CAMBRIDGE MATTERS

By: Commissioner Steve Rideout

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The City Council meeting of Monday dealt with a number of routine matters and two important reports – the annual crime report from Wayne Bromwell, Police Chief, and the other from Anna Sierra regarding the 2017 Dorchester County Flood Mitigation Plan. The Mayor and four of the five Commissioners were present, with Commissioner Sydnor being the only one absent.

After the Agenda was approved with some minor modifications, the Public Comment portion of the meeting brought forth a number of citizens. The first group was led by Sharon Smith, Chuck McFadden, and Greg Boss, board members of the Cambridge Association of Neighborhoods. Their issue was code enforcement by the city and their concerns about how it could be improved. Deteriorating houses were the major concern and the impact that they were having on people and families who rent substandard properties and are afraid to complain to the city for fear of reprisal from their landlords. The city currently responds mostly as the result of complaints made to the city Comcate system.

Greg Meekins appeared to provide Commissioner Sydnor with the Elks recognition statuette for his participation last fall on behalf of Ward 2 in the Elks 100 Anniversary Parade.

Commissioner Hanson then recognized and thanked Donna Tower, Sally Haller, and Jane Butcher along with the many volunteers and financial contributors who helped to beautify the traffic triangles at Academy Street as you enter town. Those who helped with the project included Cambridge Main Street, Chris Kidd, Mowbry’s Garden Center, Bennett Feed and Seed, Brian Roche and the Green Team, Clayton’s Seafood, and city staff.

The final comment came from representatives of the Woman’s Recovery House located in the city. Due to the increased challenges regarding opioid addiction and the increased numbers of people needing services, they were seeking additional assistance from the City. The Mayor invited them to contact her for referrals to organizations that might be able to provide help.

On the Consent Calendar the following items were approved by unanimous vote:

* The January 8th Meeting Minutes
* The request from the Maryland Small Business Development Center to renew their services and facilities agreement with the city
* The request from the Chamber of Commerce to hold the Crabi Gras Hot Sauce and Oyster Festival in the 300 Block of High Street on October 14, 2018, with conditions required by the city

The request by Shanay Jackson for permission to hold the Jackson Family Reunion at Great Marsh Park on June 30, 2018 from 1:00 – 6:00 p.m. was granted, but her request to allow attendees to bring their own beer was denied. Staff will let her know the decision of city council.

Some time ago the city had adopted rules for Great Marsh Park that prohibited alcohol without the approval of the mayor and city council. Past requests, except for large events such as the power boat races, had been uniformly denied, and city council did not want to start a new precedent regarding alcohol usage in the park.

Next on the agenda was the reading of Ordinance 1113 to modify the Comprehensive Plan of the city to incorporate the growth tier map adopted by the Commissioners on December 10, 2012. This was to correct an error that had been made in not previously incorporating the growth tier map as required by state law. The Ordinance was read and continued over to February 12th for a second reading, public hearing, and adoption.

Under New Business, Anna Sierra, Dorchester County Emergency Services Director, made a presentation on the 2017 County Flood Mitigation Plan. Over this past weekend I sent an email out regarding the plan and offered to provide a copy of portions of the plan that relate to Cambridge. If you are interested, let me know so I can forward that on to you. My email is at the top of this report. Ms. Sierra plans to put the entire plan on the County Website for those of you who live in the county and may be interested. As the plan is over 200 pages downloading all of it may be a problem. I am also attaching her Agenda Report and FEMA Fact Sheet.

Next on the agenda was the Annual Report from the Cambridge Police Department that included information regarding programs and initiatives but also the data on Part 1 crimes in the city for 2017. The good news is that there was a reduction in the crimes of murder (0), rape (3), and robbery (27) but was an increase in the other Part 1 crimes of aggravated assault (132), burglary (199), theft (628), and motor vehicle theft (29). That resulted in an increase in the number of crimes in 2017 compared to 2016.

Chief Bromwell advised that within the theft and burglary categories a number of these were what he called “spree crimes”, which means that they occurred in a short period of time and were committed by the same individuals.

The Annual Report for 2017 should be on the police department website that you can reach by going to [www.choosecambridge.com](http://www.choosecambridge.com).

Before we set some work sessions for next month, City Council appropriated $4,500 from a grant into the 2018 General Fund budget to increase the Police Department by that amount for the administrative work that it does for the Teen Court program.

There will be two work sessions in February that are open to the public. I would encourage you to attend and listen to the discussion as we begin our FY 2019 budget process. Both meetings will be at the Public Safety Building Training Room that is located at 8 Washington Street next to Food Lion. They will begin at 11 a.m. and end at 1:00 p.m. The meeting on February 16th will be in regard to the FY 2019 budget issues and the meeting on February 23rd will be on priorities for Council goals, capital projects, and grant applications.

The final announcement was with regard to the Cannery Park Design process that will have opportunities for community involvement. The first Design Charrette will be on January 23rd at the Empowerment Center at 615 B Pine Street in the city starting at 6:30 p.m. The second Design Charrette will be on January 25th at 6:30 p.m. at the Public Safety Training Room located at 8 Washington Street here in the city.

Thanks for reading.

Steve