



GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING – SATURDAY MAY 20: CAN will hold a general membership meeting from 10:00 am to 12:00 noon on Saturday, May 20 at the County Council meeting room, 501 Court Lane, in Cambridge. Ms. Sharon Smith, Vice-Chair of the **Cambridge Historic Preservation Commission (HPC)** will speak and answer questions on HPC’s philosophy and goals going forward. **The meeting is open to the public – Everyone interested in CAN or the HPC is invited to attend.**

CAN LOGO CONTEST WINNER: Congratulations to Fred Phillips-Patrick on submitting the winning entry (see masthead above). The logo will appear on all official CAN documents and membership materials. **Many thanks to everyone who submitted a design!!**

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CAN’s Website – <https://cambridgecan.org>

CAN on FaceBook – <https://www.facebook.com/CambridgeAssociationofNeighborhoods/>

Contact CAN – CambridgeCAN@yahoo.com

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

CAN is up and running! We had good representation on the April 1st **Project Clean Stream** Cambridge Cleanup (see Midshore Riverkeeper article on page xx), and the **Neighborhood “Blocks”** are getting organized. The Housing Quality Committee is developing a database of “problem houses,” and the Communications Committee has done an outstanding job with the Website, Facebook page, and Newsletter. So we are moving forward.



While we are moving, **we should not forget one of our main goals of reaching out to our community.** There are numerous organizations that are looking for our help. CAN is developing a list of organizations that we would like to support either by having a Neighborhood Block “adopt” the organization or by having our individual members help out. We will have more in the next newsletter on how to participate.

Lets us know if you have an organization that should be promoted by CAN.

Chuck McFadden, President, CAN

GROWING CAN MEMBERSHIP – THE CHICKEN OR THE EGG?

CAN’s CHICKEN or EGG ISSUE: CAN needs to build and diversify its membership across the entire City of Cambridge, and yet we need an agenda that compels people to join. Ultimately, to effect change in the City, we need larger membership numbers and all neighborhoods throughout the City working together. Therefore, we feel that growing our membership is an important first step. Progress begins with organization and tedious work, with the gratification of measurable results often coming at some point in the future.

Michelle Barnes has accepted the position of Membership Director and Neighborhood Block Coordinator for CAN. Together with several other Board members, the membership team will work over the summer to refine our messaging, including materials and develop a "recipe" of ideas for Block Captains to organize their particular neighborhood.

In the Fall, we are going to challenge each Board member, and other willing volunteers to speak about CAN to another local organization (for example, it could be the YMCA, Women's Club, or the Harriet Tubman groups). The goal is to reach all areas our community, and we need volunteers to make it happen.

To help, contact us at CambridgeCAN@yahoo.com

Judd Vickers, Vice-President, CAN

INTRODUCING CAN MEMBERSHIP DIRECTOR MICHELLE BARNES

Happy Spring to all the CAN members and community minded Cambridge folks! I’m Michelle Barnes, and I am CAN’s new **Membership Director and Neighborhood Block Coordinator** (see the article below on “Block Captains”). I wanted to take the opportunity to introduce myself to everyone and share my ideas about how to grow CAN’s fabulous ideas and membership throughout Cambridge.

I’ve practiced a good portion of my legal career in Cambridge. I was twice elected State’s Attorney, running against a multi-term incumbent, and it is from those campaigns that I gained a wealth of ideas and insights



about how to reach out to people. And even now, as I have set up a new practice in the community, I have worked with professional communications folks on ways to get my business identity out there in a way that is most productive. It is because of those experiences that I think I can be of assistance in helping to structure a well-defined and planned **outreach program** for membership and identity of the organization. Given that – let me share with you the thoughts of proceeding from this starting point.

The first order of concern is **consistency** and maintaining the visibility of our **branding** throughout everything we do. To that end, now that we have an **official logo**, I'm working on developing various handouts, postcard mailings, and other **outreach materials** for use by neighborhood "Block Captains" and anyone else who wants CAN information to disseminate.

The second concern revolves around "**ease of implementation**" — having informational materials and other items for neighborhood "Block Captains" (and other folks hoping to coordinate activities or gather ideas for assisting in the community) to make their ideas and energy as quick and easy to implement as possible.

The final focus I see is **Outreach** to bring the vision of CAN to **all parts of Cambridge**. So please be patient as this groundwork gets laid because once that happens we will be ready to spread the word and grow the organization. It's an exciting time to be involved and I look forward to working with CAN going forward.

CAN NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE – CAN NEEDS NEIGHBORHOOD "BLOCK CAPTAINS"

Neighborhoods are the heart and soul of CAN, and building neighborhood involvement is CAN's lifeblood.

The CAN Neighborhood Development Committee encourages the development of **self-identified neighborhood groups (i.e., "Blocks")** through which members both (a) address the specific concerns of their own neighborhood "Block" (e.g., helping individual neighbors needing assistance or support), and (b) leverage the combined energy and influence of CAN to advance common goals across the City (e.g., zoning standards and enforcement).

Neighborhood "**Blocks**" are loosely defined to meet the needs and concerns of each **self-identified neighborhood group**. A "Block" can literally be as small as one City block, can cover several City blocks on the same street, or even encompass multiple streets – the "Block" is defined by the those neighbors willing to work together to address neighborhood concerns. Although neighborhood concerns may vary widely across the City, CAN's goal is to bring neighborhood "Blocks" together to identify and prioritize commonalities and take action on shared concerns.

Neighborhood "**Block Captains**" organize social events and other activities through which people get to know their neighbors, identify concerns, and work together to address those concerns.

CAN DESPERATELY NEEDS "BLOCK CAPTAINS" FROM EVERY CAMBRIDGE NEIGHBORHOOD. If interested in volunteering, please contact Chuck McFadden at Ragtime31@gmail.com or CambridgeCAN@yahoo.com



CAN HOUSING QUALITY COMMITTEE – TROUBLED PROPERTIES

The CAN Housing Quality Committee is building an **inventory of troubled properties**, and we need your help. We've developed a database that will allow us to track and monitor these properties, but pictures are needed. Please text a picture or two (at most) of problem properties in your neighborhood, together with the address to [443-550-1302](tel:443-550-1302). Thanks for your help!

NOTE: CAN's actions on troubled properties will depend on the nature and cause of the identified problems. For owner-occupied properties, CAN's initial actions will focus on assisting the property owner in maintaining the quality of the residence at reasonable cost.

