

MAYOR AND COMMISSIONERS

**TOWN OF NORTH EAST
106 S. MAIN STREET
NORTH EAST, MARYLAND 21901**

September 24, 2025

The Town Meeting was called to order by Mayor Kelly Benson at 7:00 P.M. Present were Vice-Mayor Kimberly Davis, Commissioners Catherine Bernard-Dutton, Hilary Crothers-Moore and Neil DeMatt. Also present were Chief Stephan Yates, Director of Finance Vonnie Stemen, Maintenance Supervisor Richard Gregg, Water Superintendent Ron Carter, Director of Planning and Zoning Betsy Vennell, Town Administrator Melissa Cook-MacKenzie, Assistant Town Administrator Grant Handley and Town Clerk Stephanie Racine-Dean.

A moment of silence was observed to give thanks to all the men and women that protect and serve us.

-APPROVAL OF MINUTES-

A motion to approve the minutes of the September 10, 2025 regular meeting, as presented, was made by Commissioner DeMatt, and seconded by Vice-Mayor Davis and approved by all. Mayor Benson and Commissioner Bernard-Dutton abstained due to their absence from the meeting.

-GUESTS-

None

-PROCLAMATIONS-

None

-APPOINTMENTS & RE-APPOINTMENTS-

A motion to re-appoint Michael Kline, 209 Thomas Avenue, North East, to the North East Board of Supervisor of Elections, for a one-year term, expiring on October 1, 2026 with the recommendation from the Town Administrator was made by Commissioner Bernard-Dutton. The motion was seconded by Vice-Mayor Davis and approved by all.

A motion to re-appoint Ruth Gonce, 408 Merrey Street, North East, to the North East Board of Supervisor of Elections, for a one-year term, expiring on October 1, 2026 with the recommendation from the Town Administrator was made by Vice-Mayor Davis. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Crothers-Moore and approved by all.

Town Board Re-Approved Minutes October 22, 2025

A motion to appoint Ulysses Grant Demond IV, 102 Mill Lane, North East, to the North East Board of Supervisor of Elections, for a one-year term, expiring on October 1, 2026 with the recommendation from the Town Administrator was made by Commissioner DeMatt. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Bernard-Dutton and approved by all.

-PUBLIC HEARING-

Mayor Benson opened the Public Hearing at 7:04 p.m. for Ordinance 2025-09-01

ORDINANCE 2025-09-01: Repeals Article 5. District Regulations; Section 5-12 "CAO" Critical Area Overlay District Regulations and Appendix CA-1, CA-2 in its entirety. This Ordinance also enacts a revised Section 5-12 "CAO" Critical Area Overlay District Regulations, Appendix CA-I, II, III and amends Article 3. Definitions

There were no comments from the public nor the Board; therefore, Mayor Benson closed the Public Hearing at 7:08 p.m.

-INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCES-

None

-ADOPTION OF ORDINANCES-

ORDINANCE 2025-09-01: Repeals Article 5. District Regulations; Section 5-12 "CAO" Critical Area Overlay District Regulations and Appendix CA-1, CA-2 in its entirety. This Ordinance also enacts a revised Section 5-12 "CAO" Critical Area Overlay District Regulations, Appendix CA-I, II, III and amends Article 3. Definitions

A motion to approve Ordinance 2025-09-01 with the recommendation form the Planning Office was made by Commissioner Crothers-Moore, seconded by Commissioner Bernard-Dutton and approved by all.

-ADOPTION OF RESOLUTIONS-

None

-NEW BUSINESS-

Artesian Interconnection Agreement Rate: January 24, 2018 & June 26, 2019

Mrs. Cook-MacKenzie and Town Attorney, David Beste Esq., gave a brief description regarding the Artesian Interconnection Agreement, dated January 2018 and the second dated agreement, June 2019. Both were discussed at the Workshop meeting on Wednesday, August 27, 2025 prior of the Board meeting. Mrs. Cook-MacKenzie stated, Section 2-2, is where the language can be found regarding the terms and commencement of both years.

