CAMBRIDGE MATTERS

By: Commissioner Steve Rideout

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The City Council meeting had some twists and turns that made it one of the most interesting and sometimes challenging meetings so far this year. We met at 5:00 p.m. in an open meeting in order to go into a closed meeting on 3 separate topics related to potential litigation, the possible awarding of a contract, and a personnel matter. After discussion on these topics, some of which were not completed by the 6:00 p.m. time to start our regular meeting, the Mayor directed that we reconvene to start the Regular Session and return to closed session at the conclusion of the Regular Meeting.

That was done; and upon return to Regular Session a vote was taken to return to closed session at the end of our normally scheduled meeting.

The City Manager then reported that there was no reportable action taken during the closed session that City Council held on May 21st. With regard to one of the three matters discussed during the 5 p.m. session on May 29th, the City Manager reported that she had been directed in a unanimous vote of the Commissioners to complete a contract with Oasis Marinas, a marina management company for a 2 ½ year pilot management agreement for the Cambridge Marina following legal advice from Bond Counsel for the city.

The Agenda was adopted as presented after which public comment was provided by the following individuals:

Henry Van Dyke spoke regarding food trucks in the city and the proposed Mobile Food Establishment legislation

George Breig, President of the Deep Harbor HOA, spoke about the association’s desire to work with the city regarding the pending Riverwalk construction at Deep Harbor.

Katie Clendaniel, the Executive Director of Downtown Cambridge, spoke on a variety of items related to the work of Cambridge Mainstreet.

Michael Marshall started to speak regarding a personnel matter that was referred to the City Manager and City Attorney.

The Mayor then presented a key to the city to recognize Gerry Boyle for all of the great work that he has done on behalf of the City of Cambridge through his work on the IRONMAN Eagleman half marathon events held here for years in June and the more recent IRONMAN Maryland events that have received national recognition and brought large numbers of competitors and their families to Cambridge.

After a standing ovation from the Mayor, City Commissioners, the City Manager, Police Chief, and other staff in attendance as well as members of the public who were attending, Jerry humbly accepted the recognition, thanked the Mayor and everyone present, and praised the city, the county, their staffs, and all of the volunteers and citizens that have supported these events over the years.

The Consent Calendar quickly addressed 5 matters with unanimous approval of the Commissioners:

* The City Council Meeting Minutes of May 14th
* The request from the Dorchester Chamber of Commerce for permission to hang a banner across Race Street from June 4-16, 2018, announcing the upcoming Boat Docking event
* The request from Downtown Cambridge to hold the Groove City Cultural FEST on August 18th on Pine Street and for the street’s closure from 1:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. that day
* Requests from the Hyatt Regency Resort for permission to display fireworks on June 23rd and August 24 subject to the requirements of Ordinance 1117.

Two Ordinances were then taken up for 1st reading and the scheduling for 2nd reading, public hearing, and possible adoption on June 25th. Both were read by the City Attorney. Ordinance 1126 involves the allowance of Mobile Food Establishments in the city and Ordinance 1127 involves some technical modifications of the Uniform Development Code for side and rear yard setbacks in the industrial zoning district.

With regard to the Ordinances up for second reading, public hearing, and possible adoption, a number of matters were addressed. I was not able to hear every response from the Commissioners on each of the matters. If a Commissioner declines to vote on a matter, his or her vote is counted as a “yes” vote. So, where all commissioners voted or I did not hear a response from a commissioner, I have noted the vote as being 5-0.

Proposed Ordinance 1119 was withdrawn and was referred back to the Planning and Zoning Commission for further consideration.

Proposed Ordinance 1120 was a technical amendment of the City Zoning Code for a parcel of property located at 501 Bayly Road in the City to change the zoning from Residential to General Commercial. The property had been a gas station and store since the late 1960’s but was erroneously zoned residential in recent years, and this Ordinance corrected that error. The vote by the Commissioners was 5-0 to adopt this ordinance.

