CAMBRIDGE MATTERS #29

By: Commissioner Steve Rideout

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City Council began its work at 5:00 p.m. on the 28th with an Open Meeting for the purpose of going into a closed meeting for a discussion of a personnel matter affecting a specific individual and to consult with staff and the city attorney regarding that matter. In addition, there was a matter of potential litigation and another matter for which legal advice needed to be provided and considered. Proper motions to go into closed session were passed, and the close meeting was held.

At the conclusion of the closed session, we returned to open session at 5:58 p.m. in order to begin the regularly scheduled public meeting at 6:00 p.m. After the moment of silence called by the Mayor and the Pledge of Allegiance led by Commissioner Hanson, the Agenda was approved by a unanimous vote of council on my motion with proper second.

The one public comment came from Amy Craig regarding the Christmas Tree lighting on November 30th. The event begins at 5:00 p.m. with the lighting to take place around 5:30 p.m. There were no requests from the public, so the next matter was the Consent Calendar.

The Mayor suggested some minor edits to the proposed meeting minutes of September 23rd , and Dave Cannon asked that item 8, the Christmas Tree Lighting be removed from the Consent Calendar, as he was a member of that committee and thus had a conflict of interest.

The following were then approved on a vote of 5-0 upon my motion with a proper second:

* The September 23, 2019 meeting minutes as amended by the Mayor
* The September 30, 2019 meeting minutes
* The signing of the Extra Mile Day Proclamation to be held on November 1, 2019
* Having November be considered Municipal Government Works Month for the City
* Having a Day of the Dead Halloween Event on November 2, 2019 from 3-10 p.m. in the alley behind Blue Ruin
* Allowing the Agape Temple of Praise and Ministries to have a “Trunk or Treat” event on October 31st from 4-8 p.m. on Center Street near the church and a street closure.
* Approval of the 2020 Legal Holiday Schedule for the City
* Approval of the 2020 City Council Meeting schedule
* The request to have the City check for $25,000 for IRONMAN and letter be presented in 2020.

The request of the Cambridge Christmas Tree Committee to have is annual Christmas Tree lighting on November 30th from 5-6 p.m. at the Spring Valley Circuit Courthouse was then approved on a vote of 4-0 with Commissioner Cannon abstaining.

The next two items for consideration were ordinances up for second reading, public hearing, and possible adoption. Ordinance 1156 sought to amend the city’s Unified Development Code (UDC) to enhance the design standards for general commercial and mixed use buildings in order to give the Planning and Zoning Commission wider authority to help address how proposed new buildings or renovated buildings might conform to the appearance of other existing buildings in the city. On Commissioner Hanson’s motion that I seconded, after a public hearing at which no one commented, the Ordinance passed 5-0.

For those who might want more detail regarding this matter, the Ordinance, which was item 12 on the agenda, is very detailed and provides photos and drawings of examples of what is intended through the legislation. It can be found on the City Council Meeting page of the City Website. If interested, let me know, and I can forward the ordinance to you.

Ordinance 1160 approved the sale of two vacant lots, 809 and 811 Fairmont Avenue, as being surplus and not needed for any present or foreseeable public use and authorized the Mayor and city manager to execute all documents to effectuate the sale. When the transaction is completed, this will allow the two properties to return to the tax records as taxable to the benefit of the city. After a public hearing, on motion of Commissioner Sydnor and a second by Commissioner Hanson, this Ordinance passed on a vote of 5-0.

Under Old Business the Governor’s Hall Lease Agreement was considered. At an earlier meeting, I raised several concerns about the proposal that caused it to be addressed by the city manager and the lessees. While all the issues I raised were not adopted, the majority were, and so on motion of Commissioner Sydnor properly seconded, the new lease agreement was adopted on a vote of 5-0. The two major concerns that I had involved ensuring public access to the open air portion of the property when it was not being used for an event and ensuring that there was enough insurance by the lessee and those renting Governor’s Hall to protect the city in the event of an accident.

Under New Business was the matter of a Subrecipient Agreement regarding a building project on Pine Street that is partially grant funded. Work on the project had been done by Tim Crosby, a local architect, and civil and structural engineers. The state is providing approximately $50,000 in grant funding to help with the project and so the money will pass through Mr. Crosby’s firm as a Subrecipient of the City to pay for his fees, the engineering fees, and other costs. The agreement has adequate mechanisms to ensure that the work has been or will be done and that there is proper documentation of the work done and any costs expended.

Those matters concluded the agenda items. During comment time Commissioner Foster mentioned the citizens group that has been meeting regarding the Cambridge Police. Members of the group plan to participate in ride a longs with the police and some will be attending the Police Citizen Academy Training that starts next month. There was also mention of the public meeting that was held regarding Pine Street and the buildings that are under consideration for demolition or fixing up. As a result of that meeting, city staff and the HPC will be working together to identify troubled properties and their historic value and ability to be saved.

During Public Comment, Carlton Stanley spoke about the 102nd Elks Lodge Parade this past weekend, which was a great success. He noted that the Cambridge police need more credit for the good work that they do.

Rufus Sampson, the purchaser of 809 and 811 Fairmont Avenue brought his check for the purchase and was told to provide that to his settlement attorney.

The Mayor then reported on the closed meeting and advised the public that the city attorney was directed to send a letter regarding a property matter here in the city and on a potential litigation matter to discuss it and possibly prepare paperwork on it.

Commissioner Cannon raised concerns about speeding on Stone Boundary Road and asked that the traffic and safety committee consider what might be done to abate those problems. On motion of Commissioner Hanson and seconded by me, that matter was referred to the Traffic and Safety Committee on a vote of 5-0.

Commissioner Sydnor asked about the status of the Audit. He was advised that there will be a public meeting on the audit on November 6th at 2:00 p.m. He also mentioned that the final budget books had not been received, and the city manager indicated that they would be available. The final item involved the cameras on Weaver and Cornish Drive.

Mr. Wheeler advised that a meeting with the Housing Authority has been set up. The contract for the work is being discussed with the expectation that the work would start soon. The hope is for the Housing Authority to pay for the installation of electric services rather than Delmarva Power.

Commissioner Foster reported that the “Truck or Treat” event on Race Street put on by the police was a great success. There were children of all ages. She encouraged the Mayor and Commissioners to attend the event next year.

The Mayor reported on the success of the Elks parade and a water quality review of the Tred Avon River that she and the city manager participated in last Friday.

Commissioner Hanson raised the concern that there might be heavy rain on Halloween. That caused the discussion of an alternate date. After discussion and a motion by Commissioner Hanson and second by Commissioner Sydnor, the alternate date was set as November 2nd, with the Mayor and City Manager being the city representatives to make that decision and placing any notice on the city website.

Mr. Wheeler reported that the Ship the Constitution will be coming to Sailwinds in November for 8 days and then in the first week of January through mid-March for maintenance. American Cruise Line will be having electricity installed and will pay for it. He also noted that he will be retiring from city service effective December 31st.

Police Chief Lewis reminded people that the Police Citizens Academy will start November 13th in the evening. There is still time for people to sign up, if interested.

Thanks for reading.