

MAYOR AND COMMISSIONERS
TOWN OF NORTH EAST
106 S. MAIN STREET
NORTH EAST, MARYLAND 21901

August 12, 2020

In order to comply with Governor Larry Hogan's declaration of a State of Emergency as part of Maryland's response to COVID-19, and in order to comply with public gathering restrictions during this time the Mayor and Commissioners of the Town of North East conducted a virtual meeting on this date.

The Town Meeting was called to order by Mayor McKnight at 7:00 P.M. Participating via computer and/or telephone were Commissioners Cynthia Billig, Hilary Crothers-Moore, Michael Kline and Raymond Mitchell. Also present were Police Chief Jim Just, Maintenance Supervisor Phillip Meekins, Director of Finance and Administration Ken Natale, Town Administrator Melissa B. Cook-MacKenzie and Town Clerk Stephanie Racine-Dean.

A moment of silence was observed.

-OATH OF OFFICE-

None

-APPROVAL OF MINUTES-

A motion to approve the minutes of the July 22, 2020 meeting, as presented, was made by Commissioner Crothers-Moore, seconded by Commissioner Billig and approved by all.

-PUBLIC HEARING-

None

-GUESTS-

None

-APPOINTMENTS-

None

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-PUBLIC COMMENT-

None

-INTRODUCTION OF RESOLUTIONS AND ORDINANCES-

None

-ADOPTION OF RESOLUTIONS AND ORDINANCES-

None

-REPORTS-

Mayor McKnight

Mayor McKnight reported he had a telephone interview with the town's auditors, Clifton Larsen Allen, 1966 Greenspring Drive #300 Lutherville, Maryland 21093. The firm commended on how well the town conducts business and the performance of the Director of Finance and Administration, Ken Natale.

Mayor McKnight reported he was out and evaluating the town during Tropical Storm Isaias on Wednesday, August 5, 2020 along with Police Chief Just and Maintenance Supervisor Phil Meekins. Mayor McKnight wanted to thank the town staff and the North East Fire Company for all their hard work during this time.

Commissioner Billig

None

Commissioner Crothers-Moore

None

Commissioner Kline

Commissioner Kline entered into the record the July 2020 Maintenance Department Monthly Report and he also wanted to thank the Maintenance Department for all their hard work during the Tropical Storm and this is why we are proud to be a part of North East.

Commissioner Kline reported he attended a virtual meeting with the Maryland Municipal League on Friday, August 7, 2020 regarding the update of the COVID-19 pandemic. There were three main areas they touched based on from the Maryland Department of Health.

- Maryland's seven-day average positivity rate, which continues to remain low and stable.
- Number of hospitalizations, new cases and the availability of ICU levels.
- The importance of contact tracing cases and the necessary guidance about monitoring symptoms and isolating at home.

Commissioner Kline reported there was also an update from the Maryland Commerce Secretary Kelly M. Schultz regarding the Maryland Economy Data. This includes:

- Labor Force Data
- Rise in Consumer spending in the 2nd quarter of \$358,000,000 in local capitol
- Grant Programs
- CARES Act
- Small Business's

Commissioner Kline reported Corporal (Cpl.) Travis Nelson, Maryland State Police is making the compliance effort more robust, adding a "Joint Compliance Strength Team", with the help of the Maryland Liquor Board and the Maryland Health Department.

Commissioner Kline reported he will be out of town starting, Thursday August 13, 2020 through Sunday August 16, 2020.

Commissioner Mitchell

None

Town Administrator, Melissa B. Cook-MacKenzie

Mrs. Cook-MacKenzie reported after returning home from vacation, it was determined that she has broken her injured foot. Mrs. Cook-MacKenzie advised the board, she has been in communication with Mayor McKnight during this process.

Mrs. Cook-MacKenzie reported she has been participating in weekly calls with the Town Administrators from the Cecil County towns during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mrs. Cook-MacKenzie reported she has been monitoring the progress of the Jackson House Exterior and Interior Renovation Project and she is very pleased with the remodeling.

Mrs. Cook-MacKenzie reported she met with the Phil Meekins, Maintenance Supervisor at the Jackson House, 300 Cherry Street North East prior of Tropical Storm Isaias to make sure there was positive drainage from the building and to make sure everything was secure.

Mrs. Cook-MacKenzie reported she was out and monitoring the town during the Tropical Storm Isaias on Wednesday, August 5, 2020 along with Mayor McKnight, Police Chief Just and Maintenance Supervisor Phil Meekins.

Mrs. Cook-MacKenzie reported she spoke with the State Highway District 2 Public Relations staff member regarding an update on the status of the Route 272 Road Work/North side of Route 40. The issue was the large drain pipe which was conflicting with the utilities, the contractor did receive the revised redline version from the State Highway Administration (SHA), and was informed they could now move forward with the drainage pipe, the sidewalk and the paving.

