



Town Council Meeting Minutes Monday, October 23, 2023

Present: Mayor Jeffrey Schomisch, Vice Mayor Jeannette Ripley, Councilmembers Joe Williams, Mike Walker, Glenda Johnson, Kathleen Walker, and Todd Over. Also in attendance, Town Manager Rommel Pazmino, Chief of Police Robert Liberati, Town Assistant Jackie Villela, Town Treasurer Fredy Aguilar, and Code Enforcement Officer Michael Thompson.

Call to Order: Mayor Schomisch called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and asked all to rise for the Pledge of Allegiance

Approval of the Agenda: Mayor Schomisch entertained a motion to approve the amended agenda (No code enforcement report, under new business discussion of new SCMAGLEV letter). Councilman Walker moved to approve the Oct. 23, 2023, agenda. Councilman Over seconded the motion. All present voted in favor, and the Oct. 23, 2023, Agenda was approved (7-0).

Presentation from Congressman Glenn Ivey's Office: Luis Murillo with Rep. Ivey's Office discussed the appropriation process for next federal fiscal year including funding of local projects. Murillo said Rep. Ivey has 15 local projects, which are waiting for approval. He also discussed coordination with the State Department in regards to the Palestine and Israeli conflict and providing resources for U.S. citizens in Israel and Gaza needing assistance to evacuate.

Approval of the Consent Agenda

Included the Sept. 5, 2023, Council workshop minutes, the Sept. 18, 2023, Council meeting minutes, and the Oct. 2, 2023, Council workshop minutes. The Sept. 5, minutes were tabled to provide additional information.

Councilwoman Walker noted that on page 2 of the Sept. 18 minutes under Police Report "how may" should be changed to "how many," and that on page three Michael Thompson name was spelled incorrectly and that in the Oct. 2 minutes, on page 1 under Dominion apartments a question mark was needed after " and cover letter."

Hearing no further changes to the consent agenda, Mayor Schomisch entertained a motion to approve the consent agenda as amended. Councilwoman Johnson moved to approve the Consent Agenda. Councilman Over seconded the motion. All present voted in favor and the Consent Agenda was approved (7-0).

Correspondence and Announcements:

- a. **PGCMA Meeting on Oct. 19.** The presentation was conducted virtually, featuring a speaker from NASA Goddard who discussed their study on climate change challenges for municipalities. The focus lay on towns situated along tributaries of the Anacostia River due to significant flooding experiences, spanning from Greenbelt and Edmonston down to Cottage City, Berwyn Heights, Colmar Manor, and Mount Rainier. These municipalities were highlighted as crucial partners expected to collaborate closely with the Local Climate Resiliency Committee.
- b. **Discussion** on checking for invoices for PGCMA breakfast.
- c. **Opening on the PGCMA board:** There were four candidates under consideration. The candidates were Council member Trina Brown of Bladensburg, Mayor Katrina Dodro of New Carrollton, Council member Gyasi Gomez of District Heights and Council member Christopher Wade of Cheverly. Among them, the only familiar candidate was Mayor Dodro, who the Council supported.
- d. **Notification of residential project in Woodlawn.** The Town received notice of the renovation of parcels totaling 2.14 acres situated at the southern corner of the Greenvale Parkway and Furman Parkway intersection. The review encompasses the consideration of a conceptual water management plan for a proposed development. Specifically, the plan involves the construction of eight new single-family detached homes intended for residential use on the subject property.
- e. **Cleanup Day:** Mayor Schomisch expressed gratitude to the attending Council Members, staff, and police who were crucial in their support of the event. Enhancing communication with residents through increased correspondence is needed to effectively inform the Town residents about the 2024 Cleanup Days.
- f. **The Maryland Mayor's Association** meeting will be Feb. 29, 2024, and March 1, 2024, in Annapolis.
- g. **MML Fall Conference:** During the opening session on Oct. 16, Secretary Jake Day from the Maryland Housing and Community Development Department, a former mayor, spoke about the 15-year underbuilding of affordable housing in the state, highlighting a 120,000-unit shortage. Baltimore Mayor Brandon Scott also addressed the session, mentioning a proposed push in the state legislature to permit elevated property tax rates for vacant and abandoned homes. Additionally, Landover Hills received 2023-2026 Sustainable Maryland certification.
 - Home sales decreased by 21 percent from 2022 to 2023, with the median housing price in Maryland reaching \$415,000. First-time home buyers accounted for only 7 percent of this year's sales due to doubled home interest rates over the past couple of years.
 - A discussion on sustainable communities provided information regarding electric vehicles, including comprehensive details on various vehicles, 2023 prices, state vehicle electrification planning, and funding grants. The conversation progressed through ARPA fund discussions, emphasizing the obligation deadline is Dec. 31, 2024,
 - The small population forum revisited ARPA fund usage, deliberating on whether fund allocation needed itemization, specifically addressing the Feds' initial decision to allow municipalities to declare up to \$10 million as lost revenue. The discussion extended to recouping expenses from developments' impacts, particularly focusing on water and

