

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

March 25, 2026

The Town Meeting was called to order by Mayor Kelly Benson at 7:03 P.M. Present were Vice-Mayor Kimberly Davis, Commissioners Hilary Crothers-Moore, Catherine Bernard-Dutton and Neil DeMatt. Also present were Police Chief Yates, Director of Finance Deanna Ittner, Director of Planning and Zoning Betsy Vennell, Water Superintendent, Ron Carter, Town Administrator Melissa Cook-MacKenzie and Town Clerk Stephanie Racine-Dean. Absent from tonight's meeting, Assistant Town Administrator Grant Handley.

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 March 11, 2026 regular meeting, as presented, was made by Vice-Mayor Davis, seconded by Commissioner Crothers-Moore and approved by all. Commissioner Bernard-Dutton abstained due to her absence from the meeting.

-PUBLIC COMMENT-

None

-INTRODUCTION OF RESOLUTIONS AND ORDINANCES-

None

-GUESTS-

None

-ADOPTION OF RESOLUTIONS AND ORDINANCES-

None

-REPORTS-

Town Board Approved Minutes April 8, 2026

Mayor Benson

Mayor Benson reported he attended the following meetings since the March 11, 2026 Town Board Meeting:

- Various meetings with Town Administration about many different rolling topics and projects that are going on. Mayor Benson has nothing specific to report, just the ongoing dialogue and directional setting

Vice-Mayor Davis

Vice-Mayor Davis reported she attended the following meetings since the March 11, 2026 Town Board Meeting:

- 3.12.26 & 3.19.26 - Taught (ESL), English Second Language Program

Commissioner Bernard-Dutton

Commissioner Bernard-Dutton reported she attended Cecil County 4-H Bingo Fundraiser, March 13th, 7:00 p.m. at the Cecil County Fair Grounds, Ed Walls Activity Hall.

Commissioner Crothers-Moore

None

Commissioner DeMatt

- 3.18.26 - Attended Cecil County Board of Realtors meeting, discussed a future golf tournament to raise funds for a new Veterans Memorial Monument in the Brantwood Park
- 3.23.26 – Attended Cecil County Young Professionals Network (YPN) meeting to discuss what the County needs, revitalize
- General planning for the Easter Eggstravaganza 2026, which will be held this Saturday, March 28th from 12:00 – 3:00 p.m.

Town Administrator

Mrs. Cook-Mac-Kenzie reported, the court case regarding 500 South Main Street (sidewalk) was heard, she thanked the Town Clerk for her involvement with the case. As indicated in the email to the Board, the claimant was asking for \$313,750.50, the court awarded her, \$22,000.00. Mrs. Cook-MacKenzie stated, when the new Maintenance Supervisor comes on board, the one thing she will go over is how important the monthly reports are. There were several discrepancies of the reports, during the court case.

Mrs. Cook-MacKenzie reported she attended the following meetings since the March 11, 2026 Town Board Meeting:

- Participated with town staff and Cecil County regarding the Severe Weather and how the activity has changed over the years. The Town will follow protocol, with Cecil County, this has worked well in the past
- Met with the Director of Finance, regarding the Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Budget
- Met with the Town Clerk

- Meeting with the Town's Landscape Contractor along with the Director of Finance, and Assistant Town Administrator
- Participated in a Chesapeake Employment (Workman's Comp) along with the Director of Finance regarding the renewal policy
- Met with Vickie Rickerman, Town Administrator from Port Deposit regarding a Code Enforcement Officer and working together in splitting the hours/days
- Working with the Director of Planning regarding several projects
- Department Head meeting
- Met with Steve Riley, ENTECH and Ron Carter, Water Plant Superintendent

Assistant Town Administrator

Mr. Handley was absent from tonight's meeting, he did submit the following meetings he attended since the March 11, 2026 Town Board Meeting: The Town Administrator read the report into the record:

- Department Head Code of Ordinance review continues, currently working through Chapter 7 and 8
- Attended WILMAPCO Council meeting on March 12th
- Attended Maryland Department of Transportation Grants Roadshow with the Grant Writer on March 17th
- Community Garden construction has begun, with garden beds, mulching, and water access to be completed soon. A dedicated and enthusiastic core group of six gardeners has formed, with plans to expand participation and offer educational workshops for the public schools, tentatively in May
- Assisting staff with the budget process
- Working with Finance to improve water bill formatting to make shut-off risks clearer and more visible
- Tree removed at Herring Snatchers Park, thank you to Silver Lane Exteriors