CAN HOUSING QUALITY COMMITTEE – PLANNING & ZONING MEETING UPDATE

Summary of April 2017 Planning and Zoning Commission Meeting

Old Business:

Robin Hood Shop. Extended discussion took place over renovations related to the Robin Hood Shop located at 416 High Street (operated by the Hospital Auxiliary). The 1st proposed addition was more desirable in appearance, but added to construction costs. The 2nd proposed addition was less desirable in appearance, but also less costly. A decision was not reached as the vote was tied. Staff are to review options again and come to compromise, or further Commission review will be required.

New Business:

Econo Lodge Property. Review and approval of façade improvements underway at the former "Econo Lodge" motel, near the intersection of Rt. 50 and Bucktown Road were conducted. Changes appear to be an upgrade in appearance.

Egypt Road Solar Facility. Additional consideration of modifications to the Unified Development Code (UDC) related to solar facilities occurred. Adoption and rezoning of the Egypt Road parcel was deferred, and record is to be kept open until the May 2nd meeting. On June 19th and again on July 10th there will be meetings held locally by the Public Service Commission regarding the proposed Egypt Road solar facility, giving the public opportunity to review and comment.

Discussion items:

202 Franklin Street. The property was operated as a furniture store until ceasing operations several years ago. The owner now wants to reopen the store, but the proposed use is non-conforming under current



zoning. Office use would be allowed. The owner may approach the City with a request for rezoning. Concerns were raised that not allowing the furniture store to resume operations was not friendly to business.

CAN members should closely follow any efforts to loosen requirements on non-conforming uses as it could have an impact on residential neighborhoods where apartment and multi-family conversions are no longer conforming, potentially making it more difficult to bring these properties back in line with zoning when those uses cease.

Cambridge Plaza Update. Closing has occurred on the former Cambridge Plaza Shopping Plaza , and demolition is scheduled to being in next several weeks. The final Site Plan is to be reviewed by Staff.

CAN's MISSION STATEMENT

The Cambridge Association of Neighborhoods (CAN) fosters neighborhood cohesion and community involvement to (a) enhance the quality of community life for all residents of Cambridge through community events, social activities, and neighborly assistance; and (b) protect and enhance the value of properties in Cambridge by improving building and zoning codes, supporting adherence to those codes, and engaging constructively with City Government, including the Historic Preservation Commission.

CAN engages the Cambridge Community by encouraging the development of self-identified neighborhood "blocks" through which members both (a) address their own neighborhood-specific concerns (e.g., individual neighbors needing assistance/support), and (b) leverage the combined energy and influence of CAN to advance common goals (e.g., zoning standards and enforcement).

CAN is committed to transparency. Timely notification is provided to all CAN members of the Annual membership meeting, special membership meetings, and meetings of the Board of Directors. All meetings of the Board of Directors are open to the entire membership. Meeting minutes are posted to the CAN website in a timely fashion. Financial audits will be conducted annually and posted to the website.

CAN MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

CAN welcomes members from **any and all Cambridge neighborhoods** who are interested in organizing and working together, building a diverse membership reflecting the diversity of Cambridge residents.

Individual Membership. Any person at least 18 years of age residing within or owning property within the limits of Cambridge is eligible for individual membership in CAN (thus including full time residents, part time residents, property owners, and renters).



Organizational Membership. Any business or other entity located within the city limits of Cambridge that is interested in fostering CAN's goals is eligible for organizational membership.

Dues. Annual membership dues for both individuals and organizations are currently set at \$20. Dues are reviewed annually by the CAN Board of Directors and may be modified based on CAN's financial needs. The Board of Directors also welcomes proposals (e.g., volunteer work) to reduce dues for low-income individuals and non-profit organizations who are interested in membership.

Additional membership information is available on the CAN website at <http://cambridgecan.org/join-can>

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Second Annual
Cambridge
Historic Preservation
Awards Ceremony

May 18, 2017, 5:30 pm
305 Gay Street
Cambridge
Light refreshments will be served

Visit
www.choosecambridge.com
For more information



UNIVERSITY of MARYLAND
SHORE REGIONAL HEALTH

Come explore with us a vision for Dorchester County's future health care services!

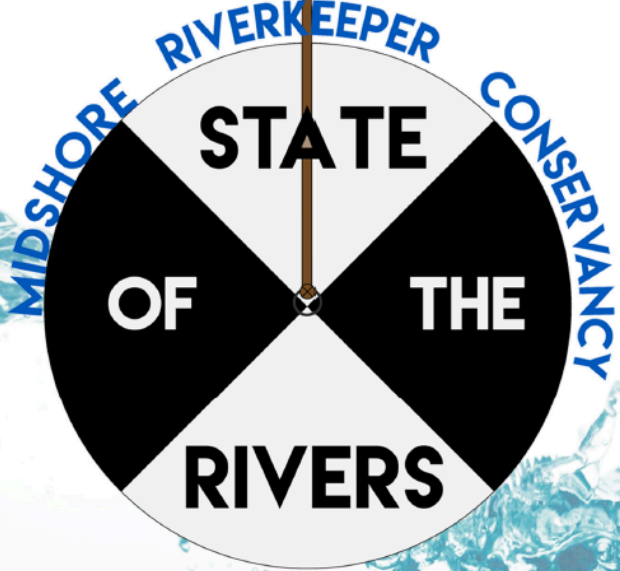
Health care continues to change and your needs for physician care, emergencies, diagnostics and treatments are changing as well. Please join us as we listen to your suggestions and share our vision with you for a future new medical campus and health care services in Dorchester County.

These sessions are free and open to all!
We look forward to seeing you there.

