

Town of Charlestown Commissioners'
Meeting Minutes

October 26, 2010, 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

Commissioner Sheets made the motion to accept the Accounts Payable and pay the bills. This was approved 5-0.

After reviewing the minutes from the October 12th meeting, Commissioner Sheets motioned to approve them as written and acceptance was unanimous 3-0 with 2 abstentions.

The Sheriff's Report was reviewed; Cpl. Streight was unable to attend. The report was accepted after a discussion concerning radar enforcement.

Commissioner Doss spoke about the deteriorating roads in Charlestown, and Louisa Lane especially, that are in need of repair before winter. It is clear that tar-and-chip will have to be used for this work because of the costs. The section of Louisa Lane between Bladen and Calvert is the most serious problem. A list of priorities for road repairs was discussed. Apparently cuts in the roadways, which were necessary for utility installations were not repaired correctly, are now sinking and will require major repair work.

A suggestion was made to obtain cost estimates for these repairs/replacements comparing tar-and-chip with asphalt. Commissioner Letts requested to see the invoices that demonstrate where the "streets" money has gone since he feels it was not used on street repair. Discussion ensued concerning the state of the Town's streets and direction was given to obtain costs estimates.

Commissioner Sheets spoke about the "Family Preparedness Guide" she and Commissioner Durange have compiled for Charlestown residents. She would like to have these guides available for each resident household. She discussed the various aspects of the booklet and forms. Discussion ensued concerning residents with special needs being made known to the emergency services and the method of distribution of the "Guides". Additional information to be included was suggested by various individuals. Commissioner Sheets proposed preparation of 750 Guides and getting cost estimates for printing.

The Legislative Meeting of the MML was briefly discussed. This will be held at the Wellwood Club on December 9, 2010. The favor which Charlestown will present was shown and a request for a Caroling group was made. Cost estimates were requested and the menu was reviewed.

Public Comment

A resident wondered why the "slip tax" must be imposed when apparently taxes collected are not being spent. He feels the Town should endeavor to attract new businesses to the Town in order to increase the tax base. He also suggested that the marinas be asked to report how many people reside on their boats.

Gloria Wood volunteered to deliver some of the "Guides". She also volunteered to take over compilation of the "Charlestown Chatter".

Town Administrator's Report

Old Business

A Municipal Infraction Ordinance was presented for discussion. This ordinance would allow Charlestown to attach penalties for violations of any Town ordinances. Penalties are imposed by way of resolutions and this would allow the Town to levy fines for infractions. Commissioner Letts moved to adopt Resolution 2010-06. Discussion revealed that this would allow the Town to handle infractions locally. This passed unanimously

Ordinance 2010-05 (Boat Slip Tax) was introduced, after having been reviewed by the Town's attorney, in its final form. A question of whether or not a public meeting is needed to discuss the subject was brought forward. It is believed that a public meeting would be most proper. Any decision to approve this Ordinance could not be made before this public meeting. Commissioner Doss questioned if an individual leases space from another, non-business individual for boat storage or docking, would that person be taxed (yes, Item 2 in the Ordinance). He also questioned how the tax could be collected. It was decided that a public hearing should be held by mid-November and any decision about Ordinance 2010-05 could not be made until after this hearing.

A memorial sign in cast metal was proposed for the Ice House as this would be the most durable material. We need to know exactly what the sign should display in order to determine what costs would be involved. It was revealed that there is a date and signature carved inside the Ice House concerning the builder and the date constructed. A free standing, metal sign somewhat like others around Charlestown would be considered. It was questioned if the State of Maryland could help to obtain this sign. It was proposed that the Charlestown Historic Commission be asked to resolve the wording.

Uses for \$1,800 left over from a Program Open Space grant were discussed. Resurfacing the basketball court or even just sealing it is considerably more than the amount available. Information from a concern that repairs tennis and basketball courts noted that the costs would be close to \$30,000. Memorial benches were discussed along with improvements to the softball field. A memorial sign to Cranford Henry was also suggested. It was agreed to table this issue until cost estimates to improve the ball field are collected.

Cemetery maintenance fees were again discussed and it was suggested that Charlestown heed the advice of the Town's attorney and not follow through with repossession of lots which are now three years in arrears for another seven years (ten years total) in accordance with an older ordinance. The new Ordinance cannot be applied to these old lots.

New Business

A letter from Core Design Group sent to Commissioner Sheets concerning conceptual design services for the proposed community center, suggests that they must be retained for the remainder of services in order to obtain any significant pro-bono work. This item was tabled as the Town cannot agree to these terms.

A Town Boat Ramp revenue gate proposal from Mid-Atlantic Entry was presented. A rate structure with free access for Town residents and graduated rates for County, State and all other users for either daily, weekend or seasonal use was described; however, it cannot be known how much revenue this boat ramp gate would generate. The cost for a sliding gate mechanism with a card reader is approximately \$22,000. A thought to use the Wellwood Club's personnel for collections was noted and was determined to be a conflict of interest. It was also noted that availability of parking for boaters will soon become a major problem.

The electrical repairs needed at 630 Water Street were discussed and an estimate was presented for consideration. More estimates were requested.

Commissioner Letts and Mr. Pumpaly presented a preliminary data report to consider formation of a Town police department. Commissioner Letts hopes to hold public hearings to discuss the issue and present information to residents. It was noted that establishing this department would be costly. Pages in the report was reviewed and discussed. It was noted that officers with experience and/or retirees would be sought. It was noted that considering expenses, an increase in taxes would be required and would be around \$990 per household. Congressional contacts have been made with little resolution. It is felt that this issue should be brought to referendum vote. Commissioner Durange feels that Charlestown residents do not have the kind of income to finance this. Commissioner Doss noted that a police department would not have to begin as large as the report suggested; that perhaps it could start as a part-time organization as was the case when we last had a Police Department. It was stated that information needs to get to the residents and the public hearing would do this and also find out how the residents feel about the proposal.

Commissioner Sheets asked to have Town Hall be a drop-off point for "Coats for Kids". There was no objection but no clear decision was made on this.

Commissioner Sheets made the motion to adjourn, this was unanimously approved and the meeting adjourned at 8:50 pm.