Meeting minutes of Town Council on 7-11-2023

As reviewed, approved, and accepted by the Town Council on August 1, 2023

There being a quorum, Mayor Charles Hendricks called the regular meeting of the Town Council to order at 7:30 p.m. The meeting was held using video conferencing. Council Members Charles Bradsher, Tom Burke, Amy Koval and Christina Pellegrino were present. The Treasurer, Clerk, Assistant Clerk, Assistant Staff Member, Planning Commission Chair, and approximately nine residents and guests were also present.

Mayor Hendricks opened the meeting by swearing in Amy Koval, Tom Burke, Eric Wenger, and James Schneider into their current positions.

Minutes:

The minutes from the Town Council Meeting held June 6, 2023, were approved as submitted.

Treasurer’s Report

Treasurer Hoffman stated that due to technical issues at Town Hall, Town Council members will receive the written report once these issues are resolved.

The fiscal year ended June 30, and we received the second part of the Miller Park grant for $20,000. This completes the grant.

In June the income total was $71,500. For expenses, every bill that came in was paid by June 30, therefore this amount is somewhat larger than usual; for example, payroll was paid on June 30. The total expenses were $53,700. Net income for June 2023 was $17,800.

Council Member Burke made a motion to accept the Treasurer’s report for June subject to any revisions made when the written report is received. Council Member Koval seconded the motion. ***Unanimously approved.***

Planning Commission Report

Eric Wenger, Planning Commission Chair, reported that a Planning Commission meeting was held on June 29, 2023, to conduct second quarter business, including the upcoming review of the town’s comprehensive plan. Chair Wenger made clear the Planning Commission’s responsibilities and divided up parts of the comprehensive plan review to different Planning Commission members. He hopes the commission will complete a satisfactory review by the fall of 2024.

Chair Wenger reported that the Hope Builders subdivision plan, as originally submitted to the town, was not completely accurate, and we believe that this plan was also submitted to the county for septic approval. It included the water perc tests done previously by the county. This has caused some concern because there are different requirements for the two watersheds in the Town of Laytonsville. The Patuxent watershed has stricter septic reserve area requirements (17,000 sq. ft.) than the Seneca watershed (10,000 sq. ft.). Hope Builders’ property lies within the Patuxent watershed, but the county is applying the 10,000 sq. ft. requirement. Thus a commercial building with many employees would have a much smaller septic field than what would be required for a single-family home in the same watershed. The Town Attorney has filed an appeal to find out why this was approved and if it is correct.

Historic District Commission Report

Mayor Hendricks, the former Historic District Commission (HDC) Chair, said the HDC had approved the installation of a sign at the building at 6920 Sundown Road owned by St. Bartholomew’s Episcopal Church. He added that the HDC had removed the landscaping section from the draft Consolidated Guidelines and resubmitted the draft to the Town Council. He suggested a joint meeting of the HDC and the Tree Commission to discuss how to handle landscaping issues in the historic district. Member McDonald will chair the July HDC meeting at which a new chair will be elected.

New Business

Maryland Municipal League (MML) Summer Conference:

Mayor Hendricks reported that he and Council Member Koval attended this conference on June 25–28, 2023. Mayor Hendricks listed and summarized several of the informative sessions that the two attended. Council Member Koval attended the MML Banner City/Town Award session at which Laytonsville was recognized. Mayor Hendricks described the five criteria needed to receive this award:

-Attend conferences

-Attend chapter meetings

-Conduct a municipal month activity

-Conduct a school visit

-Meet miscellaneous MML criteria

Mayor Hendricks said he hoped that members of the Town Council will help support meeting these criteria.

Second Quarter Safety Inspection: Council Member Pellegrino conducted the Second Quarter Safety Inspection. She reported that the shrubs around Town Hall’s fire pit need to be trimmed and the Lion’s Club medical supply shed was found unlocked. She also stated that the bike rack in Miller Park needs to be reinstalled. Council Member Koval has reached out several times to the state about the heaving sidewalk in front of the Barber funeral home but has not received a reply as of this date. Council Member Burke will conduct the Third Quarter Safety Inspection.

