

**UPCOMING MEETING DATES**

**All Meetings will be held on Thursday Evenings at 7:00 pm  
in the WHCP Meeting Room, 516 Race Street, Cambridge, MD 21613**

**September 12, and November 14, 2019**

**January 9, March 12, May 14, July 9, September 10, and November 12, 2020**

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**BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING**

**July 11, 2019**

**MINUTES**

**Board Members Present:** Chuck McFadden (President), Judd Vickers (Vice President), Mary Ellen Jesien (Treasurer), Tom Puglisi (Secretary), Roman Jesien, and Dave Thatcher (constituting a Quorum of the Board, 6 of 9 members being present when the meeting began). Greg Boss entered the meeting as noted below.

**Board Members Absent:** Michelle Barnes (Membership Director) and Sharon Smith.

In addition to CAN Board members listed above, approximately 25 people were present at the beginning of the meeting.

- 1. Call to Order.** CAN President Chuck McFadden convened the meeting at 7:00 pm.
- 2. Approval of Minutes.** Tom Puglisi made, and Judd Vickers seconded, a motion to approve the minutes of the May Board of Directors meeting. The motion was approved unanimously.
- 3. Treasurer's Report.** CAN Treasurer Mary Ellen Jesien reported that CAN's treasury currently holds \$1,683.09. Funds are used for activities such as CAN Jam and to help individuals in the community with maintenance and other needs.
- 4. CAN JAM 2019.** Chuck McFadden announced that the date of this year's CAN JAM has been set for Sunday, August 25, 2019, from 3:00 pm to 7:00 pm at Long Wharf Park adjacent to the Municipal Marina. There will be a food truck for eats and drinks, and the Gazebo will serve as the stage for local entertainment, including gospel singing, ukuleles, folk songs, and contemporary music, plus poetry reading. Volunteers are needed.

5. **Dog Bites.** Several dog attacks have been reported recently, including multiple attacks by the same dogs. One attack occurred on Choptank Avenue, where the dog was on a very long chain that stretched to the middle of the street. Another attack was on Glen Burn Avenue. Animal control is the domain of the County, rather than the City. CAN will follow up with the County to see what can be done.

*NOTE: CAN Director Greg Boss (Chair, Housing Quality Committee) entered the meeting at this juncture.*

6. **Special Guest City Council Commissioner Steve Rideout (Ward 1).** Chuck McFadden introduced Commissioner Rideout and thanked him for attending.
- a. **Animal Attacks.** Commissioner Rideout indicated that someone was also attacked recently on Sandy Hill Road. According to the County Sheriff, there have been approximately 30 dog attacks reported in Cambridge over the past 5 years. As there is currently no City Dog Ordinance, Steve will look into drafting legislation to address the types of issues that have occurred. However, he pointed out that the likelihood of hiring someone within the next year to enforce any relevant ordinance is unlikely because no position has been provided for in the 2020 budget. Steve noted that raccoons and feral cats have also become an increasing problem in the City. He stressed that there are no easy answers to these problems and that it is very important for citizens to express their concerns directly to the City Council and City Manager. Steve also suggested that people who are feeding cats only leave the food out for a limited period of time so as not to attract other animals.
- b. **Importance of Elections.** An attendee asked why City Council members have not been required to reside in their relevant District as required by the City Charter. Steve noted that complaints should be sent to the Mayor and that the City Council would ultimately decide if any action is warranted. He recalled that there was little interest on the part of voters in the 2016 City Council election. Three Council District seats and the Mayor's race were uncontested, and there were only about 300 votes in each of the contested Districts. Looking forward to the 2020 elections, Steve indicated that he is aware of efforts underway to (i) develop a slate of candidates for each City Council District, and (ii) ensure that no voting irregularities occur. He noted that three seats on the County Board of Education will also be up for election in 2020 and stressed the importance of this election, given the challenges currently facing the School System. Susan Morgan is running for the School Board in County District 3, and candidates are being sought for the other two seats that will be up for election.
- c. **Progress in Cambridge.** Steve believes progress has been made in the City in a number of ways. For example: (i) The City Manager is improving the administration of the City. (ii) The Sailwinds project has a non-profit board made up of experienced, qualified members who know what they are doing in developing a reasonable plan for moving forward. State

permissions have been requested for the proposed healthcare facilities here and in Easton; the current hospital land needs to be acquired; and the City Planning and Zoning (P&Z) Commission has approved new zoning related to the area of Sailwinds. Roman Jessien noted that real progress has been made in Cambridge, and that we should give the City Council credit for the Long Wharf renovation, the Peach Blossom and Cannery Row projects, the continued restoration in the Historic District, and the Pine Street revitalization project.

