CAMBRIDGE MATTERS

By: Commissioner Steve Rideout

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Our third meeting in April was a long one with a great deal being accomplished. New legislation, budget decisions, and review of the City Manager’s Code Enforcement Audit and recommendations were just part of what took place. The Mayor and All Commissioners were present throughout the meetings.

We began our meeting at 5:00 p.m. in order to go into closed session to discuss two issues. One involved matters related to the possible acquisition of real property for a public purpose and the other involved discussion of a possible contract not related to the first. Both issues are allowed by the Maryland Open Meetings Act to be discussed in closed session. After going into closed session and completion of those discussions, we returned to public session around 5:30 p.m. and then waited to begin the regularly scheduled public session at 6:00 p.m.

The City Manager reported on the closed session to report that City Council had approved moving forward with completing and presenting a Letter of Intent to leadership at Shore Regional Health regarding the city’s interest in the purchase of the Dorchester Hospital property as part of its efforts to develop Sailwinds Park. This is another in a number of potential steps that will need to be undertaken to move forward with the effort to develop this property.

The other issue considered at the closed meeting was informational and so no action was taken and no report provided on that matter. The agenda for the public meeting was then approved.

Before Public Comment was undertaken, the City Manager provided a brief report on the recommendations that she would be making later in the meeting about her Code Enforcement Audit. This provided the opportunity for the public and 2 landlords who were at the meeting to provide their thoughts on the meeting that they had with the City Manager and the recommendations that she would be making. No other members of the public came forward to speak.

Next on the agenda was a presentation by Cindy Smith representing Snip/Tuck, Inc. regarding its work in Delmarva and in particular here in Dorchester County to reduce the number of unwanted animals on the Delmarva Peninsula by providing a comprehensive spay/neuter program for cats. Snip/Tuck was founded in March 2008 and moved to Secretary in 2012. On average it spays/neuters approximately 800 cats per year and as of February of 2018 had spayed/neutered 8,265 cats since its founding.

More information about their work can be found at [www.sniptuckinc.org](http://www.sniptuckinc.org) or at 410-943-4050.

The Consent Calendar was then unanimously approved as follows:

* The Meeting Minutes of April 9th
* The Meeting Minutes of April 16th
* City staff being authorized to apply for FY 2019 Façade Improvement Program funding from the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development’s Community Legacy grant program
* The request from the Kappa Theta Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority to spruce up Cornish Park on Douglas Street on May 19th as their Playground Mobilization Day

Next on the agenda was the introduction and first reading of several proposed ordinances. After they were read, all were continued over to May 29th for a second reading, public hearing, and possible adoption. If you have an interest in any of them, be sure to come on May 29th to provide your thoughts or send an email or letter to the Mayor and city council. You might also call your commissioner directly.

The Ordinances are as follows:

* Ordinance 1119 – This proposes to allow Drug Rehabilitation Facilities as a Permitted Use with Conditions in the General and Center subdistricts of the Downtown/Waterfront Development District. Currently there are 2 facilities in the Core Subdistrict of the Downtown/Waterfront Development District. I understand that this legislation would not allow any future Drug Rehabilitation Facilities in the Core Subdistrict and that when/if the current 2 facilities in the Core Subdistrict close down, they would not be allowed to reopen in that Subdistrict.
* Ordinance 1120 – This proposes to rezone property at 501 Bayly Road from Residential to General Commercial. Apparently when the UDC was originally passed a mistake occurred regarding this property by including it in the Residential zoning as it had been commercial property and zoned as such since 1968. The property included a gas station that is no longer in use, and the owner is interested in possibly reopening that station on the property. Under the proposed zoning the owner would need to apply to the Planning and Zoning to reactivate the gas pumps there.
* Ordinance 1121 – This proposes to allow Auctions as a Permitted Use with Conditions in the General Commercial and Industrial zoning districts. Some of those conditions include adequate parking and holding the auctions inside any building. This issue had been before city council previously and referred back to Planning and Zoning for modification of the proposed legislation. As the next hearing is scheduled beyond the time allowed for the Foxwell Auctions to hold its auctions at the Metro Building at Dorchester Square, City Council unanimously voted to authorize Alan McRae of Anchor Point nonprofit, temporarily to extend the time for the use of the building as a place for auctions pending the passage of this ordinance. That extension goes until June 25th in the event some delay occurs in the legislative process.
* Ordinance 1122 – This proposes to allow beekeeping as a Permitted Use with Conditions in the Neighborhood Subdistrict of the Residential, Neighborhood Conservation, Resource Conservation, Open Space, and Maritime Resort zoning districts. A resident had approached the city with a request to raise bees in her yard due to the increasing loss of the bee population. Research by staff discovered that there are some bee species that are on the endangered list due to the loss of habitat, disease, and use of chemicals. Consideration is given in the proposed ordinance to the size of colonies, their location, and protection of the public. Bee Keepers are regulated by the State of Maryland, and anyone seeking to have a bee colony within the city would have to obtain city permission and also be subject to oversight by the state.
* Ordinance 1123 – This proposes to address the issue of Accessory Dwelling Units in the city and their size and location on property within the city.

