

MAYOR AND COMMISSIONERS

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

November 19, 2025

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

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 November 19, 2025 regular meeting, as presented, was made by Vice-Mayor Davis, and seconded by Commissioner Bernard-Dutton and approved by all.

-GUESTS-

North East High School Cheerleading Team – Athletes, Coaches and Families

Mayor Benson introduced the North East High School Cheerleading Team and congratulated them for their third-place finish at the Class 3A State Championship this year. The Town of North East is tremendously proud, history has been made as they are the first ever Cecil County cheerleading team to reach the States. Mayor Benson also congratulated the Coaches, Parents and the Community for achieving this incredible milestone.

-PROCLAMATIONS-

NEHS Cheer Makes History

Mayor Benson presented a Proclamation to the North East High School Cheerleading Team for the accomplishment of winning, third-place at the Class 3A State Championship.

-APPOINTMENTS & RE-APPOINTMENTS-

None

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-INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCES-

None

-ADOPTION OF ORDINANCES-

None

-ADOPTION OF RESOLUTIONS-

None

-REPORTS-

Mayor Benson

Mayor Benson reported he attended the following meetings since the November 12, 2025 Town Board Meeting:

- 11.17.25 – Meeting with the Administration regarding a water line project on Main Street and a brief discussion on the Water Plant operations
- 11.18.25 - Attended an informative meeting with an organization that runs the old Edward W. Bok Technical High School, 1901 South 9th Street, Philadelphia PA. A former technical high school, Bok's class rooms and learning spaces have been repurposed into workspaces for Philadelphia makers, businesses, nonprofits and artists. The purpose of meeting with the organization, to determine the future of the North East Middle School once they relocated to their new facility
- 11.18.25 - Had a meeting with town administration regarding the use of the "Old Town Lock-Up", the vision of the building and the qualified entities that would be occupying the space

Vice-Mayor Davis

Vice-Mayor Davis reported she attended the following meetings since the November 12, 2025 Town Board Meeting:

- 11.13.25 – Volunteered five hours to help, CHIP, Maryland's Health Program through Cecil County which helps with Medicare Open Enrollment. That evening, as Co-Director, four hours to (ESL), English Second Language Program and teaching
- 11.16.25 - Collected boxes for Operation Christmas Child and prepped all the boxes
- 11.17.25 - Took the prepped boxes for Operation Christmas Child to the 1st Baptist Church which is the collection site. This is a world-wide mission to reach children all over the world
- 11.18.25 - Attended the Bay-Wise talk at the North East Library on Stormwater Management overview and the quality of water. This presentation was given by Marshall McSorley & Katie Bagri both from the Cecil County Stormwater Management Division

Commissioner Bernard-Dutton

None

Town Administrator

Mrs. Cook-MacKenzie reported she attended the following meetings since the November 12, 2025 Town Board Meeting:

- Met with the Santa Claus who will be taking over the reins for the Cecil County Christmas Parade this year. He will be substituting for the original Mr. & Mrs. Claus from last year, they could not attend this year due to both recovering from health issues
- Several meetings with the Water Plant Superintendent regarding personnel matters and projects
- In parade mode, a lot of activity along with a parade meeting last night. Several subcommittee meetings in the next couple of days. Over 120 entries with a deadline of Friday, November 21st
- Continuation on working on town projects with the Mayor Benson and town staff

Mrs. Cook-MacKenzie reported to the Board, with the Director of Finance being on vacation last week, her staff worked very hard to cut down the water shut off list from 500 customers to less than fifty. This took a lot of effort and patience, to avoid customers from getting their water shutoff prior of the holidays.

