CAMBRIDGE MATTERS

By: Commissioner Steve Rideout

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The entire city council was present along with the Mayor for the meeting of September 24th. The Agenda was approved with Item 16 being removed and the meeting minutes of September 10th being set aside for further discussion. Item 16 involved the request by staff to approve their recommendation to award a DHCD Operating Assistance Grant to Lisa Sturtevant and Associates.

The Mayor and Commissioner Foster then presented Mayor’s Citations to the Groove City Culture Fest Committee for their hard and extremely successful Groove City Culture Fest Day that was held in August. Upon the completion of the recognition of those who led that event, the City Council then named the 3rd Saturday in August every year as Groove City Culture Fest Day.

Following these recognitions, several residents came forward to offer public comments to the Mayor and members of City Council. Portia Johnson-Ennels spoke about the need to post no parking signs at the dead-end portion of Cornish Drive as the street is too narrow to accommodate both parked vehicles and traffic. She then suggested that the old city hall building should be converted into a skating rink to allow the city youth to have another place for recreation. She also commented on the Housing Report that was on the agenda for later in the meeting and reminded city officials that there had been a housing task force years ago that had investigated housing issues and had provided a report upon which little or no action had ever been taken.

Henry Van Dyke then spoke in support of the proposed fee schedule for Mobile Food Establishments (Food Trucks) and about his desire to be able to provide food services at the City Marina Park during the IronMan event this weekend. This request was placed on the agenda for later in the meeting for discussion. Later in the meeting, the City Council approved his use of city property for the IronMan event subject to approval by DPW Director Odie Wheeler, due to the concern about the dampness of the ground, written permission from IronMan’s representative to ensure the city’s compliance with the recently signed IronMan contract, and Mr. Van Dyke’s promise that he would pay for any repairs to the City Marina Park that may result from his driving his truck and trailer on to the soft ground at the Park.

Michael Wheatley then thanked the Mayor and Commissioners for reappointing him as a member of the Ethics Commission.

The final speaker, Lynette Wongus, urged City Council to establish a summer youth employment program along with a community service program for youth in the community.

Requests from the Public included the request from Lisa Wool of the Nanticoke Watershed Alliance and Matt Pluta of ShoreRivers and the Cambridge Clear Water Advisory Committee to authorize the Mayor to sign a letter of support going to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation for their efforts to support stormwater management and community engagement in Cambridge. That request passed on a 5-0 vote.

The other request was from Katie Clendaniel, the Executive Director of Downtown Cambridge/Cambridge Main Street to request permission to extend the street closure for the Groove Fest Event scheduled for October 21st. It had been continued over to the October date due to the anticipated problems with Hurricane Florence. The request was to allow an additional 2 hours for set up starting at 10:00 a.m. and an additional 1 ½ hours for take down at the end of the event.

After much questioning and discussion, the request was approved on a 4-1 vote with me being in opposition. My reasons for opposing this request too numerous to go into here but generally are based on the policy that was approved earlier this year and had been worked on by the city and the business community over a long period of time. The policy set certain time limitations for the length of events and when the set up could begin that Ms. Clendaniel was asking to be extended.

The Consent Calendar, without the meeting minutes correction, was then taken up and passed on a 5-0 vote. It included

* The request of the Hyatt Regency for a firework display on October 13th
* The request of Cambridge Marketplace for a firework display on October 31st
* The request that City Council authorize the Mayor, the City Manager, and the City Attorney to sign the MOU with the Dorchester Health Department for the purchase of equipment and materials for installation for the Cannery Park Trail, the acceptance of $14,600 in funding from DCHD for the purchase of the equipment, and the approval of City Council of a budget appropriation of that amount of money for the purchase and installation of the equipment

I then requested that the meeting minutes of September 10th be amended to reflect that after the closed session held that day the Mayor reported that Commissioner David Cannon was appointed “Chair” Pro-Tempore rather than “Mayor” Pro-Tempore and that the reference for the period of his appointment be corrected from FY 2018-2019 as the appointment time, when the vote was taken, was not that but a period of time that the Mayor was going to research. After a brief explanation of the language of the City Code regarding the “Chair Pro-Tempore” and that the start date of Commissioner Cannon’s term should be November 2018, my request for that amendment and the minutes were approved 5-0.

Under the category of Ordinances for Introduction and First Reading, proposed Ordinances – 1131, 1132, and 1133 – were then read by the City Attorney as their first reading and for continuation over to the October 9th meeting for public hearing, 2nd reading, and possible adoption. 1131 had to do with decorative lighting on Race and Poplar Streets. 1132 had to do with deleting a signage requirement for the Cannabis growing and dispensing facilities in Cambridge. 1133 had to do with the clean up of an earlier passed ordinance regarding side yard accessory buildings. Commissioner Sydnor wanted assurance from city staff that they were prepared to enforce them when passed, which he received from DPW Director Wheeler.

Under Old Business on 5-0 votes of approval the Commissioners

* Revised the city fee schedule to include Mobile Food Establishments in the existing Peddler category with there being no fee for any nonprofit that has a Mobile Food Establishment
* Awarded the FY 2019 Water Infrastructure Contract in the amount of $446,987 to A.C. Shultes of Delaware, Inc. for well redevelopment and pump replacement for some existing city wells run by the city MUC.
* Awarded the annual street resurfacing contract in the amount of $480,000 to Russel Paving Company, Inc.
* Received the monthly report on the Housing Revitalization Project as requested by an earlier vote of City Council

Under New Business on 5-0 votes of approval the Commissioners

* Authorized DPW to purchase $97,000 in bricks from Salisbury Brick Company for the 300 Block of High Street project and to contract with Pleasants Construction, Inc. for $32,000 to reline approximately 440 feet of sewer line main in this same block.
* Modified, at the request of the City Manager, the description of the finance directors’ position to provide for a broader group of applicants for the position.
* Approved the tax abatement for portions of Cambridge Marketplace including lots 1, 3, 4, 7A, and 7B on Parcel 5675, based on current improved values and approved the city manager’s authority to approve the remainder of lot 5675 improved values as they become available. The tax abatement allowance comes from Ordinance 1087 passed in July of 2016 where abatements as to the improved portion of the property come in to play for a period of 8 years while the current taxes remain based on the current assessments. In the long run, when the abatements end, it is anticipated that the city will have received additional tax revenue than is currently being received from the properties in Cambridge Marketplace.

Following the above votes, the Mayor, Commissioners, and Staff were allowed to make any final comments and the meeting adjourned.