CAMBRIDGE MATTERS

By: Commissioner Steve Rideout

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The City Council Chamber was filled but not overflowing for the April 9th City Council meeting with a sizable number of citizens present. Before Public Comment took place, the agenda was amended with item 6 being removed for further discussion during the meeting and an additional item was added regarding a food truck/trailer being placed on the property of the Overflow Café in the city.

With regard to the Public Comment opportunity at the start of meetings, I am delighted to see more and more residents and people from the county who are interested in improving Cambridge and are attending our meetings to speak about issues of importance to them. Before the last election, whenever I attended a meeting of City Council there would be only a few people there who had to wait until the end of the meeting before being able to make any comments, some of which dealt with issues that were on the agenda and the Commissioners dealt with before the speakers had their chance to speak. With the Public Comment session now taking place at the start of the meetings, the public can have their say about issues on the agenda or not on the agenda about which they have a concern. They are then free to stay for the meeting or leave as they wish.

The issues of concern for those speaking during Public Comment time ranged from downtown street closures for events, problems with unruly patrons of local businesses, April being National Child Abuse Prevention Month, the request by Cambridge Main Street for some financial support from the city, and how to address the City’s Code Enforcement efforts effectively without burdening the good landlords who are taking care of their properties.

Later in the meeting the Commissioners addressed the street closure policy that has been developed. The Department of Social Services was allowed to post a large banner during the month of April in the open lot at Cedar and Race Streets to recognize that April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month. The City Manager will look at the request from Main Street regarding funding and will report back to the Commissioners at our next meeting. With regard to the Code Enforcement comments from both landlords and some tenants, later in the meeting the City Manager mentioned that she has scheduled meetings with landlords of properties to bring them up to date on the audit that she did and to listen to them and their concerns regarding effective code enforcement in preparation for her making recommendations to City Council on this issue. It was clear from the comments of landlords that they want those landlords who are not maintaining their properties to be held accountable but not at the expense of the landlords who are doing what they are supposed to do with regard to property maintenance.

With the Consent Calendar the following items were approved unanimously:

* The Meeting Minutes from the Council Meeting of March 26, 2018
* The request to hang the Fun Dog Show banner across Race Street for two weeks prior to the May 12th event
* The request from the Healthy Waters Round Table-Chesapeake Foundation for the Mayor to sign an agreement with the Foundation to support the Healthy Water Working Group and hire a Regional Watershed Services Manager
* The request to authorize the Mayor to sign a CDBG sub-recipient agreement with Habitat for Humanity Choptank for the CDBG Home Rehabilitation project in the Pine Street Area once the City has signed the DHCD grant agreement bringing state funding to the City

Item 6 that had been removed from the Consent Calendar was then taken up. It involved a request from Downtown Cambridge/Cambridge Mainstreet on behalf of RAR Brewing for permission to hold an RAR Spring Event (a release of a new batch of their brew) in the 500 Block of Gay Street on Saturday April 21st from noon to 5:00 p.m. with closure of the Street from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The request included the request for permission to serve food and alcohol outside and a variance from the noise ordinance. The request had come in during March and was opposed by downtown businesses, two of which had representatives speak during the meeting. The City Manager had recommended approval of the event for the 22nd of April with some additional normal conditions which recommendation was unanimously approved by the City Council.

The next item on the agenda was the 2nd reading, public hearing, and adoption of Ordinance 1117. This ordinance allows the Commissioners of Cambridge to permit on a Case-by-Case basis the discharge of firearms within the city in accordance with an Administrative Standard Operating Procedure (ASOP) that previously had been adopted. This amendment to the existing code section 12-18 came because the city had an ASOP that allowed it but the existing code section was silent on the Commissioners having the power to take this action. In recent years the only time that it has been allowed was upon request of the Hyatt Regency Resort for an exception for skeet shooting during some of their events. After the reading and public hearing, this ordinance was approved unanimously.

Next on the agenda was a presentation of the Proposed FY 2019 Operating and Capital Improvement Budget that included the overall budget including General Fund Revenues, Council Goals, and the Administrative Departments and Divisions. In addition, a public hearing on the budget was opened and will remain open for the next two meetings in order to allow for public comment on it. The next hearing will be on April 16th at 6:00 p.m.

