

TOWN COMMISSIONER MEETING

MINUTES

September 9, 2008

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 by President Vandervort with Commissioners Gell, Price and Sheets in attendance. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Ryleigh Johnson.

President Vandervort announced that Commissioner Mary Carol Durange had verbally tendered her resignation in order to pursue furthering her education and had volunteered her husband to finish her term which ends in January 2009.

The motion to approve the items in Accounts Payable was put forward by Commissioner Gell with Commissioner Price seconding. The motion was unanimously approved.

Minutes from August 26, 2008 were reviewed and Commissioner Sheets moved to approve as written with Commissioner Price seconding and all approving.

Miller Environmental report was delivered by Robert Corn. He noted that the regular coliform samples tested negative. There were 15 service shut offs for non-payment and one new house connection was photographed. There was one leak was found on Town side of a meter and repaired. In answer to a query, it was noted that sodium hypochlorite is used for chlorination

Sgt. Campbell delivered Sheriff's Report for August. Of the 92 hours requested to be filled, 80 hours were used. Discussion about disturbances at 412 Charlestown Place began and it was mentioned that forwarding e-mail messages from citizens about this address to the Sheriff's Office could be helpful. Commissioner Sheets started a discussion about establishing a Town police force and asked if a public hearing on the subject might be held. President Vendervort suggested waiting until the Town was more developed so the expenses could be borne more easily. Commissioner Sheets hoped to have the Town Administrator investigate the costs and grants available and possibly sharing a small force with a nearby town.

President Vandervort suggested that a Town police force may not solve the public safety problems, would double taxes and be difficult to manage. It was pointed out by a citizen that with development and a larger population all public safety organizations will be stressed. Commissioner Price called for the gathering and presentation of data in order to form a decision.

A citizen objected to the cost aired by President Vandervort for a small force. His personal investigation of the costs involved for a three-person police force came to about half of what President Vandervort cited. Commissioner Price noted that even with a three-person, Town, police force, 24/7 coverage would not be a reality. A current, realistic budget should be investigated and presented with actual costs. Commissioner Sheets moved to have President Vandervort appoint a committee to develop these numbers for presentation, Commissioner Price made the second and all approved.

There was no Administrator's Report

Public Comment. A resident offered comment on the Cecil Street Cemetery, that without trees, now drains water onto his nearby property. The timber from the tree removal is piled as a fire hazard and weeds are now prevalent throughout the cemetery. The resident would have liked to have been notified of the impending clean-up. The Town will investigate the drainage problem and see to the removal of the timber. The Parks Committee will investigate landscaping for this area.

Tim Whittie, CCDPW, was present to discuss replacement of the main sewage pumping station now located on Cecil Street. The proposed location behind the cemetery was offered for discussion and Town approval. It was explained that an odor filtration system and an emergency power generator would be installed on the site to service the pumping station. It was suggested that perhaps the nearby home could be connected to the emergency generator as compensation for the site location. Commissioner Price motioned to approve the location as proposed. Commissioner Sheets made the second and all approved.

Election Board Chief Judge, Judy Newsome, discussed the procedure for selection of the candidate to fill the vacancy on the Board. Three citizens have applied for the vacancy to be interviewed within two weeks with a decision to be made at the next Town meeting.

Commissioner Gell opened discussion about the Cecil Hotel and the possible opportunity to work with the Maryland Historic Trust to restore and protect this site. Ron Edwards came forward to speak for the Charlestown Historic District Commission which has great interest in saving “one of the remaining historic buildings in the Town” and concerned that it would become a derelict if not purchased to be restored. Mr. Edwards read a letter he received from the Maryland Historic Trust dated 7/30/08. It mentioned that this structure holds the historic designation in the county of CE-108. Non-profit, Cecil Historic Trust, could apply to get a below-market loan from MHT to assist in acquisition of this property and would be required to convey an easement for historic site protection. There are several other properties in Charlestown that are now under this easement protection.

Mentioned were grants up to \$50,000 available from MHT for restoration and maintenance; these grants may be obtained annually. Low interest loans with seven-year, interest-only payment options are also available through MHT. Cecil Historic Trust can assist in obtaining grants and loans. Grants from Cecil County are also possible if monies have been allocated. As a not-for-profit (501-C3), Colonial Charlestown can also arrange to borrow funds for this project and they would receive an administrative fee for their assistance.

Commissioner Price discussed the realtor’s house tour who had stated there was a ready buyer. Commissioner Gell asked for clarification of the sale option after restoration and was informed that resale was a viable option. Commissioner Price mentioned that the Maryland Historical Trust called Cecil Hotel a definite “find” and that the Town would be “ill-advised” to let the opportunity pass.

