

MAYOR AND COMMISSIONERS

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

December 17, 2025

The Town Meeting was called to order by Mayor Kelly Benson at 7:02 P.M. Present were Vice-Mayor Kimberly Davis, Commissioners Catherine Bernard-Dutton, Hilary Crothers-Moore and Neil DeMatt. Also present were Police Chief Yates, 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.

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

-OATH OF OFFICE-

Mayor Benson administered the Oath of Office to Patrol Officers, Anthony Miller and Jacob Platt as the newest members of the North East Police Department.

-APPROVAL OF MINUTES-

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

-GUESTS-

Steve Riley, P.E., ENTECH Engineering – 20 Year Water System Master Plan Update

Steve Riley, P.E., ENTECH Engineering gave a presentation regarding the 20-Year Water System Master Plan update along with recommendations with cost opinions and projected schedule. ENTECH worked closely with Town staff over the last several months to review the original plan in January of 2020 along with identifying a few new projects. The original study identified four 5-year windows:

- 2020 - 2025
- 2026 - 2030
- 2030 – 2035
- 2035 – 2040

As part of the update, ENTECH revisited when the projects were scheduled to occur along with more current information regarding the needs, funding, regulations and other factors.

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Mayor Benson asked the towns administration if there is anything the Board should be aware of regarding the information they have received. Mrs. Cook-MacKenzie did mention, as indicated by Steve Riley, the streets, who are maintained by the County/State are contacted if any capital projects, such as replacing water mains, etc.

-PUBLIC HEARING-

Mayor Benson opened the Public Hearing at 7:22 p.m. for Ordinance 2025-12-01- Amendment to Article 5. District Regulation Part 1. Zoning Districts 5-3 A. "RM-C" Multifamily Residential District Regulations. Adding a provision for transitional commercial uses, associated buffers, setback and area requirements

Mrs. Vennell, Director of Planning advised the Board, the Planning Commission conducted a public hearing regarding Ordinance 2025-12-01 at their meeting, December 2, 2025. The Planning Commission is recommending that the Ordinance be adopted as presented.

There were no comments from the public nor the Board; therefore, Mayor Benson closed the Public Hearing at 7:27 p.m.

-INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCES-

None

-ADOPTION OF RESOLUTIONS-

Resolution 2025-12-02 Human Resource Coordinator

Mrs. Cook-MacKenzie advised the Board, she would like to place ahold on the adoption of Resolution 2025-12-02 until further information can be obtained and distributed to the Board. Mayor Benson asked if the Human Resource Coordinator position was approved in the past. Mrs. Cook-MacKenzie stated it has been funded, the next step would be the creation of the job description, this is a new position.

A motion to enable the towns administration to advertise for the position of Human Resources Coordinator and at the next Board meeting, January 14, 2025 will approve the details of the job description that will be presented was made by Commissioner DeMatt, seconded by Commissioner Bernard-Dutton and approved by all.

-ADOPTION OF ORDINANCES-

Ordinance 2025-12-01 - Amendment to Article 5. District Regulation Part 1. Zoning Districts 5-3 A. "RM-C" Multifamily Residential District Regulations. Adding a provision for transitional commercial uses, associated buffers, setback and area requirements

Commissioner Crothers-Moore made a motion to adopt Ordinance 2025-12-01, Vice-Mayor Davis, seconded the motion and the motion was approved by all.

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-REPORTS-

Mayor Benson

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

- 12.17.2025 - Attended an interview with a future candidate for Director of Finance and various meetings with the town's administration regarding dealings of the town

Vice-Mayor Davis

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

- 12.11.2025 – Taught English Second Language (ESL) class which is the last, prior of the holiday
- 12.12.2025 – Took a team to Windsor Mills Maryland for the brand-new Samaritans Purse Operation Christmas Child processing center. Within a five-hour period the volunteers processed 24,000 boxes to be sent out to children all over the world. These boxes from today are going to South Africa. While they were there, the President and CEO of Samaritan's Purse, leads Operation Christmas Child, Franklin Graham made his presents and dedicated the building
- 12.17.2025 – Participated along with Mayor Benson, Town Administrator and Director of Finance an interview with a future candidate for the Director of Finance

Commissioner Bernard-Dutton

- 12.3.2025 – Attended Hot Chocolate with a Cop at the County Building
- 12.6.2025 - Volunteered for the Cecil County Christmas Parade, what a wonderful job everyone did

Commissioner Crothers-Moore

Commissioner Crothers-Moore reported she was supposed to judge the Residential Christmas Decorating Contest on Thursday, December 18th, but due to illness she had her daughter Kat fill in for her.

Commissioner DeMatt

- 12.13.2025 - He along with the Assistant Town Administrator toured the Klondike Kate's Steak Restaurant, Newark, Delaware Sleigh Bar
- 12.16.2025 – Attended Coffee with a Cop in Elkton and they were collecting last minute donations for Toys for Tots

Town Administrator

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

- Meeting with the town's IT person, Michael Devine in reference to her laptop not functioning
- Met with the Assistant Town Administrator regarding town projects

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- Participated in an interview with a future candidate for the Director of Finance
- Had an inquiring regarding the town election, that information was sent back to this individual. When looking at the town's website there has been several changes made to the election page
- Attended the NAACP meeting, December 16, 2025, went very well
- As seen on the Board's tablets, you will start seeing the Grant Writers/Project Manager report once a month

Mrs. Cook-MacKenzie reported she has started the process of attending several appointments prior of her surgery, in mid-January. She will keep the town staff as to her schedule during this time.

