

CAN's Unofficial Notes on the Cambridge City Council Meeting- April 22, 2024

The Mayor started the meeting at 6:00 with four of the Council members present and Lajan Cephas attending by video. The Council approved the consent agenda and then went straight to the Ordinances for first readings. They are:

1. Ordinance 1236 which involves buying four lots on Douglas St and one on Park Lane for \$52,000. Second reading and public comment will be May 13th.
2. Ordinance 1237 which amends the City Zoning codes for Medical Cannabis production and dispensing facilities to be allowed in certain zones. Second reading and public comment will be May 13th.
3. Ordinance 1238 which is for the purchase of 2.3 acres at 2 Queen St for \$465,000 and an additional sum of \$100,000 to take down the radio tower. The property has an old, abandoned radio station that has flooded many times and half of the property is designated wet lands and cannot be built on. The second reading and public comment will be May 13th.

The Council then moved on to Ordinance 1233 for a second reading and Council comment. This ordinance is about rezoning 3 parcels of land on Roosevelt Ave. After a positive vote on adopting revised findings, the Council voted 3 against and 2 for, so the Ordinance failed for the second time.

The Council then considered life insurance for the Police Department, as brought up at the last Council meeting. Ina Holden, Director of Administrative Services, led the discussion stating that the City now pays \$25K to police officers who die in the line of duty and the State pays \$100K. The City was going to look into raising the City amount, but she wanted to note that the City has increased benefits for all employees in the last two years, as follows:

1. Paid parental leave. Full time and permanent part time employee now get 12 weeks of paid leave for the mother and 6 weeks for the father.
2. Supplemental Compensation for Health benefits for employees who have partners with health insurance that covers them. Employees with their own insurance (not provided by the City) receive \$1,000.
3. Medical Emergency Leave, which allows for City employees to voluntarily donate their vacation or sick leave to follow employees who have medical problems and have run out of their own paid leave.
4. The City now provides a Wellness Program where each employee is entitled to a Physical, Dental, and Eye appointment each year.

In the New Business section, the Council received an update from City Engineer Bucky Jackson on the intersection of Stone Bounty Road and Rt 16, which has had several accidents. Mr. Jackson reported that the State was still studying the issue.

The Council then received a report from City Manager Tom Carroll on an inventive new program which he brought to the City. The City has set aside \$200K for sidewalk replacement. Under this program, the City has set up a master contract with Shore Construction to get a better rate on concrete work. When homeowners are cited by the City for a bad sidewalk or partial sidewalk, they can use Shore Construction for the work and pay the money back to the City through a zero-interest loan repaid over 5 years via their real estate tax. The money that comes in though the increased real estate tax goes back into the fund, so it is a continuous revolving fund.

In the Public Comment section, John Hanson, President of the Longboat Homeowners Association talked about two things. First, he was upset with the City for forcing the homeowners who wanted to plant trees in their front yards to plant trees in the grass strips between the sidewalk and the curb. Now the trees have buckled the sidewalks. He feels the City should be responsible for correcting the problem. Secondly, he was upset about the backup of raw sewage coming out of the manhole covers during heavy rains. He estimates that it happens 5 to 9 times a year and throws out 104,000 to 400,000 gallons of raw sewage on the streets and lawns of the community. The City Manager acknowledged the problem and said that had put funds into the FY25 budget to increase the capacity of the pumping station.

In the Department Head reports, Chief Todd talked about the new flag football program the Police Department is sponsoring. He stated that 140 kids had signed up for the program which starts this Saturday. He also noted that 16 people had signed up for the Citizens Police Academy. The Academy shows citizens how police go about their business and gives a better understanding about police work. Chief Todd should be commended for his "Community Policing" approach.

In the Commissioners comment section, Laura Atkiss noted that New Beginnings was starting up and could use volunteers and money. Please contact Ms. Atkiss for more information. Commissioner Lajan Cephas said she supported the Mayor in his announcement about changing CWDI. Commissioner Spuddy Cephas joined in with his support. Commissioner Brian Roche supported CWDI's sale of 2.6 acres of water front to Yacht Maintenance and the proposed building of a hotel. He said both projects should be supported by the Council.

The meeting ended at 6:53

Charles McFadden, President, CAN