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Mrs. Cook-MacKenzie reported she received an update regard the Route 272 Bridge over Amtrak regarding one of the Cambers which adds extra structural support to a wide span or space, this was off by an inch and a quarter and could not meet. Per the contractor, there was a row of concrete barriers placed on the bridge for additional weight, this would aid them in completing the calculations that can be made and what amount that is necessary to complete. Per the State Highway Administration (SHA) Engineers, the next step is to add an additional barrier, the pouring of concrete and the base at the same time and calculate the weight. Mrs. Cook-MacKenzie advised the board, once the concrete is poured, it will then have to cure for 28 days with the next step of paving and stripes, this will take an approximately 45 days for completion of the project.

Director of Finance and Administration

Mr. Natale entered into the record the list of payments issued the last Board Meeting.

Mr. Natale reported he had a telephone interview with the town's auditors, Clifton Larsen Allen, 1966 Greenspring Drive #300 Lutherville, Maryland 21093, also discussed was the time of the audit and the progress.

Mr. Natale reported he has been researching several ways to improve efficiencies and free some of the existing staff time for higher value activities. Once the research is completed, Mr. Natale will return to the board with a proposal.

Mr. Natale reported the property tax levy for the fiscal year 2020 \$1,742,211 which is 8,000 higher than participated. The Cecil County Treasurer's Office collected in July 2020, \$759,000 of that levy which is 12 percent higher from last year probably related to refinancing their mortgages at a lower rate.

Mr. Natale reported there are approximately four hundred and sixty five water customers that have not paid their water bills for the June 2020 quarter, this would include also the March 2020 quarterly bills. Mr. Natale asked the Board if they would like for the town staff to send friendly reminders to encourage the customers to make every effort to start paying down their balance due, so when the executive order is lifted by Governor Larry Hogan the customers are not in the position where they would need to come up with the funds to pay the entire water bill prior of the Town resuming shut offs.

After discussion, the Board concurred for the town staff to send a reminder letter to customers that are in a 6 month threshold.

-UNFINISHED BUSINESS-

North East Town Hall re: the HVAC Unit

Mayor McKnight asked the Town Administrator, Melissa Cook-MacKenzie about the replacement of the 20 year old HVAC unit the Town Hall. Mrs. Cook-Mackenzie advised Mayor McKnight she will be following up with the town's engineer, Steve Riley, Entech Friday, August 14, 2020 regarding the HVAC unit and the information he has received regarding the replacement.

Job Posting re: Project Manager/Grant Writer

Mayor McKnight advised the Board, there will be a new position added to the town's Planning and Zoning Department. This was being considered as a contractor position, but after discussion with the Town Administrator, it has now been decided for the Project Manager/Grant Writer to be a town employee.

-NEW BUSINESS-

WORF, LLC – Ridgely Forest LLC, Tax Map 31 Parcels 1355 re: Request to Rescind Current Water Allocation, 15 Equivalent Residential Units (ERU's)

Mrs. Melissa-MacKenzie presented a revised Water Allocation Request for WORF, LLC, Ridgely Forest, Elkton, for fifteen Equivalent Residential Units.

A motion to approve revising the Water Service Agreement from 15 Equivalent Residential Dwelling Unites and receive back into inventory was made by Commissioner Kline, seconded by Commissioner Mitchell and approved by all.

Deferring Payroll Tax

Mr. Natale gave information to the Board regarding the Memorandum from President Trump on deferring the payroll tax, which in light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. This deferment covers a four month period, September 1, 2020 through December 31, 2020 which will defer the withholding, deposit and payment of tax collection from the employee share of the Social Security tax.

After discussion is was agreed by the Board for the town staff to monitor the memorandum to the Secretary of the Treasury regarding the financial decision of the deferment of the payroll tax.

Personnel Matter

Ms. Cook-Mackenzie recommended that Patrolman Christopher Jones be promoted to Patrolman First Class Rank, retroactive to August 8, 2020. Commissioner Mitchell approved the recommendation, Commissioner Billig seconded the motion and the motion was approved by all.

-MISCELLANEOUS-

None.

-APPROPRIATIONS-

Requisition R0-01696, to Lecco Pipe Line Construction \$20,180.00

A motion to approve the Requisition R0-01696, Lecco Pipe Construction in the amount of \$20,180.00 for the Creek Crossing project was made by Commissioner Kline, seconded by Commissioner Mitchell and approved by all.

-BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR-

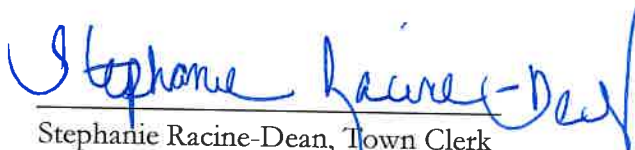
None.

-ADJOURNMENT-

With there being no further business to discuss, a motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Kline, seconded by Commissioner Mitchell and approved by all. The meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

ATTEST:


Stephanie Racine-Dean, Town Clerk


Robert F. McKnight, Mayor