CAMBRIDGE MATTERS #1

Commissioner Steve Rideout

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Dear Readers:

What follows are my unofficial meeting notes for the last meeting of the current term of City Council. On January 6th at noon outside the courthouse, the new City Council will be installed, and a new chapter of the life and governance of the City of Cambridge will begin. While I will not be providing reports on every City Council meeting from now on, I plan to continue providing Cambridge Matters in a different way to help you, if you are interested, in knowing what is happening in our City and County governments as well as the school board and even the court system.

Our virtual meeting began at 6:00 p.m. with a moment of silence led by the Mayor and the Pledge of Allegiance led by Commissioner Hanson. The agenda was amended to remove items 12 and 14 and then adopted unanimously as amended on proper motion and second. These two matters were requests by Cambridge Waterfront Development, Inc. (CWDI) for transfer of the Port Property from the City to CWDI and for a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) regarding how the City would be compensated by CWDI for the sale of properties at Sailwinds as its development took place over the coming years.

There were no requests from the public, and Sandra Tripp-Jones made a short presentation updating everyone on the efforts of CWDI to hold public hearings and send out the survey that was developed for input on the development of Sailwinds. I have sent in my thoughts and would encourage everyone to do the same. Commissioner Sydnor asked if any notices had been sent to local churches. As they had not, Ms. Tripp-Jones indicated that they would be sent out to the churches as another way to gather community input.

The Consent calendar was then unanimously adopted on my motion and second of Commissioner Hanson. Item 8 was taken out for a brief explanation that was provided by Brian Roche. As a result, it was adopted separately on my motion and second by Commissioner Hanson.

Those items approved were as follows:

* The September 14, 2020 meeting minutes
* The October 13, 2020 meeting minutes
* The October 26, 2020 meeting minutes
* The November 9, 2020 meeting minutes
* The Official List of the City Council 2021 Meeting Dates
* The Official List of the City Legal Holidays for 2021
* The Main Street request to have the New Year’s Eve Boat Drop from 8:00 pm to 8:15 pm
* Setting a meeting on January 6, 2021 for the swearing in of the new City Council at the Courthouse on High Street.

There were no new ordinances for Introduction and First Reading, but there were two for second reading, public hearing, and adoption. The first Ordinance is 1169 which defines a “ditch”. After a public hearing at which no one asked to speak, it passed on my motion and second by Commissioner Hanson on a 5-0 vote. The second Ordinance is 1170 that amended the City’s Unified Development Code to allow for Community Center Multi-Family Dwellings as a permitted use with conditions in the Institutional Zoning District. This was proposed to correct an error in a prior amendment of the City Code so that the Senior living project under construction at Delmarva Community Services could move forward. After a public hearing at which no one spoke, upon Commissioner Sydnor’s motion and my second, it passed on a vote of 5-0.

Under Old Business came the approval of the members of the 2020 Cambridge Housing Task Force. On my motion and second by Commissioner Hanson, those nominated by each Commissioner and the Mayor were appointed on a vote of 5-0. The next matter was the request by CWDI for the transfer of the City Gateway property to CWDI as part of its preparation for the development of Sailwinds. As mentioned above the other two matters regarding CWDI had been removed from the agenda. The remaining request was approved on my motion and second by Commissioner Hanson on a vote of 5-0. The final matter under Old Business was the proposed MOU between the City and the Maces Lane Community Center nonprofit (MLCC).

An earlier proposed MOU had been removed from the agenda in mid-October to have a public work session to help the Commissioners have a better understanding of what the City was being asked to do. A work session was set up but did not take place, and the matter did not make it back on the agenda for the last meeting in October. As a result, thanks to the help of a board member at MLCC and Kevin Beverly, I began discussions to find out how an agreeable MOU could be developed that would benefit the City, its children and elderly, and MLCC, out of which came the proposed MOU on the agenda.

On my motion and second of Commissioner Hanson, after discussion by the Commissioners where I answered some questions about how the agreement was developed, the MOU was approved on a vote of 5-0. I have been advised by Rev. Keith Cornish, that the MLCC Board has agreed to enter into the MOU upon its presentation by the City once the Mayor has signed it.

Under New Business was a Joint Use Agreement and MOU among the County, City, and Maryland DNR to provide some funding for a fence at Cornish Park here in the City. The proposal anticipates a small payment by the City to complete the project with most of the cost being paid by a state grant. There were some questions about what the city might do with the offer of the owner of a property next to the park to give it to the City. That offer had been made some time ago, but negotiations had stalled due to the cost to the City to tear down the damaged building that stands there. The City Manager indicated that he would follow up to see what might be agreed to between the owner of the property and the city.

The next item was the request for a budget revision to allow for the payment of up to $225,000 to Delmarva Community Services toward a sidewalk that is being installed at their development on Chesapeake Ave. These monies come from impact fees that the city has in a segregated account. A year or so ago, City Council approved payment from those impact fees of up to $225,000, so I moved and Commissioner Sydnor seconded my motion to authorize the City Manager to disburse monies up to that amount upon presentation of an invoice from Delmarva Community Services.

The next matter to be addressed involved the computers that some of the commissioners had been using during their time in office. The request was that any Commissioner who wanted to do so could purchase their computer for $100. On Commissioner Sydnor’s motion and second by Commissioner Hanson, this request was approved on a vote of 5-0.

With the business of City Council being completed, the Mayor sought any public comment before moving to any reports from the Commissioners about any meetings they wanted to announce. There were no public comments. Commissioner Foster then indicated that she would continue working on the housing challenges at Bradford House to make it a safe and humane place to live. Chief Lewis reported that the Bike Rodeo that had been planned in November had to be postponed to the Spring but that they had received a $1,000 gift from Cambridge Care and Share to help with the purchase of bike lights for the children’s bikes.

Following those comments each Commissioner and the Mayor thanked one another, staff, staff leadership and the community for their efforts to improve the City of Cambridge. On Commissioner Sydnor’s motion with proper second the meeting was adjourned, and then there were no further meetings of the current City Council scheduled.

Until I write again on some other topic, please be safe, wear your mask, remain socially distanced, be vaccinated when the vaccine becomes available, and have a blessed and safe Christmas and New Year.

Thanks for reading.

Steve