CAMBRIDGE MATTERS

By: Commissioner Steve Rideout

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Monday night’s city council meeting was a full one. We started at 6:00 p.m. and did not finish until 9:00 p.m.

The quick synopsis of some of the community requests and uncontested matters are as follows:

REQUESTS FROM THE PUBLIC- There were two.

* The first item was from Maces Lane Alumni Association seeking support from the city in developing a community center at the old Maces Lane School. Due to the historic nature of the school and the need for a community center in that portion of Cambridge, efforts are under way by the Alumni Association and the Good Shepherd Association to address this concern, and they need some assistance from city staff in developing a plan of action and grant application for pre-development costs. City Council directed staff to help prepare a development grant proposal for the Alumni Association and Good Shepherd Association to submit and also help them develop a business plan for services in the proposed community center.
* The second item was a written request by DeAdrein and Sheila Jones for consideration of a change in the UDC that addresses multi-family properties that cease for any reason for a period of 90 days to be used that way. While the Jones’ did not appear, under the city code City Council is to refer such matters to the city zoning official for discussion, possible action by the Planning and Zoning Commission, and report back to City Council. The matter was referred to the city zoning official for further action.

After a time for open statements by the public, the city undertook the consent calendar. After some discussion the following matters were addressed:

* The May 8th and 24th City Council Minutes were approved with a minor edit to the May 24th minutes.
* The request by **Cambridge Main Street** for an additional two hours to set up for Taste of Cambridge and Summer Send-Off was granted. Preparation for those events will start at 1:00 p.m. on July 8th and September 16th.
* The “Groove on Pine” street festival with music set for July 22nd was approved for **Eastern Shore Network for Change and Cambridge Main Street.**
* A youth program by **Saving our Communities Kids** was approved for July 29th.
* The request by an organization related to Maces Lane High School was denied as no one from the Maces Lane Alumni Association knew who the group was and no one from the group appeared at the meeting.
* The **Boy Scout’s** Cubmobile races set for October 1, 2017 on Court Lane were approved.
* A Tent Revival by the **Agape Temple of Praise and Ministries, Inc.** for August 8 and 9, 2017 were approved for a portion of Center Street at the corner of Robbins Street.
* The **Hyatt’s** request to shoot fireworks on June 22nd was approved subject to fire marshal approval and meeting the requirements of Resolution 15-004.
* The **Rescue Fire Company’s** request to hold the Seafood Feastival on July 12th with July 11th set up at Sailwinds Park was approved.
* The community block party sponsored by the **Shorehawks Football Team** for June 24th was approved subject to their obtaining a liquor license from the county for any alcohol service. The party make take place without alcohol, if they do not obtain the license from the county.
* The **Cambridge Yacht Club’s** request to set no motor boating events on the Choptank, to the extent the city controls such events, on July 20-22, 2018 and August 18-19, 2018 in order that the Yacht Club can hold their Sail Regatta and Log Canoe races from the Malkus Bridge to Hambrooks Bay was approved.
* The offer by the **Thomas Family Irrevocable Trust** to give property to the city was referred to staff for further study and report back to City Council.

The next order of business was the approval of the FY 2018 budget after a final public hearing along with resolutions adopting staff positions and salary controls and grades for city employees and establishing the Schedule of Fees charged by the City. As Commissioner Foster has family members who work for the city, she recused herself from a portion of this order of business after conferring with the city attorney and abstained with regard to the budget vote. All matters passed unanimously.

City Council then considered ordinances that were presented for 2nd reading, public hearings, findings of fact, and possible adoption. The following were taken up and adopted:

* Ordinance 1098 regarding the correction of a zoning error that took place on two institutional properties on Fieldcrest Road that were zoned as industrial rather than institutional. They were zoned as institutional.
* Ordinance 1103 regarding the correction of an error that took place on 319 acres of land on Egypt Road that were zoned for residential use but were not able to be developed. As a result the property was rezoned to Resource Conservation.

With regard to both of these matters, city council heard evidence supporting what error occurred and made findings of fact that the city attorney and staff will prepare in written form as support for these ordinances.

The final Ordinance adopted was Ordinance 1104 that allows for an amendment of the Unified Development Code (UDC) to provide that a sign program for a site in the City in excess of 20 acres will be given more flexibility with design, scale, and size of signs for such property due to the large size and uniqueness of the property. This will help with signage for the new Cambridge Market Place redevelopment.

With Old Business there were several matters that took some time to discuss and resolve. The first was the proposed contract with Chesapeake Waste Industries for private sanitation services/trash pickup for the city residents. After a presentation of the proposed contract and questions from the mayor and council, the contract was approved. The services will begin July 1st. large trash totes will be distributed to homes and apartments in the city. Trash pickup will remain twice a week. The city will need to change its current code regarding trash pickup given the move to privatization of services. As part of the transition to private services, two city employees will be offered jobs by Chesapeake Waste Industries, and the company has represented that the two employees will be hired at a competitive rate of pay to what they were receiving from the city. In addition city council approved additional compensation to both employees of $2400 each and will review this matter at the July 10th meeting to ensure that they are being treated fairly by their new employer with regard to their salaries.

