**CAN’s Unofficial Notes on the**

**Cambridge City Council 2023 Legislative Priorities**

**By Charles McFadden, President of CAN**

The Mayor and City Council met in a special legislative secession with our State Senator Elect Johnny Mautz, Delegates Sheree Sample-Hughes, Christopher Adams, Tom Hutchinson and State and Local Advisor, Paul Ellington to discuss the upcoming State Legislative session and the City’s priorities. City Manager Tom Carroll laid out 6 priorities for the City as follows:

1. Pine Street Redevelopment – The City’s top priority is the continued redevelopment of the Pine St area. The Council thanked the State officials for the over $6 million in grants that the State has already given to this project, however, more is needed. Mr. Carroll went over several projects that were underway but not yet completed; he also noted that the City was building 12 new homes on vacant lots. The City Manager stressed to the State officials the importance of the new Cambridge land grant program which will be the first in the State. A land grant program buys vacant, rundown houses and either demolishes them or rehabs them to bring them back on the market. The program improves the neighborhood and increases the tax base. The problem noted by Mr. Carroll is having enough funds in the program to make a noticeable difference. All the State officials asked good questions and seemed very supportive of the City’s approach.
2. Cambridge Harbor (the old hospital site), encompassing approximately 30 acres along the river, is being developed but the City would like help from the State to fund the infrastructure needed for development. The State officials made several positive comments, but then the conversation turned to the recently closed fishing pier. While plans are still uncertain on what to do about the pier – funding for demolition is being considered – there was quite an interest in rebuilding the existing pier or building a new fishing pier at Cambridge Harbor. The fishing pier is quite an attraction and is very popular in the region.
3. Historic Cambridge City Hall on Gay St. was discussed. The building was vacated in 2008 because of mold, lead paint and deteration of some of the foundation. Mr. Carroll estimated that it would take $8 million to restore the building, which he would like to do over a four-year period. This building is in the center of Cambridge and is designated as a Historic building. The State Officials wanted more details on the cost and a timeline for the project but seemed very positive of the effort.
4. Water and Sewer Infrastructure. The City has plans for a $20 million project spread over 5 years to replace the sewer lines and pumping stations. In 2022, Cambridge had 9 overflows which sent raw sewage into the City and was fined $20,000 by the State. The City has raised water and sewer rates for the next couple of years to pay for the bonds needed to finance the project but asked the State to help because polluting the Choptank River not only affects Cambridge and Dorchester County, but the entire region. Again, the State legislators seemed very positive on the City’s efforts.
5. Youth Service Enhancements and Improvements. It was noted that Dorchester County was last in the State for investments in this area. The City was asking the State to increase its support and services in Cambridge and the County. There was a lengthy discussion by both City and State officials on the issues around this problem and the need to address it from multiple fronts.
6. The Hyatt Mix-use Housing project. This is the high-end development of over 500 houses on the Hyatt Resort property. The developer is having lots of problems with the site and asked the City for help in putting in sewer, water and electrical infrastructure and to take over maintenance of the roads. The State officials seemed aware of the problems but asked for more information.

Overall, the meeting, which was the first of its kind for Cambridge, was very positive. All the State legislators seemed aware of the issues and were very positive in trying to push them at the State level. They did ask the City for papers on each of the requests which would include specific requests for funding by year and a timeline for the overall project. This was a very good first step and, hopefully, will become an annual event.