Assistant Town Administrator

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

- Old Lock-Up Renovation is officially complete, applications for public use will be released for community members interested in utilizing the space for eligible events. The application and terms were finalized this week.
- Continuing coordination with the Water Superintendent and Allied Control Services to complete the SCADA system, including network and broadband upgrades at the Leslie Water Treatment facility to support proper system operation.
- Finalized the 20 Year Water System Master Plan with Steve Riley, ENTECH
- Advancing the North East Preserve site clean-out, with the pre-construction meeting
- Preparing for the Maryland Municipal League Harford/Cecil (MML) Dinner and Staff Luncheon
- North East Elementary School Steering Committee meeting December 17, 2025

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:

- The last board meeting she attended in November; the Board requested a summary of the financials from CliftonLarsonAllen LLP which is on the Boards tablets and she highlighted some key issues
- Check Register as of 11.15.25 to 12.11.25
- General Fund Balance Sheet as of 11.30.25
- Statement of Revenue and Expenditures ending to 11.1.25 to 11.30.25

Director of Planning and Zoning

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

Mrs. Vennell reported the Planning Commission met, December 6, 2025 to review the North East retail, property owner and applicant, Stavros Kalaitzougou, Sye, LLC. Elkton, Maryland. The location of the retail will be in the area of Sunoco North East, 2391 Pulaski Highway and the island between Rogers Road & Walmart. The concept subdivision plat and concept site plan were reviewed. They are proposing a strip mall with 7 stores, restaurant and a proposed site for an Aldi's. Discussed was a traffic impact study, there were three done along with a revision of one and two. Maryland State Highway did send comments, John Budowski, from KCI, the town's consultant submitted 2-3 letters. The preliminary will probably take three to four months due to the Maryland State Highway comments. At the Planning Commission request, they are going to conduct a Workshop regarding the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) improvement at the intersection, this will be the opportunity to clean-up the area along with stating the town's demands. Mrs. Vennell stated there will be access to the North East retail from Route 40 also.

Mrs. Vennell thanked the Board for giving town staff the day off after Christmas, Friday, December 26th.

Maintenance Supervisor

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

- After the Christmas holiday is over the Maintenance will start lighting up the North East Community Park for Winter Lights-Cecil Lights (WLCN)

Mayor Benson thanked the Maintenance Department for making the town look great during the holiday season and working the Cecil County Christmas Parade.

Chief of Police

Police Chief Yates entered into the record the November 2025 North East Police Department Monthly Report:

Chief Yates reported North East Shop with a Cop will not take place this year. Sergeant Bilton Morgan was hurt in October while on duty and he was the Chair of the event. The event will return in 2026.

Chief Yates reported the Public Assistance/Reporting (PAR) system will be installed January 16, 2026 which was approved in the fiscal year budget.

Chief Yates reported since January 1, 2025 the town has hired seven officers with two recruits dropping out. Chief Yates thanked the Town Administrator, Assistant Town Administrator and the Director of Finance for all their help during the process. Chief Yates stated there are 2 new female recruits in Baltimore County. One will graduate the end of March and the other, end of May beginning of June. Mayor Benson is excited of the hiring of the youth and recruitment.

Chief Yates reported Patrol Officer Hassun D. Custis, has started, North East Police Sports Club. This will be a five-on-five basketball event, location, North East Elementary School. He also coaches the Cecil Wolfpack, youth football. Chief Yates advised the Board, Patrol Officer Custis is great asset to the town.

Water Plant Superintendent

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

Mr. Carter reported they have been working with, Total Organic Carbon (TOC) analyzer. A reading was taken, Haloacetic Acids (HAA5) was 18 ug/L and the requirement from the EPA is below 60 ppb, in the past the town has been above 60 ppb. Unfortunately, the cost of chemicals is going up but, in all aspects, everything is going well. January 8 through the 12, 2026 will be the next sampling period.

Mr. Carter reported the Leslie Pond Project is going well, the work has slowed down due to the weather. Budget wise the water leaks are at a high, Ron thanked the Maintenance Department for all their help salting during this time. Mr. Carter explained, the reason why they run water during a leak instead of shutting off, running water. Running water resists freezing because its constant motion and mixing continuously bringing warmer water from below and disrupting ice crystal formation. This makes it much easier to dig in the ground when the water is flowing.

Mayor Benson had a question regarding the towns water quality even though we received a good result. Mayor Benson asked for the Water Plant Supervisor to talk about the seasonality that the department deals with, the trend. Mr. Carter advised, when the plant runs at a lower flow winter was easy. When asked to run the plant at 1400 gallons a minute, winter can have problems as well. Because the reaction time of the chemicals, we are just not there. With the raw water quality, salt/runoff coming in. It will be interesting to see what the TOC analyzer reports. Typically, the worst season, results would be Summer for TOC & HAA5. Fall and Spring can be an issue due to leaves and rain. Everything that happens in the environment can impact the water quality.

