**CAN’s unofficial notes on**

**Cambridge City Council Meeting of Feb. 28th, 2022**

Meeting started a little late – 6:10 with a moment of silence.

**Presentations by the Public:**

1. Dennis Carmichael on the Design of the Packing House. Mr. Carmichael described possible plans to the exterior of the Packing House on Dorchester Av. The plans include outside courtyard seating for a restaurant, two outdoor stages, park like settings and lighting on the two large smoke stacks. The area would also have the possibility of showing outdoor movies and music events. Costs would be between $100,000 and $200,000.
2. City Auditor: The City’s financial auditing firm, PKS &co. gave the City a clean opinion on the overall financial situation. This means they confirmed the bank accounts are correct and the different fund balances reported by the City are correct. They did notice some material weaknesses which is normal for any audit. They noted that the business accounts – the MUC and Sewer accounts were in the positive position (surplus) but the Marina fund was still in the negative due to the last payment on the redo of the Marina from 2008. The biggest news was that the City had a large surplus at the end of the end bringing the total reserves to $7.5 million of which $5.3 million is unencumbered.
3. Matt Pluta and Allen Girard of the Clean Water Advisory Committee reported on their efforts to clean up the River. Mr. Pluta said that they have gotten a grant to plant 300 trees in Cambridge and they were looking for areas in each ward to plant them. He has also gotten help to maintain 6 green areas in Cambridge and is organizing a clean-up effort this spring. Mr. Girard stated that Cambridge had a serious sewer problem with over one mile of faulty pipes that need to be replaced. Two things are happening – first, the sewer waste lines from homes are leaking directly into the river causing high levels of bacteria. 50% of the water sample tests taken last year showed bacteria levels were too high to swim in. Secondly, rain water was leaking into the waste water system causing the plant to clean already clean water. He also said that the sewer plant processing the waste had 9 overflows last year and that the City was fined by the State. His estimate to fix the sewer line and pumping station was $4.5 million. The pumping station was last updated in 1978.

**Consent Calendar**:

1. Minutes were passed with amendments
2. Shelia Jones requested permission to have a Garden Party Annual Fund raiser on May 14th at the 400 block of Race St.
3. Nancy Jackson requested permission for a Harriet Parade and Festival on August 6. From 12 to 2 on High St.

All were approved 5/0

**New Business:**

1. Amendment to the MOU for the Sanitary District #7 – The amendment is to add 14 new homes to the Sewer system for new homes. No cost to the City.
2. RFP for an Election Company – The Council approved 5/0 to move forward with hiring a company to operate the Mayoral election, if in fact we have an election.
3. Discussion on the Form of Government for the City. Although listed on the agenda there was no discussion on this topic until the end of the meeting when two Commissioners made statements.
4. A Housing report by Yvette Robinson was presented. She outlined several projects the City was working on, sometimes with Habitat for Humanity. The total number was 22 houses mainly around the Pine St. area. She also discussed fencing around Cornish Park which needed to be completed. The Council then got into a discussion on forming a “land bank” which would buy abandon houses and resell them. Ms. Robinson promised to look into establishing a “land bank” and will report back to the City.
5. ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funds – This is the $6million in Federal funds that the City received this year and will also get an additional $6 million this summer. While listed on the agenda, there was no discussion or comments made, it was just passed over. It should be noted that the City has already funded a fire truck and a $400,000 bonus for the Police out of this fund but over $4 million is still waiting to be allocated.

**Meetings:**

1. Planning and Zoning will meet at 6 on March 1 at Council Chambers
2. Historic Preservation Committee will meet at 6 on March 16th

**Public Comment:**

1. Ms. LaShon Foster asked why the Council was not following the City Charter and having an election for the Mayor and when can someone apply for the Job. She was told that the Public Comment section was not to period to ask questions but for the public to make statements.
2. Mr. Aaron made a statement that he was against the Charter Change to do away with the Mayor.
3. Mr. McFadden asked when is the Council going to discuss the ARPA allocation and was told that he should not ask questions but make a statement and the Commission President would call him to discuss the issue. Ms. Foster then asked to called about her questions and the Council agreed to call her also.

**Commissioners Comments:**

1. Commissioners Harrington, S. Cephas, and Malkus had no comments
2. Commissioner L. Cephas commented on rumors about secret meetings the Council was supposed to have in the past on discussing the Charter Change to do away with the Mayor position. She assured everyone that there were no secret meetings and that all meetings about the Charter change were done in open session with the public invited to observe.
3. Commissioner Roche then gave an emotional speech about the Council’s right to look into other forms of government. He stated that no decisions were yet made to change the present form the City government but the opportunity to discuss doing away with the Mayor’s position was opportune since it was now vacant.