Tues., May 23	6:00 - 7:30 p.m.	East New Market Fire Department 4020 East New Market Bypass East New Market, MD 21631
Wed., May 31	6:00 - 7:30 p.m.	Chesapeake College – Cambridge Center 416-418 Race Street Cambridge, MD 21613
Thurs., June 8	6:00 - 7:30 p.m.	E.A. Murphy Community Building 104 Race Street Vienna, MD 21869
Thurs., June 15	6:00 - 7:30 p.m.	Madison Fire Department 1154 Taylor's Island Road Madison, MD 21648

UMShoreRegional.org

For further information, call 410-228-5511, ext. 5508



**ENJOY AN EVENING WITH
THE RIVERKEEPERS
AS WE PRESENT OUR
2016 GRADES FOR THE CHOPTANK RIVER**

CAMBRIDGE YACHT CLUB
MAY 25TH 6:00PM-7:30PM
1 MILL STREET
CAMBRIDGE, MD

**FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC!
FOOD & DRINKS SERVED**

**SPECIAL GUESTS:
MEMBERS OF THE CAMBRIDGE
CLEAN WATER ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CWAC)**

For more information, contact Choptank Riverkeeper Matt Pluta
at matt@midshoreriverkeeper.org or 443-385-0511



MIDSHORE RIVERKEEPER CONSERVANCY (MRC) –

Cambridge Cleans Up Streams, Shorelines, Streets & Woodlands to Protect Choptank River

Starting Saturday April 1, and continuing through Earth Day, April 22, 2017, Cambridge and Dorchester County residents and community groups took to streams, shorelines, streets and woodlands along the Choptank River to volunteer to remove debris and litter as a part of the Chesapeake-wide Project Clean Stream (PCS). Started by the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, PCS is a concerted regional effort that engages community members in a hands-on opportunity to improve local water quality through litter pick-up. Midshore Riverkeeper Conservancy (MRC) spearheads the effort locally as the Midshore PCS coordinator, including the Choptank, Miles and Wye Rivers.

The results of this clean-up provide a snapshot of the amount of trash and debris that, if not removed, could make it into our waterways and degrade local water quality and habitat for fish, crabs and oysters. Approximately 60 volunteers from Cambridge and Dorchester County worked at seven different locations, collecting over 4,475 pounds of trash. The most common items were plastic bottles and bags. Unusual items included a car exhaust, upholstery, a cell phone, crab pots, televisions, shopping carts, oil drums, car parts and household wall insulation.

This clean-up effort is a great way to build awareness and to encourage the community to get involved in cleaning up debris left behind after winter and before spring showers wash it into the Choptank River. “Project Clean Stream is an opportunity to create awareness and encourage action,” says Choptank Riverkeeper Matt Pluta. I urge everyone to join this effort, not just in the spring but every day, by not littering and by picking up unsightly trash as you go throughout your day. We all enjoy the outdoors—whether boating on the Choptank River, catching fish off the fishing pier and Long Wharf Park, or shooting hoops in the street. Let’s continue to work together to keep these areas clean and inviting for everyone to enjoy.”

Participating groups included the newly formed **Cambridge Association of Neighborhoods (CAN)** cleaning up Long Wharf Park and sections of West End Avenue; Cambridge Multi-Sport cleaning up Great Marsh Park—the site of the Maryland Ironman and Eagleman events; Cambridge Main Street cleaning up Cannery Park at the headwaters of Cambridge Creek and the future site of a stream restoration project; Cambridge Sail and Power Squadron cleaning up Sailwinds Park; Dorchester Citizens for Planned Growth and Nanticoke Watershed Alliance cleaning up Vienna; 4H Busy Beavers cleaning up Bill Burton Fishing Pier; and a citizen clean up group in Secretary.

MRC extends its appreciation to the amazing volunteers who gave up a few hours of their time to clean our streams and beautify the rivers of the Eastern Shore. A special thanks also goes to the City of Cambridge and Dorchester County Departments of Public Works for collecting and disposing of the trash. For more information, contact Suzanne Sullivan at suzanne@midshoreriverkeeper.org or 443.385.0511.

Matthew J. Pluta, Choptank Riverkeeper



COMMISSIONER'S CORNER –

Cambridge Matters: A Message from Commissioner Steve Rideout (swrideout@aol.com)

Yes, Cambridge does matter, and the importance of your engagement in all aspects of this community is critical to its success. Allow me to tell a short story from my past experience that, hopefully, will help set the stage for what follows.

In 1989 when I became the juvenile court judge in Alexandria, my workday started at 8 a.m. and usually went to 6 p.m. with a few short breaks during the day and 15 minutes for lunch. Our docket was so full there was no time to figure out why that was the case; and I did not have the time because I was the only person available to hear the cases. I knew, however, that if I did not change what I did and how I did it, things would only get worse with more cases coming in to be heard.

So I set aside short periods of time from a heavy docket to see what was causing so many cases to come before the court. My thought was to see how our community and local agencies might address the challenges we faced with preventive services and early intervention services. In time the docket for the court lightened, and we became one of only two communities in the entire State of Virginia whose caseload was going down rather than up. Our delinquency rate was cut in half, and the number of youth we sent to State custody went down dramatically. We, as a community, accomplished this by volunteerism, reallocation of existing resources, addressing school, crime, and neighborhood challenges collaboratively, and finding new resources to address problems that had been ignored in the past. As a community Alexandria stepped up to the challenges we faced and addressed them in cost effective and responsible ways.

I see here in Cambridge too few people doing most of the work and contributing most of the financial support for nonprofit efforts. More people need to become engaged in helping to be a solution.

During the past two weeks since the City Manager introduced some possibilities for needed infrastructure improvements for Cambridge as part of a proposed increase in the City tax rate, the drum beat of “do not raise taxes” has been clear and heard. The idea of fixing the 300 block of High Street is no longer part of the proposed budget. The idea of improving substandard housing in Ward 3, which has the most challenges in a city with many housing challenges, is no longer part of the proposed budget.

Have these challenges miraculously been solved? No. Have they fixed themselves? No. Do they continue to exist? Clearly. But your City government is not going to raise your taxes to fix those problems – At least not this year.

At some point, however, the infrastructure in the 300 block of High Street and elsewhere within the City, much of which approximates 100 years will fail and will need to be replaced. When that happens, those who live here will see their tax rates increase even more than was considered this year. The money to fix all of



our infrastructure challenges does not exist in a savings account or reserve fund. Prior City leadership has done what the federal government and many states and localities have done – They have kicked the can down the road for someone else to take care of at a much greater expense. That is what we are doing right now as part of the current budget process.