Assistant Town Administrator

Mr. Handley reported he attended the following meetings since the November 12, 2025 Town Board Meeting:

- Legacy Bricks are now available
- Leslie Pond sediment removal has begun
- Held various meetings with the Mayor and Town Administrator
- Old Town Lock-Up Project slated for completion by Thanksgiving; the facility will be open for the Christmas Parade
- Submitted the Annual MS4 Progress Report to Maryland Department of Environment (MDE)
- Preparing for trash and debris removal at the North East Preserve site, we walked and marked on November 6th
- Attended the Maryland Department of Transportation Consolidated Transportation Plan Meeting
- Attended the First Responders Banquet on Thursday, November 6th, Congratulations to Officer Holmes and Kristin Short
- Bamboo removal at Water Street has been completed, greatly improving the site's appearance
- Street and sidewalk data have been sent to the civil engineer for the civil repair project

Director of Finance

Mrs. Vonnice 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 10.18.25 to 11.14.25
- General Fund Balance Sheet as of 10.31.25
- Statement of Revenue and Expenditures ending to 10.1.25 to 10.31.25
- Three documents from CliftonLarsonAllen LLP
 - a. TONE (Town of North East)
 - b. Report Internal of Control (look at the operations)
 - c. Audit Financial Statements

Mrs. Stemen wanted to thank her staff, Erin Sewell and Deana Ittner for all their hard work in collections, there was a lot of calls and conversations.

Mayor Benson asked if information can be added to the customers water bills regarding watering of lawns, conserving water and other pertinent information. Mrs. Stemen stated that could be an option and she would make a note for this upcoming year.

Russell Polo, 4-6 North Main Street made a suggestion, it would be beneficial adding information to the Welcome Letters that are given out when new residents move to our community. That would be a great place to add valuable information regarding excessive water usage and tips on conserving.

Shawn Hamlin, 11 Sequioa Place, Elkton, Maryland, who moved to Ridgely Forest in 2022, the developer, Ryan Homes forced the situation of putting sod down. He then received his water bill and had to pay over \$3,000.00 for green grass along with a letter from the town regarding water and chemicals issues, which he does not drink.

Director of Planning and Zoning

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

- Major Facility \$4,100.00
- Connection Fee \$2,825.00
- Permit Fees \$310.00
- Escrow Fees \$29,775.00
- Escrow Fee Refund \$100.00
- Ridgely Forest MPC \$2,00.00
- Application Fees \$250.00

Mrs. Vennell reported she is heavily involved on working on the Comprehensive Plan and working with the consultant EPR PC Consulting Firm. She is getting 15 to 20 emails a day to confirm details of the map and text, its very time consuming with her other duties. She has met with the Town Administrator regarding the final formatting, there is a final date for April 2026 to have a public meeting.

Mrs. Vennell reported town hall staff has been doing Christmas decorating to get prepared for the Cecil County Christmas Parade.

Mrs. Vennell reported she spoke with Critical Area today; they had several questions regarding the Adoption of Ordinance. There will be a Public Hearing on Tuesday, December 2nd for Zoning Amendments.

Mayor Benson asked the Director of Planning for an update on Elk River Brewery, it looks like there is movement. Mrs. Vennell stated the town has released the permit. Mayor Benson asked a second question, Kathy's Corner and the renovation. Mrs. Vennell stated this is the Façade Grant she was awarded. Mrs. Cook-MacKenzie stated Ms. Roth also received a Revitalization Program through the town, settlement was last week.

Maintenance Supervisor

Mr. Richard Gregg entered into the record the October 2025 Monthly Report for the North East Maintenance Department:

- New banners will be put up down South Main Street on Friday, November 14th
- New wreaths have been placed on the side of the Town Hall building along with the new swag
- Town's electrician has repaired the electric at the North Island
- Grasses have been replaced with Fothergilla which is a rare garden shrub grown for spectacular fall foliage as it shows flowers in the Spring
- Pedestrian Poles now have electric with outlets
- During the changeover for "Winter Lights – Cecil Nights", the wreaths at town hall will be changed out and the banners. More lights will be added to the North East Community Park

Mayor Benson asked about the Pocket Park and the clearing of debris from the contractor and the next step that will be taken. The Assistant Town Administrator stated it is now strawed and seeded, there will be conversation in the future regarding the vision for the property.