sewer concerns. Governor Moore highlighted the state's economic growth and emphasis on tourism zones for development, while the discussion also touched upon tax differentials in various counties, including legal disputes.

- A cybersecurity talk presented by DC Three highlighted the inevitability of data breaches and emphasized the need for improved security measures. Plans were discussed to shift from current email systems due to trust concerns and to engage DC Three for analysis, recommendations, and potential grant funding for cybersecurity. Urgent warnings regarding phishing emails were given, citing statistics on cyber-attacks targeting governments and the lengthy timeframes for breach identification.
- An ethics session, led by Todd Turner, the Prince George's County's ethics officer, refreshed attendees' understanding of ethical protocols. Plans were outlined for the Town to enlist an attorney to oversee ethics matters and disclosure forms. Additionally, insights were shared regarding the Care Act passed in 2022, which stipulates twelve weeks of paid leave for employees for medical purposes and is effective Jan. 1, 2026, with exemptions for businesses with fewer than 15 employees.
- Finally, there is a new affiliation of all MML member towns with the National League of Cities.

Reports

- a. The Town Treasurer provided the monthly financial report. The Bank of America checking account remains open with no recent activity; plans to terminate it are prepared pending completion of the Town's annual audit. The primary checking account at TD Bank sees regular activity, enjoying interest rate increases due to meeting account thresholds. September's investment accounts saw minor increases in interest rates. PNC accounts accrue only interest, with discussions around the potential for higher returns via a CD, as learned from the MML conference.
- b. In the police report, a blood drive attracted 15 appointments with capacity for 31. Community events, such as the Landover Hills Baptist Church and Ebenezer's International Day, were attended by police. However, recent news featured a surge in ATM-related burglaries and stolen cars in the county, prompting discussions around heightened security measures.
- c. Regarding public works, discussions with Brightview revealed their reluctance to invest further resources in the Rain Garden project due to perceived discrepancies in plant maintenance. While the Rain Garden was deemed functional, discrepancies arose regarding the planted vegetation, with accusations levied against the town's maintenance practices. Efforts to resolve these issues and attain project closure continue amidst differing perspectives between involved parties.

Public Comments

- a. There were no public comments.

Unfinished Business

The discussion revolved around a proposed letter the Town would send to County and State officials addressing traffic concerns due to a forthcoming apartment complex near the SR 450-SR 410 intersection. The complex lacks sufficient parking, and their traffic plan might create congestion on Chesapeake Road, Buchanan St., and Ardwick-Ardmore

Rd. The letter aims to involve the state, suggesting potential solutions such as altering the intersection at SR 450 and Gallatin St. The Council approved and signed the letter.

New Business

- a. The Council reviewed, approved and signed a letter to the Maryland Department of the Environment requesting a 30-day extension for comments to the SCMAGLEV project's Water Quality Certification Application. The superconducting Maglev project between Washington, D.C. and Baltimore initially, with future plans extending to New York City is proposed to be built near the Town. The Council is concerned about the project's environmental and economic impacts as well as the effects on AMTRAC and MARC service. Another concern is rising electrical costs for residents to pay for electrical infrastructure needed for SCMAGLEV.

Adjournment

Mayor Schomisch entertained a motion to adjourn, motion was second and adjourned. The meeting was adjourned at 8:56 p.m.