Director of Finance, Ms. Ittner entered in the record the list of payments issued since the last Board Meeting:

- Check Register as of 2.24.26 to 3.23.26
- General Fund Balance Sheet as of 12.31.26
- Statement of Revenue and Expenditures ending to 2.1.26 to 2.28.26

Ms. Ittner stated she is continuing to work with Department Heads along with the Town Administrator regarding the Fiscal Year Budget 2026-2027. Mayor Benson asked, how she is doing with her new job title along with the process of the budget.

Director of Planning and Zoning

Mrs. Vennell reported her Assistant, Lisa Rhoades spoke with Brad Carillo, 16-18 South Main Street, North East regarding the Restaurant/Bar. He plans on opening, Elk River Brewery at the Ford House, May 2026, they are actively setting things up inside.

Mrs. Vennell reported ENERWA sponsored, "Cabin Fever" at Moore's Chapel Global Methodist Church, Saturday, March 21st. This year's event, was less in attendance, possibly due to the weather.

Mrs. Betsy Vennell entered into the record the February 2026 Planning and Zoning Monthly report. In addition, Mrs. Vennell reported the following:

- Permits are down due to the time of year \$245.00
- Escrow Fees \$8,000.00
- ENERWA sponsored, "Cabin Fever" at Moore's Chapel Global Methodist Church, Saturday, March 21st.
- Maryland Department of Transportation Annual Tour Priority Letter was sent out to Penn Dot & Cecil County. She did receive correspondence from the County with questions
- The final draft for the Comprehensive Plan is finished, they have been working on this project since 2022. Mayor Benson and Commissioner Crothers-Moore helped with the process. There will be an Open House, April 14, 2026 from 5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. at the North East Library, 485 Mauldin Avenue. This gives the public to answer any questions to the North East Planning Commission & Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee

Chief of Police

Police Chief Yates entered into the record the February 2026 North East Police Department Monthly Report: Chief Yates also reported:

- Jeannie Jones, North East Police Department Recruit who entered the Police Academy last year will graduate, Friday, March 27th. Chief Yates stated, this will be a good addition to the force, second Recruit will be graduating the end of June. This will allow the North East Police Department to be fully staffed
- Monday, March 23rd attended Yes Youth Coalition Prevention Rally at the Elkton High School from 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
- Chief Yates reported the Department is gearing-up for the months of April and May, Community Events. He will be attending the Easter Eggstravaganza 2026, which will be held this Saturday, March 28th from 12:00 – 3:00 p.m.

Mayor Benson wanted to give a big shout out to Officer Curtis. He was visiting the North East Community Park on Saturday, and witnessed the enthusiasm Officer Curtis, who was running one of his programs with the children. Mayor Benson stated he loves the community outreach that is given and the positivity. He thanked Chief Yates for his openness in supporting his Officers and embracing their involvement with our community.

Water Plant Superintendent

Mr. Ron Carter entered into the record the February 2026 Monthly Report for the North East Rolling Mill and Leslie Water Plants. In addition, Mr. Carter reported the following:

- Leslie Water Treatment Plant is back on line part-time as of, Friday, March 20th, there has been a hit & miss, due to SCADA issues

- Employees at the water plant need to be trained in the new SCADA system. After the tweaking is completed at the Leslie Water Plant, they plan on moving to the Rolling Mill Treatment Plant, this has been pushed off until the Total Trihalomethanes (TTHM) & Haloacetic Acids (HAA5) have been tested along with, there is a hydrant flushing scheduled
- There was a yellow water issue about a week ago due to Manganese levels in the raw water coming in fluctuating low to high. The Water Plant Superintendent is asking for the Board to approve a purchase of an on-line analyzer, this will resolve the problem right-away

Mayor Benson had a question for the Water Plant Superintendent, the Total Organic Carbon (TOC) analyzer, and the HACH Company, Manganese Colorimetric analyzer is basically the same thing. Yes, by installing the HACH EZ1000SC Manganese analyzer it will get real time data and by hooking it up to SCADA this would allow the town to set a level not to exceed. After discussion, Mayor Benson and the Board are a hundred percent agreed in purchasing the HACH Manganese analyzer.