2.2 Commencement and Term for the Year 2018

The term of this agreement shall be for a period of three years from the Commencement Date, unless either party delivers written notice of earlier termination, which termination may be with or without cause, which notice shall be provided not less than (60) Sixty days prior to the date of termination stated in the notice. The Agreement shall automatically renew for up to (2) two additional one-year terms at the end of the prior term absent cancellation by notice from either party provided at least thirty days prior to the end of the prior term.

2.2 Commencement and Term for the Year 2019

Town shall continue to provide water to Artesian via Red Toad Road Interconnection. The availability of delivery by Town and the purchase by Artesian of potable water via the Route 40 East Interconnection shall commence on the first day of the month next following the date on which the Route 40 East Interconnection is completed to the satisfaction of the Parties and placed into commercial operation. The term of the Agreement shall be for a period of (5) five years from the Commencement Date. This agreement shall automatically renew for up to 2 additional (5) five-year term at the end of the prior term absent cancellation by notice from either party provided at least 30 days prior to the end of the prior term.

After discussion, this item will be tabled until the next town board meeting, Wednesday, October 8, 2025 so additional information can be presented to the Board from the Town Administrator and Town Attorney. Melissa Cook-MacKenzie did advise the Board, Artesian is anxious to meet with them to discuss the agreement.

Mayor Benson wanted to recap, to the public and the board: the town has 3 different set of water rates:

- In-Town Customer Rate
- Out-of-Town Customer Rate
- Whole Sale Rate

Mayor Benson stated the discussion has been whether the Whole Sale Rate gives benefit to the Town. As a resident In-Town or Out-of-Town, if you are not a Whole Sale customer you are in essence subsidizing the Whole Sale customer. We as a Board have looked at this during the workshop meeting, and it's the opinion of the Town Administration, this is not what we want to be doing. We want to supply water to our residents and those who are In-Town or Out-of-Town, we don't necessarily want to. So, the question is, does the Town of North East want to continue to be a producer of Whole Sale Water, or does the Town not want to be that entity. **(Mrs. Cook-MacKenzie wanted this information entered into the record, the areas that the Whole Sale of water is going to, is clearly outside of the Town's exclusive service area.)**

Mayor Benson is asking for concurrence from the Board, from the information that was presented, from the workshop on the August 27th and tonight's Board meeting. The motion he would like to put forward, the Board to concur that the Town does not want to be in the Whole Sale Water business and to task the Town Administration to handle, the cost of legal fees and figure out the next steps, moving forward.

After discussion, all Board Members have concurred. Mrs. Cook-MacKenzie stated she will work with the Town's Attorney, David Beste Esq., drafting a letter for the Board's signature of approval and continue with the dialogue.

-REPORTS-

Mayor Benson

Mayor Benson reported he attended the following meetings since the September 10, 2025 Town Board Meeting:

- 8.28.25 – Attended Bikeways Public Workshop at the North East Library, very nice
- 9.3.25 - Met with the Assistant Town Administrator and a former employee of Underwood & Associates, who is now on his own, regarding MS4 Permit & the North East Preserve Project
- 9.5.25 - Attended the Town Hall Staff picnic at the North East Community Park, it was fantastic. Thank you too Rich for cooking and Grant for organizing the event
- 9.10.25 - Interviewed by the Town's Auditor & met with a property owner who has interest in a parcel of land for lodging
- 9.10.25 - Met with Cecil County Economic Development and Cecil County Tourism
- 9.10.25 - Traveled to Ocean City Maryland to swear in Police Chief Yates. He is President, Chiefs of Maryland Police Association. Very honored to be there, what a great time and a lot of fun
- 9.17.25 - Walked around the Water Street Park near Mauldin Avenue, around the creek and saw several proposals from an Arborist to move forward with clearing the bamboo and discussed other projects regarding trees
- 9.17.25 - Met with the Secretary of the Natural Resources to continue dialogue which was started a few months ago in regards to the State Forest that backs into the town property and see if it can intertwine with the Bikeways & North East Preserve Projects
- 9.24.25 - Met with Water Plant Superintendent to talk about the North East Preserve and Human Resource positions

