

Town Commissioner's Meeting
Charlestown, Maryland
January 10, 2023
6:00 PM
Town Hall, 241 Market Street and on Zoom

Attendees: Karl Fockler, Jeff Fields, Bryan Lightner, Mary Culver, Kathy SanDoe; Renee Capano and Curtis Elmer attended on Zoom. Lou Wood was not in attendance.

Public in Attendance: Dan Rubert, Charles Heitz, Richard Mahan, Audrey Edwards, Diane Letts, Ursula and Prosper Boudart, Dennis Dobay

Zoom: Robyn Rowe, Thelma McMullen, Michael Phelan - Alumint, Keith Binsted – Underwood, Jake Thompson - WILMAPCO

President Fockler called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Mr. C.J. Heitz.

Approval of the Minutes – December 13, 2022 – Charlestown Commissioners: Commissioner Capano motioned to approve the minutes. Commissioner Fields seconded. Approved 4-0.

Accounts Payable Review – Charlestown Commissioners: Commissioner Field motioned to approve the Accounts Payable for \$20,580.60. Commissioner Capano seconded. Approved 4-0.

Miller Environmental – November report: Mr. Lightner read the report. Water withdrawal for December was 3,033,000 gallons. There were no positive coliform samples. Routine operations and maintenance were performed. Sixteen Miss Utilities were completed and Well #1 pump was exercised.

Mr. Lightner continued with an update on the back-up generators for the wells and sewage pump stations. AECOM has provided a proposal and we're finding costs of different generator types to compare diesel versus propane gas. The back-up generators at Avalon and Veteran's Parks will need to be elevated, due to being located within the regulatory floodplain. An electrician could be hired for the installation and the Town could purchase the generators directly from the supplier. The Town could also obtain the necessary permits. The cost estimates should be available for the next Commissioner's meeting. AC Shultes will be scheduling the replacement of the pump for Well #1 soon. In order to install a generator at the Avalon Park Sewage Pump Station, we'll need to coordinate with M Davis and Cecil County for any potential modifications to the alarm system. The transducers have been ordered for well monitoring and should be here and installed within the next two months. In part due to Artesian drilling wells outside of Town limits, and within the same aquifer, the long-term monitoring of water levels in Town wells is important.

Cecil County Sheriff's Report: Sergeant Kalinsky was unable to attend the meeting due to illness. President Fockler read the report. In December, there were 33 calls for service which is in the moderate range. There were no overdoses last month, with two overdoses for 2022.

Maintenance Report – Bobby Straiton: Removed the old refrigerator from 630 Water Street and installed a new one with an ice maker. Ice eaters and thermostats were installed at the Town Pier and C-Dock. Replaced three deck boards and a railing on the Boat Ramp Pier and two boards on C-Dock. Salted intersections for ice flash freeze event on 12/23/2022 and 12/24/2022. Also salted the Town Hall parking lot and St. John’s United Methodist Church for Christmas services. Cleaned the marquee sign board in the center of the Town. Cleaned and realigned the water valve boxes at Bladen and Edgewater Avenues. Cleaned out valve boxes with Elkton’s vacuum truck at ten points that will help with isolating leaks, in case of emergencies. Serviced all lawn mowing equipment and weed eaters to be stored for the winter with stabilizer in the fuel lines. Built and painted shelves at the Avalon building that were needed for tote storage. Took down the Christmas trees in front of Fair Green Park and stored them for next year. Also took down the sea shell lights and stored them. Repaired a broken steering wheel in Fair Green Park and replaced it. Limbs lying on the fence surrounding the maintenance shop were cut and taken to the landfill. Fixed three pot holes, one on Caroline Street and two at the intersection of Frederick and Water Streets. Collected yard waste and bulk trash and took to the landfill.

