



Minutes of the Town Council

February 27, 2024
Approved May 21, 2024

Mayor John Compton called the regular Special Town Council meeting to order at 7:35 p.m. In attendance were Mayor Compton, the Council and approximately 70 people.

Public Appearances: There were none.

Approval of Agenda: Mayor Compton explained the original intent of this Special Meeting was to obtain legal advice from the Town Attorney to help address the issues of neglected maintenance. However, this matter was deferred until the March 11th Town Council meeting.

The amended Agenda instead proposes to address new business brought to the Town Council by RASEC (the Racial and Social Equity Committee). One is for the Council to discuss the report received from RASEC compiling the results from the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Survey conducted in 2022 by RASEC with Town support.

The other business was Council consideration of five recommendations to the Town Council from RASEC, proposed to beginning realizing the intentions stated in the Town's anti-racist Resolution 2023-08, "Acknowledging Washington Grove's Racially Exclusionary Past and Committing to an Equitable and Inclusive Future". Many residents in attendance were present hoping to address the RASEC proposals, particularly the one to remove the name McCathran from the Town Hall. As well, a large number of letters have been received prior to this meeting.

Mayor Compton suggested the Council use this meeting to listen public statements, but that no action on the RASEC recommendations be taken at this meeting.

Peter Nagrod moved and Eva Patrone seconded approving the agenda as amended. Eva Patrone seconded the motion.

Action: Vote: 5-0, Agenda adopted.

Mayor's Announcements: There were none.

Administrative Matters:

Road Work – Mayor Compton explained that in 2022 the Town Council issued a Road Work RFP and received two itemized bids on the many road segments identified for potential repaving. Work proceeded on the highest priority segments in FY22, leaving other segments to be addressed in future years.

For FY24, the budget includes \$40,000 for road work which should be obligated by June 30th. He proposed to review priorities for road segments needing repair and to request updated bids using today's material's prices from the 2022 responding vendors. Limited additional areas for repair will be considered.

Following discussion of the status of the road segments identified in the 2022 RFP, the Council requested an updated review.

Action: The mayor will ask for additional suggestions where road work is needed and update for the March 11, 2024 meeting the list of segments that should be considered for updated or new pricing.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Survey Results – Discussion

Paula Puglisi asked if technical questions would be addressed tonight and reported that the Survey Data analysis covers the 120-slide report. She also reported that survey opinions suggesting racism occurred or was observed should be handled by an Inclusion Expert. There was additional discussion about the following:

- Five presentations *Tad Stanke* would present.
- Whether Washington Grove is welcoming to other community members.
- McCathran Hall renaming.
- Evaluating survey results.
- Obtaining the survey responses which the RASEC report evaluated.

RASEC Recommendations for Furthering the Goals of Resolution 2023-01, “Acknowledging Washington Grove’s Racially Exclusionary Past and Committing to an Equitable and Inclusive Future” – Discussion

The Town Council received five recommendations from RASEC:

- Consider restoring the name of our town hall to 'Town Hall'.
- Hire a diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) Specialist to provide training in town.
- Develop a protocol for posting to the website statements submitted to the Town containing racist, discriminatory, insulting, accusatory, harassing or threatening language.
- Collaborate with neighboring communities regarding the shared use path.
- Establish a communication system between the town of Washington Grove and heritage Emory Grove.

Christine Dibble asked for a sense of the Council concerning the five recommendations and moving on to the renaming of the Town Hall. The Council unanimously agreed to move on and discuss the renaming of McCathran Hall. *Barbara Raimondo* suggested comments be limited to three minutes.

Public Comments:

- *Nancy Haskett* gave a history lesson about the three mayors named McCathran.
- *Jay Everhart* noted the existing cooperative nature of the work on the Shared Use Path.
- *Tad Stanke* stated the need to clarify what the recommendation says. It is changing the name of the Town Hall as an apology for our racist past. He also suggested we have a Town Meeting in a forum style about this subject only.
- *Larry French* stated this was a binary choice, and we need a more effective way to do this.
- *Sarah Kobrin* talked about healing, honoring others and looking ahead.

- *Audrey Maskery* supports keeping McCathran Hall name. She finds the renaming proposal offensive.
- *Joan Mahaffey* doesn't want voting based on sympathy. The RASEC arguments are based on inferences and erroneous conclusions (lies). This is a very divisive subject.
- *Joe Stolz* finds this action unnecessary and thinks it creates a problem where one doesn't exist. This type of divisiveness will be bad for the Town. He also felt that addressing restrictive covenants in some deeds was a pretty silly subject.
- *Marilynn Frey* (lived here since 1948) stated it was always the Assembly Hall – never the Town Hall. Roy McCathran was a good man. Because George Washington had slaves, should we change the name of Washington Grove too?
- *Philip Mento* asked what can we really do to change our racist past? The Council should look at ways to move forward.
- *Patty Klein* questioned whether Paul Thorne-Keziah, a member of RASEC, but a non-resident, was allowed to vote on Town issues. She is against this.
- *Paul Thorne-Keziah* appreciates participating in RASEC meetings and all the work of volunteers. He said the renaming of McCathran Hall is the right thing to do. Roy McCathran was a good man but shouldn't be representative of the Town's core identity.
- *Ann Philips* stated this is a painful topic to consider. She understands the fear of change and going through the process.
- *Charlie Challstrom* echoes Tad Stahnke's concern. The Town should consider the change, perhaps as an educational project. However, he does not recommend the change.
- *Linda Winter* stated she read the well-written comments. She objects to the tone of the slides making the case for removing the McCathran name. She does not approve of the change.

Following the public statements, Mayor Compton asked the Council how they wished to proceed. Did the Council favor moving forward with a Special Town Meeting? Councilor Nagrod consideration of this idea be deferred until the next Council Meeting. Barbara Raimondo thanked everyone for their thoughtful comments and suggested further discussion take place at the next meeting. Christine Dibble expressed her support for further discussion at the next Council meeting.

Action: The RASEC recommendations will be taken up by the Council at the March 11th meeting.

Next meeting: Monday March 11, 2024 at 7:30 pm

The deferred Closed Session to consult with the Town Attorney was anticipated for the next regular virtual Town Council meeting. Mayor Compton reviewed the business before the Council and an earlier start time was discussed. It was moved and seconded to move the starting time for the meeting to 6:15.

Action: Unanimous to start the meeting time to 6:15 pm

Adjournment: There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.