

**Town Commissioners' Meeting  
Minutes - February 8, 2011 - 6:30 pm**

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 pm by President Robert Gell. Also in attendance were Commissioners Michael Doss, Mary Carol Durange, Joseph Letts and Donna Sheets.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Ryleigh Johnson.

The Accounts Payable report was reviewed with Commissioner Sheets making the motion to pay the bills. Approval was 5-0

The minutes for the January 25, 2010 meeting were reviewed. President Gell noted that the minutes from the executive session of 1/25/2011 are included here since the content is not in accordance with the requirements of a closed session. Commissioner Doss made the motion to accept as written and all approved 5-0. In discussion Commissioner Sheets mentioned she would like to see minutes one or two days after the meeting not on the meeting day.

Sgt. Ronald Schmidt delivered the patrol report for January 2011 for the 108 approved hours. Commissioner Letts commented that Ron Schmidt has been re-assigned to Charlestown and wanted to welcome him back.

Robert Corn of Miller Environmental, Inc. gave report of water gallons treated and miscellaneous water system related tasks. He reported that the 5 to 6-year old pump and/or the motor for well #1 has failed and will need to be repaired or replaced at a cost of approximately \$4,285.

M's Leslie Gorak, Manager, and Tricia Jones, Cecil County Transit Coordinator for Cecil County Transportation, County Bus Service were present to discuss transportation issues in Cecil County and the bus connections throughout the county. Wheel chair lift equipped bus service is available for everyone from designated route stops through the County. The C.T. Cruiser service will pick up residents curb-to-curb with 2-3 day's notice on a first-come, first-served basis. A taxi voucher program is available for qualified senior individuals and provides door-to-door service and help with packages. President Gell asked about getting a bus stop in Charlestown and was informed that there needs to be a demand. If enough people request service they would be able to add a Charlestown stop. The demand would have to be included in the 5-year transportation plan. Ms. Gorak discussed the Senior Services offered at the County Office Building and what programs are available there. She mentioned being willing to speak with Charlestown senior groups to discuss the County's senior services programs. Also mentioned was the Health Department's free, 6-week program called "Living Well" which addresses health, wellness and exercise issues.

Vice-President Durange gave an up-date of the "Let's Move Cities & Towns" program having received a packet with all the federal resources. This packet has information on applicable grants for equipment and pedometers. Charlestown Elementary School's gym has been secured for use and Cecil College has been contacted with the idea that physical education students might assist with the exercise programs. Information for publication on the Town's website is being gathered. The WILMAPCO bus stop in Charlestown was discussed in order to enable residents to get to nearby grocery stores. Also mentioned was coordinating with the Market Street Cafe to have a farmers market available on a regular basis during the warm months.

Mr. Edgar McMullen spoke about the Charlestown Cemetery. He discussed the Holloway lots and noted that after research no heirs have been located. President Gell indicated the need to contact an attorney to make reclaiming these lots official.

Mr. Mike Burns gave a report on recommendations from the recently formed Charlestown Parks Committee which was formed to review the use of the Town parks.

**Boat Ramp** – Institute a \$30 annual ramp fee for Maryland residents and \$55 for non-residents which would include parking (Wellwood or Lot B). Daily passes would be \$5 for Maryland or \$10 for non-

Maryland residents. Issues for further consideration would be if the fees are for trailer parking or use of boat ramp. Charlestown would be responsible for collection of parking fees unless coordinated with the Wellwood Club. Town residents could have free access to the boat ramp if they parked their trailers at their own homes. If they want to use Wellwood or Lot B they would pay the fee.

**Veterans Park** – Use fee should be \$50 with a 4-hour limit with users providing clean-up and a \$25 deposit. A consideration for Town residents would be free use during the week days. A brief discussion and explanation concerning TULIP and other insurance coverage for using these areas ensued. It was explained that these policies are needed only during periods of exclusive use.