Old Business

Walkable Community Workshop Report & Regional Transportation Plan Update – Jake Thompson, WILMAPCO: The Wilmington Area Planning Council (WILMAPCO) is the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for Cecil County, Maryland and New Castle County, Delaware. They are charged with planning and coordinating transportation investments for our region. Their mission is to create the best transportation plan for the region, which meets all the requirements of the Clean Air Act and its amendments, including the Infrastructure Investment Jobs Act. WILMAPCO’s 2050 Regional Transportation Plan calls for improving quality life, efficiently transporting people and supporting economic development and goods movement. Making communities more walkable achieves all of these goals. Walkability considers how well an area facilitates safe foot and bicycle traffic. Fourteen residents attended the Walkable Community workshop that was held on October 12, 2022. It involved three parts. The first was a presentation to review what is needed to create a walkable environment. The second part was a walking audit of the area to identify issues learned in the presentation. The walking tour began at the Charlestown Fire Company and proceeded on Market Street to Cecil Street, left on Cecil Street and then left again onto Baltimore Street to Foot Log Park where a walk along the beach brought the walkers to the Foot Log Bridge and onto Bladen Street, returning to the fire company. The third part was a chance to share ideas for improving walkability in Town. Some suggestions were to redesign intersections at Market and Cecil Streets, Cecil and Baltimore Streets, and Market and Bladen Streets. It was suggested that sidewalks be six feet wide so two people can walk together. Another suggestion was for advisory shoulders to be painted for walking and biking on Town roads. Off-road trail connections were proposed, connecting Tasker Lane to Foot Log Park, and up to the Athletic Complex. Federal funding is available to help complete some of the walkability suggestions. Longer term, there is hope that an off-road trail will go through Cecil County, and perhaps connect to Charlestown. The 2050 Regional Transportation Plan is available for review and comments will be received until March 2023. Wilmapco’s “Our Town Conference” will be held on February 8th for additional public comment.

Commissioner Capano suggested getting input from the Fire Company in relation to the round-about being considered for the Market and Bladen Streets intersection. President Fockler asked if a train station could be considered for Charlestown. Mr. Thompson stated that while there are no current plans to connect commuter rail between Perryville and Newark, it could still be considered.

Speed Camera Contract – Mike Phelan, Altumint: Two location had speeding data collected, one by Charlestown Elementary School and the other in Cool Springs. Any locations proposed for installing a speed camera along a State road, would need a permit from the State Highway Administration. Prior to installing a speed camera, there would be public service announcements during a 30-day warning period, prior to assessing fines. The fines would be for speeding only, current State law doesn't allow their use for running stop signs. Any collected fines would go to the Town, with a portion going to Altumint, for providing the camera. All of the funds collected must be spent on public safety projects. Since Charlestown had some speeding data collected outside of the one half mile radius school zone in Cool Springs, this information could be helpful in requesting the State's General Assembly to allow cameras outside of school zones in the future. Currently in Maryland the cameras are allowed only within one half mile of a school. There was some discussion regarding the proposed agreement with Altumint, and Mr. Lightner will follow up with Mr. Phelan to discuss the costs of the service. President Fockler would also like to further review the fee structure. The speed camera system could be ready to go about 90 days after an agreement is executed.

New Business

Charter Amendments – President Fockler:

1. Powers and Duties of the President
Section 25-401. The President of the Commissioners is responsible for the hiring and firing of employees, in agreement with a majority vote of the remaining Commissioners. Commissioner Elmer motioned to accept this revised language. Commissioner Capano seconded. Approved 3-0-1, Commissioner Fields abstained.
2. The Personnel Manual Dismissal Procedure will need additional review at the next meeting, to clarify the wording is the same as the proposed Charter Amendment.
3. Qualifications of Commissioners
Section 25-601. Voters: To vote in the Town of Charlestown elections, a person must be 18 years of age, must be a resident of Charlestown and be registered to vote in Charlestown at least 30 days, (changed from 90 days), immediately preceding any Town election. The change makes it consistent with State law. Commissioner Fields motioned to accept the change. Commissioner Capano seconded. Approved 4-0.
Section 25-602. Board of Supervisors of Elections: The Board of Supervisors of Elections will consist of three members and one alternate appointed by the President and Commissioners. The alternate position was added to assist the Board. Commissioner Fields motioned to accept the change. Commissioner Capano seconded. Approved 4-0.

Section 25-606. Registration:

- (a) Citizens qualified to vote shall be able to register at a Town or County office, every Town or County business day, except within 30 calendar days prior to an election. Added “or County”.
- (b) Registration shall be permanent, and no person shall be entitled to vote in Town elections unless he/she is registered in the Town, at least thirty (30) days prior to any given election. It shall be the duty of the Election Board to keep registration lists up-to-date by striking from the lists persons known to have died or to have moved out of the town. Words underlined are the changes. Commissioner Capano motioned to accept the changes in wording. Commissioner Fields seconded. Approved 4-0. Ms. Diane Letts, Chairwoman of the Elections Board, provided an updated list of residents to President Fockler.

Section 25-608. Candidates: Any person desiring to become a candidate for Commissioner under this Charter shall, at least thirty (30) days before said election, file with the Town, a Maryland driver’s license and a statement of such candidacy in substantially the following form: On the form the change was made to remove 19__ in two places and make it 20__. Any alternate form of identification must prove residency in Charlestown for one year. The underlined words are the proposed changes. Commissioner Fields motioned to accept the changes. Commissioner Capano seconded. Approved 3-1. President Fockler voted nae.

