

**Town Commissioners' Meeting Minutes**  
**August 23, 2011, 6:30 pm**

Meeting was called to order at 6:36 pm by President Robert Gell. Commissioners Joseph Letts, Donna Sheets, and Robert Gell were in attendance with Commissioner Michael Doss arriving around 8:05PM.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Emily Fletcher.

The Accounts Payable report was reviewed and Commissioner Sheets motioned to pay the bills and this was approved unanimously 3-0.

The minutes from the August 9, 2011 meeting were reviewed with Commissioner Sheets motioning that they be accepted as written and this was approved unanimously 3-0.

Ken Confalone presented an update and review of the Ethics Law SB315 changes to the State ethics code. He reviewed one change in the law being the difference between two words "similar" and "equivalent". Another change is the section on lobbyists, sections 4 and 5. Elected officials have to fill out a conflict of interest form. This is still going to be required of elected officials and Town employees, however, the change will be the requirement of filing of Form #1 by all elected officials and candidates who file for election. This form requires disclosure of detailed personal financial information and this form is available to anyone who requests through Town Hall via filing a Freedom of Information Act request. Mr. Confalone explained that the Town can seek exemption from the financial disclosure that due to the small size of the Town, we may be exempt from the requirement. He said a preliminary inquiry has indicated that this is a possibility. We would have to expend the time and expense with the Town Attorney to seek relief from section 5. There is a requirement to approve the New Ethics Ordinance by a certain time period, however if the Commissioners choose to file the exemption, it stops the clock and we will be given a new timeline. Commissioner Letts motioned to ask for exception and this was approved unanimously 3-0.

Darrel K. Wilson of Chesapeake Utilities Corp. came to introduce his company and present his ideas on expanding natural gas into the Town of Charlestown. He gave a brief history of the company and their presence in the Delmarva Peninsula. They are looking to take expansions into Cecil County and have already received a franchise agreement earlier this year. Their goal is to increase the options available to residents. Natural gas is a cleaner and safer fuel option. He then presented a statistical overview of the natural gas industry and its uses. They also gave examples of other Towns that have made the expansions to natural gas. The next steps for them would be to request a franchise arrangement with the Towns they hope to serve provided that it would be economical. They are in discussion with North East right now and currently have a draft agreement. They would like to solicit a franchise agreement with Charlestown and move forward. He went on to explain the logistics of connections and where the connections would be made. Mr. Wilson fielded several questions including a question about potential annual savings, to which he answered would be approximately \$1000.00 in annual savings. President Gell asked what the payoff would be with having to do a conversion. Mr. Wilson explained that they would bring pipe in from the street, if it 100 feet or less, there would probably be no charge. If it is a longer distance than 100 feet, it would be charged per foot. He also explained if you currently have propane, you may be able to simply change out parts on the equipment. He said a ballpark range of six to seven years payback in savings. In the case of a new development, they would work with the developer to put the system in with the development. Commissioner Sheets asked about hookup fees.

The typical fee is \$35.00 which is the meter charge. President Gell said the Board will take this under advisement and have the Town attorney take a look at it.

President Gell presented the results of the Charlestown Charter Amendments Review . He explained there are about fifteen changes that the commission has recommended. He said because all commissioners are not here, they do not want to make a decision on these changes tonight. He did go on to explain that each change requires a separate resolution and once each resolution has been adopted, it is to be advertised in the local newspaper 4 times and there is a 40 day waiting period for referendum. If there has been no opposition, the changes will take effect. This item will be tabled to the next meeting.

President Gell explained that last meeting the Board discussed persons who come to the Town are not able to pay their utility bill and seek some sort of relief. We had been doing this on a one-on-one basis. He explained that Commissioner Sheets has developed a new Utility Payment Form to make this a more formal process. Commissioner Letts asked if this is a one-time thing or if it can be a repeat thing for the same person. Commissioner Sheets explained this does not exempt them from filling it out each time as it has to be approved by the board in all cases. The person will have a \$25.00 processing fee in addition to the 1.5% interest on the total amount due. The full amount must be paid within six weeks. Any property not paid, will have the water turned off and will be sent to tax sale at the end of the year. Commissioner Sheets moved to begin using the new form with approval being made by the board and this was approved unanimously 3-0.

#### Town Administrator's Report

##### Old Business

The boat user fee final draft with all changes made that were of concerns was presented. Commissioner Letts inquired if this is another item that should be delayed to another meeting where all commissioners are present. President Gell said the Board could move forward because it contains all items that all commissioners discussed, it has been approved by the attorney and meets the annotated code. Once approved, Wib Pumpaly will set up a time to meet with the marinas and get the mechanisms in place for the collection of the fee. Commissioner Letts motioned to approve the boat user final draft with the changes made and go on record that he would rather have all commissioners present. This was approved unanimously 3-0.

##### New Business

Every ten years we appraise the value of all leased lands of the Town. An appraisal for Lee's Marina was due for 2011 and has been done by Erlich and Erlich who was approved by the current owner of J.P. Lee Marina. After careful review, the appraised value of the land portion of the property the Town leases is \$280,000. The Town will receive 5% of the appraised value which is about \$1166.67 per month. Currently, because of adjustments for losses of land made by Commissioners to the marina we receive \$597.33. The new lease amount has not been presented to J.P. Lee Marina yet. Mr. Pumpaly asked the Board if there is any reason to not present this to the marina. The Board agreed this is in accordance with the lease. Mr. Pumpaly will forward a copy of the appraisal and notify J.P. Lee Marina of the new lease amount effective January 1, 2012.

Richard Price will be hosting a wedding at his home on May 12, 2012. He respectfully requests to use one of several parcels to park 75 cars. His first choice is to use the field down below the basketball court

