



**Town of Port Deposit
Town Council Meeting Minutes
Legislative Meeting
Conference/Video Meeting
January 4, 2022**

The public was invited to call into the meeting via videoconferencing or audio by phone.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Kuhs called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

PRESENT: In person: Mayor Kuhs, Deputy Mayor Brown, Councilman Berlin, Councilman Knight, Treasurer Sookiasian, and Chief of Police Smith. Via Zoom: Councilman Tome Jr. and Town Administrator Rinkerman.

ABSENT: None

SAFETY TIP OF THE MONTH – Mayor Kuhs presented the Safety Tip of the Month to Council.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Minutes from Town Council December 7, 2021 Legislative Meeting were presented.

Motion was made by Councilman Knight to approve the December 7, 2021 Legislative Meeting minutes as presented. Seconded by Deputy Mayor Brown. Councilman Berlin abstained due to being absent. Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT – Honore Lane residents, Whitney and Danny Zebac introduced themselves and advised that they are looking to be more involved with the community.

RESOLUTIONS – United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Loan

Resolution 01-2022 – USDA Loan for Stormwater Drainage Project – Race Street and Granite Avenue – Providing for the issuance and sale by the Town, upon its full faith and credit, of its general obligation installment bond in the amount of \$245,000 for stormwater drainage improvements on Race Street and Granite Avenue.

Town Administrator Rinkerman presented Resolution 01-2022 and provided a bullet point overview from Bond Counsel Lindsey Radar. She explained that the \$245,000 USDA loan for the Stormwater Drainage Project has a 1.25% interest rate and the town will be looking to close the bond on January 20, 2022.

Public Comment - None

Motion was made by Councilman Knight to adopt Resolution 01-2022. Seconded by Councilman Berlin. Roll call vote: Berlin – Y, Knight – Y, Brown – Y, Tome Jr. – Y. All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.

USDA Loan Resolution – RUS Bulletin 1780-27 – Required by USDA authorizing and providing for the incurrence of indebtedness for the purpose of providing a portion of the cost of stormwater drainage project for Race Street and Granite Avenue.

Public Comment - None

Motion was made by Councilman Knight to adopt the USDA Loan Resolution as distributed. Seconded by Councilman Berlin. Roll call vote: Berlin – Y, Knight – Y, Brown – Y, Tome Jr. – Y. All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

Town Newsletter – Town Administrator Rinkerman stated the subject matter was placed on the agenda as per Councilman Berlin’s request for a Town Newsletter. Town Administrator Rinkerman provided statistics from the town’s website and Facebook page in regards to number of visitors, followers, and likes. She stated that social media and the town’s website is the fastest and easiest way to provide information to the community. The town is also working on fixing the bulletin board in the center of town to be able to post information, fliers, and events for those walking through town. Town Administrator Rinkerman expressed her and Administrative Assistant Heath’s concerns regarding the newsletter such as staff shortage, cost of distribution and printing, lack of engagement, not being a journalist writer, and the use of time that would be used to produce the newsletter and do interviews as requested.

Councilman Berlin stated that a lot of other towns do newsletters and he thinks it would be a great way to get information to all of the residents, especially those residents on Granite Avenue and Race Street who may not travel through the center of town and/or see the bulletin board. He suggests that the town newsletter include events, history, coupons, and interviews to then be mailed to all residents either bi-monthly or quarterly. He suggested for Administrative Assistant Heath to do the newsletter with his help and inquired about the number of properties in the town. Town Administrator Rinkerman explained that it depends on the number of rental properties and if we would send the newsletter to the owner or the occupant, in addition to taking vacancies into consideration.

Councilman Knight stated that he likes the engagement that the town’s Facebook offers with being able to instantly view information/events, being able to comment, ask questions, share, and link to/from businesses. He suggested that the town leverage social media sites instead of the newsletter being that it is instant and the engagement can be measured. He also would like to push the businesses to resurrect the Chamber of Commerce and update the Cell Phone Tour.

NEW BUSINESS

220 North Main Street – Town Administrator Rinkerman discussed the property currently in cyclical tax sale with over \$15,000 owed. The property was bought in tax sale in 2009 in by Thorton & Melon LLC who has not foreclosed on the property but has two (2) years to do so or it will go back to tax sale. Town Administrator Rinkerman explained that in 2019 a resident requested a proposal for demolition of the property if purchased. The Historic Area Commission (HAC) reviewed the request and approved demolition of the property with the provision that the new construction plan would be reviewed by HAC and that an attempt would be made to use the materials from the granite foundation. The town is waiting on a response from Thorton & Melon regarding the property and will potentially proceed with asking Cecil County if they will condemn the property if no response is received. Councilman Knight clarified that Thorton & Melon LLC do not own 220 N. Main Street, but own the tax certificate for the property.

Councilman Tome Jr. commented on individuals trespassing onto the property and asked what the town can do about it to help prevent vandalism. Counsel McCarron stated he will review the town code to determine what authority the town has over the property and will provide his recommendations. Discussion ensued regarding trespassers, preventative measures, and the on-going issue that towns are having with properties in tax sale.

The Council discussed other properties in cyclical tax sale including 41 N. Main Street and the Quad Unit (88-94 N. Main St.) which the town is trying to see if the County will work with the town and do something with the properties to get them back on the tax roll.

2022 Façade Improvement Grant – Town Administrator Rinkerman announced that the town received \$25,000 for the 2022 Façade Improvement Grant rather than the usual \$50,000 in past years due to a reduction in grant funding and increase of projects submitted. She inquired if the Council would like to continue with the \$10,000 cap for projects or decrease it to \$5,000 to allow for more applicants to receive funding. Deputy Mayor Brown asked if the town should consider matching the \$25,000 grant to which Councilman Knight suggested potentially after the town's revenue has increased.

Councilman Knight made the recommendation and Council concurred to decrease the maximum amount for the 2022 Façade Improvement Grant to \$5,000.

REPORTS TO COUNCIL

Treasurer Sookiasian provided the Council with financial statements prepared by the auditors. He discussed the excess deficiency of revenues over/under expenditures on the revenue and expenditures report compared to previous years. Treasurer Sookiasian explained previously at the June 2021 Town Council meeting that there is a \$29,000 deficit and the report presented is confirmation of the deficit.

Treasurer Sookiasian provided the Council with financial reports and updates for the month of December. The report included various revenue sources, projects and expenses including professional fees, real property taxes, trash collection, and the Winter Lights – Cecil Nights promotion.

Chief Smith provided the Chief's report for the month of December and informed the Council of the meetings attended. She informed the Council that she has not received a report from the Cecil County Sheriff's Office or Maryland Department of Transportation Authority.

Town Administrator Rinkerman provided the Council an update on projects. This included the removal of dead trees in Marina Park, revisions to the application submitted to MEMA for review of the Flood Gate Study project for the railroad underpasses, and the Army Corp of Engineers has advised that they will begin working on the Watershed Study by February or March. She stated the town has been drafting a list of potential projects for the first round of funding received for the American Rescue Plan Act Funding (ARPA) and would like to meet with the Finance Committee to discuss further.

COUNCIL REPORTS – Councilman Berlin provided an update regarding the Snakehead Tournament to be held on May 14, 2022.

PUBLIC COMMENT – No Public Comment.

ANNOUNCEMENTS – Winter Lights Promotion – Photo Booth at Granite Run Taproom and House Decorating Contest

The public meeting was adjourned at 8:25 p.m. The meeting was recorded and audio is available upon request.

Attest:



Vicky Rinkerman, Town Administrator

Approved:



Robert A. Kuhs, Mayor