Historic District Commission Appointments – President Fockler: There are two openings and the two candidates are Marci Schneider and Heather Hoge. Commissioner Fields motioned to appoint both candidates. Commissioner Elmer seconded. Approved 4-0.

Town Pier Increase – Bryan Lightner: Maintenance expenses show a shortfall of about \$40.00 per slip on the Town Pier, comparing this year’s expenses to last years. Recognizing the shortfall and accounting for inflation, Mr. Lightner suggested raising the seasonal fee by \$50.00 from \$754.00 to \$804.00, which still keeps the Town Pier fees lower than neighboring rates. A letter of concurrence from the State Department of Natural Resources has approved the increase. There was no increase last year. No motion was made and no action was taken.

Tasker Lane Shore Erosion Control Design Concept – Bryan Lightner: Underwood and Associates has submitted a proposal for design of a living shoreline along the Town’s sewer line at Tasker Lane. The design of 200 linear feet would include protection of the sewer lines and proposes two natural jetty structures, to create additional beach width along the sewer lines. It would have a 2-1 slope at a 45-degree angle. Twelve-inch rocks down to sand would interlock and allow for native plant growth. It would help to manipulate and refract wave energy and would capture sand along the sewer line. There is a private boat ramp at 317 Tasker Lane and the Holloway Beach Campground that the project will need to account for. A question was asked to see if the project could be scaled down, and the answer is yes, redesign can be considered. Mr. Lightner will set an appointment to meet with the property owners and the designer to discuss in more detail.

Commissioner Comment

Commissioner Fields and Elmer had no comment.

Commissioner Capano will meet with Mr. Lightner and the Watershed Master Plan Steering Committee on Friday, January 13th to discuss project progress and next steps.

President Fockler will meet with Mr. Lightner and Artesian on Wednesday morning, January 11th to discuss their potential well interference with the Town's wells.

Public Comment

Diane Letts presented the updated voter registration list to the Commissioners. The list removed deceased individuals and those that moved out of Town.

Dan Rubert wondered what the difference would be between the cost of speed cameras and a police force. He suggested the Altumint agreement be thoroughly reviewed. Public safety needs to be the main focus, whether speed cameras are used or not.

Ursula Boudart would like more information on the erosion control project for Tasker Lane. She likes the large rocks that are in place as the land hasn't moved since they were installed. Ms. Boudart reminded the Commissioners that Air B and Bs are an opportunity to garner tax income for the Town and the tax is not collected at this time. She suggested creating a local Air B and B tax with local guidelines, so the taxes can be collected.

Prosper Boudart feels that monthly expenses for the Town should be published for the residents to review. He noted that during Wreaths Across America many of the markers and graves have settled. He wondered if this would be a good maintenance project for the Boy Scouts. Mr. Lightner will follow up with Mr. Psioda to discuss the project opportunity.

CJ Heitz asked how many residents are in Town. Roughly 1500 residents is the answer. He has questions about the speed cameras. Is there a flat rate instead of the look up fees? He verified that to vote in the Town election that people must be Town residents. Mr. Heitz would like to see all of the storm drains cleaned/jetted out to help alleviate some of the Town's flooding concerns. He feels the Town Pier fee should be increased, to help pay for the regular cleaning of the storm drains.

Richard Mahan asked if the Town knows when/if the Post Office will close. The Town has sent correspondence to the Postal Service, but has not received a response as yet. The letter was sent certified and proof of receipt has been received. He noted that there is a Village Post Office Program to consider, where the Town could hire personnel to staff it. Mr. Mahan suggested contacting Congressman Andy Harris for assistance in getting some assistance. Regarding the living shoreline project at Tasker Lane, he agreed that the manholes need to be protected, but suggested there be resident input, before proceeding with the project. He is willing to be a participant in the discussion. He also feels the boat slip fee increase of \$50.00 makes good business sense.

Dennis Dobay wants to be included in any living shoreline project discussions as well.

Thelma McMullen feels the Town Pier boat slips should be for Town residents only and the fee should be increased. The walkability report was a good project and suggests we consider the maintenance associated with stormwater runoff as part of the proposed round-about project.

Audrey Edwards stated the beach between Tasker Lane and Foot Log Park needs to be cleaned up. The Daughters of the American Revolution wants to place a marker at the Red Lyon and Indian Queen Taverns and approval of a Town permit is needed. Commissioner Fields motioned for the Commissioners to consent to placement of a historical marker identifying the Old Post Road, providing it meets with the approval of the Historic District Commission and the Planning and Zoning Commission. Commissioner Elmer seconded. Approved 3-0. (Commissioner Capano dropped off Zoom.)

Commissioner Fields motioned to adjourn. Commissioner Elmer seconded the motion. Approved 3-0.

Meeting adjourned at 8:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy SanDoe