While I was initially in favor of an increase in the tax rate to take care of the two specific items that are high on the City's list of priorities, I came to understand a number of things:

1. City Council cannot successfully address the multiple problems that the City faces without bringing the community into the conversation and helping all of you understand what we are facing and obtaining your support for next steps.
2. There are other ways to address some of the infrastructure and service challenges in small bites and at less expense. This will not solve the big problems but will start us on the right path of systematically addressing needs and making improvements. Examples include evaluating the condition of the City streets and prioritizing the most effective and least costly way to fix them. We are going to look at trash collection and recycling services and see if they can be done less expensively.
3. City leadership has been unsuccessful in providing the taxpayers with a clear picture of what needs to be done while maintaining essential services for the citizens. We need to do better so that you understand what challenges face us, both long standing and new.
4. City leadership needs to help the community understand that past actions by previous City Councils have given us low and moderate income housing that, while essential, important and present in every community, does not pay through its taxes or PILOT (Payment in Lieu of Taxes) payments enough money to support the essential citizen services that government provides such as police, emergency, fire, and public education. As a result every other homeowner, property owner, and renter in the City is paying more for their residence because the owners of some multiunit housing are not.
5. The City has failed as well to effectively and consistently enforce compliance with the housing maintenance code so that our housing stock has dramatically deteriorated and helped in reducing home values within the City.
6. A tax differential exists between the City and the county. We are looking to see what that differential currently is for Dorchester County and Cambridge and other cities and towns in Dorchester County but also how we compare to the rest of the State. The last time this was done, Cambridge was way out of line compared to other cities in other counties. The tax differential should be based on what services that the City provides that the county does not have to provide. Examples would be police services that the county sheriff does not have to provide in Cambridge. Other services include sewer and water, trash collection, and planning and zoning services all of which the



City provides and county does not have to provide. Efforts by former Commissioner Cooke and Commissioner Hanson a couple of years ago to engage the City residents in protesting this tax differential received a widespread yawn by City residents, who apparently could not have cared less.

7. Helping children succeed in school helps everyone. It helps reduce juvenile delinquency and ultimately adult crime. It helps reduce use of illegal substances by youth. It helps teachers be able to teach more effectively and want to stay here to do that work. I have a study from Milwaukee, Wisconsin that shows that that community paid 1/3 more to replace a social worker than it did to retain him/her. If that cost translates to teachers in Dorchester County, just think of the cost we as tax payers are bearing with all of the teachers, who are recruited to come here, stay for a year or so, and leave because of their experiences here. You as a volunteer can help a child and help our collective pocket books by helping out at a local school.

And the list can go on. What we need from you, at the very least, are good ideas to help solve problems that the City faces and less complaining, which solves little and only helps us kick the can further down the road.

April 10 City Council Meeting

At our City Council meeting on Monday evening, there was a lot on the agenda and much was accomplished. At the same time, much time and effort was wasted. Some would say that that is how democracy works. I would say it happens when City Commissioners fail to do their homework and inadequately represent the citizens of this City.

After a closed meeting to discuss the hiring of a City Attorney to replace Rob Collision, Esq., whose last work day for the City will be April 17th, the resignation of Chief Dan Dvorak and the appointment of Major Lewis as the interim Police Chief, and an ethics matter raised by Commissioner Foster, the City Council returned to public session to begin the regular agenda.

After hearing from citizens regarding the proposed increase in the tax rate and issues concerning the City ethics commission, during which Commissioner Sydnor sought the resignation of Chuck McFadden from the Ethics Commission, the agenda was approved.

For those of you who do not know Chuck, he was a leader and former chair of the Cambridge Ethics Commission for a number of years and was one of the drafters of the Cambridge Ethics Ordinance that passed City Council in 2011. He is and has been for years an advocate for open meetings and ethical behavior for all City employees including elected officials. His forced resignation from the Ethics Commission Monday evening was just one of the disgraceful things that took place during the meeting.

The Consent Calendar included the approval of the March 27th meeting minutes; a noise variance for Movie Night on May 5th between 8-10 p.m. at Sailwinds Park Amphitheater; a WECA picnic on June 4th; the Juneteenth Festival on June 17th from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Pine Street; two Beer Festival events for the High Spot Restaurant; a date change for the Cambridge Sail and Power Squadron for its flare demonstration to



May 21st; the Fair Housing Month Declaration for April; and the Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity Plan and related plans.

The next order of business was the introduction of Ordinance 1097 to set the tax rates for personal property and real property for FY 2018 as the basis for setting the City budget for the coming year. The public hearing on that ordinance will be held on April 24th prior to the second reading and final adoption of the tax rates for the coming year.

Next was the discussion of and approval of a process for screening and awarding Human Services Grant requests. The City is starting this initiative with a small amount of money this year, but my hope is that everyone will see the benefit of these grants on our community. This is something that I have been advocating for years. As an example of how spending money now will help reduce costs later and improve the quality of life in Cambridge, my experience as mentioned above has shown me that investing in early childhood education and parental engagement and mentoring programs for older youth will have a positive impact on school readiness, reduction of substance abuse, juvenile delinquency and ultimately adult crime and the cost of incarceration.

I have seen direct correlation with programs such as this improving school systems, helping to retain good teachers, improving academic achievement, and reduction of crime and delinquency. If we do not engage in some of these programs, the hope for a better Cambridge will never be achieved, and tax rates will never go down.

Under new business the Commissioners received and adopted the 2018 proposed budget adoption schedule and the 2018-2022 Five-Year Capital Improvement Plan. City staff also sought permission to issue and RFP for Privatization of City Sanitation Services, which was approved by City Council.

Staff will bring back the results of the RFP to see what might be done to improve these services at a lower cost to the residents. The transient boat slip fees for the City Marina were suspended for weekends in May as well as Memorial Weekend in an effort to entice more boaters to visit Cambridge and possibly return later in the summer as paying customers.

The City Council approved the ownership interest transfer of a portion of Cambridge Commons, a low and moderate income housing project here in the City. The City Manager also announced that staff will be providing at least annual and possibly semi-annual reports to City Council about this and the other subsidized housing projects in the City to help City Council and City residents understand the ongoing status of those projects and their cost.

Another item of business was the approval of a contract for seawall improvement design for Choptank and West End Avenues and Willis and Oakley Streets. I raised the issue of the need to address Belvedere Street as well and was advised that City staff believed that information gained from the contract will help staff to address Belvedere Street improvements as well in overall corrective efforts.



A matter that was defeated on a 2-3 vote at the last City Council meeting was brought back for reconsideration. This was the Working Waterfronts Implementation Grant Proposal selection of a company to provide contract services. After the matter was reconsidered, the City Council approved the contract 5-0. Why this was not accomplished at the last City Council meeting remains a mystery to me, especially since it passed on Monday evening 5-0.

