

CAN's Unofficial Notes on the Cambridge City Council Meeting of 2/12/2024

By Charles McFadden, President, CAN

The Council was in closed session from 5pm to 6pm and shared no information about the content of that meeting.

Mayor Rideout opened the regular Council meeting with a prayer and the oath of allegiance to the United States which took until 6:08 pm. He then proceeded to the agenda approval. Commissioner Spuddy Cephas requested that item 10 – the second reading of Ordinance 1232 which deals with protocol for the city's appointment and removal of citizens to certain (unnamed) non-profits be taken off the agenda and tabled indefinitely. The Council agreed with no discussion. *(Editors note: this ordinance has been on and off the agenda for 4 months but since there can be no public input during the first reading, one is left to wonder what the intention of the ordinance is. The Council cut it off with no discussion, so we will remain in the dark as to the intent of this ordinance or why it was cancelled.)*

The Council moved on with approving the consent agenda with no discussion of any item. The agenda included approval of the past meeting minutes, approvals of public events and the award of the contract for construction of the Cannery Park Events Pavilion (no dollar amount or discussion at the meeting).

There was no old or new business on the agenda, so Mayor Rideout listed upcoming meetings and asked for public comment of which there was none. The meeting moved to Department Head comments. Police Chief Todd made an announcement about the upcoming Citizens Police Academy to be held every Wednesday in May – applications are being taken now.

The Council moved on to their comments. Commissioners Roche, L Cephias, and Harrington had no comments. Commissioner S. Cephias congratulated Commissioner Roche on being appointed to the “Critical Area Committee” by the Governor, and he also asked for volunteers in the 4th Ward to serve on the Planning and Zoning Committee. Commissioner Atkiss made a passionate speech about alcohol and drug abuse and the difficult recovery process people dealing with these issues face. She stated citizens need to recognize these problems and support individuals and programs in the city which are trying to deal with them.

The meeting which started at 6:08 ended ten minutes later at 6:18. The Council then went back into closed session after laughing about how quick the meeting had been.

Editor’s note: To me, Council meetings are the primary method of informing the public as to the positions and opinions of the Council members. Speed should not be the objective; illumination of the issues should be. As mentioned above, the Council did not explain what Ordinance 1232 was or why it was terminated. Also on the Consent agenda was a contract to build a music pavilion at the Packing House. The cost of this pavilion, which is \$624,500, can be found buried deep in the attachments to the agenda. No one mentioned or questioned the cost, no one asked why we were building two outside music venues (the other one is at Cambridge Harbor) or why the Packing House is having trouble filling its spaces. It also should be noted that our two new music sites are outside the Pine St. area which historically has been the center and heart of Cambridge music. No one asked why.

Maybe there are good reasons for the Council’s actions on these issues but getting through the agenda without discussion and laughing about it should not be the Council’s objective.