town resident interviews, can be found on the [Town website's video gallery](#).

Administrative Matters:

- a. *Town Policy on pruning Town tree branches over-hanging private land – Status:* Forestry and Beautification would like the Town to have a written policy about over-hanging branches. *Action:* Georgette Cole and Audrey Maskery will draft a policy document.
- b. *Transitioning to a new web domain, WashingtonGroveMD.gov.* Government approvals of new domains will be restarting in January. A new web host and official town email addresses will be explored as well. *Action:* Webmaster Christine Dibble must be consulted prior to making changes.

Unfinished Business

Maintenance of Unoccupied Residences and Property – Written review of Town ordinances and guidance from Town Attorney Suellen Ferguson. Mayor Compton reported he hopes to have her report in January.

New Business

Ordinance 2023-08 (ZTA) Enabling Accessory Dwelling Units – Introduction, discussion and setting the date for the public hearing.

The Planning Commission transmitted the proposed ordinance along with an explanatory memorandum to the Town Council. Mayor Compton reviewed the ZTA that would allow an accessory dwelling unit on existing residential properties, and the process and notices required for Council consideration of the ZTA. Barbara Raimondo moved and Peter Nagrod seconded introduction of Ordinance 2023-08 “Ordinance Amending the Washington Grove Zoning Ordinance to Expand Housing Opportunities and Update Vehicle Parking Requirements”.

A date for a Public Hearing and timing for public notices in the Bulletin and Washington Post were discussed.

Vote: 4-0, Ordinance introduced and a Public Hearing by Zoom set for January 23, 2024 at 7:30.

Other Regular Business

Town Council Reports:

Of note:

- a. *Planning Commission (Nagrod)* – The PC modified maximum square footage in the draft Zoning Text Amendment and voted to send the proposed ZTA to the Council for review. See Agenda item above.
- b. *Gateway (Nagrod)* – A meeting with the owner of the Commercial Corner has become a priority due to progress made by Gaithersburg in their planning efforts for the shared use path into Old Town.
- c. *Woodward Park (Patrone)* – Based on recommendations from our insurer (LGIT), new signage will be placed in appropriate locations to inform users of the parks open hours, that alcohol is prohibited without a permit, and play in the playground is at your own risk.
- d. *Woodward Park (Patrone)* – Residents will be asked for artistic ideas for carving the stump in the park.
- e. *Recreation (Patrone)* – Lisa Bielen and Kristina Kough have agreed to become Co-Chairs.

Barbara Raimondo moved to accept the Council Reports and post them to the website.

Vote: 4-0, approved for posting on the website.

Approval of Minutes:

Peter Nagrod moved to approve the minutes from the November 13, 2023 Town Council meeting. Barbara Raimondo seconded the motion.

Vote: 4-0, Minutes approved.

Next Meeting:

Virtual on Monday, January 8, 2024, 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