**Flag Pole Park** – Clear signage denoting “Reserved” functions, \$100 use fee with a \$50 deposit and a 4-hour limit. Consider a refund for weather cancellation. Finally, consider a sliding fee for reserving Flag Pole based on number of attendees.

**Foot Log Park** – Let this area remain free. Consider installation of concrete benches, anchored trash cans and posting of park rules.

**Long-Term Considerations** include posting “Swim at Own Risk” “No Lifeguard” signs at the beach areas; installation of lights and “No Parking” signs at all parks also consider relocating boat ramp to Lot B. Committee member, Ursula Boudart, feels that there should be a straight fee for use of park facilities to keep it simple. Commissioner Doss feels that residents already pay for these facilities via their taxes.

**Dead End Beach** was suggested as a possible “residents only” area but it was noted that the Town is not able to limit the use of any of our Town parks.

It was noted that if the committee agrees to fees, rules and regulations concerning the parks, the Board should move forward with implementation. President Gell asked the committee to refine what they have researched and submit these findings.

### **Period of Public Comment**

Gophery Richardson spoke about the expense reduction and new revenue plan being offered. He noted that reductions are going to hurt and additionally, the only way to get new revenue is to get it from the residents. He agrees with Ursula Boudart previous statement that we need to increase property taxes in order to raise some of the revenues necessary. He mentioned that he has no problem with spending if the money is available but he then discussed areas he felt could be cut in order to save money.

Alan McDaniel responded to the belief that Charlestown’s contribution to Riverfest was used exclusively for the fireworks display. He noted that this contribution is combined with the general funds collected for Riverfest. He commented about the situation at the boat ramp with the future growth anticipated and because there is no adjacent parking. He feels the better solution is to relocate the boat ramp to Lot B and additionally he feels a lot attendant would not work as the Town might hope. Mr. McDaniel was asked if he would join the Park Committee and he agreed. The vacant lot on Caroline Street was suggested for boater’s parking. Mr. McDaniel favors the slip tax but suggests it be a flat tax based on full occupancy and perhaps be phased in at 80% occupancy.

Commissioner Sheets had the following comment:

I would like to apologize for getting so upset at the last meeting. I still hold my position on the sewer lines as before. We, as Charlestown Commissioners need to be fair on everything brought before us. It is spoken in our Oath of Office to treat ALL citizens without PARTIALITY or PREJUDICE. That would include ALL of Charlestown. If you pay taxes to Charlestown, you’re included. It is my opinion that ANY Commissioner who had knowledge of the sewer lines and did NOTHING about it, has violated their Oath of Office.

I have one more problem I would like to bring to the Board. All of us at this table are adults. Our children learn by the example of the adults in our Town. It is ever evident there is so much hatred between some of the members and it really bothers me. When we sit down at this table, we should be conducting business in the most professional manner. No matter how anyone feels personally outside these walls, it needs to stay outside these walls when we have meetings. I think we all need to work together on projects. We should be helping each other out so we can get things DONE. We have all been elected by the people. Let’s start working FOR the people and leave our personal issues at home.

## **Town Administrator's Report**

### **Old Business**

- Expense Reduction & New Revenue – The presentation the Commissioners viewed during a recent Executive Session, excluding items specific to employment issues, gave an overview of Federal, State and County government shortages and suggested remedies. Proposals for new revenue sources and possible budget cuts were offered for the Board to consider. New revenue sources include instituting a boat slip tax, increasing the Town Pier's slip fee (already in place), hiring someone to monitor and collect Town boat ramp fees, expanding the cemetery to add additional lots and increasing sewer and water rates. The total that could be realized from these proposals is approximately \$182,000. Budget cuts include reducing contributions to Riverfest, the Historic District Commission, the Charlestown Volunteer Fire Company, the Cecil House renovation, the sewer system improvement account, the parks and recreation accounts and MML activities. The total budget expense reduction from these cuts could be \$34,000. There are additional budget cuts that could further reduce expenses by \$25,000. A change is proposed for the Town's trash, recycling and bulk collection services. Recyclables would be collected every other week and bulk would be collected once per month. These proposed revenue sources and budget cuts may realize \$250,000 for the budget without increasing property taxes.

