



Minutes of the Meeting of the Town Council

January 8, 2024, 7:30 p.m.

Held online by ZOOM Videoconference

Approved February 12, 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, Rob Gilmore, Peter Nagrod, Eva Patrone, Barbara Raimondo, and Mary Warfield. Also in attendance were Treasurer Jean Moyer, Planning Commission Chair Georgette Cole, and five other residents.

Approval of Agenda:

Peter Nagrod moved to approve the agenda. Eva Patrone seconded the motion.

Vote: 6-0, as amended.

Public Appearances: There were none.

Treasurer's Report:

Rob Gilmore moved to accept the December 2023 Treasurer's Report. Barbara Raimondo seconded the motion. Treasurer Jean Moyer explained some of the expenses in the following sections:

- Executive
- Maintenance
- Municipal Buildings
- Town Attorney

Vote: 6-0, Treasurers report accepted.

Mayor's Report:

- a. *Kudos* – To Town-spirited residents Renee Moloznik and her elves (McCathran Hall decorations), Terry Cox and Bruce Rothrock (McCathran Hall wreath) and two nameless "Grove Fairies" for the tree and decorating at the Gazebo.
- b. *Virtual Public Hearing on Ordinance 2023 (ZTA) Enabling Accessory Dwelling Units on January 23rd at 7:30 pm by Zoom.* Written input from residents was encouraged. Residents were also invited to deliver their comments at the virtual Hearing.
- c. *Sprinkler pipe repair in McCathran Hall* – Repairs to the leaking pipe were completed. A possible leak elsewhere may exist since the air compressor to the system continues to run relatively frequently.
- d. *Shared Use Pathway Report* – A December update from MCDOT reviewed engineering for two direct connections between Brown Street and Crabbs Branch Way. The favored alignment of MCDOT connects to the north side of Crabbs Branch Way via the existing access ramp to the County's stormwater management pond. This route has the lowest estimated cost

(~\$800,000) and the least environmental impact of the two alternatives, and is also supported by town representatives. MCDOT is pessimistic the pathway could be built in FY 2025, estimating permitting and final engineering might require 18 months. Nevertheless, County Councilor Sidney Katz has agreed to work with the Town to promote funding for construction of the WGC in the FY2025 Capital Improvement Plan (expected to be proposed in January).

- e. *Stormwater Infrastructure RFP – update.* The RFP is not yet finished and awaits more detailed project sites information from Jason Mills of Soltesz.
- f. *Neglected Maintenance of Properties – update.* The mayor expects that Town Attorney Suellen Ferguson will deliver her written guidance to the Town Council in February. He reviewed what he requested for her report. The term “neglected” rather than “vacant” is a better description of these properties. Rob Gilmore suggested that the Council consider asking for the Town Attorney appear in a closed Council session.
- g. *Demographics of Washington Grove –* Mayor Compton is seeking individual(s) to extract and report on 2020 census data and to serve in the role of Census Liaison. Christine Dibble volunteered to take this on.

Administrative Matters:

- a. *Auditing Services RFP:* It is time to rebid our auditing services. Jean Moyer recommended we do this electronically rather than paper copies and US Mail. The Mayor and Council agree with her recommendation. The RFP will be awarded in March.
- b. *Proposal to Expend Town Funds to remove the dumpster enclosure at the Commercial Corner.* County traffic engineers would like the dumpster enclosure removed because it interferes with visibility at the intersection, Town resident and Town Council “sentiment” overwhelmingly considers the enclosure an eyesore, and property owner Tatiana Bell has agreed it should be removed. Mayor Compton supported Councilor Nagrod’s proposal that the Town offer financial support of about \$3000 for the removal.
Vote 6-0, payment for the removal approved.
- c. *Discussion of the Refuse and Recycling Collection from the Commercial Corner:* Mayor Compton proposed to the property owner that the Town contractor, as it does for residents, could collect refuse and recycling from the property. Like other properties in Town, this service would be paid for by an assessment to the property of an appropriate (3-4) number of “residential collection” equivalents.
Action: The Town Council indicated their approval of this proposal.
- d. *Proposed New Signage for Woodward Park and the Playground:* In their recent hazard evaluation report to the Town, our insurer LGIT recommended improved signage be placed in the Woodward Park playground area, including signs in Spanish. Eva Patrone explained the proposed language in her Town Council Report and requested any additional input before she has the signs produced.

- e. *Renewable Energy Conservation Incentive Application – Revision of required supporting documentation. Role of the Town Representative in the approval process.* Two applications have been approved by the Sustainability Committee and Town Representative Liz Gillanders. Being the first two in the Pilot Program, Treasurer Jean Moyer and Mayor Compton also reviewed the submissions and recommended the required documentation be tweaked for better oversight. The two grants have been awarded.

Liz Gillanders has asked for clarification of her role as the Town Representative in the approval process.

Action: Jean Moyer is preparing a guidance document for this purpose.

Unfinished Business

None

New Business

State of the Conservation Meadow:

Proposal to work with the County Parks Department to ensure management of the meadow achieves the goals of the 2013 Operation and Use Plan.

Bruce Daggy explained his concerns that the Conservation Meadow is not meeting the meadow management goals of the Conservation Meadow 2013 Operation and Use Plan. He pointed out significant differences between the meadow now and ten years ago that are not consistent with the management goals. He has discussed the situation with the Montgomery County Parks Department. Bruce proposed that the Town work with Parks to improve and restore the meadow.

There was ensuing discussion about:

- Ecological maintenance.
- A Town advisory committee.
- Involving Forestry and Beautification.
- The Woods Committee's history of coordination with the County.

Bruce Daggy agreed to the suggestion that he form a new Meadow Group of interested residents to advise the Town Council after discussing with the Parks Department whether changes to the management of the Conservation Meadow were desirable. Dave Cosson agreed to provide pertinent documents to Bruce.

Other Regular Business

Town Council Reports:

Of note:

- a. Gateway (Nagrod) – A meeting with Tatiana Bell, owner of the Commercial Corner, was congenial and productive. Matters discussed included the Town possibly paying to remove the dumpster enclosure and use alternative trash receptacles (see Agenda Item above), obtaining a 3'-5' easement along Railroad Street for creating a multi-user path sidewalk as part of the Gaithersburg's plans for completing a shared use pathway from Old Town to

Brown Street, renovation of the properties, and expansion of allowed uses per our 2022 Comprehensive Plan.

- b. Gateway and Maintenance (Nagrod) – Various signage around Town is slated for installation, restoration or replacement. Mayor Compton urged members to read the Gateway Committee report for details.
- 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. (See Agenda item above).

Barbara Raimondo moved to approve the Council Reports and post them on the website. Mary Warfield seconded the motion.

Vote: 6-0, approved for posting.

Approval of Minutes:

Peter Nagrod moved to approve the December Town Council Minutes. Mary Warfield seconded the motion.

Vote: 6-0, Minutes approved.

Next Meetings:

- a. Tuesday January 23, 2024 at 7:30 – Virtual Public Hearing on Ordinance 2023-08.
- b. Monday February 12, 2024 at 7:30 – Regular virtual Town Council meeting.

Adjournment:

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m. **(Woo Hoo!)**

Kathryn L. Lehman
Town Clerk