CAMBRIDGE MATTERS

By: Commissioner Steve Rideout

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On Monday evening the City Council finished its closed sessions early. We had met at 5 p.m. in Open Session to go into closed session under the Maryland Open Meetings Act. The two issues for consideration were consultation with staff/counsel concerning litigation and the other was to discuss public security. Information was provided and no decisions were made by the Commissioners.

As we waited for the Regular Session of City Council to start at 6:00 p.m., citizens started to enter Council Chambers a few at a time with more coming in as 6:00 p.m. approached. By the time that the meeting started every seat was taken and people were standing. The issue that brought most of them involved the effort by a Commissioner to amend the City Charter. Thank you to everyone who came to watch and listen and to those who came to speak.

After the meeting started with a moment of silence and the Pledge of Allegiance and the report by the City Manager on the Closed Session, the agenda was modified to move item 9 to be considered after item 10, which was what almost everyone attending was there to hear.

The Public Comment portion of the meeting brought forth many of the people attending to speak on the proposed Charter Change issue that was on the agenda for later in the meeting. All but one person who spoke opposed the proposed change. If you are interested in seeing the public comment portion of the meeting or the debate regarding this issue, you can see it on the internet at [www.townhallstreams.com](http://www.townhallstreams.com). After arriving at the website, enter Cambridge, MD and you will be taken to our page. In the lower right portion of the page you will find the past recorded meetings of City Council. Click on November 27th.

For the discussion of the issue, move the timeline at the bottom of the page to a little after 40 minutes and start watching the discussion and vote. For the citizen comments, they are at the start of the meeting.

After the Public Comment portion of the meeting the following Consent Calendar was adopted and approved:

* The November 13, 2017 minutes, as corrected.
* The request by Keith Graffus of Crabi Gras for permission to hold the 8th Annual Muskrat Stew Festival in the 300 block of High Street on February 25th.
* The revised Official List of City Holidays and City Council Meeting Schedule for 2018.

With Old Business City Council received a progress report on Council Goals for FY 2108 and notes from the FY 2019 Work Session. These will be used by the City Manager and Staff to help City Council set priorities. That is the visioning part of our duties as elected officials. I am including those notes with this report and would ask that you take a look and let me know if you agree, disagree, or have other ideas for what we need to be doing.

With New Business the Police Chief Job Classification was updated to reflect the need for the Police Chief to cooperate and collaborate with the City Manager. The basics of the job description have not been changed since used for hiring former Chief Dan Dvorak.

The Council and public were then notified of the Work Session on December 7th from 11 a.m. to noon at the Public Safety Building Training Room with the Sailwinds Inc. Board to discuss formalizing the relationship between the City and Sailwinds, Inc. as it relates to the development of the port property.

With item 10 that brought many residents to the meeting, the best way to understand what took place is to take a look at the recorded video of that part of the meeting. The short form of what happened is as follows:

1. Commissioner Foster moved to amend the Charter so that the Chief of Police would be supervised by the Mayor and Commissioners.
2. No mention was made of the department heads.
3. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Sydnor.
4. Commissioner Foster read a prepared statement supporting her reasoning for this request.
5. I asked a question for clarification to make sure that the failure to include the department heads in the motion was intentional.
6. Commissioner Foster advised that Commissioner Cannon initially had asked to include department heads and then withdrew his request so that the only issue involved the Chief of Police.
7. I then began my argument to support my view that the Charter should not be changed.
8. The Mayor interjected some history regarding the management of the Police Chief prior to the establishment of the City Manager form of Government, and I explained that the proposal would change event that.
9. The City Manager then asked some clarifying questions.
10. Commissioner Hanson called the question and the motion

was defeated on a 2-3 vote with Commissioners Sydnor and Foster voting in favor and Commissioners Hanson, Cannon, and me voting against.

Upon completion of this portion of the meeting, I moved that we appoint the search committee members who had been recommended by the Commissioner from their wards. Those individuals include Dan Dvorak (Ward 1), Portia Johnson Ennels (Ward 2), Barbara Johnson (Ward 3), Herschel Johnson (Ward 4), and Jennifer Ruark (Ward 5). All were approved unanimously.

At some point during the meeting, Commissioner Foster removed from the agenda her request to have the city provide funding for the search for the City Manager in the amount of $30,000. The final matter prior to another closed session at the end of the meeting was item 9, which was the request by the Mayor that City Council authorize not more than $20,000 from within the Administration Budget of the Mayor and staff to move forward with the recruitment process for hiring a new City Manager. Upon motion and after discussion, that passed 3-2 with Commissioners Hanson, Cannon, and me voting in favor and Commissioners Foster and Sydnor abstaining. The motion passed.

At our last meeting this same vote occurred. The difference between the motion last meeting that failed and this one that passed, while technical, is important for you to understand. At the last meeting we were asking to use monies that were not in the 2018 FY budget and were being held in reserve. That takes a 4/5 vote of approval. We did not have that last meeting. The motion on Monday was to move around already approved monies and use them differently than had originally been determined. That only required a majority vote.

Prior to moving into closed session, the Mayor and all of the Commissioners thanked Acting Chief Mark Lewis for his 30 years of service to the City of Cambridge. He is retiring December 1st, and you will recall from my last report that Wayne Bromwell will be the Acting Police Chief while the City Manager conducts a search for a new Police Chief.

The citizens who appeared for the meeting were also thanked for coming.

The matters taken up in the closed session will be reported on at the next Regular Meeting of City Council in December.

Thanks for Reading. Merry Christmas to everyone as well as best wishes for the Holiday Season.

Steve