A final topic of discussion and consideration by the Commissioners was a request by Commissioner Foster to amend the current Cambridge Ethics Law in several aspects and to accept the resignation earlier in the meeting of Chuck McFadden from his membership on the Ethics Commission. The effort to refer the proposed changes of the Ethics Code to the Ordinance Committee was defeated 3-2, with the Mayor casting the deciding vote after Commissioner Cannon recused himself. The vote to accept Chuck McFadden's resignation from the Ethics Commission was approved on a vote of 3-2 with Commissioner Hanson and myself voting in the negative.

Aside from some other administrative actions, the members of City Council and the Mayor provided their final comments to Rob Collison, Esq. who was attending his last City Council meeting as City Attorney. Rob's contract was ended without cause by a 2-1 vote of City Council earlier this year. Dave Cannon and I had recused ourselves from consideration of this matter due to a possible conflict of interest on Commissioner Cannon's part and an actual one in my situation because I rent office space from Rob.

That left three Commissioners to decide the issue of Rob's continued service to the City, and Commissioner Sydnor and Commissioner Foster voted to terminate his contract while Commissioner Hanson voted against it. This termination without cause will have consequences to the City in several respects that I am not allowed to discuss at this time.

The Mayor, the City Manager, and everyone on Council, except for Commissioner Sydnor, were gracious in their comments and thanks to Rob for his over 21 years of service to the City. While I have had to recuse myself from involvement in this issue, I still have an opinion. The action of those voting to terminate Rob's contract was not in the best interests of the City of Cambridge.

April 24 City Council Meeting

Having written all that follows and then read it, I must once again apologize for its length. As this is budget time, however, there is a lot going on; and how we spend your money is important to those of you who live within the City and is important to everyone who receives this as the prosperity of Cambridge is important to those who live both in and outside the City.

There were several important matters that were addressed at our City Council meeting on April 24th. We had presentations from City staff on some of the City budget issues, set up future meetings for more presentations and for public hearings on the City budget for FY 2018, and passed Ordinance 1097 that adopted and approved the levy for Real Property and Personal Property Taxes for the 2018 fiscal year that starts July 1st.



The Mayor read the Opinion from the Open Meetings Compliance Board regarding a complaint that I filed. I am including my complaint and the opinion for you to read, if you wish, and will comment on this issue later in my report.

At the first of two closed sessions held at 5:30 p.m., City Council voted to hire the law offices of Charles Macleod for a period of 4 months as the new City Attorney for Cambridge. The 4-month term is to help the City and Mr. Macleod's firm determine the amount of appropriate legal services that the City will need. The second closed session involved litigation in a matter that I have recused myself from participating pursuant to the requirements of the Cambridge Ethics Law, so I have nothing to report on what may have taken place there.

After those meetings, the City Council returned to regular session where the agenda was approved as was the consent calendar, excluding the meeting minutes of April 10th that needed some minor correction and the proposed waiver of City fees related to the Robin Hood Shop about which Commissioner Sydnor had some questions. The corrected minutes and the waiver of up to \$300 of charges for a building permit and inspection fees on the new addition to the Robin Hood Shop, which is run by the Dorchester General Hospital Auxiliary, were then approved.

Mr. Buffy Luffman, the Eastern Shore Intergovernmental Affairs representative for the Office of the Governor, then introduced himself and let City Council and those in attendance at the meeting know how he could help City and county governments on the Eastern Shore among themselves and with State government.

Ordinance 1098 was then introduced for first reading. The purpose of this ordinance was to correct an error that occurred when the UDC was originally passed involving properties at 821 and 829 Fieldcrest Road that were rezoned in error in order that they be properly zoned as institutional zoning. After the 1st reading, the 2nd reading and adoption of the ordinance was scheduled for May 8th.

Ordinance 1097 mentioned above was then taken up. A public hearing took place where citizens were given the opportunity to provide the City Council with their views regarding the proposed rates. No one commented on the personal property tax rate that remained at \$1.69 per \$100. Several people urged that the City Council not raise the real property tax rate from \$.007989 per \$100 in assessed value to \$.008179 per \$100 in assessed value. This was an increase of .00019 to maintain what is called the "Constant Yield" that is allowed when the average value of real estate assessments goes down, as happened in Cambridge, which would cause the City government to receive fewer dollars than in the prior year.

On a 4-1 vote City Council adopted Ordinance 1097 and directed staff to forward the ordinance to Dorchester County and the State. I voted in favor of the ordinance. While raising the tax rate is not something that the members of City Council wanted to do, after a review of the evidence provided to us by the City Manager and staff, it was clearly the right thing to do.



Some of the known and anticipated higher costs for the next tax year over current costs include the following:

- \$270,000 - Health Insurance Costs increase
- \$150,000 - ½ year payment on loan to fix Sailwinds' Wharf
- \$ 40,000 – Higher cost for new City attorney (plus additional costs for ending Rob Collison's contract)
- \$120,000 – employee cost of living increases (125 employees)
- \$ 25,000 – Human Services Grants
- \$ 10,000 – New Street Lights

A more complete list can be found in the proposed City budget located on the City Website at www.choosecambridge.com

As part of the budgeting process, the City Manager was asked to have staff look at the work that they do and find places where costs might be cut. We have modified insurance coverages to reduce costs, and the police department is in the process of reorganization of command staff to operate more efficiently. In addition, the onetime State payment of \$194,000 due the City for State errors in taxing the City in past years was included in the upcoming budget to help fund the capital program.

To try help you understand why I voted in favor of the tax rate, I offer the following:

1. I clearly heard that the proposed increase to address the 300 Block of High Street and housing blight in the 3rd Ward was not popular. I also felt that there were other ways to begin the process of building consensus within the City on how to fund needed infrastructure repairs and taking some early smaller steps to begin those efforts. At an earlier meeting, I changed my mind and voted against those proposed increases even though the work needs to be done.
2. In some instances, spending what I call “prevention and early intervention dollars” now can result in less costs and better use of limited dollars down the road. One example of that is a pavement management program that will help us identify the best way to improve City streets at less cost. Another is looking at the possibility of privatizing trash collection to see if it might be done better and at less cost. Another is the investment of taxpayer funds in the Human Resources Grants to see how that money given to the right nonprofit can intervene to help children and families and reduce costs for other services later. Fred Phillips-Patrick just provided me with a link to a story from the Washington Post about a recent study that provides an excellent example of that, which I hope will come from our effort. That story can be found at https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2017/04/24/why-your-childrens-daycare-may-determine-how-wealthy-they-become/?utm_term=.ec4390efa5c9

Take a look at it. This is how prevention and early intervention dollars can make a difference and reduce costs. Here in Cambridge and Dorchester County the benefits will come in children better prepared for school; schools that show improved outcomes and improved school ranking within the



State; and teachers who are more satisfied in their work and stay here longer than a few years. Improved schools mean economic development because businesses are more likely to move here when there is a school system that shows improvement in outcomes. The Dorchester County Schools are doing that, but there are always new and different things that can be done to help make them better.