MHT, Richard Brand, called to arrange an appointment to see the “Hotel” on 9/10/08.

A question arose concerning who would be responsible for supervising any restoration work. Colonial Charlestown and Charlestown Historic District Commission stated they would be available to help. Commissioner Gell motioned to pursue historic restoration of the Cecil Hotel. Commissioner Price seconded the motion and all approved.

Commissioner Sheets commented on recent requests of our web site users for historic background about Charlestown. She was informed that the Town will be enhancing this site in the future and this could easily be included. Historic information should be gathered for inclusion. It was suggested that in the mean time visits be made to other towns’ web sites to study formats.

President Vandervort presented the Constitution Week Proclamation to Historic District Commission Chairman, Becky Phillips and Pam Johnson, State Chaplin of the DAR. September 17th through the 23rd commemorates the anniversary of the signing of the U.S. Constitution.

Fuel oil bids have been received and the Town Administrator advised purchasing heating fuel at a floating rate. Maintenance contracts with either concern had no major differences. President Vandervort suggested letting the Town Administrator make the decision on whether to use floating or locking the price. After viewing the submitted bids from two concerns. Commissioner Price motioned to go with

Alger Oil Company this year. Commissioner Sheets supplied the second. The motion passed unanimously.

The MML Geocache Resolution (08-03) establishing Charlestown as an official Geocache Trail location was presented for final consideration. Commissioner Gell made the motion to approve the resolution establishing this cache; Commissioner Sheets seconded the motion. Resolution 08-03 was then unanimously approved.

The issue concerning the six pet roosters in Town entered into discussion. The Town attorney's opinion was that the 200'-from-the-road-rule applies as for farm animals. The owner is going to appeal the issue to Planning & Zoning which may rule as it pleases in October. If they rule against these pets, he may then apply for a variance with the Board of Appeals. The Commissioners may also change zoning to allow pet fowl. Investigation of ordinances from various cities have indicated chickens as allowable in urban areas. It was decided to table the issue until the 9/23/08 meeting.

Commissioner Gell spoke about the scope of the Council of Governments 09/25/08 meeting to present three scenarios of the comprehensive plan on to the Mayors. The Water Resources Committee is asking for assurance that the Comp Plan addresses our need for these resources. The county is privatizing water and sewer services to western sections of the County with the intention that the effluent will be going to Delaware. This should take the cap off Seneca Point which may impact this area's development. Details are still to be finalized. Artesian rates should be substantially higher since the county will not be subsidizing this private concern.

Maryland Signage Program (TAC Sign Concept Plan) was presented for consideration and approval. "Anchor" signs are to be placed on various roadways in the area to direct boaters to the marinas. Commissioner Sheets moved to accept the signage plan with Commissioner Gell seconding and all approving.

The recent Planning & Zoning Board vacancy received one applicant, Ursula Boudart. Commissioner Price moved to waive the interview process since Mrs. Boudart is known to the Town Commissioners. Commissioner Sheets seconded and all approved waiving of the interview. Commissioner Gell motioned to accept this applicant to serve the remainder (3 years, 1 month) of the vacated position. Commissioner Sheets supplied the second and Ursula Boudart was unanimously approved.

Employee vacation, sick leave accruals and disability were brought up for discussion and approval. Disability insurance discussion revealed that elimination periods of either 7 or 14 days, after having used all available sick days, age groups and lengths of coverage (up to 3 months and up to 6 months) dramatically affect the premiums. Other plan coverage for individuals were also listed. The benefits from AFLAC were believed to be 60% of a full-time employee's paycheck. It was disclosed that disability premiums are usually paid entirely by the employer. Discussion was inconclusive concerning the Town's share and the employee's share of the premium cost. It was decided to table this issue for further study.

The employee vacation/sick leave accrual plan as discussed at the 08/26/08 Commissioner's meeting was brought forth and it was suggested that it be implemented starting January 1, 2009. Commissioner Gell made the motion to accept the new policy as stated and Commissioner Sheets seconded. The Commissioners voted unanimously to approve the new policy.

A letter was received at the meeting expressing interest in the unofficially vacated Board of Commissioner's seat. It was noted that the Board of Commissioner's vacancy will be advertised as soon as a letter of resignation is received.

Commissioner Sheets asked about movement on proposed security camera upgrades. The Town Administrator was tasked to gather estimates for presentation and discussion.

Commissioner Price moved to adjourn to executive session. Commissioner Gell seconded. Adjournment was unanimously approved.