Mayor Benson made a comment regarding the Grant Writer/Project Manager report. He requested the report to be entered into the record after the Assistant Town Administrator's report.

-UNFINISHED BUSINESS-

None

-NEW BUSINESS-

Deed of Conveyance to accept Public Improvements: Ridgely Forest, Section 5B & Deed of Conveyance to accept Public Improvements: Ridgely Forest, Section 6

Mrs. Cook-MacKenzie presented to the Board two Deed of Conveyance to accept Public Improvements Ridgely Forest, Section 5B & Section 6.

A motion to approve the Deed of Conveyance for Public Improvements Ridgely Forest, Section 5B and Section 6 with the recommendation from the Planning Office was made by Vice-Mayor Davis, seconded by Commissioner Bernard-Dutton and approved by all.

Water Allocation Request: Freedom Land Development, LLC – Bailiff Woods (Montgomery Oaks) Subdivision Lots 1-7, 7 Equivalent Residential Units

Mrs. Cook-MacKenzie presented to the Board a Water Allocation Request for Bailiff Woods (Montgomery Oaks), Subdivision Lots 1-7 for 7 equivalent residential units.

A motion to approved the Water Allocation Request 1,750 gallons per day, with the recommendation from the Planning Office, was made by Commissioner Crothers-Moore, seconded by Commissioner DeMatt and approved by all.

-MISCELLANEOUS-

Commissioner DeMatt asked the town administration if there were any updates on the salary survey. Mrs. Cook-MacKenzie stated, it is continuing and it will be ready by the fiscal year budget. Mayor Benson asked what is the next steps. The Town Administrator stated once the consultant provides the draft, it will be presented to the Board for review, any feedback will be sent back to them for modifications. Mrs. Cook-MacKenzie will contact them to see when this document will be available.

Commissioner Crothers-Moore asked for the Town Clerk to give the winners of the 2025 Residential Decorating Contest.

- 1st Place – 205 North Main Street
- 2nd Place – 135 Jethro Street
- 715 South Main Street
- Honorable Mention – 107 George Street

-APPROPRIATIONS-

Budget Amendment 2026-007

General Fund

General Government Fixed Assets – Building Improvement	\$27,000.00
Parks & Recreation Professional Services – Engineer/Design	\$27,000.00

A motion to approve Budget Amendment 2026-007 was made by Vice-Mayor Davis, seconded by Commissioner Bernard-Dutton and approved by all.

Requisition R6-01143 - Richard Mort, RCM Paving LLC – N.E. Preserve Clearing Project \$66,845.00

A motion to approve Requisition R6-01143 to Richard Mort, RCM Paving LLC for the North East Preserve Clearing Project in the amount of \$66,845.00 was made by Commissioner DeMatt, seconded by Commissioner Crothers-Moore and approved by all.

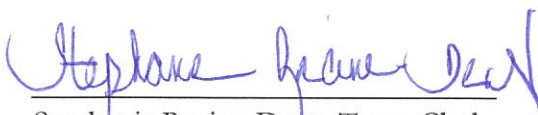
-BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR-

Lisa Wood, 134 Bayside Drive, North East thanked the Board for all they do, she loves our town. She would like to express her concerns regarding the Cecil County Christmas Parade on Saturday, December 4, 2025, she was distressed as many people were. Ms. Wood would like to know, what information was released to the public, there was an immediate release to the newspaper, Baltimore Sun and CBS News for something other than all the great things we do, it is really distressing to our Hallmark town. She has talked to a lot of people and they would like to know if there will be additional information sent out specifically to address the statement. Mayor Benson advised other than the statement that has been already released, there will be no additional information sent out. For him, moving forward is the objective and making sure this will never happen again. As you felt, and as I was standing in front of town hall that day, when the float past, my thoughts, this does not representative of who we are as a town. The Board meeting, Wednesday December 10th there was Resolution 2025-12-01 that was passed that gives directive to figure out what the town needs to do to address participants who aren't bringing our entire community together to celebrate the holiday season. Mayor Benson stated he has spent a lot of time learning the legal rights and ramification that comes to having a public entity host a parade and how to overcome this in the future. Not only did he receive feedback from the community, his friends from the University of Maryland at College Park scattered all over Maryland, and to get phone calls from them and seeing our town in the news, it's embarrassing, we have to do better. Ms. Wood thanked the Board and she appreciates all the town does with the parade being the highlight of her Christmas Season and she can't have it ruined, especially for the children.

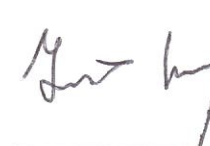
-ADJOURNMENT-

With there being no further business to discuss, a motion to adjourn was made by Vice-Mayor Davis, seconded by Commissioner Crothers-Moore and approved by all. The meeting adjourned at 8:23 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,


Stephanie Racine-Dean, Town Clerk

ATTEST:


Assistant Town Admin
on Behalf of

Kelly Benson, Mayor