Mr. Carter also reported he has been working with the Assistant Town Administrator regarding a service line/yard hydrant for gardening on Water Street. LECCO, Owner, Joe Tilley will be donating his time and material to complete this project.

-UNFINISHED BUSINESS-

None

-NEW BUSINESS-

Personnel Matter – Maintenance Department Supervisor Appointment

Mrs. Cook-MacKenzie sent out packages to the Members of the Board indicating the summary of what the panel had ascertained and scoring. After hearing back from 3 members of the Board, the recommendation was unanimous for the appointment of Maintenance Department Supervisor.

Mayor Benson stated, as one of the members sitting on the panel, this individual was certainly the standout candidate that we had the ability to interview and I have high hopes in his ability to perform this job to the standard and take the Maintenance Department to a higher level.

A motion to approve the appointment of the new Maintenance Supervisor, pursuant to the draft letter that was sent to the Board by the Town Administrator was made by Commissioner Bernard-Dutton, seconded by Vice-Mayor Davis and approved by all.

-MISCELLANEOUS-

Mrs. Cook-MacKenzie reported, when she was in Circuit Court last week, she spoke with the owner of property, Mr. Edwin Fockler, 5 Roney Avenue, North East. As of today, the Planning Office here at Town Hall received a call, the owner is requesting a demolition permit.

Mrs. Cook-MacKenzie reported she attended the Planning Commission Workshop, Tuesday, March 24th and discussed was the traffic flow for the retail behind Sunoco. The Planning Commission would like to have further dialogue, her recommendation, reach out to WILMAPCO and Maryland State Highway to set up a meeting for further discussion.

Mayor Benson asked about the traffic lights on Cecil Avenue and Main Street. He has noticed the lights stop working, during the day. He expressed it usually happens due to the bad weather or electric issues. Mrs. Cook-MacKenzie stated the State of Maryland is aware, and they will be looking into it further.

-APPROPRIATIONS-

Budget Amendment 2026-010

General Fund

Revenue – Contingency (See Note 1)	\$36,197.42
Expenditure - Property Service – R & M Services – HACH	\$36,197.42

Note 1: the remaining amount in the general fund contingency fund will be \$10,338.58

A motion to approve Budget Amendment 2026-010 was made by Vice-Mayor Davis, seconded by Commissioner Bernard-Dutton and approved by all.

Requisition R6-01800 – HACH Company – Manganese Colorimetric Analyser \$36,197.42

A motion to approve Requisition R6-01800 to HACH Company for Manganese Colorimetric Analyser in the amount of \$36,197.42 was made by Commissioner DeMatt, seconded by Commissioner Crothers-Moore and approved by all.

-BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR-

Marybeth Appio, 18 Bayberry Drive, Elkton has been speaking with the Assistant Town Administrator regarding, painting in front of the stop signs/bars in Ridgely Forest, starting Thursday, March 26th. She would like to know, if there is a vehicle parked near the area of painting, will the town return to finish. Mrs. Cook-MacKenzie stated if there is a problem, that area will be posted and the town will go back. As Marybeth reported last Board meeting, she did bring her guest, Heather Randolph, Store Manager, Lowes North East. Ms. Randolph expressed to the Board, she would like to become a better business partner with the Town, there is a lot of resources Lowes offers. One is a community bucket-list that allows large grants to help within the community. Their employees are paid by Lowes to go out and help with these projects. Ms. Randolph stated to the Board, if there is anything the town needs, please let them know and they will see how they can accommodate.

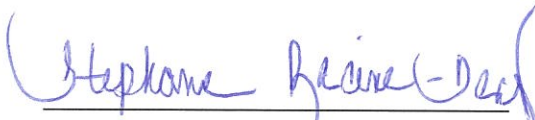
Russell Polo, 4 North Main Street, North East stated when walking his dog, he makes it a habit to pick up trash. He noticed there are gaps of trash containers near the Postal Office/North East Methodist Church. The Town Administrator noticed the container near St. Mary Anne's Outreach Office was taken in back of their building, she will have them return the container to the front of the building.

-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 8:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

ATTEST:


Stephanie Racine-Dean, Town Clerk


Kelly Benson, Mayor