Vice-Mayor Davis

Vice-Mayor Davis reported she attended the following meetings since the September 10, 2025 Town Board Meeting:

- 9.12.25 - Attended Project Leaders meeting for Operation Christmas Child
- 9.13.25 - Attended the Crab Crawl, fabulous event which supports the Friends Foundation for the libraries
- 9.20.25 - Manned a table all day at the Elkton's Fall Fest to promote, English Second Language Program which will be starting, Thursday, October 23rd
- 9.24.25 - As the Co-Director, English Second Language Program, I was in a meeting for ESL

Commissioner Bernard-Dutton

Commissioner Bernard-Dutton reported she attended the Town Hall Staff picnic at the North East Community Park, it was very nice.

Town Board Re-Approved Minutes October 22, 2025

Commissioner Crothers-Moore

None

Commissioner DeMatt

Commissioner DeMatt reported he attended the following meetings since the September 10, 2025 Town Board Meeting:

- Attended the 2nd Friday, September 12th and volunteered for the swim tank
- 9.16.25 - Follow-up meeting regarding next year's 2nd Friday
- 9.13.25 - Attended Paws in the Park, North East Community Park
- 9.13.25 - Attended the Crab Crawl, fun event, favorite Forges Restaurant
- 9.20.25 - Attended Elkton's Fall Fest and manning a booth for Cecil County Relators and Mascot Bluey for all the kids
- Attended a Crab Feast with Jennifer Goldbach and Angela LaPorte, University Delaware Women's Basketball Team

Town Administrator

Mrs. Cook-MacKenzie reported she attended the following meetings since the September 10, 2025 Town Board Meeting:

- Several meetings with the Town's attorney
- Met with a contractor on site, 102 West Cecil Avenue, North East
- 9.14.25 - Talked with St. Mary Anne's Episcopal Church regarding projects around Town
- 9.15.25 - Attended the Ridgely Forest HOA company representative along with Chief Yates and Assistant Town Administrator regarding better communication
- 9.16.25 - Code Review which is going very well
- 9.17.25 - Met with the Secretary of the Natural Resources to continue dialogue which was started a few months ago in regards to the State Forest that backs into the town property and see if it can intertwine with the Bikeways & North East Preserve Projects
- Met with the Director of Planning regarding the Comprehensive Plan
- Several meetings with the Water Plant Superintendent
- Follow-up with the pay Consultant, going very well
- 9.19.25 - Attended Network of Freedom, Great Wolf Lodge program through Cecil County Tourism
- 9.20.25 - National Championship of National Association of Historic Baseball
- Met with Director of Planning, onsite visit, Lot 98, 1 North East Isles Drive

Mrs. Cook-MacKenzie thanked the Clerk, Mable Huber and Town Clerk, Stephanie Dean for covering the Cecil County Christmas Parade meeting, Tuesday, September 23rd.

Mrs. Cook-MacKenzie reported she had a very good meeting with Mayor Benson in regards to preparing for a meeting on November 5th and pitching some request to the delegation for the North East Preserve. Also met with, Director of Planning and Grant Writer, working on Riverwoods Phase 2, all with different responsibilities.

Town Board Re-Approved Minutes October 22, 2025

Mrs. Cook-MacKenzie reported there is a new Patrol Officer starting on Monday, September 29th. Two cadets in the Police Academy are doing extremely well. One more applicant has been interviewed and feel very confident she will do a good job and the Chief is hoping to get her in the Police Academy in November.

Mrs. Cook-MacKenzie reported at the next Town Board meeting, the Board will be getting a packet regarding job descriptions for the Code Enforcement and the Human Resources personal.

Mrs. Cook-MacKenzie reported the Director of Finance, Vonnie Stemen last day of employment at the Town of North East, January 30, 2026.