3. While the overall assessment of City property went down 2.3%, the increase in the tax rate does not mean that every homeowner will pay more taxes. Those homeowners whose assessment decreased may pay less depending on how much their assessment went down. Those whose assessment went up, will, of course pay more. What is important for those homeowners to remember is that investing now in programs and projects that will reduce costs later and support increases in assessment rates can allow us to reduce tax rates later. As I looked at the assessment on my home and compared it to properties I know in the City, how properties are assessed is a real mystery. Nearby properties that are much larger and more attractive than where I live and have as much or more land area are assessed equally to mine. Some properties that have gone down in value may have done so because owners are not keeping them up for whatever reason. One of my tasks for the coming year is to find out more about how properties are assessed and see if there might be a solution to that challenge.
4. I did not feel that simply remaining at the current tax rate was the right answer. Prior to our establishing a City Manager form of government, this community was on a predictable path that would have cost even more than is currently the case. With the City Manager and a finance director that understand ways to make taxpayer money work for the benefit of the entire community, the improved management of the City and the savings that would otherwise not have occurred have been accomplished. We needed to keep our funding level at least where it was last year both because of increased costs, some of which were out of our control, and because having those funds available now will help us find ways to improve services and reduce costs in the future. I have seen it done in several communities around the country and know that it can happen here.

City Administrative Staff and the Police Chief then made presentations that can also be found on the City website. Included in those presentations is some information about what each department did during FY 2017. From the Economic Development Department, we learned that the new City website will be up and running this summer, probably in August. The current website has not worked well and has not been easy to use by those seeking information about us and how we function. While I have not seen the new proposed site, those working on it are very much aware of the importance of having an easy to use website presence.

Chief Lewis made the police department presentation much of which was developed by Chief Dan before his resignation. After the meeting, I suggested to the Chief that having outcome driven data rather than output data would help Cambridge residents have a better understanding of the excellent work that our police department is doing. I am hopeful that in next year's budget we will have more data from all departments that will help us understand how the City and its citizens benefitted from the work that they did and not just be a recitation of what they did. This is just the 2nd year of the effort by the City Manager to



provide more useful data for City Council and the community, and what has been accomplished so far is a big step in getting to where we need to be.

The next topic on the agenda was old business and was the acceptance and appropriation of grant funding for completion of the Historic Preservation Commission Design Guidelines. This was a grant opportunity authorized earlier this year, which was awarded by the Maryland Certified Local Governments Program for \$15,000 to hire a consultant to help revise and complete the proposed Historic District Design Guidelines.

As many have heard and some have experienced, the HPC process has, in the past, been a challenge. As the Ward 1 Commissioner and the liaison from City Council to the HPC, I felt it was important to find ways to improve the efficiency of the HPC process and bring on commission members from the community who are both knowledgeable about the importance of historic preservation and have had experience with the HPC process. The new leadership of the HPC is making every effort to make it work better and more efficiently for residents of the Historic District who need to address changes or improvements to their properties. This grant will help them and the community in the work that they are doing.

The other old business matter that was addressed was the reading by the Mayor of the findings of the Open Meetings Act Compliance Board that came because of a complaint that I made about a closed meeting on February 21st of this year. Rather than tell you about it, I am attaching to my email my complaint and the decision for you to read, if you wish.

As background, one of my primary issues regarding City government is its need to be more open and transparent. How “closed” meetings were done in the past was clearly in violation of the Open Meetings Act. When I came on City Council, I asked for changes to be made. While there was some improvement, the meeting that I complained about had so much wrong with it that I filed my complaint.

The old process has gone on for so long that no one ever shows up at meetings that are labeled as closed, so it is easier for City Council to be less open and transparent. This decision, that the Mayor read, says that we must change the way we close meetings. It also means that if this decision is going to have any impact here in Cambridge, you must do something. You should show up at the early open meetings and listen to why the meeting is being closed. That way you know what is supposed to be discussed and, when the Mayor and Commissioners come out of the meeting and report, you will know if something different was discussed. If that is the case, there has not been compliance with the Act.

In addition, since the Mayor and City Manager set the agenda, I expect that these “closed” meetings will continue to occur prior to the regular open meetings. If we are being open and transparent, they should occur after the regular open meetings have been completed at which point we announce our intent to go into “closed” session and provide the reason for it. That then gives those of you who are present the ability to understand the purpose of the closed meeting. As the opinion states, when we come out of those closed meetings we do not need to make a report and can make that at the next open meeting where you, the community, can make sure that we only talked about what we said was the reason for the closed meeting.



While all of this may seem bureaucratic and a waste of time, it is the only way you can know that what we are doing behind closed doors is being disclosed to the extent it is required by law.

The only New Business on the agenda included the scheduling of a Work Session on May 12th from 11 am – noon at the Public Safety Training Room and a Work Session on May 8th at 5 p.m. to discuss grant funding opportunities.

As the Mayor and Commissioners were making closing statements at the end of the meeting, the City Manager asked that we hear from Odie Wheeler, Director of DPW, about an emergency funding situation that had just occurred. Apparently, the State has changed its process of how gasoline can be dispensed at marinas within the State to help ensure, to the extent possible, that gasoline does not enter the water of the Bay or its tributaries. The cost of the “fix” that the State is requiring is about \$35,000, and for the Cambridge Marina to be able to continue to sell gasoline the “fix” had to be done immediately. There were grant funds available to DPW to do this work that the State would allow to be shifted from State monies already received by the City. In addition, the State would work with the City to find monies to replace the \$35,000.

We also learned that the Hyatt had been required to make a similar “fix” for its marina gasoline distribution and had declined to do so. That meant that if the City and Hyatt did not have the ability to dispense gas that none would be immediately available for boaters. It also meant that if the City complied with the State request that it would be the closest gasoline for Hyatt boaters to use. That would mean a potential increase in revenue for the Cambridge Marina that has been a money loser for years.

