CAMBRIDGE MATTERS #43

By: Commissioner Steve Rideout

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The agenda for the City Council meeting of March 25th was long but many of the items were resolved quickly. After the traditional moment of silence and Pledge of Allegiance, the agenda was modified with several matters being removed from the Consent Calendar on my motion.

Grady Wilson, on behalf of the Board of Sailwinds West, which is running Governors Hall under a contract with the city, provided the City Council with some updates on what is happening with the facility and their future plans. He provided pictures of portions of Governors Hall as they found it along with pictures of everything that they have done to improve and spruce up the facility. All that they have done is quite impressive.

Mr. Wilson mentioned that there will be a Business After Hours event on March 29th with a planned Grand Opening on April 26th. He introduced members of the board to the City Council and let everyone know that they will have a full kitchen will be in place by Friday. They have held one successful event so far, which was the Gun Bash that had approximately 900 attendees. They have also applied for a beer and wine license for the facility.

Before closing he mentioned that the dock at Sailwinds has been damaged by large vehicles going on the dock to service the American Cruise Line ships that have been docket here over the winter. Mr. Wheeler indicated that he was aware of some of the damage and would inspect for the more recent damage before being touch with the owners of the cruise line and the company that rebuilt the dock.

Mike Krantz from Group Mission Trips Workcamps had to postpone his presentation to City Council about the status of the effort to bring a group of youth to work on homes in Cambridge during the summer of 2020. He plans to attend the April 8th City Council Meeting.

The Consent Calendar that remained after items were removed was approved on a vote of 5-0. Those items included the following:

* The Meeting Minutes of March 11th
* The requests of Cambridge Main Street for -

* + - Street closure on Saturday July 13th for Taste of Cambridge in the 500 block of Poplar Street and the 400 block of Race Street
    - Street closure on August 17th for the Groove City Culture Fest on Pine Street
    - Holding the Groove FEST Downtown Music Fest on the city lot at the corner of Cedar and Race Streets on September 21st
* The request of Tina Murray to hold the Molock Family Reunion on July 13th at Great Marsh Park
* After answering a question that I had, the request of Pastor Milton Walls to hold a Crusade of Worship and Praise at the corner of Greenwood Ave. and Washington Street from April 15-19
* The City’s request to hold a Family Movie Night at Sailwinds Park Amphitheater on May 10th
* The request of the Cambridge Little League for their Opening Day Parade from Long Wharf to Race Street on April 13th
* The request of the Cambridge Association of Neighborhoods to hold a CAN Jam Music Fest at Long Wharf Park on August 24th with the 25th being a rain date.
* The request from the Boy Scouts of America, Del-Mar-Council, Choptank District to hold a Cub Scout Cubmobile Derby on Court Lane on October 6th

Items that were removed from the Consent Calendar and subsequent action taken were the following:

* The proposed approval of the Meeting Minutes of February 25th was removed as they had already been approved at the March 11th meeting.
* The request by Chad Malkus for a letter of support for a grant request for $80,000 to the Maryland Heritage Areas Program to fund the removal of the old fence and its replacement at the graveyard on Academy Street was approved on a 5-0 vote.
* Two requests by Cambridge Main Street for street closures on April 13th and May 18th of Poplar Street. These were removed from the agenda with direction to the city manager to have Cambridge Main Street comply with the Street Closure Policy adopted by City Council over a year ago that required notifications to be provided to neighboring businesses and residents when new events were to take place. Neither of the proposed events had previously taken place on Poplar Street. Cambridge Main Street can reapply for consideration at the City Council meeting on April 8th. This received a vote of 5-0.

The next item for consideration was proposed Ordinance 1141, which was a modification of the City Ethics Code due to changes in state law as well as the City Attorney cleaning up some old language in the Ordinance due to changes in city governmental structure since the original enactment of the City Ethics Code. After a summary reading of its purpose, the public was given the opportunity to raise issues or concerns. No one came forward so the public comment hearing was closed, and the Ordinance was passed on a vote of 5-0.

Under Old Business was the request by city staff for permission to submit a grant application to the Maryland State Arts Council for promotional materials specific to the Cambridge Arts and Entertainment District. This is a grant for $2,500 that the city would use to help promote the city’s Arts and Entertainment District.

Under New Business Chris Hauge made a presentation on behalf of the Dorchester County Sanitary District, Inc. to obtain city approval, subject to grant and other funding, to connect 12 existing homes that use the McKeil Point #1 bermed infiltration pond. They want to connect to the city sewer system because the pond is failing. It is located on Brooks Road in Woolford, MD. During the discussion it was learned that there are two additional filtration ponds that show signs of failing in the future.

There will be costs to the city and the homeowners as well the Sanitary District to accomplish what is being requested. Commissioner Sydnor moved that we approve the request. As there would be additional legal costs to the city to only address the one pond now and then the other two in the future, I suggested that any legal work required would allow all three ponds to be added for potential future connection to the city wastewater treatment system subject to approval of city council and after staff negotiations with the state and County Sanitary District representatives with regard to how the city would be reimbursed any costs. This was approved on a vote of 5-0

The final agenda item was the acceptance and approval of the 2018 Financial Audit. After some additional language was provided to explain one matter in the audit that the Commissioners felt might lead to a misunderstanding of the audit, it was accepted and approved on a vote of 5-0.

Earlier in the meeting, Mr. Wheeler had notified City Council that his office had just received a notice about a possible grant but that the application had to be made by April 8th and so needed to be considered prior to our next city council meeting. After discussion the Commissioners agreed to hear more about the grant even though no documentation regarding it had been provided prior to the meeting. I suggested that if we felt we could not decide the matter at this meeting after hearing from staff that we could put the matter over to another meeting prior to the application date.

Brandon Hesson made a presentation regarding the grant. It had to be filed by April 1st with the anticipation that the city would hear back from the state on April 8th. The grant was for $10,000 and was aimed at reimbursing the city for up to $10,000 for administrative costs that the city had expended for staff time spent on the Cambridge Arts and Entertainment District. Mr. Hesson indicated that he had spent that much time and more so that this grant was really reimbursing the city for costs that it had already expended. There would be no matching monies from the city other than the work that Mr. Hesson had already expended as part of this work for the city.

I moved to approve the grant application. The discussion was on whether we could decide the issue then or take the matter up at an upcoming City Council work session on Thursday the 28th. My motion lost on a 1-4 vote. I then moved that we have a regular meeting on the 28th in conjunction with our budget work session in order to give staff time to provide us written materials upon which to make our decision. That motion passed 5-0.

Prior to the end of the meeting Mr. Wheeler provided an update on the work being done in the 300 block of High Street. The City MUC had done some of the work reconnecting the properties in that block to the water system that saved the city some money. He also indicated that rain had delayed some of the work, but that it was moving forward with limited interruptions.

Police Chief Lewis indicated that in the first two months of the year, Part 1 crime in the city was down another 32% below the decline that the city experienced in 2018.

Thanks for reading.

Steve