**UPCOMING BOARD MEETINGS**

***All Board Meetings will be held at the WHCP Meeting Room***

***516 Race Street, Cambridge, MD 21613***

***2019***

Thursday, July 11, 7:00 pm

Thursday, September 12, 7:00 pm

Saturday, November 9, 7:00 pm

\* \* \* \* \*

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING**

**June 26, 2019**

**MINUTES**

Executive Committee Members Present: Chuck McFadden, Michelle Barnes, Mary Ellen Jesien, Tom Puglisi, Judd Vickers (5 of 5 members present, constituting a quorum of the Executive Committee).

Executive Committee Members Absent: None

Board Members Present: Greg Boss, Roman Jesien, Dave Thatcher.

Guest: City Council Commissioner Steve Rideout (Ward 1)

1. Opening Comments – Chuck McFadden opened the meeting at 6:32 pm at 200 Belvedere St. Cambridge, MD. He welcomed the CAN Board members present and thanked Commissioner Rideout for coming to discuss several important issues facing the City.
2. Concerns Potentially Warranting Referendum Petitions. Commissioner Steve Rideout spoke about the importance of the following matters facing the City Council and the possible need for referendum petitions to address them adequately. Steve explained that a referendum petition would require signatures from 20% of the City's registered voters, which must be obtained within 40 days of passage of the resolution or ordinance addressed by the referendum. Any referendum would be held at the next scheduled election unless an earlier time was selected, which would cost additional monies to hold. *(Note: The general sense of CAN Board members present at the meeting regarding these issues is reflected in parenthesis following each item).*
   1. Restoring the City Manager's Personnel Hiring Authority. The City Council recently voted (3-2) to request that the City Attorney draft a resolution for a Charter Change to give the Council authority over the hiring of all City employees (thus diluting the current hiring authority of the City Manager.) The Council currently advises and consents relative to the hiring of the City's Division Directors, but does have such authority over regular City employees, who serve under the hiring authority of the City Manager or designated Department Heads. Commissioner Rideout believes that extending the Council's hiring authority to all City employees would undermine the City's objective hiring procedures, encourage favoritism in hiring, and open the City to lawsuits (which the City could easily loose without a strong basis for not following the City Manager recommendation). Based on information collected a few years ago when the current City Charter was adopted, Commissioner Rideout believes that City Managers in Maryland generally hold hiring authority comparable to that currently held by the Cambridge City Manager, and there is no reason to believe that this situation has significantly changed since then. *(First Priority of CAN Board members in attendance.)*
   2. Requiring the votes of at least four City Council Commissioners to effect changes to the City Charter. Currently, the City Charter can be changed at the will of a simply majority (i.e., three) of the five Commissioners. This situation can result in frequent Charter changes that have little public support. Ensuring that the Charter changes only with a significant majority of the Commissioners is very important to maintaining the stability of City government. Charters can be changed by cities either through a city council vote or by referendum. The City Manager change came of a vote of 4-1. Commissioner Rideout would like to see this be the requirement for future city council changes of the Charter. *(Third priority of CAN Board members in attendance.)*
   3. Health Insurance and Salary for City Council Commissioners. In reviewing the FY2020 City budget proposal, Chuck McFadden noticed that $21,000 was designated for health insurance for the City Council Commissioners. The fact that Commissioners, who are considered part-time City employees, are eligible to participate in the City's Employee Health Plan seems to have been unknown to most members of the public for the last 30 years. The current City Charter does not address health insurance for elected City Commissioners, but it does limit compensation to $10,000 per year for each Commissioner. As the Maryland Attorney General has held that health insurance constitutes compensation, the current practice of offering health insurance to Council Commissioners would appear to violate the Commissioner compensation provision of the City Charter. Commissioner Rideout will seek a vote of the Council to send the matter to the Maryland Attorney General for an opinion.

Under the Personnel Rules only full time and permanent part-time City employees are eligible to participate in the City Employee Health Program. In addition, Council Commissioners' insurance premiums are disproportionately low because their premiums are based on low salaries ($10,000 per year), compared to salaries of full time employees. Because the Employee Health Plan is self-funded by the taxpayers of the City, offering health insurance to Council Commissioners is unfair to other employees both in terms of premiums and the effect on risk pool exposure. It was noted that in 1995, the City Auditor pointed out the lack of authorization for Council Commissioners' health coverage, and that in 1996, the Council raised Commissioners' pay without any public notice but did not address health insurance.

