

MINUTES
WALKERSVILLE BURGESS & COMMISSIONERS TOWN MEETING
December 13, 2023

The Town meeting of the Walkersville Burgess & Commissioners was called to order on Wednesday, December 13, 2023, at 7:00 p.m. Those in attendance included Burgess Chad Weddle, Commissioners Mary Ann Brodie-Ennis, 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 8 citizens. 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 Tom Gilbert made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Gary Baker to approve with corrections the Town meeting minutes of November 8, 2023. The motion passed by a vote of 4-0-1 with Commissioner Mary Ann Brodie-Ennis abstaining.

2. PUBLIC HEARING – ORDINANCE 2023-05 CHAPTER 69 STREETS AND SIDEWALKS

Ordinance 2023-05 was reviewed with Commissioner Mike McNiesh requesting the height differential in C.1.a.2 be changed from 1 ½ inches to ¾ inch and an addition for allowing a homeowner time to mitigate a tree that causes sidewalk damage. There was discussion on the proposed changes with general agreement from all.

Burgess Chad Weddle began the public hearing. He read a letter from Ann and John Moldenhauer in support of the Ordinance.

Lauri Gross of 30 Main Street inquired about the definition of mitigating a tree, the timing of how the Town will replace damaged sidewalks, and sidewalks that are not within Town limits.

There were no additional public comments and the public hearing was closed.

Commissioner Mike McNiesh made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Betsey Whitmore Brannen to adopt Ordinance 2023-05 with discussed amendments. There was discussion of the Town potentially placing a lien on homeowner's properties that do not pay for any work performed by the Town and clarification of the owner of certain sidewalks in Town. The motion passed 5-0.

3. SENIOR TAX CREDIT DISCUSSION

Commissioner Tom Gilbert discussed changes Frederick County made to their senior tax credit that affects the Town's current senior tax credit. The changes include increasing the gross household income from \$80,000 to \$100,000, increasing the property tax credit from \$300,000 to \$400,000, and an adjustment based on consumer price index to prevent future amendments the Town will need to make based on changes the County makes in the future.

Commissioner Tom Gilbert made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Mary Ann Brodie-Ennis to introduce Ordinance 2023-06 amending the Senior Tax Credit. There was no discussion. The motion passed 5-0. A public hearing will be scheduled for the January 10th Town Meeting.

4. PARKS COMMISSION VACANCY

Burgess Chad Weddle advised that Kitty Baker will not seek reappointment for her position on the Parks Commission. The position will be advertised for next month.

5. PLANNING COMMISSION REAPPOINTMENT – DAVID ENNIS AND RUSS WINCH

Burgess Chad Weddle expressed his interest in reappointing David Ennis and Russ Winch whose terms expired in November of 2023. There was discussion regarding the expired terms, reappointing both for continuity, and the request to separate the motions.

Commissioner Gary Baker made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Tom Gilbert to reappoint David Ennis to the Planning Commission. There was discussion of husbands/wives serving the Town at the same time, disagreement with actions against Community wishes, multiple family members serving the Town, disagreements with the draft Comprehensive Plan, the desire to limit members changing during passing of Comprehensive Plan, and a brief history of recent reappointments. The motion failed 2-2-1 with Commissioners Betsey Whitmore Brannen and Mike McNiesh in opposition and Commissioner Mary Ann Brodie-Ennis abstaining.

Commissioner Tom Gilbert made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Gary Baker to reappoint Russ Winch to the Planning Commission. There was no additional discussion. The motion passed 4-1 with Commissioner Betsey Whitmore Brannen in opposition.

6. ARPA FUNDING DISCUSSION – CHURCHES AND BUSINESSES

Burgess Chad Weddle discussed the original ARPA funding plans for the Town. Some funding was originally discussed for assistance for small business, non-profits, and churches. Non-profit organizations have been awarded funding through the EDC. Burgess Weddle asked if the EDC should move forward with awarding churches funding using ARPA funds. There was a majority of Commissioners that were not in favor of awarding churches ARPA funding. No motions were made.

7. TREE LIGHTING CEREMONY

Burgess Chad Weddle was complimentary of the tree lighting ceremony and will discuss possible improvements for future events. There was a discussion on possible improvements to the event.

8. FIBER OPTIC DISCUSSION

Town Manager Sean Williams discussed the possibility of fiber optic service for the Town and a recent agreement with Glow Fiber and Thurmont. There was agreement to obtain internet provider options for the Town and Manager Williams will inquire with several companies.

9. LIAISON POSITION DISCUSSION

Town Manager Williams discussed options for a liaison position with the hopes of improving communication and increasing representation at County meetings. Future potential part-time position needs (water billing, lead pipe tracking for DPW) has led Manager Williams to request Town staff take on the immediate responsibility of improving communication with the County and informing the Burgess and Commissioners of upcoming County meetings. Concerns with representation in the County and a possible college intern position were discussed. There was agreement to have Town staff manage the task for now.