A discussion of the budget presentation would be too long and complicated for this report. If you are interested in seeing the budget, it is scheduled to be available on the City Website on April 10th. In addition, the presentation that was made on the 9th during the City Council meeting can be found at [www.townhallstreams.com](http://www.townhallstreams.com) when you can go to the Cambridge page and the April 9th meeting. The presentation on the first part of the budget starts at 1 hour 10 minutes and 30 seconds (1:10:30) and goes to 1 hour and 43 minutes (1:43:00). At that point the public hearing begins for those who are interested.

Following the presentation and public hearing on the budget, the next agenda item involved the adoption of Resolution 18-003 that amends Resolution 17-007. This changes the FY 2018 Position and Salary Control Resolution, as the Department of Public Works was reorganized and in so doing the position of Superintendent of Public Works was eliminated.

Under Old Business, the Downtown Street Closure and Events Policy and FY 2019 Special Events list was taken up by City Council. This issue had been considered and conceptually approved late in 2017 and referred to the Ordinance Committee for further drafting. That was completed in late 2017 and after further review by the City Manager was returned to City Council for further conceptual approval along with the approval of the annual events application and schedule with conditions as set forth in the Council Agenda Report (CAR), and for direction to staff to include $15,000 for the Police Department FY 2109 proposed budget for events overtime.

All of the above was approved unanimously by City Council. The aim of this work is to put in place a policy about street closure and special events that is clear for those seeking to hold public events in the city that might or might not include street closures. It will allow for notification of neighboring businesses and residences within a defined area where the event will be held and will make it easier for recurring events and festivals to obtain approval each year for those events while encouraging new events to identify other locations within the city where they might be held.

Item 11 on the agenda under Old Business was a request for budget purposes that City Council conceptually approve inclusion of $20,000 in the FY 2019 Proposed Operating and Capital Improvement Budget for the purposes of making those funds available for requests by nonprofits and churches for support of their programming, mostly oriented toward support for children. This is the second year for funding to be made available for these grants. The city manager needed to have this approval in order to include that amount of funds in the Proposed FY 2019 budget. After some discussion and the assurance that each of the funding requests that are made would be decided on separately by the Commissioners, as was done last year, this item was approved unanimously.

Item 12 was a request from the Hyatt Regency Resort seeking permission to hold a skeet shooting event on the golf course near Hole 17 on Sunday April 22nd from 9:00 a.m. to noon. This had been on the agenda at an earlier meeting but was continued over to this meeting in order that Ordinance 1117, approved earlier in the meeting by City Council, could be taken up and finalized. The request by the Hyatt was then approved unanimously.

At this point in the meeting, the other item that had been added to the agenda was taken up, and City Council moved to go into closed session for the purposes of advice from the city attorney on an issue. The closed session was approved unanimously. After receiving the advice of counsel, the City Council returned to open session and took up the request by the Overflow Café to allow a food trailer to be located temporarily on the property of the café for it to use the trailer as an accessory kitchen while the Planning Commission develops a proposal for how food trucks and trailers might be permitted in the city in a more uniform and consistent manner that would be adopted by City Council.

After discussion of the issue, the Commissioners unanimously approved allowing a food trailer to be located on the property of the Overflow Café for its use and benefit as an accessory kitchen for a period of 90 days or until the Planning Commission returns to City Council with a proposal for consideration.

As we neared the conclusion of the meeting, the meeting notes of the City/County Coordinating Committee was considered and a listing of the major work being done and to be undertaken in the near future was shared by the City Manager. A copy of the Meeting notes and major work being done is included with this report. Please take the opportunity to see how well the city and county are working together for the betterment of everyone.

A special regular meeting of City Council regarding the FY 2019 Proposed Budget with presentations is set for April 16th at 6:00 p.m. Presentations will be made regarding the following:

* Police and Fire budgets
* Planning, Economic Development, Special Events, and Housing and Community Development budgets
* Municipal Utilities Commission budget

followed by a continuation of the public hearing on the budget that will also be continued over to April 23rd.

During the time of final comments and reports by staff and the members of the City Council, the city attorney reported that Beazer Housing Corporation had agreed to pay to the city $100,000 in exchange for the city undertaking the full responsibility for the completion of Beazer’s obligation to complete the Riverwalk at the Deep Harbor Development.

The construction of the Riverwalk will begin as soon as reasonably possible. There are some additional mutual agreements regarding the release of any further responsibility of Beazer to complete the Riverwalk under an earlier agreement.

After comments by some of the Commissioners and the Mayor, the meeting was adjourned.