

# **CAN's Unofficial Notes on the Cambridge City Council Meeting of March 25, 2024**

The Mayor convened the meeting at 6:07 with all Commissioners in attendance. After approval of the agenda, the Mayor introduced Dr. Jymil Thompson, Interim School Superintendent, and DCPS for a presentation.

Dr. Thompson, who is the interim superintendent of the Dorchester Co school system, gave a very upbeat talk on the status of the schools. Dr. Thompson, who just started in September as Assistant Superintendent, laid out four areas of concentration, as follows:

1. Attendance – the school system has 187 constantly absent elementary school children, 120 in the Middle Schools and 102 in high school. These children have more than school issues and each one will need to be addressed individually.
2. Discipline – 505 elementary school children had aggressive actions against adults and other school mates. The numbers go down in Middle and High School but are still way too high.
3. Instruction – needs to be improved for the whole system. Special targeted training to the teachers and elimination of non-teaching responsibilities by the teachers are needed so they can focus on teaching.
4. Graduation Rates – overall 80% graduate from our two High Schools.

Dr. Thompson pointed out that Dorchester Co ranked 23<sup>rd</sup> out of 24 counties and he wants to move up.

The Mayor then introduced Thomas Hurley, FOP Lodge 27 President, Regarding the “In Line of Duty Death Insurance Policy” proposal. The current policy for the police department is to give double the salary to the family in case of death in the line of duty. Mr. Hurley pointed out that a current private makes around \$60,000 so their family would receive \$120,000 less State and Federal taxes which would only net \$78,000. His proposal to the Council is to buy an insurance policy for \$1 million for each officer which is not subjected to taxation. In addition, the policy covers death by suicide, some deaths by illness and would

cover bodily injuries such as loss of limbs, eyes or such. The cost of this insurance would be \$34,000 a year for the entire police force. The Dorchester Co Sheriffs Dept changed to this system last year.

The Mayor asked the City Manager to look into the insurance issue and make a recommendation to the Council.

The Council then approved the Consent agenda which included past Council meeting minutes, proclamations and approval of citizens events.

The Council approved (by a vote of 4/0) Ordinance 1234 which deals with setting up the new Cambridge Land Bank funded at \$1 million dollars. The purpose of the Ordinance is to acquire, manage, maintain and repurpose blighted, abandoned and distressed properties in the City. There was no public comment on the ordinance.

The Council approved (by a vote of 5/0) Ordinance 1235 concerning the 2025 City personal and real property tax rates which will remain at the same level as 2024. There was no public comment on the ordinance.

Public Comment – several people spoke

- Chuck McFadden, President of CAN spoke on Cambridge Harbor and made several recommendations to the Council as follows:
  - The Council should hire its own independent financial analyst to review the proposals of CWDI.
  - The Council should have regular reports at open Council meetings on Cambridge Harbor from the Finance Director, Planning Director and from the Director of Public Works.
  - The Council should have an Open Meeting on Cambridge Harbor and take question from the public on the following:
    - Why is CWDI setting itself up as a permanent agency?
    - Who reviews and approves the CWDI budgets to ensure that there is no wasteful spending.
    - Why is there a need for 2 marinas, 2 outdoor amphitheaters and 2 maintenance groups in a small city like Cambridge
    - Why are we putting a non-profit, non taxpaying organization like the YMCA on the premier lot in the development?

- Why did the YMCA spend its AARP money given to it by the City for improvements on architectural plans to move.
  - Why are there no tenants after 5 years of CWDI?
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- Canella Turner asked about the new stop signs, and she was opposed to taking out the traffic lights. Mr. Carroll responded that the City had done a traffic study and these were the recommendations. He also stated that it was a pilot program for 3 months, and that the City was looking for feedback.
  - Sheldon Hudson spoke to the council about his firm which focuses on transitions and offered his help in finding a new City Manager
  - Tom Hanna thanked Tom Carroll for all the work and accomplishments he had in the past 2 years. He also endorsed the presentation by Mr. McFadden and finally stated he liked the stop signs.

The City Manager noted in an attachment to the agenda that Code Enforcement walks would occur as follows:

April 1-5 areas of Douglass St. Cosby, Eldon and Mimosa

April 8-12 areas of Stone Boundary and Wood Duck Drive

April 15 -19 areas of Willis, Pine and West End

April 22-23 areas of Willis, Brian Circle, Lance Dr. and Wood Duck

He also noted in his attachment that 100 suspected rental registration letters would go out soon. (There are approximately 500 unregistered rentals in Cambridge.)

The meeting ended with the Commissioners and the Mayor thanking Mr. Carroll for all his hard work.

The meeting ended at 7:12 pm.

Chuck McFadden, President, CAN