CAMBRIDGE MATTERS #34

By: Commissioner Steve Rideout

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City Council met in Open Meeting at 5:00 p.m. to go into closed session for consultation with the City Attorney. That consultation lasted until the Public Meeting at 6:00 p.m. While much was discussed, no decisions were made and no report on the meeting was required.

At 6:00 p.m. following the opening moment of silence and Pledge of Allegiance, the Agenda was approved with no amendments. No one from the public came forward during the public comment portion of the meeting so next on the agenda were two requests.

The first was the request by Adrian Holmes and Jermaine Anderson of Alpha Genesis Community Development Corporation to close the 400 Block of Race Street on September 7th from 12:30 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. It was approved on a 5-0 vote of the Commissioners.

The reason for this request was for the safety of everyone expected to attend the “Day of Resilience” Event that will take place at the Harriet Tubman Mural at Cannery Way on Race Street. Race street will be closed but with access to the parking lot at Craig’s Drug Store. Ambassadors from at least three African Countries will be attending that event as well as a town hall meeting at Waugh Chapel UMC on High Street starting at 2:30 p.m.

The Day of Resilience consists of several events from Noon to 9:00 p.m. on September 7th commemorating the 400th Anniversary of the Transatlantic Slave Trade. The events to which the public is invited are supported by the Alpha Genesis Community Development Corporation and the Dorchester Center for the Arts.

Mike Starling then provided an update on the Dorchester Goes Purple public relations campaign that is supported by the Dorchester Chamber of Commerce, Sheriff Phillips, and the Cambridge Rotary Club. Starting on August 30th with a public kickoff event at Governor’s Hall at Sailwinds Park, the month of September is designated as a month of awareness regarding the Opioid Crisis that is impacting the Nation and Dorchester County. The statistics that Mike reported regarding the challenges facing us and the country regarding the use of Opioids were startling, and he indicated that there will be information provided all month long to the community to increase awareness of the dangers of drug usage.

All the items on the Consent Calendar were approved on a vote of 5-0. They included the approval of

* The Meeting Minutes of the July 22nd City Council Meeting
* The request of Sheniqua Fletcher to have a walk for Lupus on September 21 from 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the Gerry Boyle Park at Great Marsh
* The Dorchester Chamber’s request to hang a banner across Race Street from August 28th to September 12th for Dorchester Goes Purple
* Jymil Thompson’s request to have a Maces Lane Middle School block party at Cosby Street/Greenwood Avenue on August 28th from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m.

There were no ordinances for first or second reading, so the next items of business were under the category of Old Business. Three items were taken up separately and each approved on votes of 5-0 after proper motions were made and seconded.

They were

* The approval of the staff request to extend the contract of Russell Paving for the FY 2020 annual street resurfacing and to use the proposed list of streets that had come from the survey done of all the streets in Cambridge.
* The adoption of Resolution 19-010 which adopts standard forms for a voter-initiated Charter Amendment and for the referral of a Charter Amendment Resolution adopted by the Commissioners of Cambridge for a referendum vote.
* The adoption of Resolution 19-011 to declare property owned by the Commissioners of Cambridge at 809 and 811 Fairmont Avenue as surplus and no longer needed for any public purpose or use and to authorize the advertisement of the property for offers of purchase. A public hearing was held on this issue at which no one from the public spoke.

With New Business, two items were approved on 5-0 votes of the Commissioners.

* The allocation of $725 from the auction of a car seized in a drug raid to the Police Drug Forfeiture Account.
* City Staff moving forward to apply for a grant from the Department of Natural Resources for up to $300,000 for Cornish Park to include park improvements as well as equipment. There is no city match required.

The Mayor then reported on a requested Memorial Day Proclamation by the DAR. It will be brought forward at the next meeting of City Council. She also acknowledged the receipt of a thank you letter for the City’s Donation to the Maryland IronMan Event scheduled later this year.

Commissioner Sydnor indicated that the County is looking to build an animal shelter in the city and asked that staff work with the County. I offered to participate in that effort.

Commissioner Foster reported on the Seafood Feastival and what a great success it was. Many people attended, and the event raised money to support the Volunteer Fire Department. She also mentioned that August 17th will be the all-day cultural festival on Pine Street. I understand that there were so many people who wanted to be vendors for the event that some had to be turned away. This is a public event to which everyone is invited.

Odie Wheeler raised a few matters. He reported that there had been damage to some equipment and tables in Cornish Park that Habitat Choptank plans to repair with the help of children in the community. He also provided to the Commissioners prior to the meeting a picture of the proposed sign for the Gerry Boyle Park at Great Marsh with which everyone approved.

The community was also told about the August 5th public meeting of the city and county councils where we received an excellent presentation by Sandra Tripp-Jones and Frank Narr on some of ideas being discussed regarding the development of the Sailwinds Area including the hospital property owned by Shore Health.

During the Public Comment portion at the end of the meeting, Dr. Theresa Stafford spoke about her afterschool and summer youth programs and thanked Commissioner Hanson and me for coming by to observe them. She thanked the Chief of Police for his efforts on Greenwood Avenue and mentioned her concerns that she had with the responses of individuals that she had called regarding community problems. I could not tell if these were 911 calls or calls directly to the police department.

Donna Towers asked that the city do something to clean up Maryland Avenue, especially prior to the IronMan event. Odie Wheeler indicated that both vehicles used to clean the streets are down for repairs but that the streets will be cleaned before the IronMan event.

Robert Arron raised his concerns that while he can attend Mainstreet Meetings he is not allowed to speak during them as he is not on the board. As Commissioner Foster is the liaison to Cambridge Mainstreet, it was suggested that he speak with her about his concerns so that they might be addressed.

With nothing further to be done the meeting was adjourned.

Thanks for reading.