

MINUTES
WALKERSVILLE BURGESS & COMMISSIONERS TOWN MEETING
April 22, 2020

The Town meeting of the Walkersville Burgess & Commissioners was called to order on Wednesday, April 22, 2020, at 7:30 p.m. Those in attendance included Burgess Chad Weddle, Commissioners Michael Bailey, Mary Ann Brodie-Ennis, Tom Gilbert, Michael McNiesh, and John Zimmerman, Planning and Zoning Administrator Susan Hauver, Public Works Director Bob DePaola, Town Manager Gloria Long Rollins, and Communications Specialist Samantha Fowle. The meeting was not opened to the public, but was on FaceBook Live and advertised for the public to tune in to the meeting.

The meeting was called to order with the Pledge of Allegiance, and a prayer for all affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, including special acknowledgement of first responders, grocery store workers, pharmacy workers, etc.

1. MINUTES

Commissioner Mary Ann Brodie-Ennis made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Michael Bailey, to approve the Town meeting minutes of March 11, 2020. The motion passed by a vote of 5-0.

Burgess Weddle reviewed the meeting closed on March 25, 2020, closed under State Government Article, §10-508(a)(10) To discuss public security, if the public body determines that public discussion would constitute a risk to the public or to public security, including (i) the deployment of fire and police services and staff; and (ii) the development and implementation of emergency plans. The meeting was held to discuss the Town's response to the COVID-19 pandemic emergency. A motion was made and passed to give employees 15 extra days of sick leave should they or a family member be diagnosed with COVID-19 and have to self isolate. No other motions were made.

Commissioner Michael Bailey made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Mike McNiesh, to approve the closed meeting minutes of March 25, 2020. The motion passed by a vote of 5-0.

2. PROCLAMATION 2020-01 – APRIL IS CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH AND MONTH OF THE YOUNG CHILD

Burgess Weddle read the Proclamation proclaiming April as Child Abuse Prevention Month and Month of the Young Child. The Burgess and all Commissioners signed the proclamation.

3. APPROVAL OF ORDINANCE 2020-04 - SIGN TEXT AMENDMENT

Ms. Hauver reviewed Ordinance 2020-04 that was introduced at the March 11, 2020 meeting.

The introduced amendment to §88-14 is:

If located along a Major Arterial, the sign area may be increased one square foot for each 321 square feet of gross floor area over 73,500 square feet. In no case shall a Shopping Center sign exceed 229 square feet in area per face and 29 feet 8 inches in overall height.

Identification signs: Shopping center floor area = 0 – 73,500 sf: 100 sf sign size; 25 ft maximum height. Shopping center floor area > 73,500 sf: 1sf of sign per 321 sf of floor area, up to 229 sf in size; 29 feet, 8 inches maximum height.

Commissioner Michael Bailey made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Tom Gilbert, to approve Ordinance 2020-04, the sign text amendment. The motion passed by a vote of 5-0.

4. AWARD RIGHT TURN IN/RIGHT TURN OUT PROJECT AT FOUNTAINROCK ROAD AND RT. 194

Commissioners questioned background information on the company and requested 3 references on the ECM Corporation, the only bidder on the project. The award will be placed on the May 13, 2020 agenda.

5. DECISION TO BID OUT TRASH CONTRACT

Burgess Weddle recommended bidding out the trash contract in hopes of the trash on Wednesday and the yard waste on Tuesday may be done by the same company at a savings on both contracts.

Commissioner Michael Bailey made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Michael McNiesh, to bid out the trash contract and also ask for a bid for next year's yard waste for a potential savings. The motion passed by a vote of 5-0.

6. CONSTANT YIELD TAX RATE REQUIREMENTS

Ms. Rollins presented the documents required for advertising an increase in the tax rate, as required by the State Department of Assessments and Taxation. Typically the Town advertises a tax rate of 5¢ over the constant yield tax rate (.1547 per \$100 of assessed real property value). By consensus, commissioners agreed to advertise the 5¢ increase.

7. ACCOUNTS PAYABLE AND MARCH FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Commissioner Tom Gilbert made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Mary Ann Brodie-Ennis, to approve the bills to be paid and the March 2020 financial statements for the General Fund and the Water Fund. The motion passed by a vote of 5-0.

8. ANNOUNCEMENTS BY BURGESS WEDDLE

Burgess Weddle announced the following:

- The water leak on Biggs Ford Road was fixed by 6:00 p.m. by Town water staff.
- He encouraged everyone to complete their 2020 Census forms and emphasized the importance of doing so.
- The Veterans' Day bus trip scheduled for June 10, 2020 is still on.
- Memorial bricks ordered by June 1, 2020, each \$50, will be installed by Veterans' Day.

9. HISTORICAL BUDGET ANALYSIS – COMMISSIONER MICHAEL MCNIESH

Commissioner Michael McNiesh presented a power point slide show analyzing the Town's budget compared to actual for the audited years 2004 – 2019. The slides have been posted to the Town's website at www.walkersvillemd.gov. The message from the presentation is that the Town has too much money in reserves. Reasons were presented for why this is occurring, attributing it to underestimating revenue and failing to spend totals budgeted in all expense and capital categories. Alternatives for reducing the reserves were presented. Reducing property taxes and/or spending all the money, or a combination of both, were presented as alternatives for spending down the reserves. Items suggested for spending the funds were 1) more law enforcement, 2) Skate park, 3) Public pool, 4) Community Center for Youth/Seniors, 5) Upgrades to parks, new/additional equipment, 6) Lighted fields at Heritage, 7) Dog park, 8) Run the Yard Waste site at Heritage, 9) Pave Creamery Park parking lot, 10) more security cameras, 11) Weather sensors at the parks for more accurate determination of severe weather, 12) Trash pickup more than once per week, 13) Develop Downtown. The analysis was presented as a starting point for budgeting and spending taxpayer funds. In conjunction with the spending proposed for the General Fund, water rates may be raised to provide operating revenue for the Water Fund and running of the new water plant.

