

CAN's Unofficial Notes on the Cambridge City Council Meeting of 7/11/2023

The meeting started at the usual time but not at the usual place. The City Council Chamber on Gay St. is undergoing some renovations, so the Council meetings have been moved to the Empowerment Center on Pine St. for the month of September. Unfortunately, for listeners such as myself, the sound system did not pick up the Mayor and several Council members' comments. Also, the camera did not pick up the public or the screen, which again was unfortunate since there were two presentations with slides which could not be seen. That said, the following is a summary of what I could hear.

Pam Gregory, the CEO of United Way of the Lower Eastern Shore, made a lengthy and depressing presentation on poverty in Maryland, Dorchester County and the City. She outlined that her organization follows a combination of the populations below the poverty level and barely above the poverty level. Her charts showed that these two income levels make up 38% of Maryland's population, 45% of Dorchester County's population, and a whopping 57% of the population in Cambridge. Cambridge is one of the worst cities for "asset limited" populations in the State. Ms. Gregory showed several other slides illustrating that Cambridge is at the bottom levels of income however you cut the figures. She recommended that the Council focus on job development and job training. The Council members had no comments.

Lisa Molock of Maryland Moms Demand Action's Local Eastern Shore Group, spoke next by Zoom and was very difficult to hear. Her focus was on gun violence. She spoke for several minutes asking the Council to do more to curb the gun violence in the City. Ms. Molock was very complimentary of the City's Police force, but thought the problem was larger than just police involvement. The Council members made no comments on the presentation

The Council's next action was approval of two Ordinances (#1228 and #1230). Ordinance 1228 is the revised curfew regulations for the City. This ordinance reflects the Mayor's effort to revise the old curfew to eliminate the monetary penalties on the parents of young teenagers and replace them with social workers who will try to work with the families to overcome the problems which allow

children to be out late at night unsupervised. While not perfect, this approach tries to correct the core problem instead of adding to more family difficulties by imposing fines. Since this was the first reading there was no discussion and no vote. Ordinance #1230 dealt with the acquisition of abandoned or rundown properties.

The Public Comment section saw four speakers who spoke about poverty in Cambridge; praised the police for their efforts to do community policing; claimed there are only 25 kids who are doing a lot of the harm and are not held accountable; and finally, and maintained that there should be better tracking of the curfew to see if it is having an effect.

I could not hear any Council members' comments except for those of Brian Roche, Ward 5, who gave an impassioned speech about not crowding low-income people together in one area but spreading everyone out and mixing up the income levels though out the city. He said this is the most important issue for the city especially considering that the Hearn Building on Race Street is slated to have 44 low-income apartments at a cost of \$20 million. Each unit will cost \$450,000.

Meetings:

1. Ward Realignment Committee to be held on Sept.14th at 6 pm at the Empowerment Center, 615B Pine St.
2. Historic Preservation Commission meeting on Sept. 20th at 6 pm at the Empowerment Center
3. Council Work Session to review registrations for non-owner-occupied property, including rental registration, short term rental registration, vacant property registration and more to be held on Sept 25th from 5-6 pm at the Empowerment Center.
4. City Council regular meeting to be held on Sept. 25th at 6 pm at the Empowerment Center.
5. Planning and Zoning Commission meeting to be held on Oct 3rd at 6pm at Council Chambers, although the location may change depending on Construction scheduling.
6. Traffic and Safety Committee meeting to be held virtually on Oct 12th at 1pm via <https://meet.google.com/etm-gcko-xxp?hs=224> .