

CAN's Unofficial Notes on the Cambridge City Council Meeting of 8/22/22

By Charles McFadden, President of CAN

The meeting started as usual at 6pm on Monday, August 22, 2022

- **Changes to the agenda** – dropped the discussion of the “white paper” on utility issues for the second meeting in a row. Also postponed discussion of the City Manager’s priorities for FY23. The Council added an appointment to the Planning and Zoning Commission.

- **Approved the Consent agenda**, 5/0 to allow for a Choptank Heritage Skipjack Race on 9/24/22 and to have a “Youth Night” on 9/3/22 sponsored by the Greater Mt. Olive Gospel Baptist Church.

- **Had the first reading of Ordinance 1204** which lays out the rules on short term rentals. It is a lengthy document which states that anyone renting their house out for **more than 3 days** has to follow. The ordinance states that the home has to have certain safety items, pay city taxes, is open to City inspection and many more guidelines. No public comment was allowed.

- **Had the second reading of Ordinance 1197** which changes real estate contracts in the Historic District to include a written statement in the listing and sales contract of a home in the Historic District. This change will ensure that buyers know in advance that they are required to follow the rules of the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC). This ordinance was heavily revised from the First Reading to include the listing as well as the contract. This change was made after the Council allowed public comment at the first reading. The Council allowed no public comment on the amended Ordinance and voted 5/0 to approve.

- **The Council approved 4 appointments** to Cambridge Waterfront Development Board

- **The Council approved the appointment Dr. Stafford** to the Planning and Zoning Board.

- **The City Manager gave a report on his support of giving \$450,000 to Hyatt** development group to build one of the three bridges on their private road. The money which was not included in the FY23 budget would come from the ARPA funds

(\$150,000) and the General fund (up to \$75,000 each year for 4 years). The Council asked if this was a private road maintained by the Hyatt homeowners and the Hyatt and the City Manager said it was not a State, County or City road but privately owned. The Council was favorably inclined and asked the City Manager to continue developing an agreement by a vote of 5/0. No public comment was allowed.

- **The City Manager introduced an item from the Gran Fondo New York (GFNY) cycling event** to hold a cycling race in Cambridge on September 24th or October 1. GFNY wanted a three year commitment and the City would have to pay \$125,000 over three years. This amount **could** be offset by the State and County participation. The Council was concerned about making a 3 year commitment without assurances from the State and County and asked the City Manager to draw up a new document that would allow for the City to back out if the State and County funding did not come though. The Council was in favor of the event, if the funding could be worked out.

- **The City Manager introduced a paper on the use of the old police radio tower.** The new FM NPR radio station wants to use the tower as well as the proposed new Tubman radio station. The Council approved of the City Manager moving forward with working out agreements.

- **The Council had a discussion on the reappointment of all the members of the Cambridge Historic Preservation Commission.** For some unknown reason, all the members 3 year terms expired at the same time. The Council fixed the problem by appointing two of the members to a 3 year term and 3 to a 2 year term.

- **Upcoming Meetings:**

- ARPA non-profit review Committee, August 25, Council Chambers
- Planning and Zoning Commission , Sept. 6th , Council Chambers.

- **Public Comment: only one speaker** – Charles McFadden, President, CAN who made the following comments:

- On ordinance 1204 dealing with short term leasing; two items\
 - The effective date should be after this year's Ironman.
 - The ordinance should exempt Ironman and Eagleman from the 3 day limit. Many homeowners get 4 day listings for these events don't want to go through all of restrictions included in the Ordinance which include application to the City, specialize safety equipment, payment of room tax and possible City Inspections. Citizens will either cut short the visits to the City or not do it at all which is not in the City's interest.

- Questioned why there was no public comment allowed on the first or second readings of the two ordinances at the Council meeting.
- On the GFNY cycling race, stated that CAN was generally in favor of such events promoting the City but requested that the City explore changing the date so as not to be so close to the Ironman Competition. Having the two races so close wares out the volunteers needed, increases frustration at street closures and makes it hard on people who rent out the homes. Suggested spring would be better.
- Made a very favorable comment on the City Manager’s priority list for FY 23 and suggested he add a grant writer to help the City get needed funds especially in light of the \$20 million needed to fix the sewer system. During the Council Comments later in the meeting, the Council asked the City Manager about this idea and he stated that he was using the Management Analyst position to do this and she was doing a good job. This seemed to satisfy the Council.
- Praised the reappointment of the HPC members. This group has calmed down the process and added needed stability to the system. Looking at the Historic District over the years, it has done a wonderful job of improving the look of our housing.
- Finally, there were comments made on the \$450,000 going to the developers and Hyatt for a bridge on private property. There were many issues raised. Why didn’t the Council ask how much profit the developers were going to make after building 651 high end houses? What assurances where there that the developer was going to build all these homes. Why was the Hyatt picked to get special treatment; are other developments and Companies in Cambridge eligible to get hundreds of thousands for their needs on their private property? The stated economic purpose in the proposal to the City is “The additional residents from these new homes will support the Hyatt Resort’s food and beverage business operations as well as drive additional demand for room revenue to support the Resort during the off season”. There is no mention of helping the City, just one private developer helping a private company but asking for City funds to do so. The \$75,000 a year from the general fund could get a grant writer or increase pay at the police department or even fund a new engine.

- **Yvette Robinson, the City’s housing specialist**, made a presentation on the improving condition of the housing stock within the City and the improvements made at Cornish Park. She also talked about the upcoming art work at the Park. A very positive report.

Meeting adjourned – Commissioners went into a closed session on real property issues.