Proposed Ordinance 1121 allowed auctions as a permitted use with Conditions in the General Commercial and Industrial Districts. As part of the public comment Shane Foxwell and his attorney Michael Dodd, Esq. thanked City Council for working with them on this legislation. This Ordinance was adopted on a 5-0 vote.

Proposed Ordinance 1122 allowed beekeeping under certain conditions and restrictions in Residential, Neighborhood Conservation, Resource Conservation, Open Space, and Maritime Resort zoning districts and in the Neighborhood subdistrict and define terms relating to the matter. It was passed on a 3-2 vote with Commissioners Sydnor and Foster opposing.

Proposed Ordinance 1123 amended the city’s Unified Development Code with regard to Accessory Dwelling Units and defined terms relating to that issue. It passed on a 5-0 vote.

Under the Budget category, Resolution 18-004 was approved on a 4-0 vote with Commissioner Foster abstaining. It dealt with the adoption of positions and salary controls and scheduled for salary grades and steps for general employees and sworn police officers of the city for FY 2019.

With regard to Resolution 18-005, it was approved on a 5-0 vote and amended and established the schedule of fees charged by the city.

Proposed Ordinance 1124 established the Annual Tax Levy for Real and Personal Property taxes for FY 2019. This Ordinance was adopted on a 5-0 vote.

Proposed Ordinance 1125 was to adopt and approve the FY 2019 budget appropriating the necessary funds for the operation of the city government. I moved to amend this proposed ordinance in order to move the remaining city manager search and hiring funds remaining as of June 30, 2018 and approved in late November of 2017 and put them in the FY 2019 budget as we seek to complete that task.

The motion and vote in November of 2017 on the matter of funding the search and hiring of a new city manager is recorded in the November 27th meeting minutes as follows:

A motion by Commissioner Hanson to authorize an expenditure not-to-exceed

$20,000, within the Administration budget for Mayor & staff to move forward with the recruitment process and hiring of a new City Manager was seconded by Commissioner Cannon. The motion passed 3:2 with Commissioners Foster and Sydnor abstaining.

Due to my lack of experience with regard to budget motions, I made a mess of what I was trying to accomplish. After much discussion, disagreement, and help from others on how to accomplish this, $15,000 from the city manager search and hiring funding left as of June 30th will be moved to the FY 2019 budget for the same purpose. This amendment to the proposed budget was accomplished on a 3-2 vote with Commissioners Sydnor and Foster opposing. The Proposed Ordinance 1125 as amended was then adopted on a 3-2 vote with the same Commissioners opposing.

Under Old Business, City Council voted 5-0 to have city staff submit a grant application for Bayly Road sidewalks in the amount of $350,000 to the Maryland Safe Routes to School program for the next phase of that sidewalk project. If that application is approved by the state, the city will be obligated to provide a 20% match of $70,000.

Under New Business, City Council voted 5-0 to renew the Octavene H. Saunders Empowerment Center Lease for 5 years from July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2023. Also, on a 5-0 vote, City Council voted to approve modifications to the City Employment Manual to establish an 18-month introductory period for Police Department Recruits and to allow probationary employees to utilize accrued leave during their introductory period.

The Mayor announced that there would be no City Council meeting on June 11th as the Mayor and Commissioners will be at the Maryland Municipal League meeting that week. The next regularly scheduled meeting will be June 25th.

Before adjourning a personnel matter was raised by Commissioner Foster. The City Manager offered to withhold any action regarding it. Commissioner Foster moved to hold a city council meeting regarding the personnel matter. That motion was seconded by Commissioner Sydnor and passed on a 3-2 vote with Commissioner Hanson and myself voting in the negative.

With regard to the issue raised, the City Manager asserted that the Charter gave her responsibilities over personnel issues, and that position was supported by the City Attorney. As she had indicated that she would withhold action until the City Attorney could look into the matter and because of the opinion of the City Attorney that the Charter controlled as to personnel issue, I felt that there was no need to establish any meeting until the City Attorney was able to research the issue and provide his opinion for us to consider as part of any meeting.

City Council then returned to closed session regarding the personnel matter not completed from the earlier closed meeting, discussed it, and then returned to the regular meeting to adjourn.

Thanks for reading.