

Charlestown Town Commissioners' Meeting

Minutes - August 10, 2010, 6:30 pm

This meeting was called to order at 6:30 PM by President Robert Gell. Commissioners also in attendance were Michael Doss, Joseph Letts and Donna Sheets.

Ryleigh Johnson was present to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

Accounts Payable report was reviewed with Commissioner Sheets making the motion to accept as presented. This was approved (4-0).

The meeting minutes from 07-27-2010 were presented, reviewed and Commissioner Sheets moved to accept as written. This was approved (4-0).

Robert Corn, Miller Environmental, gave the water summary report for activity during July 2010. He also presented the semi-annual water draw report.

President Gell has received Charlestown's certificate for renewed MML Membership and spoke about Charlestown's award of Banner City designation.

Discussion of the proposed Community Center began with the introduction of Teen Vebares, Core Design Group, Baldur Bernal and Steve Crowe, Civil Concepts. Commissioner Sheets reviewed the recent history of inspections of the Boys & Girls Club and the need for \$250,000 worth of work needing to be done to the existing building. She said that we are probably in need of a new building that could potentially be located at the Athletic Complex.

She mentioned that Delegate David Rudolph is working on getting a bond which must be matched with donations. The hope is to provide a place for children and seniors to meet. A list of benefits from the potential community center was distributed. B&G Club has agreed to pay for their portion of utilities, they could also get IKEA to donate furniture and they are also willing to let us use their computers for other programs.

President Gell explained that Core Design Group/Civil Concepts are a group of architects who were asked to develop a concept plan for possibilities. Mr. Vebares explained how they do programs benefitting the welfare of children and were referred by the Stewart Associates. They are donating their time with engineering for this project. Steve Crowe noted the tight time frame and he introduced proposed schedules that would have to be accepted by URS. A preliminary cost was found to be about \$65-\$70 per square foot which would put the total cost for the building they are proposing at \$600,000 not including the soft costs. Mr. Vebares notes he is willing to put the marketing effort costs out for the in-kind donations.

Locations, pre-engineered metal buildings and wood structures were discussed and are all being considered. Converting the 630 Water Street building to a rental (or selling it) and applying the income from that toward recreational purposes was discussed. Commissioner Letts expressed concern over the cost.

President Gell requested approval from the Board to move forward with the concept study. Commissioner Sheets put forward this motion. Discussion revealed that Steve Crowe and Teen Vebares need authorization to proceed so that more definitive costs can be presented and a budget set. Discussion from the floor expressed concerns about costs, the need for these types of programs, expansion capability and if the time line was realistic. It was noted that this authorization would be at no cost to the Town. Approved 4-0.

Mr. Paul Atkinson, 320 Tasker Lane, and his neighbor, Jonathan Pusey, were present to discuss the problem with compliance to a Town ordinance. The property is occupied and co-owned by Mr. Atkinson's daughter (Karen Schroder) who, it is contended, created the problem. Mr. Atkinson would like to postpone further legal actions so that they may continue cleaning up the property. Commissioner Letts mentioned that items must be moved and other things need to be accomplished before this court case could be cancelled. President Gell noted that this has been going on for years and we need to have some resolution before changing the court case. Commissioner Doss suggested that Mr. Atkinson present his case before the court on the specified date and ask the judge to assign a time frame. Mr. Pusey noted this suggestion and will do what they can to comply.

A proposed Charlestown Boat Slip Tax was presented by Commissioner Sheets for reconsideration and discussion. The Town Administrator noted that an annual charge of 5% of the slip fee, not to exceed \$100 each, is allowed by the Maryland Annotated Code (Senate Bill 521). This is a proposal to provide some revenue that the Town needs especially since having lost 90% of our highway user revenue from the State of Maryland. Discussion ensued regarding the number of boat slips within Charlestown, how much revenue this may generate and how these fees would be collected. Mr. Pumpaly would like the Board to give this consideration as we will need to take action (ordinance, meetings and notifications) to get this into effect for January 1, 2011. Commissioner Letts made the motion to proceed with the implementation which got unanimous approval (4-0).

Public Comment

Art Helton, who running for the Sate Senate seat which includes Cecil County, spoke about his previous experience as a State Senator and mentioned he would work with Delegate Rudolph by helping on the Senate side with obtaining funding for the "community building." He spoke of his success in obtaining funds for various projects in the past and he stated that he knows how to get the job done. He also made comments about his opponent's voting record and his personal desire to obtain what his constituents want. Commissioner Sheets asked if he would be available and he said he would be here as needed.

