Meeting minutes of Town Council on 1-3-2023

As reviewed, approved, and accepted by the Town Council on February 7, 2023

There being a quorum, Mayor Ruspi called the regular meeting of the Town Council to order at 7:31 p.m. The meeting was held using video conferencing. Council Members Charles Bradsher, Tom Burke, Amy Koval and David Preusch were present. The Treasurer, Clerk, Assistant Clerk, four residents and an invited guest were also present.

Minutes: The minutes from the Town Council Meeting held December 13, 2022, were approved as submitted.

Treasurer's Report: The Treasurer’s report for December 2022 will be presented at the February Council meeting.

**Audit Report: Mayor Ruspi said copies of the Auditor’s Report were provided to the Council and he introduced Robert Diss, President, of Lindsey & Associates. Mr. Diss reviewed the annual Independent Auditor’s Report. Mr. Diss said the opinion letter requirements have changed and that it provides reasonable assurance the statements in the report are not materially misleading. The Management Discussion/Analysis Financial Highlights, which is written by the town staff/representatives provides a comparison of 2021 to 2022. The General Revenues on page 11 shows the equity increased by approximately $500,000.00, which includes the American Rescue Plan Act funds. The current Assets and Liabilities shows a total equity increase of approximately $515,000.00. Total Investments of the town are about $841,000.00 and are listed on page 23. Capital Assets, on page 24, show a calculation of $27,000.00 depreciation expense.**

Committee/Board Reports

**Charles Hendricks, Historic District Commission Chair said the Commission did not meet in December. The Commission will meet virtually on January 16, 2023 and will discuss how the Commission’s guidelines should address the Commission’s handling an owner’s desire to alter the environmental setting of their property in the historic district. Council Member Burke who expressed interest in this topic at the December Council meeting has informed Chair Hendricks that he plans on attending the January 16th meeting. As there are no Historic District Work Permit applications pending, Chair Hendricks does not anticipate the Commission will deliberate over proposed work at any specific property at the January meeting.**

**Eric Wenger, Planning Commission Chair, said the Planning Commission held its fourth quarter meeting virtually on December 15, 2022, and welcomed new member Tom Jackson. Chair Wenger explained that Laytonsville’s current Comprehensive Plan was approved in 2014 by the Maryland Department of Planning and the Planning Commission is in the process of beginning the ten year review process. The process will involve looking at what continues to be relevant, what may need to change, and what the future of the town may look like so that plans for the future can be incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan. Chair Wenger anticipates the process will involve some professional consultation and support as well as resources from the Maryland Department of Planning.**

**Mayor Ruspi said residents need to be notified and encouraged to participate in the process. Chair Wenger said this is a step-by-step process and residents will have a couple of years to provide input.**

**Council Member Koval asked what has been done to encourage greater resident participation and what is the timeframe. Posting notices on the website, at the post office and other locations in town was suggested. Mayor Ruspi said a notice can be written and posted and the homeowners associations can also be asked to notify their members.**

**Council Member Burke inquired if a new Comprehensive Plan is being developed or if the current plan is being updated. Chair Wenger explained that the current plan is to be updated which will be reviewed by the Maryland Department of Planning for compliance with state requirements. He emphasized that the Comprehensive Plan is a roadmap, and it is essential that items considered important for Laytonsville’s future need to be in the plan.**

**Council Member Burke asked if public hearings were held when the current plan was developed and said the state requires public input. Chair Wenger said public hearings were held when the Comprehensive Plan was developed, and that public input is welcomed.**

**Charles Hendricks asked if updates to the Comprehensive Plan might include: possible changes to the zoning of properties, text amendments that might change a permitted use in a certain zone, and annexation that may be desired by the town if the residents of adjoining areas want to become part of Laytonsville. Chair Wenger said all of these items can be looked at but only annexation is reviewed by the state. He stated if certain items are not addressed in the Comprehensive Plan they cannot be done.**

**New Business**

**Fourth Quarter Safety Inspection: Council Member Bradsher reviewed his findings from the safety inspection. These items included cracks in some sidewalks, the culvert at Miller Park needing to be cleaned, the evidence of motorized vehicle use on the wood chip trail, bushes around the firepit at the Town Hall needing to be cut back and vegetation and trash needing to be cleaned up at the pocket wetland. Amy Koval will be the First Quarter Safety Inspector for 2023.**

**Update on Proposed Development for Parcel 248: Mayor Ruspi said the owner of the parcel behind the bank building presented a proposal to the Council in December. Those plans included the construction of a warehouse which is not permitted. The plans have been modified and resubmitted to the Town Clerk. These plans will be provided to the Council and will be reviewed at a public meeting of the Mayor and Council on January 17, 2023.**

**Old Business**

**American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Update: Mayor Ruspi previously provided an updated ARPA spreadsheet to the council. On December 14, 2022, Mayor Ruspi presented representatives from the Laytonsville District Volunteer Fire Department with the check for $7,000 and they were very appreciative. Additionally, he has been working with representatives from the churches in town regarding the purchase of defibrillators and is completing the process of obtaining bids for the work on the patio and porch behind the Town Hall. ARPA items will be discussed at the meeting of the Mayor and Council on January 17, 2023. Council Member Koval inquired about the status of getting another bid for the work at Jones Farm Pond. Council Member Preusch said he has contacted another company and is also following up on water testing for residents.**

**Resident’s Forum**

**None**

Adjournment: Council Member Koval made a motion to adjourn at 8:23p.m. Council Member Preusch seconded the motion. ***Unanimously approved.***

Respectfully submitted,

Joy Jackson

Assistant Clerk
January 3, 2023