

MINUTES
WALKERSVILLE BURGESS & COMMISSIONERS TOWN MEETING
April 10, 2024

The Town meeting of the Walkersville Burgess & Commissioners was called to order on Wednesday, April 10, 2024, at 7:00 p.m. Those in attendance included Burgess Chad Weddle, Commissioners Mary Ann Brodie-Ennis, Tom Gilbert, Mike McNiesh, Gary Baker 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 26 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 Mary Ann Brodie-Ennis to approve the minutes of March 27, 2024. The motion passed by a vote of 5-0.

2. WHS ACADEMIC TEAM RECOGNITION

Burgess Chad Weddle read Proclamation 2024-05 recognizing the Walkersville High School Academic Team for winning the 2024 Frederick County Academic Tournament.

3. FREDERICK COUNTY CHILD ABUSE AWARENESS MONTH

Burgess Chad Weddle read Proclamation 2024-06 proclaiming April 2024 as Child Abuse Prevention Month.

Kristen Dun, Jenna Moseman, Chantell Beckett, Megan McGowan, Arielle Bender, and Heiress the facility dog were introduced. They discussed The Child Advocacy Center in Frederick, the services the group provides, and Child Abuse Prevention Month information.

4. PUBLIC HEARING – WATER PLANT LOAN REPAYMENT FEE

There were no public comments. The public hearing was closed.

Burgess Chad Weddle discussed Ordinance 2024-01 Water Plant Loan Repayment Fee explaining the \$100 fee that would be added to customer bills each year.

Commissioner Tom Gilbert made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Gary Baker to adopt Ordinance 2024-01 – Water Plant Loan Repayment Fee. There was discussion about the need for the loan repayment fee, the need to increase water rates, raising rates before the next election, and having an upcoming workshop giving Commissioners future billing options. The motion passed by a vote of 5-0.

5. COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Burgess Chad Weddle introduced attorney Leslie Powell assisting the Town with the Comprehensive Plan. Attorney Powell advised the Commissioners of the options available to them of accepting, rejecting, accepting part of the comprehensive plan, or remanding it to the Planning Commission for further consideration. There was an extended conversation with Commissioners all taking turns discussing their opinions on the Comprehensive Plan as presented.

Commissioner Mike McNiesh made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Betsey Whitmore Brannen to remand the Comprehensive Plan to the Planning Commission for removal of the land

use sections designating the Staley property as residential. There was continued conversation, and the motion was withdrawn by both Commissioners McNiesh and Whitmore Brannen.

Commissioner Mike McNiesh made a motion to strike out the sentences in the Land Use Section of the Comprehensive Plan redesignating the Staley property as partially high density and partially low density. Planning and Zoning Administrator Susan Hauver discussed the concerns by simply removing two sentences from the plan and asked for direction. Commissioner McNiesh noted the lack of a second and requested to reword the motion.

Commissioner Mike McNiesh made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Betsey Whitmore Brannen to remove all instances referring to the redesignating of the Staley property as high density and low density residential within the 2024 Comprehensive Plan. Attorney Powell noted concerns with the motion and suggested the plan be remanded to the Planning Commission with instructions to remove the redesignation of the Staley property. The motion was effectively withdrawn after continued conversation.

Commissioner Betsey Whitmore Brannen made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Mike McNiesh to remand the Comprehensive Plan to the Planning and Zoning Commission with direction to modify the plan to keep the Staley property as it currently is designated. The motion passed by a vote of 3-2 with Commissioners Mary Ann Brodie-Ennis and Gary Baker in opposition.

6. AWARD PAVING AND CONCRETE SERVICE CONTRACT

Burgess Chad Weddle read a staff memo regarding the paving and concrete service contract describing the bid process and the three companies that supplied bids (RFP Inc., D& H Paving, D.I.R Construction, Inc). Town staff recommended RFP Inc. based on the bids provided and previous work history. There was discussion regarding the best way to implement a plan for fixing sidewalks and roadways in town along with the amount of money that can be spent this fiscal year.

Commissioner Gary Baker made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Mary Ann Brodie-Ennis to award the on-call paving and concrete contract to RFP, Inc. of Middletown. There was no additional discussion. The motion passed by a vote of 5-0.

7. REAPPOINTMENT OF DAVID ENNIS TO PLANNING COMMISSION

Commissioner Gary Baker made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Tom Gilbert to appoint David Ennis to the Planning Commission. Commissioner Mary Ann Brodie-Ennis recused herself from the discussion and the vote. There was an extended conversation regarding the appointment. Commissioners Tom Gilbert and Gary Baker voted for the nomination, Commissioner Betsey Whitmore Brannen voted against the nomination, and Commissioner Mike McNiesh voted present. Burgess Chad Weddle noted that on the advice of legal counsel he was authorized to break the tie vote and voted for the nomination. The motion passed.

8. ACCOUNTS PAYABLE

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

9. CHAD UPDATES, STAFF COMMENTS AND COMMISSIONER CONCERNS

Communications Specialist Ashley Bailey promoted the EDC's Pop Up on Penn event on Saturday May 4th 10 AM – 4:00 PM.

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

1. Town staff is working with residents on Green Street regarding sidewalk before putting the project out for bid.
2. DPW will begin making appointments to restart meter replacements in the first week of May focusing on Old Towne. Appointments for areas we have already canvassed will still be accepted.
3. Meter reads and re-reads for water billing are complete.
4. The Community clean-up week is on April 22nd-28th. Trash bags, gloves, and vests are available at Town Hall.

Town Manager Sean Williams discussed a Maryland State mandated update to the Town Code Ethics Chapter that will come up for discussion at a future Town Meeting.

Commissioner Tom Gilbert discussed a Frederick News Post article about sidewalk repair within Frederick City and citing Walkersville's recent change to the Town Code.

Commissioner Gilbert discussed potential concerns with loss of property due to the proposed Frederick County rail trail. Plans have not yet been designed, but future designs will be brought to the Town's attention.

Commissioner Mary Ann Brodie-Ennis provided a brief update of the Charter Review Committee.

Commissioner Gary Baker inquired of Commissioner Betsey Whitmore Brannen for any updates of the Biggs Ford Solar LLC. Commissioner Whitmore Brannen advised she is not the property owner but provided an update on the project.

Commissioner Mike McNiesh noted that a previously elected Commissioners voted in opposition to the solar farm, but that the State is allowing the project.

10. PUBLIC COMMENTS AND CONCERNS/WATERSHED UPDATE

Jay Bureau of Lenhart Road noted that Commissioner Mike McNiesh defended all of the Commissioners from comments on social media claiming some Commissioners were taking financial incentives for votes.

Gary Grossnickle of Devilbiss Bridge Road commented on the future solar farm and inquired about the width of railroad right of way.

Ron Layman of 24 W. Frederick Street discussed the water shed.

Burgess Weddle read the announcements.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Mon., April 22 - EDC Meeting 7pm

Tues., April 23 - Planning Commission Meeting 7pm

Wed., April 24 - Town Meeting 7pm

Wed., May 1 - Parks Meeting 7pm

Mon., May 6 – ARIA Remembrance Service

Meeting adjourned at 8:27 p.m.

Sean Williams, Town Manager