Skip Dewitt, candidate for Sheriff (son of former sheriff Jack Dewitt) spoke of his belief that the sheriff is a public official and answers to the people. He spoke of his community involvement and his plan to be available 24/7 as his father was. He plans on working within the same budget without any increases. He wants to locate his office at the detention center and to promote the community policing program. He also discussed his plans for the Sheriff's Patrols in Charlestown.

Gophrey Richardson presented his comments about the community building being discussed. He supplied a handout concerning his opinions concerning the proposed community building. He feels differently from how the board feels, for example, this is a bad time to undertake such an expenditure. He feels the Athletic Complex location is a bad choice as this is a completed project and instead we should use the lot we purchased from the fire company which, Mr. Richardson contends, has much greater potential for usage. He believes that unless the building is constructed specifically for the Boys & Girls Club of Cecil County, the Athletic Complex is the worst possible location. He also feels a disproportionate amount is given to the B&G club as opposed to other organizations such as the boy scouts and the fire company. He feels the residents should choose those to whom the Town should donate.

Mary Jo Jablonski, Interim Director, Boys & Girls Clubs of Cecil County, spoke to expressed gratitude to the Charlestown for moving forward with the project. She stated the towns in which they are located support the B&G Club in one way or another. She also mentioned that the Charlestown facility has been too small to support a "Teen Program" which she contends has dramatically reduced juvenile incidents in towns utilizing this program. She explained some of the ways other towns have contributed to the B&G Club's operation and understands the concerns expressed.

Steve Vandervort spoke mentioning his agreement with most of Mr. Richardson's concerns. However, he noted that the building was donated to the Town to be used for recreation, not as a way to reduce taxes. He feels that the "Community Center" approach to the proposed building would benefit additional groups.

He next expressed his dismay to Mr. Helton about the 90% of the Road Use Tax being taken from the Town. He asked how the State can justify collecting the tax allocations but not distributing the allocations to the Town for the roads. Mr. Helton said that it is illegal to take the money from this "enterprise" account, so the State is borrowing it and it must be paid back at some time in the future. Steve Vandervort wants the Board to put pressure on the County and State to return this borrowed money.

Donald Chess asked about the newspaper article concerning the Sheriff's Patrol activities and Commissioner Letts said the patrol's "sitting around" has been addressed.

Town Administrator's Report

Old Business

- A review of the Charlestown Fire Co. donation revealed that \$500 was missed in the Fire Company account. The Fire Company budget item is listed as \$11,725, with \$725 representing the anticipated VLOSAP credit given to the firefighters. It had appeared the \$725 was part of the Town's annual donation. Mr. Pumpaly requested we increase the Town's donation to the fire company by \$500. President Gell feels donations should be on a separate line other than the Fire Company VLOSAP for future fiscal years. Commissioner Sheets motioned to approve an additional \$500 for the Fire Company's donation. This passed 3-0 with one abstention.
- The Town Message Center was discussed regarding the cost of the bulletin board and what would and would not be included in the approximately \$6,600 cost. Mr. Pumpaly had questions regarding where the board could be located and where in the budget the funds would come. Commissioner Doss indicated that President Gell and Commissioner Letts will need to decide which account would be used to fund this proposal.
- The lease revision for Lee's Marina was presented as an addendum to the original lease. Commissioner Doss motioned to have this addendum approved and this motion passed unanimously 4-0

New Business

- A list of surplus Town equipment was presented. Mr. Pumpaly proposed a public notice for sealed bids on these items with the ability to reject any or all bids. President Gell mentioned that the bids should be open and that they must be public. He asked Mr. Pumpaly to document all the steps of the equipment sale and disposal.

- Mr. Pumpaly asked the Board to consider allowing the Sheriff's Patrol to issue parking citations for the Town. Commissioner Doss discussed the legal considerations of issuing these citations and asked to table this issue in order to research the ordinance and procedures.
- There are several Holloway cemetery lots for which dues have not been paid in over three years. Charlestown would like to reclaim these lots and we can either sue or wait the ten years as required by a Town ordinance. The Town attorney, Keith Baynes, suggests waiting the ten years. Mr. Pumpaly wants to know if the Board could amend the Ordinance to shorten the wait period. President Gell suggested the Town Administrator to draft an addendum with advice from the Town's attorney.
- Review of July Reports - Budget, Cash Balance, Accounts Receivable, Fuel Report, Maintenance Work Order and Building Permits.

There being no further business to discuss Commissioner Sheets motioned to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 8:50PM.