To approve the request, because it was not in the existing budget, 4 Commissioners had to vote in favor of the request. By that time in the evening, Commissioner Foster had left the meeting. On my motion with a second from Commissioner Hanson, the motion went down to defeat on a 3-1 vote, with Commissioner Sydnor opposing. During the debate, Commissioner Sydnor asked me if I wanted to withdraw the motion, which was a clear indication that he would vote against it.

As this was an emergency that the City could benefit from if the matter was approved and that the monies available were grant monies already in a City account from the State, that meant that no additional funds would come from the City, I refused to withdraw the motion.

Commissioner Sydnor complains often about the cost of the marina and how unfair it is that City monies are spent there when it is a money loser. Prior to the marina expansion, the Marina was a money-maker and cash cow that the City used to fund other projects in the City. Now it is not. His vote against the motion would cause the City to have to close the gasoline distribution from the marina, which would send marina users elsewhere for their gasoline.

Apparently, after thinking through his decision, Commissioner Sydnor realized the mistake that he had made and asked that the matter be reconsidered. It was, and the 4 favorable votes needed were achieved.



Thanks for reading.

All the Best,

Steve Rideout

OPEN MEETINGS ACT COMPLAINT

MEMO TO: Open Meetings Compliance Board
C/o Attorney General's Office
200 St. Paul Place
Baltimore, MD 21202

From: Commissioner Stephen W. Rideout
311 High Street
Cambridge, MD 21613

Re: Open Meetings Act Alleged Violations

Date: February 22, 2017

The purpose of this memo is to file a complaint against the Mayor and the Cambridge City Council, of which I am a member, regarding what I believe are violations of Chapter 5 of the Maryland Open Meetings Act.

COMPLAINT

On February 21, 2017 pursuant to the attached notices (#1A and 1B), two meetings of the Cambridge City Council were held. One was an open public work session scheduled for 10 a.m., and the other was a "closed" meeting at 12:00 p.m. to "consider a motion to go into Closed Session concerning a personnel matter: City Attorney proposals". These notices were provided to the public in a timely manner prior to the meeting on February 21st.

The public work session was held with the Mayor, Commissioners, City Manager, and 2 staff members participating and with two citizens observing the meeting. Upon conclusion of that meeting the two citizens and staff left and no other citizens came for the "closed" meeting. On prior occasions I have complained to the City Manager that notices about City Council "closed" meetings violated the Open Meetings Act as they did not notify the public that there would be an open meeting to determine if a closed meeting was required and did not adequately advise anyone of the topics of discussion. As you can see from the attached "closed meeting" notice, the city continues a practice about which I have complained since being elected to City Council in July 2016 as it did not announce an open meeting to make a determination as to closing a meeting as required by the Open Meetings Act but rather simply announced a closed meeting.



The reason that there was a need to review “City Attorney proposals” on the 21st is that earlier this year the City Council on a 2-1 vote terminated without cause the contract of Robert Collison, Esq., who has been the City Attorney for Cambridge for over 20 years (See attached meeting notes #2 of 1/23/17 regarding closed meeting of 1/9/17). There are 5 City Commissioners, but I had recused myself and Commissioner Cannon had recused himself pending a decision on a request that he had made for an Ethics Commission Opinion on his need to recuse himself regarding Mr. Collison. That left 3 Commissioners available for the vote per #2 above. I had recused myself from all matters regarding Mr. Collison and his contract due to the fact that I have a business relationship with him (I rent office space from him and so have a lease contract relationship with him), but Mr. Collison had not responded to the RFP for the purposes of possibly providing legal services to the City of Cambridge in the future. It was determined that I would be allowed to participate in the application review and selection process for a new City Attorney for Cambridge, as Mr. Collison was no longer a candidate.

Although the attached notice failed to properly notify the public that the meeting was first an open meeting before going into a closed meeting, the Mayor opened the meeting as an open meeting and sought a motion to go into a closed meeting for the purpose of reviewing the “City Attorney proposals” that came as a result of the RFP that the city had issued. See attachment #3. After a proper vote was taken to go into a closed meeting to discuss the responses to the RFP and we were in the closed meeting, Mayor Victoria Jackson-Stanley asked the City Manager to inform everyone about the letter that apparently had been sent that morning by Mr. Collison to the Mayor, Commissioner Robert Hanson, and the City Manager.

As I was unaware of the letter, upon hearing the Mayor’s request, I thought it could be something that dealt with the purpose of the closed meeting such as the differences with Mr. Collison had been worked out so we would not need to hold the closed meeting. However the response from the City Manager was that Mr. Collison had requested that the terms of his terminated contract be honored. While I have never seen his contract, it apparently provided him with a year’s salary if/when his contract was terminated without cause. I was not aware of any termination of the contract “for cause”. Commissioner Donald Sydnor then responded to the effect that the city might not have to pay anything. In response to his comment, I responded that Mr. Sydnor, who is not a lawyer, should not be providing legal advice and that the City Manager needed to obtain legal advice from a lawyer who was knowledgeable about contracts.

The City Manager correctly noted at that point that I should not be discussing matters concerning Mr. Collison. I then realized that I should have been forewarned that Mr. Collison’s letter was going to be included in the discussion at the closed meeting and that it should have been a separate basis for going into the closed meeting, which it was not. That would have permitted me to leave the meeting during the discussion of his letter. Nothing further was said during the closed meeting regarding Mr. Collison, and the Mayor and Commissioners then reviewed the responses to the RFP.

After approximately 1 ½ hours some of the commissioners and the Mayor decided that they had read and discussed enough about the responses to the RFP to know who they wanted to have follow up interviews with and so left the meeting without ending the closed meeting, returning to an open meeting, and making a report on the results of the closed meeting. I continued to review the responses to the RFP, as did Commissioner Hanson. Also present with us was the City Manager. The Mayor and the other three commissioners left the meeting without following the requirements of the Open Meetings Act.