Water Plant Superintendent

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

- Thanked the Director of Finance and staff for their hard work regarding the water shutoff list and how it downsized from 500 customers to only fifty
- Leslie Plant is shut down until the pond project is over. They started taking down fencing along with trees and cut out of pavement.
- The Powdered Activated Carbon (PAC) issues have gotten straightened out. It turns out the company shipped ½ inch outers instead of ¾, which have not been received as of yet. Mr. Carter stated, the ½ outers were installed but they will be switched out once the ¾ outers are received. The TOC on-line analyzer has been a game changer,

with notification received right away. This has allowed continuous dropping of the finished water TOC removal daily.

Mayor Benson stated to the Board, the water quality has been an important issue, not only for him personally but for all the residence. Mayor Benson stated it has been an eye-opening experience to him with all the different variables. It's good to see change along with progress getting the sensors aligned and the progress that is being made. Mayor Benson is very optimistic the report the Water Superintendent is giving and the positive impact.

-UNFINISHED BUSINESS-

None

-NEW BUSINESS-

Personnel – Christmas Bonus

Mrs. Cook-MacKenzie presented to the Board the 2025 Christmas bonuses which are in accordance with the personnel manual.

Mayor Benson asked the Assistant Town Administrator to gather information regarding projects that has been accomplished in 2025. Mayor Benson stated he looked in the folder that was provided and took a glance and the list is long. He wanted to thank town staff for the ongoing support with all these tasks and expressed this year's Christmas Bonus is well deserved.

Vice-Mayor Davis made a motion to approve the 2025 Christmas bonuses, Commissioner Bernard-Dutton seconded the motion and the motion was approved.

-MISCELLANEOUS-

None

-APPROPRIATIONS-

Budget Amendment 2026-005

General Fund

Maryland Heritage Fund Grant Old Lock-Up Stairway	\$9,600.00
Fixed Assets Building/Improvements	\$9,600.00

A motion to approve Budget Amendment 2026-005 was made by Vice-Mayor Davis, seconded by Commissioner Bernard-Dutton and approved by all.

-BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR-

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Trista Polo, 4 North Main Street, North East went to a North East Chamber meeting, Sandra Edwards, Director of the Cecil County Economic & Development was the guest speaker and spoke about the old Chesapeake City Elementary School and the future of the building. Mrs. Polo wanted this information to be placed in the record that Ms. Edwards would be a great resource regarding the future of North East Middle School once they move to their new facility. Mayor Benson stated the town has a great relationship with Sandra, the Town Administrator states she has a meeting with her this Friday.

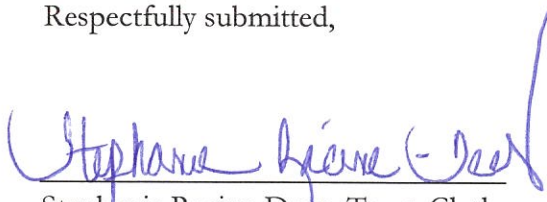
Shawn Hamlin, 11 Sequioa Place, Elkton, Maryland stated he was voted on to the Board last night for the Ridgely Forest Community. There was a topic brought up regarding what the Town of North East owns in the neighborhood. There has been several developers and different property lines and set backs on different things. The HOA is requesting drawings who owns what and where. Mr. Hamlin stated he had his land surveyed and it seems the Town's sidewalk is on his property, there is also confusion regarding his plot plan, it's reflecting different information. Mr. Hamlin is requesting a civil plan from the town that reflects what is owned by the town and the people of the community.

After discussion, the Town Administrator suggested for Mr. Hamlin to meet with the town to go over these documents.

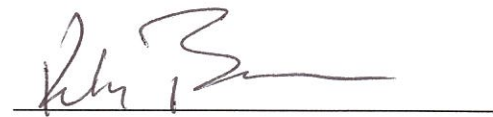
-ADJOURNMENT-

With there being no further business to discuss, a motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Bernard-Dutton, seconded by Vice Mayor Davis and approved by all. The meeting adjourned at 8:05 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,


Stephanie Racine-Dean, Town Clerk

ATTEST:


Kelly Benson, Mayor