Noxious Weed Control in Laytonsville Preserve: Mayor Hendricks explained that town property in Laytonsville Preserve is infested with Canadian thistle, which is considered a noxious weed. He said that this was brought to the town’s attention and that the state requires the area be mowed.  He shared that Goshen Enterprises has prepared a proposal, which was provided to the Council, to mow the area.

Eric Wenger said he inspected the area, and the Canadian thistle has already gone to seed.  He recommends the Council add this item to the annual maintenance contract as thistle needs to be mowed when the plant is mature and the flower head is beginning to form.

Mayor Hendricks asked if there was any opinion on having regular mowing in this area.  Council Member Koval said there are other beneficial plants in this area, and it could be expensive.  Mr. Wenger said it is a matter of mowing at the appropriate time not a matter of routine mowing.  He said some benefit will be received by mowing it now, despite that it has gone to seed.  Council Members Koval and Pellegrino expressed their support for having Goshen Enterprises mow the area at this time.

Appointments: Mayor Hendricks presented the following slate of appointments:

1. Planning Commission Vice Chair for one year – Brian Kline

Vice President Koval made a motion to approve this appointment. Council Member Bradsher seconded the motion. *Unanimously approved*.

 ii. Historic District Commission Member – Rebecca Saah

Vice President Koval made a motion to approve this appointment. Council Member Pellegrino seconded the motion. *Unanimously approved*.

Determination of the date of the August 2023 Town Council meeting: Council members agreed to keep the August Town Council meeting on August 1, 2023. Mayor Hendricks mentioned the possibility of holding a closed session at that meeting to discuss a matter that is the subject of possible litigation.

Old Business

Laytonsville Historical Center Update on Wayside Signs: Anne Wolf and Jane Evans of the Laytonsville Historical Center, Inc., displayed five proposed historical wayside signs. They explained the reasoning behind the visuals and text of each sign. Each sign will include a QR code linking to more information on the Town of Laytonsville website. A graphic designer is being consulted to enhance these signs. A sign location tour is scheduled for July 25, 2023, to select possible locations for the signs. This wayside sign project is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2023.

Mobley Farm Tree Project: Mayor Hendricks reported that he met with Matt Madeira, Town Arborist, to view and discuss the trees on Mobley Farm Drive. Mr. Madeira amended his earlier recommendation during this meeting, and he stated that none of the trees appear to be in danger of falling or losing limbs at this time. Since the scope of the work is now looking a bit different, Mayor Hendricks proposed that the town issue a new Request for Proposal (RFP) to reflect the new scope of this work and seek additional companies as prospective bidders, having originally received only a single proposal. Vice President Koval made a motion to put out a new RFP. Council Member Burke seconded the motion. *Unanimously approved*.

Action against Antisemitism: Mayor Hendricks stated that other municipalities in Montgomery County are not including locally specific language in adopting this resolution. Given the newest correspondence, Council Members Koval and Pellegrino recommended leaving the wording of this resolution as originally proposed. Mayor Hendricks said that he would work on getting this written up as a formal numbered resolution and informing the public that it is being considered.

Residents' Forum

Vice President Koval reported that at the MML conference she met with someone from Precision Concrete, which is a company that would be willing to examine the Town’s sidewalks to evaluate if any work needs to be done, for example, to prevent a tripping hazard.

Vice President Koval asked when a closed session might be scheduled. Mayor Hendricks said that he would need to discuss this with the Town Attorney to see if a closed session is needed and to ensure that she could be present.

Council Member Burke made a motion to adjourn at 9:50 p.m. Council Member Bradsher seconded the motion. ***Unanimously approved.***

Respectfully submitted,

James Schneider

Assistant Clerk
July 11, 2023