10. ACCOUNTS PAYABLE

Commissioner Tom Gilbert a motion, seconded by Commissioner Gary Baker to pay the bills submitted for the time period. The motion passed 5-0.

11. CHAD UPDATES, STAFF COMMENTS AND COMMISSIONER CONCERNS

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

1. The Maple Ave project is mostly completed with only a few minor issues to remedy in the Spring or as weather temperatures allow. Those fixes include top soil and re-seeding remediation, some minor painting, and street signage.
2. The Community Park mill and overlay project is complete with just wheel stops for the parking stalls needing to be installed. That work should be completed by end of week.
3. Street Sweeping was completed November 28th due to weather and trash pickup conflict.
4. Town Staff met with Wilson T. Ballard regarding the Green Street project. They are working on putting the bid package together with work to start in the Spring once the bid is awarded.
5. Discovery Engineering design for water main replacement bids are due on December 14th. Staff recommendation will be presented at the first town meeting in January.
6. Meter replacement to start mid-January in Glade Manor I, which has 78 Badger Meters to replace and then we will move to Glade Town which has 278 Badger Meters to replace. Citizens will be notified of start date and location of work. This is at no cost to the residents and takes about 20-30 minutes to complete.
7. Director Birch discussed new testing mandates from MDE requiring the Town to test for lead in locations previously not tested. The new report must be completed by October 2024 with all lead in water mains identified.

Planning and Zoning Administrator Susan Hauver discussed the Planning Commission voting on the Comprehensive Plan and sending it to the Burgess and Commissioners for adoption. A public hearing will need to be held.

Town Manager Sean Williams discussed a citizen concern with the crosswalk at Sandstone Drive leading from Victoria Park into the area of Rutters. There was a request made to add additional safety measures to the crosswalk. There was a brief discussion and general agreement that no additional measures are necessary.

Commissioner Mike McNiesh notified everyone that he may miss one or both meetings in January.

Commissioner Gary Baker discussed the sun shades at the library.

Commissioner Baker discussed the Veterans Day ceremony along with the Chriskindlmarket parade.

Commissioner Baker promoted Way Off Broadway's dinner theater, and noted Commissioner Whitmore Brannen's performance.

Commissioner Mary Ann Brodie-Ennis also discussed the Chriskindlmarket parade.

Commissioner Betsey Whitmore Brannen discussed the Tree lighting ceremony and Chriskindlmarket parade.

Commissioner Tom Gilbert discussed a Frederick News Post article from 25 years ago that recounted the swearing in of former Burgess Ralph Whitmore.

Commissioner Gilbert discussed requesting additional information from Public Works to potentially explore the option of building a micro sewer treatment plant. Director Birch provided concerns involving the costs of a feasibility study, possibly purchasing additional property, obtaining a MD discharge permit, and the challenges of where to discharge treated water. There was general agreement to move forward with a feasibility study.

Commissioner Mary Ann Brodie-Ennis discussed the EDC and the desire of the group to work with businesses in the Town.

Commissioner Gary Baker requested the micro sewer feasibility study be added to the next agenda.

Commissioner Mike McNiesh complimented the Walkersville Historical Society for their work with the Chriskindlmarket. There was also a brief discussion on the need for a new location or storage space for the historical society.

Commissioner Tom Gilbert requested a closed meeting §3-305(b) (3) "To consider the acquisition of real property for a public purpose and matters directly related thereto" and §3-305(b) (9) "To conduct collective bargaining negotiations or consider matters that relate to the negotiations."

Commissioner Tom Gilbert made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Mike McNiesh for a closed meeting. The motion passed 5-0.

12. PUBLIC COMMENTS AND CONCERNS/WATERSHED UPDATE

Ann Moldenhauer of 258 Deer Run Drive thanked everyone for passing the changes to the sidewalk. Mrs. Moldenhauer also liked the potential of having fiber optic internet options. Mrs. Moldenhauer discussed concerns with the lack of new people on some of the Town Commissions and spouses serving roles with the Town.

David Ennis of 118 Challedon Drive noted continued traffic concerns with Calvert Assembly and the actions being taken by law enforcement. Mr. Ennis noted certain sidewalk on MD 194 would not be affected by the new sidewalk ordinance. Mr. Ennis discussed his feelings on the Comprehensive Plan and the various points of view on the Planning Commission. Mr. Ennis also noted there are no rules in the Town Code that prevents spouses serving the Town.

Ron Layman of 24 W. Frederick Street discussed upcoming Scouting events at the watershed and positive turnout for Santa visits at the Manor House.

Burgess Chad Weddle read all the announcements.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- Sun., Dec. 17 WVFD Santa Parade
- Mon., Dec. 18 – EDC Meeting 7pm
- Mon., Dec. 25 - Town Office Closed – Christmas
- Mon., Jan. 1 – Town Office Closed – New Years Day
- Wed., Jan. 3 – Parks Meeting 7pm

Meeting adjourned at 8:43 p.m.

Sean Williams, Town Manager