CAMBRIDGE MATTERS

By: Commissioner Steve Rideout

swrideout@aol.com

October 22, 2018

My report for the October 22nd meeting will be short, as the meeting was short, but there are several attachments to the report that I will explain shortly.

The time for public comment brought forward two citizens. Amy Craig spoke about the upcoming Christmas Tree lighting scheduled for November 24th at the County Courthouse and Spring Valley starting at 5:00 p.m. This is the 6th year for the event, and this year the Hyatt will be providing refreshments. The Maple Elementary School Band will be performing, and there is the possibility of a Boat Parade from Long Wharf into Cambridge Creek. If you haven’t seen and heard the Maple Elementary School Band, please come, as you are in for a treat.

Michael Wheatley spoke about the GrooveFest event this past Sunday and thanked the city council for its support. I attended the event, which was wonderful. Although it was a bit cold and very windy, the music provided was excellent. You need to attend next year, if you missed this year, as it is a lot of fun.

There were no requests from the Public for City Council to consider. The Consent Calendar was approved in its entirety on a 5-0 vote. Those items approved were

* The Meeting Minutes of the City Council Meeting of October 9th
* Having the 4th of July Fireworks for Cambridge on July 4, 2019
* The City Economic Development Staff completing and submitting the Sustainable Community Renewal Application, which will allow Cambridge to continue to be a designated community under the Maryland Sustainable Communities Act of 2010. This will be an important tool for the City to leverage funds to attract State funding for important projects
* Holding the Cambridge Christmas Tree lighting in Spring Valley at the County Courthouse on November 24th from 5:00 -6:30 p.m.
* Confirmation December 1, 2018 starting at 5:00 p.m. as the date and time for the 70th Annual Cambridge-Dorchester Christmas Parade with participant line up starting at 4:00 p.m.
* Amending the terms of the MOU between the Maryland Department of Environment and the Commissioners of Cambridge to extend the time to complete the work on Cambridge Peachblossom Branch Shoreline and Stream Design Project to June 30, 2019
* The Dorchester County Department of Social Services holding their Family Fun Fest on October 27, 2018 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. on the lot at the corner of Race and Cedar Streets

Ordinance 1135 was then provided its first reading with continuation over to the November 13th City Council meeting for 2nd reading, public hearing, possible amendment, and possible passage. After the Ordinance was read by title only by the City Attorney, several issues were raised that were of concern to members of City Council. Commissioner Sydnor was concerned about the language that required that “Fences that have a side with exposed framing or similar features shall orient that side internal to the site”. I was concerned that the language of the proposed ordinance would limit the ability of a homeowner to decide the best location for the 6-foot fence that is permitted and so asked that the City Attorney draft some less restrictive language to address that issue for discussion and consideration on November 13th.

During the public comment time at the end of the meeting, Mark Masden spoke about the concerned raised by Commissioner Sydnor. Mr. Masden thought that the proposed language regarding the exposed framing was appropriate as a neighbor had built a fence with the exposed framing facing Mr. Masden’s property that he felt looked unattractive. If the community has a view on this issue or the proposed Ordinance, which is attached, please attend the meeting on November 13th to express your views as the City Council holds a public hearing.

There was one matter under Old Business. That was a monthly report that City Council has requested from staff regarding housing revitalization efforts here in the City. Mr. Wheeler provided an oral summary of the report. As the report is detailed, it is attached for those who are interested in reading it.

During the Comments by the Mayor, Commissioners, and Senior Staff, Commissioner Sydnor raised the issue of police salaries and the apparent loss of good officers to other jurisdictions because of the insufficient level of pay that the city provides. Other Commissioners raised similar concerns, and a work session was set for November 16th from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at a location to be determined. Commissioner Cannon suggested that citizens be invited to attend to provide their comments and suggestions as part of this meeting.

I plan to meet with the Police Chief to go over the data that he as developed on this issue. I know of a past study of social worker turnover years ago in Milwaukee, WI that indicates that there is a significant cost to a community when staff turns over so that working to keep good staff is an important and cost-effective consideration for any city or county.

After further comments by the Commissioners and staff and public comments at the close of the meeting, it was adjourned.

Right after the meeting, Police Chief Lewis provided me with a speed summary report from the speed camera placed at School Street and Belvedere. It is attached. In addition, Yvette Robinson, our housing specialist provided me with a document with some of her notations from the Federal Home Loans Bank about 2018 the Affordable Housing Program Homeowner Assistance Products. That is also attached. Finally, attached is a notice about the upcoming community meeting on November 15th from 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. at the Empowerment Center on Pine Street regarding the Cambridge Neighborhood Revitalization Plan that is also discussed in the Monthly housing revitalization report mentioned earlier.

Thanks for reading.

Steve