CAMBRIDGE MATTERS #28

By: Commissioner Steve Rideout

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With a relatively short agenda, City Council had several matters to address both at a closed meeting at 5:00 p.m. and the regularly scheduled public meeting that began shortly after 6:00 p.m. The earlier meeting began as required by the Maryland Open Meetings Act with an open meeting that resulted in a closed meeting to discuss a personnel matter, possible acquisition of certain land for pubic purposes, consulting with staff and counsel regarding potential litigation, and obtaining legal advice on all of these matters. A full report on votes taken and decisions made will be provided at our next public meeting, although one matter was taken up during this meeting that I will report on shortly.

City Council came back into an open meeting at 5:58 p.m. and then started the regular public meeting a few minutes later. After a moment of silence recognizing our veterans, and the Pledge of Allegiance, the agenda was approved on a vote of 5-0 on my motion and second by Commissioner Hanson. No report on the closed meeting was provided as allowed under the Open Meetings Act, understanding that a report on any actions taken will be due at the next meeting. There were no public comments or requests from the public. The one matter on the Consent Calendar, the meeting minutes of October 28th, was approved on a vote of 5-0 on my motion that was seconded by Commissioner Hanson.

Prior to the reading of Charter Resolution CR 2019-02, The City Attorney provided a brief explanation of the reason for this proposed Charter Change. Prior to the current City Council being elected and sworn in in 2016, City Council had passed a Charter Resolution that established the city elections taking place on the same date as the Presidential Election. Earlier this year we learned that more had to be done to accomplish the vote taking place then but that it was now too late for a variety of legal reasons to make that happen. As a result, we had to establish a new date for city elections in 2020 and every 4 years after that.

After closed meetings earlier this year where the challenges were explained to us by the city attorney and we had a chance to indicate our preference, the city attorney drafted Charter Resolution CR 2019-02 for public hearing, consideration by city council, and possible adoption. After it was given its first reading the matter was continued over to January 13, 2020 for second reading, public hearing, and possible adoption. While the basic change in the Charter was the change of the voting date to the 3rd Saturday in October, the city attorney also decided to clean up some of the out of date language relative to this portion of the Charter that does not make any significant changes to the Charter. The proposed Charter change can be found on the City Council meetings page of the city website.

Under Old Business, we received a presentation of the City Audit Report by Roy Geiser, the city auditor, for the Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2019. The bottom line on the audit is that it was a clean audit and that the city finished FY 2019 with an approximate surplus of $15,000. The next matter to be taken up was a proposed letter of intent from Cambridge Waterfront Development, Inc. (CWDI). This was one of the matters taken up during the closed meeting that was held at 5:00 p.m. where we were provided legal advice by the city attorney. In general terms the Commissioners on motion of Commissioner Sydnor and Seconded by Commissioner Cannon voted 5-0 to allow the Mayor to sign the letter of intent. It establishes that the City and CWDI will work together between now and the end of the year to develop a contract that would need to be approved by the State of Maryland for the transfer of the approximately 11 acres of Sailwinds to CWDI to help facilitate its ability to work with developers interested in portions of the property consistent with the agreement that the City signed with the State several years ago. That contract would ensure that the public spaces owned by the City would remain so and that existing leases on the property would be honored. This letter of intent only deals with the property currently owned by the City and not any of the hospital or other property that might become available.

The next matter was the approval of increasing the budget of the Department of Public Works by $42,864 for the purposes of using that sum of money that has been given to the City by the Cambridge Housing Authority for City staff to install camera equipment on Weaver Avenue and Cornish Drive. It was approved on a vote of 5-0.

New Business was the next matter on the agenda. The Commissioners approved two requests by the Cambridge Police Department to add $3,000 and $91.93 to the police budget. $3,000 had been donated by the American Legion and would be used for tools and equipment and the $91.93 had come from profits from the vending machines at the police department and would go into their event fund. The final matter on the approved agenda was the recommendation of the Traffic and Safety Committee to install 4 way stop signs at three locations on Stone Boundary Road in order to help slow traffic. Those signs will be located at Shepherd Avenue, East Appleby Avenue, and Southside Avenue. All the above New Business matters were approved on votes of 5-0 on motions properly made and seconded.

During the time for comments by the Mayor, Council, and staff, Commissioner Sydnor moved to cancel the City Council meeting scheduled for November 25th as it was close to Thanksgiving. The trash ordinance was scheduled for hearing that date; so, with the agreement of the Commissioners, the meeting of November 25th was cancelled, and the trash ordinance was moved to the December 9th meeting. The city attorney will ensure that proper legal public notice will be provided to the citizens of the City for the new date.

The Mayor reported that Commissioner Sydnor was given an award by the Dorchester NAACP that recognized his community involvement. Herve Hamon reported that 15 youth from the high school have been recruited to do their community service requirement with the City ADA Committee to help address the challenges with city sidewalks.

That concluded the public meeting, but there was one matter that had not been completed in the closed meeting that needed to be addressed. As a result, City Council went back into closed session to discuss that matter. Upon its conclusion, we returned to open meeting and adjourned.

Although we will not have a meeting on the 25th, I have been in discussion with Matt Pluta of Shore Rivers about how the city and all of us can help to reduce pollution in our local waterways and the Chesapeake Bay. I will be providing a report on that later this month.

Thanks for reading.