CAMBRIDGE MATTERS

By: Commissioner Steve Rideout

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City Council had a number of matters to decide during several meetings held on July 9th. Commissioner Foster had arranged to attend the Work Session and the Regular meeting by Skype, but the connection did not appear to work, and then a family emergency arose that prevented her from attending any of the meetings. The Mayor and all other Commissioners were present.

After going into closed session regarding personnel matters, City Council returned for a work session where presentations were made by the grant applicants that had been before the Human Services Grant Committee and had been recommended by that committee to City Council for funding. Representatives of each of the 7 organizations made two minute presentations about their projects and the reasons for their funding request. Voting on these requests took place later in the Regular meeting.

The Regular Session of City Council then began with reports on the closed session of June 21st and the closed session earlier on the 9th. The Pledge of Allegiance was then led by Carlos, a young man who had come to participate in the presentations on the grant requests. The Agenda was then approved as proposed.

Interim City Administrator Oden Wheeler then introduced Yvette Robinson, the Housing Specialist, who will be leading the city effort in collaboration with Habitat Choptank to improve some of the deteriorated housing in the Pine Street Area of the City. He also introduced Susan Webb, the new Division Manager of Public Safety Services, who is leading the city efforts to improve the Code Enforcement process in the city and to propose legislation what will help the city to reduce the number of deteriorating properties throughout the city. Both new employees have impeccable credentials and are looking forward to working for the City of Cambridge.

During the Public Comment portion of the meeting Cheryl Berringer spoke on the failure of City Council to appoint citizen members to the Citizens Advisory Committee that exists under section 2-5 of the City Code. She emphasized that the language of that ordinance is “shall” indicating that City Council is required to take action regarding the appointment of members.

This is an issue that I raised in the fall of 2017 and brought to the attention of City Council. At that time my effort to have members appointed as required failed on a 3-2 vote. I am delighted that Ms. Berringer raised this issue during the Public Comment section of the meeting, as after the meeting there was some discussion among some members of City Council about taking action on this matter.

Adrian Anderson then spoke about the Mural that is found at the Maryland Ave entrance to the city. As someone who grew up in Cambridge and attended the schools here, he felt that the mural did not completely depict any of the African American schools in the city and thus did not tell the full story of the history of the African American community here. After the meeting I had a chance to speak with him to provide some more information about the mural and who he might contact to learn more about how the concept of the mural was developed and done.

Portia Johnson-Ennels then asked that the lease agreement that the city has with the Empowerment Center be finalized as was approved at the last city council meeting.

During the portion of the meeting where City Council receives requests from the public, Henry Van Dyke spoke regarding his food truck business and his desire to be able to engage in business in the City while the Food Truck ordinance is being developed by the Planning and Zoning Commission for presentation to City Council. After hearing his request and knowing that the Planning and Zoning Commission was scheduled to meet on July 10th, I moved that he be allowed to make sales from his Food Truck subject to the conditions and limitations that the Planning and Zoning Commission would place on him pending the development of the final legislation. That motion was unanimously approved after discussion by the Commissioners.

The Consent Calendar was then taken up and approved unanimously by the Commissioners present. That included the following:

* Approval of the Council Minutes of June 25th
* Approval of the request of Agape Temple of Praise & Ministries for permission to hold a revival on August 8, 9, and 10 from 4 p.m. to 10 p.m. on Center Street with street closure, noise ordinance variance, and erection of a tent
* Approval of a request for a “Caution Children at Play” at Willis Street and Park Lane to be considered by the Traffic and Safety Committee
* Approval of the request of the Cambridge Association of Neighborhoods to hang a banner across Race Street for 2 weeks prior to the community picnic at Long Wharf Park on August 26th.
* Approval of the request by RAR to hold their National Craft Beer Festival at Sailwinds Park on August 18th from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.
* Approval of the request of the Dorchester County Office of Tourism for noise ordinance variances for their “At the Sail” concerts on July 27, August 31, September 7, and October 5 of 2018 from 6 to 8 p.m. and for sale of alcohol and use of city owned trash containers

Under New Business the Human Services Grants were taken up. As I am a board member of the MidShore ProBono legal services organization and the Mayor attends Waugh Chapel Church, we each recused ourselves from the earlier presentations on those items where we had a conflict of interest and from the vote on the item where we had a conflict of interest.

Upon proper motions that were seconded, the following recommendations of the Human Services Grants Committee were approved:

* Funding for the Dorchester Center for the Arts for $2,200
* Funding for the Dorchester County Public Library for $2,600
* Funding for the Empowerment Center for $4,000
* Funding for the Maryland Food Bank for $2,400
* Funding for New Beginnings for $4,200

I learned after the meeting that the funding for MidShore ProBono for $2,400 was deferred with the request by those voting on this matter to see if the city had some available office space that could be used by MidShore ProBono for its work here in lieu of providing funding. This matter will return to a later City Council meeting for report from staff and decision.

The request by Waugh Chapel Church for $2,200 that would be paid contingent on the remaining match of $2,180 being accomplished by April 30, 2019, was defeated on the motion of Commissioner Sydnor with the support of Commissioners Hanson and Cannon. I voted to support the request, and the Mayor was absent from the discussion and vote due to her having recused herself regarding this matter.

The last item of New Business was the appropriation of $1,011 from available Safe Streets Grant money for the Cambridge Police Department to help fund police overtime that occurred during an incident on June 29th. This was approved unanimously.

The Mayor then asked that City Council appoint William Craig, Eugene Lauer, and Mary Losty as members of the Planning and Zoning Commission with terms that will go to July 1, 2022. All of these individuals are current members of the Commission. This request was unanimously approved by City Council.

During final comments by City Council and staff, we learned from the Interim City Administrator that the management agreement with Oasis Marinas for the management of the Cambridge Marina has been signed effective July 1st and that city staff working at the Marina will be employees of Oasis Marinas. Their website is located at [www.oasismarinas.com](http://www.oasismarinas.com). Take a look at the many marinas that they run.

This agreement provides the city with the opportunity to have professional management of the Marina that will also be able to advertise the Marina more than the city was able to do that should increase traffic and income to the Marina and the City. This is a major accomplishment that has been a long time coming.

Thanks for reading.