



Public Hearing/Legislative Minutes October 7, 2024

Location: Garland Hayward Youth Center
30660 Rosa Parks Dr.
6:30 PM

- I.** Call to Order 6:30 PM
approximately 25-30 members of the community were in attendance. The following legislative members were also present
Commissioners: Lionel Frederick, Shelley Johnson, Ellis Jones, Joey Gardner, Marion Polk,
Town Hall depts: Jay Prouse, Joe Mangini, Izabelle Wilk, Nye Milbourne, Dionte Cottman
Police Dept: Chief Wink
Town lawyer: Christopher Smith.
- II.** Pledge of Allegiance
- III.** Moment of Silence
- IV.** Motion to Accept Agenda- Commissioner Polk motioned, Commissioner Johnson second.
- V.** Motion to Accept September Minutes- Commissioner Gardner motioned, Commissioner Polk second
- VI.** Legislative Action- Resident Ms Perry stood up and interrupted to ask if citizens would be allowed to voice their concerns over the budget before any voting took place. Commissioner Frederick said no, not until the end of the meeting and that they were moving forward. There was an outburst from a gentleman in the audience, Commissioner Frederick made a motion to have the man removed from the audience if he didn't remain quiet. Commissioner Gardner interjected and said he thinks other commissioners and



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residents should be allowed to speak before voting. Commissioner Frederick says they need to stick to the agenda. Commissioner Gardner makes a motion to allow citizens to speak, Commissioner Frederick responded that he wants the town to move forward, prosper and continue in a lawful manner. If he would be allowed to speak he will let everyone talk but the interruptions are unacceptable. Resident Ms Perry asked respectfully why they were not allowed to speak before like they were before the cannabis meeting. Commissioner Frederick did not respond but proceeded to the first agenda item.

A) Motion to Approve American Rescue Plan Final Budget

B) Consideration of Resolution #2024-09 "A Resolution to Allocate Funds from The American Rescue Plan to Provide Elderly Homeowners and Veterans with a property tax Reimbursement"

Commissioner Gardner motioned, Commissioner Polk second, all other commissioners voted "aye" to approve this resolution. Commissioner Gardner said he feels this program has been well received. He would like it noted that this program came from ARP funds when it comes time for next years budget. Commissioner Frederick wanted it highlighted in the minutes that he was the one that introduced the proposal for the Elderly Tax Credit.

C) Consideration of Resolution # 2024-10 "A Resolution to Allocate Funds from The American Rescue Plan to Provide Economic Stimulus Assistance Grants for the Business Community, To Respond to Public Health Emergencies, And to Meet Urgent Community Needs Because Of The Continuing Economic Impact Of The Covid-19 Pandemic"



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*Commissioners Frederick, Commissioner Johnson, Commissioner Jones voted "aye" and Commissioner Gardner and Commissioner Polk voted "nay". The resolution passed.

Comments:

Attorney Christopher Smith spoke, he wanted to clarify that according to "code" a budget needs to balance. He also explained about voting on agenda items and what a conflict of interest is according to the "code" Commissioner Gardner asked for him to explain it more simply. Mr Smith replied that "if the business entity will profit from any decision you make, it is in fact a conflict of interest". Commissioner Frederick added that Commissioner Gardner had used funds during covid.

There was a lot of back and forth but the following were some highlighted points made:

Commissioner Frederick:

He described which projects will benefit from this money.

He stated that details of the budget were not released to the residents. He says the budget will provide revenue for minorities, specifically African Americans, who were affected most during Covid. He explained that with the "racial wealth gap disparity" this money is the least we can do to help minority businesses. He feels like every time there is money it never seems to get to where it needs to be and in this case it will go where its needed most.

Commissioner Gardner:

Explained how he recused himself from voting on prior Covid



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programs that he himself had used during the pandemic for his own photography business. He said that he believes the town needs a “Nest Egg” and that between the two budget options given they both had allocations for the same grants just at different levels. With the town budget having a surplus and Commissioner Fredericks budget having a deficit. He asked where we were going to get the money to cover the deficit when we need to have a balanced budget. He also stated that as commissioners ‘we cannot participate in the program’ because it’s a conflict of interest.

Commissioner Frederick:

Both budget proposals reduce the towns deficit, its exaggeration and hyperbole that the town budget will have a surplus. He also would like respect while he is speaking, the town needs to be run professionally. The two proposals are essentially equal except for the money for minorities. The town is just trying to suppress minority business and the racial wealth gap disparity.

Resident Ms Perry: citizens were not allowed to speak

Male resident made multiple outbursts

Commissioner Gardner: any other commissioners have thoughts?

Commissioner Johnson: Work sessions have been unproductive since there are so many outbursts.

Commissioners Frederick, Johnson and Jones motioned to have resident making outbursts removed from the building by Chief Wink. Resident was removed.



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E) Consideration of Resolution #2024-11 "A Resolution to Establish A "No Parking Zone" Along Brittingham Lane Behind the Royal Farms Which Is a Public Street"

*Commissioners voted unanimously "aye" to approve this resolution.

VII. Department Head Report

Jay Prouse Town Manager:

Attended various UMES meetings, Somerset County

Commissioners meetings, Millard Tawes Clam Bake and Signed Peraton agreement along with Commissioner Frederick and Commissioner Johnson

Chief Wink Police Dept:

Attended Health Wellness meeting, Movie night in the park, Seagull Century Ride, UMES planning meeting for homecoming in Nov. They had 653 calls to service. Another movie night and Trunk or Treat coming up in Oct. They are soliciting for new officers.