Assistant Town Administrator

Mr. Handley reported he attended the following meetings since the September 10, 2025 Town Board Meeting:

- Lock-Up restoration is ongoing. Stairs have been rebuilt, doors have been restored off-site, and the building interior has been demoed. The contractors are now working on permits for electrical and HVAC work before beginning interior renovations
- Coordinating repairs for sidewalk cuts caused by Verizon's recent pole installations in Town
- Continuing to explore options for Water Street Park, several meetings and discussions have been held with interested entities
- The Mayor and myself have been advancing a few economic development projects and hope to present a final deliverable soon
- Various improvements for Ridgely Forest are scheduled, we are awaiting contractor availability
- Amy Yackanech, Grant Writer, Betsy Vennell, Director of Planning and myself submitted the application for the Sustainable Communities Designation Renewal for the Town
- Amy Yackanech, Grant Writer, submitted an application for the Town to be designated as a Chesapeake Gateway
- Coordinating efforts to have debris cleared from the North East Preserve
- Spent considerable time reviewing and editing the Code of Ordinances
- On September 11, 2025 attended the WILMAPCO Council Meeting
- Thanked the Board for their attendance at the Staff Cook-Out, Friday, September 5th
- Thanked the Director of Planning and Assistant for putting up the clock in the Town Hall Board Meeting Room

Director of Finance

Mrs. Vonnie Stemen entered in the record the list of payments issued since the last Board Meeting. In addition, Mrs. Stemen reported the following:

- Check Register as of 8.21.25 to 9.17.25
- General Fund Balance Sheet as of 8.31.25

- Statement of Revenue and Expenditures from 8.1.25 to 8.31.25

Mrs. Stemen reported the town will be hosting the auditors on site the week of September 22nd with partial week of September 29th, with concluding their work by the end of October.

Director of Planning and Zoning

Mrs. Betsy Vennell entered into the record the August 2025 Planning and Zoning Monthly report. In addition, Mrs. Vennell reported the following:

- Permit Fees \$275.00
- Escrow Fees \$5,000.00

Mrs. Vennell reported she is working on the Traffic Impact Study and the Proposed North East Retail Center and Texas Roadhouse. We are still sending comments to State Highway and receiving feedback., nothing has gone to the Planning Commission for their review.

Mrs. Cook-MacKenzie advised the Board., the town has retained KCI to review on the town's behalf. This will happen prior of taking this to the Planning Commission.

Mrs. Vennell reported Comprehensive Plan meeting was scheduled for October 6th, this had to be re-scheduled due to the drafts not being prepared in time, these packages have to be completed prior of review.

Chief of Police

Police Chief Yates entered into the record the August 2025 North East Police Department Monthly report. In addition, Police Chief Yates reported the last 10 days have been very busy:

Chief Yates thanked Mayor Benson and the Assistant Town Administrator for traveling to Ocean City Maryland to swear him in for President, Chiefs of Maryland Police Association and for all the support.

Water Plant Superintendent

Mr. Ron Carter entered into the record the August 2025 Monthly Report for the North East Rolling Mill and Leslie Treatment Plants. In addition, Mr. Carter reported the following:

Mr. Carter reported to the Board, the Powder Activated Carbon (PAC) is now active at both water treatment plants (Rolling Mill and Leslie Treatment). Mr. Carter told the Board, you will start seeing the Total Organic Carbon (TOC) improve taste and odor while reducing compounds and other impurities. The Hach analyzer equipment has been installed, it now goes through a checklist and gets sent to Hach. Hach will ask for another checklist, then it will be up to them to come to the treatment plant and start the equipment. This will show the removal of the TOC, from the raw to finish, along with the operation of the plant in real-time.

