

CAMBRIDGE MATTERS  
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What I expected to be a short meeting turned out to be a bit longer due to some of the reports that we were provided that needed some explanation and about which we had questions.

The City Manager reported on the Closed Session held at the end of our last city council meeting. The stated purpose of that meeting was possible property acquisition, and no reportable action was taken. During the public comment portion of the meeting one citizen spoke regarding the repair to the 300 block of High Street and his opposition to the city rebricking that block after the repairs are done.

After the agenda was modified and adopted, Dion Banks and Kisha Petticolis of the Eastern Shore Network for Change (ESNC) and Amanda Fenstermaker, Director of the Dorchester County Office of Tourism, spoke regarding the need for some assistance for a proposed series of conversations concerning race relations in our community. Commissioner Sydnor indicated that Commissioner Foster would be late to the meeting and asked that council delay the matter until she was able to arrive. A compromise was reached that allowed for the presentation to be made as proposed in the agenda with any action by the Commissioners being delayed until later in the meeting on the request for \$1,500 from the city to support this effort.

The proposal was to hire Real Time Strategic Change, a company led by Jake Jacobs and George McDaniel, to come to Cambridge for a series of meetings and discussion groups out of which a strategic plan would be developed to move beyond the Reflections on Pine events from this past summer. This organization had worked with the community in Charleston, S.C. to help improve community relations after the murders at Mother Emanuel AME Church. ESNC and Dorchester County, through a grant, had

\$3,000 committed to the effort and were seeking the remaining \$1,500 from the city.

As the money would be coming from reserves and was not part of the current city budget, 4 Commissioners needed to approve the funding. Near the end of the meeting, when Commissioner Foster was still absent, Commissioner Sydnor asked to put the vote over until our next meeting, which will be in January 2018. After discussion among the Mayor and Commissioners where Commissioner Sydnor indicated that he was not prepared to vote in favor of the request, it was apparent that the request for funding would fail, and so the other Commissioners reluctantly agreed to place the matter on the January 8<sup>th</sup> agenda for the vote.

The only item on the Consent Agenda was the meeting minutes from the November 27<sup>th</sup> meeting, which were unanimously approved. The request from the Dorchester Chamber of Commerce to hold a Boat Docking Competition on June 16, 2018, at Long Wharf was removed from the Consent Agenda as Commissioner Cannon, a board member of the Chamber, recused himself from voting on this issue. After an explanation of the event and the understanding that parking and traffic management issues needed to be worked out, the remaining Commissioners on a 3-0 vote approved the request subject to insurance being provided to protect the city, submission of the liquor license for the event, and the understanding that the parking and traffic issues will be resolved by city staff and the police department.

Under Old Business, we had a housekeeping matter regarding an Economic Development Strategic Plan grant that the city received from the Department of Housing and Community Development. The city had received funds for the update of the original plan and had hired Sage Policy Group to do that work. In order to fulfill the requirements of the grant, the City needed to hold a public hearing on the progress of the grant. The report from Sage had been approved earlier this year.

The 4 major areas in that report addressed the Waterfront 2020 plan, the development of a Micro Enterprise Center in the city, Charter Schools, and an expanded code enforcement effort. The City Manager will be providing her recommendations regarding code enforcement in the spring of 2018. The other matter under Old Business was a request to increase the City's Grant request to the Department of Housing and Community Development to \$500,000 rather than the lower amount that originally had been sought. The purpose of the grant is to help low income homeowners in the Pine Street area to rehabilitate their homes and to improve the condition of housing in that area. A copy of this agenda item is attached to provide more detail as it is a complex project.

This work will be done in collaboration with Habitat Choptank. In addition because of the amount of funding being provided and the complexity of the issues involved, the City will be seeking to contract for a housing specialist and a part time grant monitor to help the City and Habitat Choptank meet the requirements of the grant.

New Business brought a report on the Audit of the City's Fiscal Year 2017 and its approval. The auditor provided an unmodified opinion, which is the highest opinion that can be given. You can find the audit on the city website. City Council approved filing the audit with the State by December 31<sup>st</sup>.

The next two items were funding issues for the police department. The first was a Safe Street Grant that gave \$11,118 to the police for overtime and the second was a \$1,000 gift from Care and Share for the Shop with a Cop program to provide Christmas for approximately 50 city children. These funds were unanimously moved to the police budget for the current year.

The last item in New Business was a report on the Seawall Improvement Design that was done under a state grant by a consultant. The report addresses the waterfront seawalls at Choptank, Willis, West End, and Oakley Streets and provides recommendations, cost estimates, and proposed designs regarding those walls. The report detail can be found on

the city website. If you are not able to locate it and are interested, send me an email, and I will get it to you. When grant opportunities arise, this will be brought back to City Council for consideration.

The city then received a brief report from the November 9<sup>th</sup> Finance Committee and the December 4<sup>th</sup> City/County Coordinating Committee meetings. The City Manager announced that the December 18<sup>th</sup> meeting of City Council is cancelled, so this meeting is the last for 2017. The City Manager then proposed that each employee of the city excluding her, the mayor, and commissioners receive a Christmas Bonus of \$115, which will result in a onetime increase in their paychecks of \$101.00. She indicated that she received “thank you” from many staff last year for this contribution. The costs for the bonus will be absorbed in unexpended salary and benefits budgets in the total amount of \$14,900.

With the business of the meeting being concluded, the city staff, the City Attorney, the Mayor and Commissioners wished everyone present a “Merry Christmas” and closed the meeting.