As a result of the above facts, I submit that the following are violations of Chapter 5 the Maryland Open Meetings Act that need a decision by the Open Meetings Commission and about which the Mayor, Commissioners, and City Manager need to receive a formal written opinion from the Commission on the specific requirements needed for future compliance with the Open Meetings Act and to acknowledge the same pursuant to the Open Meetings Act:

1. Notices for proposed “closed” meetings are not permitted. They need to be notices for open meetings that notify the public that there will be an open meeting for the Commissioners to decide on whether or not to go into a closed meeting.
2. Any notices need to provide adequate detail for the public and the Mayor and Commissioners not only of the legal basis for the proposed closed meeting but the specifics of what is to be decided that will maintain the confidentiality of the person, organization, or subject under consideration but will also define the limits of what may be discussed at any closed meeting.
3. Only matters identified in the meeting notice and contained in any motion and final decision by the Commissioners to go into a closed meeting may be discussed so that, for example, discussion of issues about which every Commissioner and the Mayor are aware will be discussed and “surprise” matters such as the Notification Letter from Mr. Collison may not be raised at a closed meeting because it was not part of the reason for going into closed session. I and other Commissioners in my situation are entitled to know what was going to be raised before going into closed session in order to avoid being placed in a conflict of interest situation that was unexpected.
4. When a closed meeting is ended, the meeting needs to be ended and the city council needs to return to an open meeting where a report can be provided to the public of what occurred during the meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,

Stephen W. Rideout
Commissioner Ward 1
City of Cambridge, MD 21613



OPEN MEETINGS ACT COMPLIANCE BOARD FINDINGS

*11 Official Opinions of the Compliance Board 22 (2017)**

- ♦ 2(B) NOTICE-CONTENT: NOTICE OF “CLOSED SESSION” MUST CONVEY THAT VOTE TO CLOSE IS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
- ♦ 5(C)(1) WRITTEN CLOSING STATEMENT: AGENDA NOT SUFFICIENT WHEN NOT ADOPTED AS CLOSING STATEMENT AND NOT COMPLETE
- ♦ 5(A)(2) CLOSED SESSIONS: IN VIOLATION, DISCUSSION OF TOPIC NOT DISCLOSED ON WRITTEN STATEMENT

* Topic numbers and headings correspond to those in the Opinions Index (2014 edition) posted on the Open Meetings webpage at www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov/Pages/OpenGov/OpenMeetings/index.aspx

April 13, 2017*

Re: Cambridge City Council
(Hon. Stephen W. Rideout, Complainant)

Stephen W. Rideout, a Cambridge City Commissioner, alleges that the Cambridge City Council violated the Act in various ways with regard to the closed meeting that the Council held on February 21, 2017. The City Council responded.

First, Complainant alleges that the Council violated the Act by posting a notice and an agenda for a “Closed session (closed to the public)” to occur on February 21, 2017 without inviting the public to attend the Council’s vote to close the session to the public. The Council concedes that it was required to hold the vote in public, *see* § 3-305(d) 1, and therefore to provide the public with advance notice of the public’s right to attend. § 3-302. We find that the Council violated these sections.

Second, Complainant alleges that the Council violated the Act by failing to provide, in its meeting notice, sufficient information about the topics to be discussed at the anticipated closed session. The Act does not require public bodies to include that information in their agendas. *See* § 3-302.1 (requiring an agenda to “indicat[e] whether the public body expects to close any portion of the meeting in accordance with § 3-305”). However, § 3-305(d) requires the presiding officer to make a written statement, at the time of closing, that specifies three items of information: the topics to be discussed, the reasons for closing the session, and a “citation of the authority” under § 3-305 for the closed session. A pre-prepared statement or agenda satisfies § 3-305(d) when (1) it contains the required information, and (2) the public body adopted it as the public body’s closing statement at the time of closing. 9 *OMCB Opinions* 1, 6 (2013); *see also* Open Meetings Act Manual (2016) Chapter 5, Part A (explaining the § 3-305(d) requirements). Although staff may prepare the closing statement in advance for the public body’s consideration and vote, the responsibility for its accuracy at the time of closing lies with the presiding officer. 9 *OMCB Opinions* 15, 23 (2013).

Here, the agenda specified “City Attorney proposals” as the topic to be discussed, and it referred to a closed session for “personnel matters.” We find that the agenda did not serve as an adequate closing statement either



as to content or as to its adoption. As to content, the agenda does not specify the Council’s reason for closing and does not cite any authority under § 3-305. We understand that § 3-305(b)(1), the exception that permits public bodies to close a meeting in order to discuss appointment or employment matters pertaining to particular individuals, is often referred to as the “personnel matters” or “personnel” exception. However, the public does not necessarily know that, and the Act requires a “citation” so that the public is assured that the Act authorizes the closed session. As to the use of an agenda as the presiding officer’s written statement, we see no indication that the Council adopted the agenda as a written closing statement. The response acknowledges, and we find, that the Council violated § 3-305(d).

Third, Complainant alleges that the closed-door discussion exceeded the scope of the topic disclosed on the agenda. *See* § 3-305(b) (providing authority for closing a meeting only to discuss certain topics) and (d) (conditioning the authority to close a session on the disclosure, in the written statement, of the topics to be discussed). As predicted on its closing statement, the Council reviewed proposals of law firms that had responded to the City’s request for proposals for the position of City Attorney. That discussion fell within both the Council’s description and the personnel exception. *See* § 3-305(b)(1); *see also* 7 *OMCB Opinions* 125, 128 (noting that a discussion about the public body’s attorney’s contract fell within the exception); *Open Meetings Act Manual* (2016) Chapter 4, Part A (explaining the exception). Additionally, Complainant alleges, the Mayor asked the City Manager to report on the city’s receipt of a letter from the current City Attorney about the City’s contract with him. Complainant further states that a Council member and Complainant remarked on the matter briefly before the City Manager ended the discussion. The response acknowledges that the topic had not been “planned,” that the topic was not “entirely” germane to the review of proposals for the position, and that the Council will take measures in the future to avoid straying into discussions of topics not disclosed on the written statement. We find that the Council violated § 3-305 by discussing a topic other than the one that it had disclosed. As noted in 9 *OMCB Opinions* 46, 50 (2013), the introduction of an unplanned topic during a closed session renders the closing statement inaccurate and the members’ vote insufficient as to the new topic. We refer the Council to that opinion.

Fourth, Complainant alleges that the Council violated the Act when it did not return to open session after the closed session. The Act does not impose such a requirement. The Act thus permits public bodies to schedule their closed-session items as the last items on the agenda so as not to inconvenience the public.

In conclusion, we find that the Council violated §§ 3-302 and 3-305 with regard to its February 21, 2017 closed session.

Open Meetings Compliance Board
Jonathan A. Hodgson, Esq.
April C. Ishak, Esq.
Rachel A. Shapiro Grasmick, Esq.

¹ Statutory citations are to the General Provisions Article of the Maryland Annotated Code (2014, with 2016 supp.).

* The Compliance Board revised this opinion on April 20, 2017, to reflect that the City Council responded to the complaint.