The Ordinance Committee had two matters regarding a propose committee and committee rules and procedures for committees that do not have their own rules and procedures. Dave Cannon and I led a discussion about the establishment of a city parks and waterfront committee and how it might be constructed and run. In addition there was a discussion about the rules for running the committee as well as other committees in the city that do not otherwise have meeting and procedural rules. The reason for this proposal came from my experience as liaison for the Long Wharf Committee that had too many members fail to attend meetings and the complexity of removing them from the committee.

As a result of the discussion, a number of things were agreed upon; and Commissioner Cannon and I will be developing a clarifying document regarding the parks and waterfront committee that will be brought back to City Council for further discussion and, hopefully, approval. In addition we will work on finalizing a set of standard committee rules for those committees that otherwise have not developed their own rules. The City Attorney would then use these as work documents for preparation of the ordinance establishing the committee and also a resolution regarding the general committee rules for committees that do not otherwise have rules.

Under New Business, City Council approved staff submitting a Technical Assistance Grant Application to the Maryland DHCD for $25,000 and for appropriating $25,000 available from 2017 Appropriated City Reserves to the City Manager’s Budget for matching funds to hire a consultant to assist in this effort. These monies will assist the city in developing a Pine Street Revitalization Plan and Specific Project Plan while also helping to the city identify ways to address other areas of the city that also need assistance with deteriorating housing stock.

The final docket item for Council action was a report and recommendations from the Traffic and Safety Committee on the following that were adopted by council:

* The installation of 5 street lights between Leonard Lane and Cattail Crossing on MD Route 343 for pedestrian safety.
* Creating a four-way stop at the intersection of Peachblossum and Shephard Ave. that are consistent with other intersections on Peachblossum.
* The installation of 2 street lights on Goodwill Ave. between Washington Street and Boundary Ave for pedestrian safety.
* The installation of a 20 minute parking space restriction in front of the brick building on the southeast corner of Maryland Ave and Hayward Street and center lane pedestrian crosswalk signs on Maryland Ave.; relocating existing pedestrian crosswalk signs for more traffic and pedestrian visibility; painting the curbs yellow at this intersection and installing stop signs on Hayward Street for vehicle and pedestrian safety.

With regard to the last item on the list, I sought to have the committee consider some form of electronic pedestrian and vehicle traffic control at the Maryland Ave. and Hayward Street intersection given the speed at which traffic come in both direction and the significant width of Maryland Ave. there. This was not adopted, but the committee will meet to consider that possibility and report back to City Council.

This prompted the request from other commissioners, including myself, to have the committee look at the intersection of Washington Street and Maces Lane, which has challenges for vehicles crossing or turning on to Washington Street from Maces Lane. Another street that was discussed was Vue de Leau and the manner of parking on that street. When two vehicles are parked across the street from one another and are parked properly on the street and not on the sidewalks, it appears that no fire engine and possibly no ambulance can make it between those vehicles, which presents an issue of public safety to that part of the community. I raised concern about the automatic right turn from High Street onto Poplar Street and the intersection of Poplar, Race, and Gay Streets which are not pedestrian friendly. Other spots were noted by other Commissioners.

If there is an intersection or a place in the city that has vehicle or pedestrian problems, please let me know so that I can pass it on to the Traffic and Safety Committee for consideration.

The final item on the agenda was a report on the Sailwinds Wharf Reconstruction. Rather than give you a summary, it is attached.

An additional matter that was not on the City Council agenda may be of interest to some of you, so I am sharing it here.

The other day while walking our dog to Marina Park, I noticed a strange odor at Water and Mill Street. Because of the direction of the wind, I thought that it came from elsewhere in the city. It turns out that I was mistaken.

A neighbor raised the issue with me as well and indicated that the cause was related to the growth of algae near the river. Upon inquiry to Odie Wheeler at DPW, he provided the following explanation and how the city addresses the issue:

**Unfortunately the odor… comes when seaweed that accumulates in the corner of the bulkhead next to Yacht Club Drive close to Water St.  … we have been checking the tide pretty much every day to see if it’s low enough that we can try and clean it.  When the seaweed accumulates in the corner one would think that it would go and come with the tides, however once it makes it to the corner it just stays there, and when the weather reaches the high temperatures like we have experience the past several days, it begins to decay and puts off the odor.   The only way we can clean the seaweed is when the tide is extremely low to where the bottom in that corner is exposed, and we can take our vactor truck down there and suck out the seaweed.  Otherwise if we try to do it while there’s still water in the corner, due to the way our truck works, we get a large percentage of water, and very little to no seaweed. … we will continue to check the water level in hopes that we can assist, I have also asked Scott to keep an eye on the tide, and if it gets low enough he will contact us.**

Thanks for reading. Let me know how we can make Cambridge and even better place to live.

Steve Rideout