

CAN's Unofficial Notes on the City Council Meeting of October 23, 2023

The meeting started as usual at 6 pm with a moment of silence for those lost in Israel and Ukraine. The Council then approved the Consent Agenda, which included past minutes, upcoming social events and ARPA funding updates, but did not approve appointments to Arts & Entertainment Committee because the Committee had not yet been established. The Council then voted to establish the Committee, but Lajan Cephas opposed the appointments, saying she wanted a chance to look over the responsibilities of the just-established Committee. The other members agreed, and the appointments were postponed until a later date.

The Council went on to approve a number of resolutions as follows:

1. Resolution #2023-02 changed the Ward boundaries of Cambridge to comply with the Court order to have equal populations in Wards (within 5%).
2. Ordinance #1231 authorized acquisition of property at 645 Washington St.
3. Resolution #2023-01 made 85 amendments to the City Charter of Cambridge, including the following:
 - a. Moving the voting time from November to May.
 - b. Changing residency requirements for Commissioners.
 - c. Allowing Council to appoint a Commissioner in lieu of an election if a vacancy occurs after the second year of a term. This resolution was amended by Lajan Cephas to allow virtual, as well as physical, attendance of Council Members to be counted for quorum purposes. No public comment was allowed on the amendment. The amended resolution passed 5/0 and will take effect in 40 days.
4. Three Ordinances #1226, 1227, 1228 dealt with overlay zoning for the YMCA property on 201 Talbot St. Public comments by Judd Vickers for CAN and Robbie Gill for the YMCA were in favor of the three ordinances.
5. Ordinance # 1230 authorized acquisition of property at 701 Lincoln Terrace.
6. Resolution # 23-11 allowed Cambridge to accept grant funding from the Maryland Historical Trust.

There was a lengthy discussion on whether or not the Council should support Commissioner's Roche's letter to the State regarding the Hearn building.

Commissioner Roche pointed out that the City did not need more low-income housing especially in the downtown area. In addition, he said each unit would cost \$500,000 and it would be cheaper to give people a house free of charge. He also stated the developer had no responsibility for the operation of the building after construction, so the City would be responsible for any problems that developed. The Council, led by Commissioner Lajan Cephas, rejected supporting Commissioner Roche's letter and instead wanted a meeting with the developer and the State to talk about ways to make the project work. The Council voted 4-1 against supporting Commissioner Roche's letter.

Upcoming Event: Halloween, Tuesday October 31, 2023, 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm

Upcoming Meetings

1. Planning and Zoning Commission – November 7, 6:00 pm, Council Chambers
2. Traffic and Safety Committee – November 9, 1:00 pm, virtual meeting accessible at meet.google.com/etm-gcko-xxp
3. City Council, November 13, 6:00 pm, Council Chambers
4. Historic Preservation Commission – November 16, 6:00 pm, Council Chambers

The meeting adjourned at 7:12 pm.