- d. Mill Street School Property.** At Steve's suggestion, the City Council requested that the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) provide a determination regarding the historic significance of the Mill Street School. HPC reaffirmed that the School and its surrounding property are both historically significant, so that preservation of the School and the significance of the property will be considered in rezoning and redeveloping the property. The process now goes back to the P&Z Commission, which will hold Hearings and send a zoning proposal to City Council. The current P&Z zoning proposal would require restoration of the school as a condition for development. CAN Housing Quality Chair Greg Boss indicated that he intends to present documentation to the P&Z Commission to demonstrate that current zoning for the property was made in error and should be changed before an overlay is approved.
- e. Complaints.** An attendee asked why the Mill Street property has not been secured as it should be. Someone else referenced a property on Choptank that needs to be cited. Steve suggested that the Citizen Feedback Portal (Comcate) on the City website be used to register complaints about the Mill Street School and other properties. Instructions are provided at <http://www.choosecambridge.com/Faq.aspx?QID=62>. Code Enforcement Manager Susan Webb and City Manager Patrick Comisky are the individuals who would act on such complaints. They are responsive to these notices.
- f. Cambridge Neighborhood Revitalization Plan.** An attendee recommended that folks read the recently released Cambridge Neighborhood Revitalization Plan. The report suggests that finding suitable developers has been, and will continue to be, a problem due to the demographics of the City. The report also provides ideas to address the many problems that the City addresses. Steve thinks the report is a great roadmap to turning the City around. The report can be found on the City website at: <http://www.choosecambridge.com/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Item/465?fileID=2172>
- g. Property Assessments and Tax Rates.** Steve explained that each year, one third of the properties in the county are re-assessed. This year's reassessments will include the City of Cambridge. Steve hopes that overall assessments will rise so the tax rate can be reduced. He noted that the City is getting good press with the recommendation by Smithsonian Magazine that Cambridge is a great place to visit and the viral image of the new Harriett Tubman Mural bringing more people into town. Steve noted that the City has no depreciation/reserve funds to save for replacement of any City property or equipment. We have been taxing residents heavily but the overall tax base is very small.

City Council recently raised the tax rate in order to provide raises for its police officer, but in response, Talbot County has raised its police officer salaries and hiring bonuses.

- h. City Marina.** An attendee commented that the Cambridge Municipal Marina seems to be deteriorating and observed that Cambridge should strive to be unique on the Eastern Shore in offering a first-class marina. Steve noted that, some years ago, the Marina made money for the City. However, when the new Public Services Building was built in anticipation of an influx of residents that did not occur, each City unit was "taxed" to pay for the building (and the Marina will continue to be taxed until 2021). Proposals to upgrade the Marina have been unsuccessful, and probably will be unsuccessful, until it makes money.
  - i. Citizen Engagement.** Steve stressed that the key to progress in Cambridge is citizen engagement. He noted that 4 of the 5 Commissioners were born here. Elections are important, and an informed citizenry is essential to progress. HPC has made great strides in improving its standards and processes. P&Z Commission members are very qualified and are functioning well. The ADA Committee is making sure that the Harriett Tubman Mural and other downtown businesses are ADA compliant.
  - j. Charter Changes.** Asked if any Charter Changes are worth considering, Steve said that he would like to see at least 4 votes by City Council Commissioners (rather than 3) required for a Charter Change. Implementing a Charter Change to require 4 votes would involve a referendum.
- 7. Future Meetings.** Greg Boss noted that this is a relatively large turnout for a CAN meeting. Gregg would like to get Eastern Shore Network for Change and Alpha Genesis to speak to a CAN meeting, but we need to ensure a good turnout.
- 8. Sign-up and Dues Payment.** Tom encouraged attendees to join CAN if they have not done so and asked those who are continuing CAN members to send their voluntary dues payments as soon as possible to Treasurer Mary Ellen Jesien or make dues payments via PayPal on the CAN website at <https://cambridgecan.org/join-can/>.
- 7. Adjournment.** Tom Puglisi made a motion (seconded by Judd Vickers) to adjourn the meeting, and the meeting was adjourned at 8:40 pm.