* 1. Under the current City Charter, compensation for Council Commissioners can be changed only by a formal Council vote directed to that purpose, and any such change would not be implemented until the next Council takes office. It is anticipated that the Council will pass an ordinance in the near future to codify health insurance benefits for Commissioners under the present system. Commissioner Rideout is proposing an alternative that would create a citizen committee to look into the issue and make recommendations to the City Council. That proposal will be on the agenda for the July 8th meeting. *(Second priority of CAN Board members in attendance.)*
  2. Term limits. Some people have suggested that terms limits should be enacted to ensure that Council Commissioners do not become entrenched in power. It was agreed by CAN Board members in attendance that addressing this issue is probably not a viable option at this time.

1. CAN Action on Referendum Petitions. CAN Board members in attendance suggested that CAN needs to identify the one issue that is most in need of immediate action. Other issues could be addressed later. It was noted that the "First Reading" of the personnel change resolution will occur at the July 8 City Council meeting. Immediate emphasis should be on influencing the current Commissioners in anticipation of the July 8 and July 22 meetings. It was suggested that CAN mobilize to encourage a large turnout at these meetings. The CAN Board will have an opportunity to seek CAN members' feedback and vote on conducting one or more petition campaigns at the upcoming July 11 Board meeting. Roman Jesien volunteered to write a letter addressing the hiring issue for distribution to CAN members, and Dave Thatcher volunteered to lead a petition drive.
2. Treasurer's Report. Mary Ellen Jesien reported that CAN recently spent $135 for CAN JAM insurance but still has $1672.87 in its Treasury. Tom Puglisi indicated that he has sent email messages to individuals who have not paid dues for 2019, but the response to his email was negligible. It was suggested that CAN solicit contributions for specific events/activities as needed, rather than emphasizing dues payments.
3. July 11th Board of Directors Meeting. Commissioner Steve Rideout will discuss the issues listed in Item #2 above.
4. Recent Dog Bite Concern. A CAN member recently received a serious fog bite while walking in his neighborhood. It appears that the dog was on chain that went out to the street, and the dog's owners (who are renters of the property from which the dog emerged) expressed disregard for the victim. The dog is currently in quarantine, and the owner of the property has been fined $1000 for operating a rental property without a license. (a) Commissioner Rideout is looking to obtain some information from the City Manager, police department, and the county in order to help determine what, if anything, the City needs to do to address this challenge. The problem is that establishing a City leash law would require hiring one or more individuals to enforce the ordinance. (b) Greg Boss is trying to get current information on unlicensed rental properties.
5. Registered Sex Offenders. CAN member Barbara Knepp has recently expressed concern about the number of convicted sex offenders living in Cambridge. In response to this concern, Greg Boss found that the City of Cambridge has more registered sex offenders than in certain other areas, but that there is no concentration among any particular landlord, which was CAN's primary concern. Tom will forward Michelle Barnes's email strongly opposing CAN action on this issue to all Board members. Maryland apparently has one of the lowest rates of registered sex offenders in the country.
6. Mill Street School. At the request of City Council, the Cambridge Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) determined that the Mill Street School and its grounds constitute a significant contributing property of the Cambridge Historic District. Issues related to zoning for the property will be discussed will at an upcoming City Council meeting. Mill Street residents apparently believe that the proposal to be considered by the Council would permit unreasonable density on the property. Some of these residents believe that Mill Street 's zoning is in error; specifically, that Mill Street should be zoned like High Street, rather than like Choptank Avenue. Greg will draft something to distribute to the Board on this issue. It was noted that citizens can register code enforcement complaints, including complaints about the Mill Street School property, through the "Citizen Comments & Feedback" (COMCATE) feature on the ChooseCambridge website.
7. Housing Quality Committee. Judd Vickers indicated that CAN's Housing Quality Committee needs to be revitalized. Judd is willing to coordinate attendance at the Policy and Planning Commission meetings and maintain the list of unoccupied rentals, but somebody is needed to provide leadership for the Committee. Gregg Boss volunteered to replace Judd as Chair of the Committee. Gregg will enlist Barbara Knepp to help. Gregg is willing to Chair the Committee.
8. CAN JAM. Chuck McFadden reported that planning for CAN JAM is proceeding nicely, and that everyone should set aside Sunday, August 25, for the event.
9. Adjournment. Roman Jesien made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Tom Puglisi. Upon unanimous vote, the meeting was adjourned at 8:24 pm.