Commissioner Tom Gilbert expressed his concern for the Water Fund with its upcoming debt service requirements with the completion of the new water plant. He noted the interest and principal payments that will be due on the MDE loan and the loan from the General Fund to the Water Fund (for the increased wastewater/sewer capacity fee due to Frederick County). He also noted the annual fees due to the County for the discharge into the County sewer system. The discharge fees, currently about \$120,000 annually, will go to \$164,000 and then to \$276,000. He noted that raising each of the approximately 3000 water bills by \$40 annually would generate \$120,000 of additional revenue for the Water Fund. Commissioner Gilbert will put his findings and concerns into a memo to be pondered later this week.

Burgess Weddle got consensus from the Commissioners to hold a budget workshop on Wednesday, May 6, 2020 at 7:00 p.m.

10. COMMISSIONERS' CONCERNS

Commissioner Tom Gilbert asked that in the future the Town honor CVS Pharmacy, Safeway store and pharmacy, firefighters and first responders, etc. Commissioner Mary Ann Brodie-Ennis added that town staff should be included in the recognition.

Commissioner Gilbert reported that he has received a citizen complaint about mud on Frederick Street from the construction of the Rock Creek School. He asked that the contractors keep the road clean.

Commissioner Tom Gilbert asked what is wrong with the railroad track on Glade Road by Longley Green. He noted driving over it almost takes the front off his car. Mr. DePaola reported that the railroad wanted to replace the boards, but wanted to close the whole road. He noted it was not allowed due to this need to close the whole road.

Commissioner John Zimmerman asked the status of the sidewalk to be installed on Biggs Ford Road at Parkside. He was told this item will be discussed in the closed legal meeting.

Commissioner Mary Ann Brodie-Ennis asked for the status of when the new water treatment plant will open. Mr. DePaola reported that the filters coming from Florida are supposed to be delivered by May 15. Depending on the COVID-19 situation, the delivery date may be adjusted.

Commissioner Brodie-Ennis asked the status of the HFP building and was told this will be discussed in the closed legal meeting.

Commissioner Brodie-Ennis reported that the LED streetlights have been postponed.

Commissioner Brodie-Ennis asked if the County had asked the Town to postpone the bulk trash pickup day but it is still on, so far, for June 13, 2020.

Commissioner Michael Bailey thanked town staff for cleaning up the downed tree at Trout Park, a result of the recent wind storms.

Commissioner Bailey suggested setting up a curb side food pickup in the Town Hall parking lot to support local farmers. The pickups would have to be prepaid. To date, the Town sponsored Farmers' Market will have to be postponed.

Commissioner Bailey thanked Commissioner McNiesh for his budget analysis presentation, and will ponder the suggestions of additional law enforcement and infrastructure.

Commissioner Bailey welcomed all citizens watching from home and announced the Frederick County Take Out app. He also suggested checking on neighbors, coming together, and helping each other out during this pandemic.

Commissioner Mary Ann Brodie-Ennis announced and thanked town employee Kelly Woods for planting 200 trees at Community Park.

Commissioner Mike McNiesh announced that as of earlier this evening, Safeway had toilet paper and paper towels.

Burgess Weddle answered the following questions by citizens:

- Can golf balls be hit at Heritage Farm Park? – No, according to interpretation of Gov. Larry Hogan orders.
- Can we reschedule Walkersville Day? – No, but any church or organization can hold fundraisers whenever they want in compliance with Gov. Larry Hogan orders.
- Can we remove the sign announcing the variance hearing for the Dollar General dated for March? – Yes, it will be removed and reposted when we are allowed for the hearing to take place.
- What is the status of the eyesore where Marsala's Restaurant stands? – The owner is working with the Planning Commission to get the restaurant reopened.

- Why are dump trucks using Frederick Street instead of Nicodemus Road to get out of town from the Rock Creek School site? – Frederick Street is part of the Town’s truck route and trucks are allowed to use it. It is also easier for them to get onto Rt. 194 if they go to the traffic light.

Burgess Weddle read the following announcements:

- Weds., May 6, 7:00 – Budget Workshop
- Weds., May 13, 7:30 – Town Meeting
- Weds., May 27, 7:30 – Planning Meeting

Burgess Weddle also noted that the Food Bank has plenty of food. Food and money donations are gladly accepted.

Burgess Weddle noted that blood can be donated to the Red Cross on TJ Drive.

13. MOTION FOR CLOSED LEGAL MEETING

Commissioner Michael Bailey made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Mary Ann Brodie-Ennis, to hold a closed legal meeting under State Government Article §10-508(a)(3) to consider the acquisition of real property for a public purpose and matters directly related thereto, and §10-508(a)(8) to consult with staff, consultants, or other individuals about pending or potential litigation. The motion passed by a vote of 5-0.

Mr. Bob DePaola reported that he obtained cost estimates for replacing the water lines in Spring Garden Estates, the next area that needs upgrading. The cost for design is about \$125K and full replacement cost for the system is \$1.5 million.

Ms. Susan Hauver reported that the Planning Commission is in the early stages of updating the Comprehensive Plan and a survey has been developed and will be administered on Survey Monkey. Commissioner Mike McNiesh noted that Relatrix – The Walkersville Wire is also another venue for the survey.

The next Town meeting will be Wednesday, May 13, 2020 at 7:30 p.m.

Meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.


Gloria Long Rollins, Town Manager