Dionte Cottman Public Works:

84.63 tons of trash. They have hung Veterans Banners, trimmed over grown fields, unclogged storm drains and trimmed branches hit by passing trucks on Manokin St. near the highway.

Nye Milbourne Finance Dept:

All accounts not pd by 9/30 received a penalty fee. Residents can now process payments online via our website. Deposits for this month totaled \$680,000. FY 24 revenue report was submitted along with budget request.



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VIII. Community and Family Safety Alliance

Robert Hazir (Bobby Wilk) read aloud a letter that was submitted to the Commissioners directly after it was done being read. They will be sponsoring the cost of the community impact study that was requested at the Cannabis Meeting to help alleviate any cost to the town.

IX. Citizens Comments:

Antioch Church Pastor: listed events upcoming they are having. Stated that he attends most of the work sessions and legislative meetings. He is concerned that citizens who should be able to have a voice and be able to speak before meetings. He is invested in the community and we need to support business that bring people here. He doesn't understand how you have a surplus that's investable with one budget why would you want to have a budget with a deficit. He felt the Commissioners were dismissive to opinions of residents and thought that they would have liked to let residents speak. He appreciates all that the commissioners and town managers and just wished they would have been more receptive.

Resident: Its irresponsible to continue this way. There is no good reason that there is no ethics board. We are being led down a path that can lead to civil litigation. Process applications now, its tantamount that we have an ethics board. We need to not have personal agendas. We need to not take the past into our future.



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Resident: Somerset landing resident

says they pay double taxes, she was not happy. She stated that there are Robert Rules for meetings for a reason and that everyone should've had a chance to speak.

Commissioner Frederick proceeded without acknowledging her comment and reiterated the racial wealth gap disparity and that the issue was white vs black.

Dale Parker owner of CROPA station: Very respectfully says that more people have been allowed to talk than used to be. He spoke about his upcoming events. He said the deficits have been around for a very long time. The money we have been getting here is much lower than other areas. This money will bring more people into our town, we must invest in business. The ARP money doesn't usually trickle down to the businesses. Let's lift the community up together. He wants it to be fair to everyone and we need to bring our community up and support our town so everyone can prosper.

Resident Warner Sumptner: asked "Did you go to the Ethics committee before you voted?" "Why did you ignore the town attorney?"

Commissioner Fredrick did not comment and asked if there were any other comments.

Resident Ms Perry: repeated that the town attorney said that it is the commissioner's duty to provide a balanced budget for the community and to remove themselves from voting on things that have a conflict of interest. The entire town is their responsibility



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not just the African Americans. She stated she called the States Ethic Board and if they vote and participate on these matters they can be prosecuted by not passing balanced budget and not recusing themselves. She asked that the commissioners do not pass Budget option 2, its robbing peter to pay paul.

Resident Lynelle Pugh: multiple business owner downtown, she shared a story about her recent brekins at her place of business and how they have affected her. She feels the town needs to "feed the pig" so to speak and save money.

Resident: Ethics committee being vacant worries him and commissioners seeking to gain from these votes worries him. In the absence of the Ethics committee do you not think you should recuse yourselves? Shouldn't there be a better process since we all know the previous bad history in our town? He hopes the commissioners can come together. He had applied 3 monthes ago and hasn't heard anything.

Commissioner Fredrick wanted to highlight the bonuses of @\$400,000 by previous town employees, the town was shut down for almost a yr. We need to cut frivolous spending and frivoulous spending stops with him. The Ethics committee will be filled, we are working on it.

Resident Warner Sumptner: he asked "Ethics committee was also discussed at May/June meeting correct?"

There was a lot of grumbling in the room in general, Commissioner Frederick banged the gavel and moved on to Commissioner comments.



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X. Commissioners Comments

Commissioner Gardner: Ethics/Election committee were in place in June. Budget proposal was passed but the numbers will put us in a deficit and we have to stay within the law. It will get sticky if any commissioner takes the grant.

Commissioner Johnson: Wanted to clarify that she is a successful business owner here in Princess Anne and an active community advocate. She is very blessed and will be fine, she doesn't get one dime from the town. Her vote was solely based on needs she sees every day. She attended many events in the community last month as a commissioner. She works with the police as a prevention coordinator and is the leader of the pilot Prevention Club Program at Washington High.

Commissioner Polk: he participated in the Seagull Rider event and attended the LESMA dinner last month. He wants to move old news to the past and move forward.

Commissioner Jones: He said someone has embezzled money in the past and the town should be better off at this point.

Commissioner Frederick: he has worked on reduction of taxes for the last ten years.

XI. Work Session Agenda Items

Resident: asked about looking into the joint Somerset County Economic Development and UMES initiative. Commissioner Gardner recommends that we get the Town manager to look into this and set up a presentation.



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Commissioner Gardner: recommends Ethics board, all applications read and do interviews

CROPA owner: Define clearly the boards, their purpose, their vacancies, their terms and how do we get them filled asap.

Antioch Pastor: Vacancies at Manokin park board that he applied for months ago, Lynelle Pugh said that Carrie Samis is the head of that and she will contact her and work with him.

XII. Adjournment: Meeting was adjourned at 8:03PM

XIII. Closed Session

Parts of this meeting may be closed due to Real Estate or Personnel Matters