A resident asked about the Town employees' involvement in the proposed budget cuts and it was explained that the employees are involved in the equation. Carl Fockler questioned expanding the Town's commercial base (in keeping with the small town feel) as a revenue source. It was noted that the Planning & Zoning board has discussing the current status but the possibility of re-zoning has not been discussed. Alan McDaniel asked if assets, such as leases, rentals and the Cecil House have been discussed as far as liquidating them. The revenue from those sales could be re-invested in items such as boat ramp relocation. Commissioner Doss noted that the sale of Town property has been investigated in the past and it was learned that leases create recurring revenues for the Town where sales do not. President Gell noted one of the options for the Cecil House is to stabilize it and then sell it.

- "C" Dock up-Date – In August of 2010 an action was filed between Charlestown Marina, LLC and the Town of Charlestown concerning marina electrical lines and so forth being attached to pilings which are owned by the Town. Charlestown wanted the utilities removed from the pilings. An agreement could not be reached. More recently the Town proposed to Charlestown Marina that a line-of-indenture agreement would cede these pilings to Charlestown Marina. Charlestown Marina's attorneys replied with two other proposals, one of which was close to the Town's original proposal; recently however, several things happened including the loss of the Town's attorney, the receipt of a letter from an attorney associated with Water Street Properties indicating they do not wish us to cede the pilings to Charlestown Marina and finally, the Town received paperwork concerning a hearing scheduled in Circuit Court on May 6<sup>th</sup> and a pre-trial scheduling conference on May 13<sup>th</sup> regarding initial trespass issue with Charlestown Marina. At this point the entire issue is at a standstill.
- Town of Charlestown Road Conditions –WILMAPCO has requested suggestions for funding that could be used for street repairs, drainage and such. Correspondence from URS revealed a study done in 2004 where suggestions for street repairs were noted and prioritized. This study would be the basis to apply for funding through WILMAPCO for this street repair project.

### **New Business**

- January Budget Review – discussed accounts that are over budget this year.
- January Cash Balance Review – discussion of MLGIP investment account. Comparison was made if the funds were in an MMA account instead.
- January Accounts Receivable Review
- January Fuel Report Review – diesel tank was delivered this day and electricity is to be installed.
- January Maintenance Work Order Review

- January Building Permit Review – there were no permits requested.
- Annual Ice Splash – February 26<sup>th</sup> everything is in line, insurance is in place and so forth.
- Budget Request Worksheet – request Commissioners submit items they would like to have included in the budget
- Wm. C. Saddler & Co., P.A. – Annual Audit – Mr. Pumpaly noted the excellent relationship Charlestown has with this firm and their excellent work; he suggests that the Town should stay with this firm. However, their fee could be as much as \$16,000 and resolution (2008-1) requires that the Town bid out contracts over \$10,000. It was questioned if this resolution was intended to cover professional services. Section 25-722, paragraph “C” of Charlestown’s Charter was cited and indicates that all contracts involving professional services . . . . . shall be negotiated by the Town Commissioners; this includes auditing contracts. Commissioner Letts feels we are going against the resolution and this inspired discussion concerning professional contracts, negotiations and bidding. Commissioner Durange made the motion to stay with Wm. C. Sadler this year. The motion was approved 3-2.

Commissioner Durange spoke to go on record to clarify statements from the last meeting regarding discussion about building the community center. She noted that Commissioner Letts mentioned that someone campaigning had spoken to several people implying that Commissioner Letts was against the Boys & Girls Club and the children of Charlestown. Commissioner Durange wanted to clarify that Commissioner Letts was not attributing this statement to her. Commissioner Letts indicated that no names were mentioned in connection with the statement which was reported to him by other individuals.

Commissioner Doss made the motion to adjourn which was unanimously approved. The meeting adjourned at 8:35 pm.

Submitted by Linda Jackson