

MINUTES
WALKERSVILLE BURGESS & COMMISSIONERS TOWN MEETING
November 8, 2023

The Town meeting of the Walkersville Burgess & Commissioners was called to order on Wednesday, November 8, 2023, at 7:00 p.m. Those in attendance included Burgess Chad Weddle, Commissioners Tom Gilbert, Gary Baker, Mike McNiesh, and Betsey Whitmore Brannen, Town Manager Sean Williams, Planning and Zoning Administrator Susan Hauver, Director of Public Works Joe Birch, Communications Specialist Ashley Bailey, and a total of 9 citizens. Commissioner Mary Ann Brodie-Ennis was absent. The meeting was streamed on the Town's website.

The meeting was called to order with the Pledge of Allegiance and a prayer.

1. MINUTES

Commissioner Mike McNiesh made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Gary Baker to approve the Town meeting minutes of October 25, 2023. The motion passed by a vote of 3-0-1 with Commissioner Tom Gilbert abstaining.

2. TOWN WATER FLUORIDE DISCUSSION

Water Superintendent Matthew Orndorff requested the potential elimination of using fluoride in the Town's water supply. Mr. Orndorff discussed the potential danger fluoride poses to employees, the limited benefits provided to citizens, and a potential cost savings to the Town. There was discussion regarding the cost savings, concerns with the reference material provided, fluoride levels used in the Town water, and overall safety concerns. Commissioner Betsey Whitmore Brannen and Mike McNiesh were opposed to removing fluoride from the water supply. No motions were made during the discussion.

3. WALKER FARM CONTRACT DISCUSSION

Burgess Chad Weddle discussed the history of renting the Walker Farm property to Matthew Toms for farming. There was a discussion regarding land rental rates and the lack of any complaints against Mr. Toms.

Commissioner Mike McNiesh made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Betsey Whitmore Brannen to award the farming lease of 8939 Woodsboro Pike to Matthew Toms. Commissioner Gary Baker noted this topic should be discussed next June if the Town would potentially want to cancel the contract for the following year and Commissioner Tom Gilbert requested some minor verbiage improvement to the pay schedule. The motion passed 4-0.

4. SIDEWALK ORDINANCE DISCUSSION

Commissioner Mike McNiesh read through some minor changes to a previously proposed update to Chapter 69 of Town Code regarding sidewalks.

Commissioner Mike McNiesh made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Betsey Whitmore Brannen to introduce Ordinance 23-05 amending Chapter 69 of the Town Code. There were positive comments regarding the proposed update and a public hearing will be held at the December Town Meeting. The motion passed 4-0.

5. ACCOUNTS PAYABLE

Commissioner Tom Gilbert a motion, seconded by Commissioner Gary Baker to pay the bills submitted for the time period. There was no discussion. The motion passed 4-0.

6. CHAD UPDATES, STAFF COMMENTS AND COMMISSIONER CONCERNS

Burgess Chad Weddle read the announcements.

Director of Public Works Joe Birch provided an update on the follow items:

1. The inlets on Maple Avenue are in the process of being repaired and may be completed by Friday. Once completed, top coat asphalt and striping will be completed if temperatures allow. Maple Ave will continue to be one way until the project is complete.
2. The mill and overlay of the parking lot at Community Park is complete. Wheel stops will be added by town staff once they are received.
3. Town wide street sweeping is scheduled for November 20th through November 23rd, if needed.
4. Town Park closing hours will change to winter hours on November 15th opening at 7:00am and closing at 5:00pm. Heritage Farm Park we will only close and lock the inner gates in the evening to allow access to the Whitmore Zimmerman Bldg.
5. Town Staff met with Wilson T. Ballard to discuss the bid package for the work on Green Street.

There was a request from Commissioner Tom Gilbert to place a porta potty at Creamery Park. There was a discussion and agreement to try one at the location.

Planning and Zoning Administrator Susan Hauver advised comments for the Comprehensive Plan are being reviewed and the plan will be voted on in the near future.

Town Manager Sean Williams announced the recent hiring of a second water operator/maintenance technician and staffing is now considered full.

Manager Williams discussed recent internet issues and the offer to install fiberoptic from Comcast at Town Hall for an additional \$300 per month. There was a discussion of pros/cons of spending the additional \$3,600 upgrading to fiberoptic, the option of potentially going with a different company, and future limitations. No immediate action was taken.

Manager Williams discussed the transfer of another \$300,000 from the General Fund MLGIP account in to the General Fund checking account earlier in the day. Over the past few months, a total of \$1.3 Million has been transferred.

Commissioner Tom Gilbert appreciated the new paths installed at Community Park.

Commissioner Gilbert discussed a potential need to alter the Senior Tax Credit due to changes from Frederick County. Updates will be drafted and presented for review.

Commissioner Betsey Whitmore Brannen discussed the new hair salon Shear Grace and Whistle Stop Coffee near the train station. The coffee shop will only be open when the train is conducting business.

Commissioner Whitmore Brannen noted that November is Native American Heritage Month and discussed the history of the local Piscataway-Conoy Tribe.

Commissioner Gary Baker discussed the 2nd Annual Great Pumpkin Pickup held in Thurmont. Volunteers pick up pumpkins and take them to the Catocin Zoo. Commissioner Baker suggested the Town consider a similar program next year.

Commissioner Baker discussed the article published by the Maryland Municipal League about the Town's water plant and requested a link to the article be added to the website.

Commissioner Mike McNiesh congratulated the Walkersville Marching Band and Color Guard along with the successful seasons for several GVAA's soccer teams.

Commissioner McNiesh acknowledged receiving citizen requests to deal with dilapidated properties in Town. He noted the Town can take steps to fix that issue once the sidewalk code has been updated.

7. PUBLIC COMMENTS AND CONCERNS/WATERSHED UPDATE

There were no public comments.

Burgess Chad Weddle discussed the need to address future water rates and the special assessment fee.

Burgess Weddle thanked all Veterans for their service to the Country.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- Fri., Nov 10 – Town Office Closed – Veteran's Day
- Sun., Nov 12 – Veteran's Day Ceremony – Memorial Park 1pm
- Tues., Nov 14 – Planning Commission Workshop 7pm
- Thurs/Fri., Nov 23-24 – Town Office Closed – Thanksgiving
- Mon., Nov 27 – EDC Meeting 7pm
- Wed., Dec 6 – Tree Lighting - Creamery Park 7pm

Meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Sean Williams, Town Manager