Maintenance Supervisor

Mr. Richard Gregg entered into the record the August 2025 Maintenance Report. In addition, Mr. Gregg reported the following:

Town Board Re-Approved Minutes October 22, 2025

- Advancements to the landscaping at the North & South Islands
- Will be replanting tulips every year along with adding fothergilla for fall color
- Replacing trees on South Main Street
- Ordered new Christmas Wreaths for Town Hall & Winter Lights along with new garland

-UNFINISHED BUSINESS-

None

-NEW BUSINESS-

Water Service Agreement Extension Request: North East Commerce Center, SGMS Lums Road LLC., 161 Lums Road, Lot 7B – Requesting One Year Extension

Mrs. Melissa Cook-MacKenzie presented to the Board a Water Service Agreement Extension Request for North East Commerce Center, North East for 6 Equivalent Residential Units.

A motion to approve the Water Service Agreement Extension for 1 year, with the recommendation of the Planning Office was made by Commissioner DeMatt, seconded by Vice-Mayor Davis and approved by all.

-MISCELLANEOUS-

Mayor Benson wanted to explain the toy truck that is sitting in front of him. Sandy Turner, Director of Cecil County Tourism along with Town of Chesapeake City and the Town of North East are partners in marketing on the I-95 interstate from Baltimore, MD to Philadelphia, PA a couple times a day.

Assistant Town Administrator reminded the Board, if you are volunteering for Cecil Cares Day, Friday, October 3rd she will be giving out t-shirts tomorrow for the event.

-APPROPRIATIONS-

Budget Amendment 2026-002

A motion to approve Budget Amendment 2026-002 was made by Vice-Mayor Davis, seconded by Commissioner Bernard-Dutton and approved by all.

Requisition R6-00517– Chapman Ford of Horsham - 2025 Ford Explorer \$47,135.00

A motion to approve Requisitions R6-00517 amount \$47,135.00 for 2025 Ford Explore in the amount of \$47,135.00 was made by Commissioner DeMatt, seconded by Commissioner Bernard-Dutton and approved by all.

-BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR-

Marybeth Appio, 18 Bayberry Drive, Elkton is speaking on behalf of the Ridgely Forest Community, to bring to the Boards attention. Many of residents are expressing concerns regarding Halloween. Last year, there were a number on incidents in the community and they are asking for more police presents. Mayor Benson stated the town will take this under advisement, there is still time. The second item, she works at Lowes and she started to volunteer, a partner, with "Sleep IN Heavenly Peace". They build beds for children along with bedding, comforters etc. Ms. Appio thinks there would be a need in Cecil County and she is asking for the help with contacts and sponsors. The Town Administrator stated she would pass along several contacts along with Commissioner DeMatt, Cecil County Board of Realtors/Care Foundation and Angie LaPorte, North East Rotary.

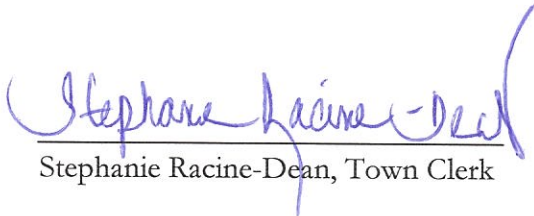
Chief Yates advised the Board, he has put out assignments for Halloween Night. There will be 3 officers in Ridgely Forest from 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. and after 8:00 p.m. there will be 5 officers. This is due to the incidents from last year, outsiders who do not live in the community.

Jennifer Goldbach reminded, Shipwreck sponsored by the North East Chamber will be on Thursday, October 30th and Trick or Treat will be Friday, October 31st.

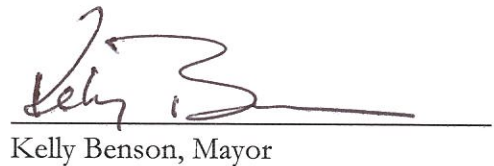
-ADJOURNMENT-

With there being no further business to discuss, a motion to adjourn was made by Vice-Mayor Davis, seconded by Commissioner Bernard-Dutton and approved by all. The meeting adjourned at 7:25 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,


Stephanie Racine-Dean, Town Clerk

ATTEST:


Kelly Benson, Mayor