Next came the second reading, public hearing, and adoption of Ordinance 1118. This ordinance allows the city to join with the Local Government Infrastructure Program of the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development to refinance $1,880,000 over 30 years at an interest rate not to exceed 4.65% APR. This will allow the city to pay the line of credit it has with 1880 Bank for the Wharf reconstruction, fund a portion of the Capital Reserve Fund, and pay costs for the issuance and other costs related to the bond. When the Sailwinds property is ultimately turned over to a developer and funds are received for that transfer from the developer, this bond subject to some time limitations could be repaid or the funds set aside in an escrow account. This process will also reduce the yearly payment that the city would have had to pay on the existing line of credit.

No one spoke at the public hearing, and City Council passed the ordinance 5-0.

Under Old Business was the issue of the Human Services Grants for FY 2019. $20,000 has been proposed to be in the budget for the coming year for these grants. Last year’s committee was reappointed. City Council approved the application form, process, timeline, and selection criteria so that staff can move forward to implement the granting process once the FY 2019 budget is finalized. Selection of the awardees will be on an individual basis as was done last year.

Under New Business, City Council appropriated $9,000 from insurance proceeds for a damage police vehicle along with $19,300 from the forfeiture fund into General Fund Revenue for the Police Department Capital Budget to purchase a new vehicle for $28,300.

The City Manager then made a detailed presentation regarding the Code Enforcement Audit and her recommendations. A copy of the PowerPoint presentation is included with this report. Rather than try to explain all of the detail here, I refer you to the attached report. Following the presentation and questions by City Council, I moved that we accept the Management Audit and its findings; approve recommendations for changes to the Code Enforcement Program as detailed in the report that includes increased staffing, direct staff to file formal notice to MDIA that code enforcement services will no longer be needed effective July 1, 2018; and refer recommended changes to the FY 2019 Proposed Operating and Capital Improvements Budget for consideration under the next topic on the agenda. Commissioner Sydnor provided the second to the motion, and the motion passed 4-1 with Commissioner Foster voting in the negative.

The next portion of the agenda involved the final budget presentations and a public hearing on the budget. The final presentations were from Public Works, the Sewer Fund, the Capital Program, and the Marina. After those presentations, the public hearing was continued from the last meeting. One person had a question about the seawalls at the end of several streets from Choptank to Oakley in the Historic District. Later in the meeting his question was addressed by Mr. Wheeler. The city will be seeking grant funding for the repair/replacement of those walls based on the survey report that was provided this fiscal year regarding the condition of those walls.

The public hearing on the budget was closed followed by a presentation by the city manager regarding some loose ends on some of the budget process that resulted from presentations, questions raised, and new information received regarding available funding. After the presentation and discussion, the Commissioners directed staff to make changes to the original proposed budget and incorporate the new information and recommendations into the FY 2019 budget ordinances and resolutions for introduction on May 14, 2019.

With the evenings work almost done, final comments were allowed for staff, the Mayor and Commissioners. I reminded the Mayor and Commissioners of the packet of information that had been provided to them from the Historic Preservation Commission. They are the proposed guidelines that are subject to public comment and will be being brought to City Council for approval before being sent to the Maryland Historic Trust for final review and approval and return to City Council for final adoption.