

December 4, 2017

The regular meeting of the Pocomoke City Mayor and Council was held in the Council Chambers at City Hall on Monday, December 4, 2017. The meeting was called to order at 6:30 P.M.

Present: Acting Mayor Esther Troast
Council Members: Diane Downing, Brian Hirshman,
Dale Trotter, George Tasker
City Manager Robert L. Cowger, Jr
City Attorney Roscoe Leslie
City Clerk: Carol L. Sullivan

Review Minutes:

In a motion (Hirshman, Trotter passed) to approve the minutes of the November 6, 2017 meeting.

Review and approval of bills:

In a motion (Tasker, Downing passed) the bills presented to be paid. (Copy of bill list attached to original minutes).

Second Reading of Ordinance No. 436 to add Chapter 85 – Mutual Aid Agreements to Pocomoke City Code:

Acting Mayor Troast read for the record;

In motion (Trotter, Hirshman passed) to pass Ordinance No. 436 to add Chapter 85 - Mutual Aid to the City Code.

First Reading of Resolution No. 512 to amend Chapter 3 of Employee Handbook Policies to add Compensatory Time Exempt Employees:

Acting Mayor Troast read Resolution No. 512 for the record. (see attached to minutes).

A RESOLUTION OF THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL OF POCOMOKE CITY,
MARYLAND TO AMEND CHAPTER 3 OF EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK POLICIES TO ADD
COMPENSATORY TIME FOR EXEMPT EMPLOYEES.

City Manager to discuss Winter Quarters Golf Course:

City Manager Cowger stated that the Golf Course was budgeted for the first six months. Mayor Morrison asked that there be an update of the Golf Course for this meeting. It was discussed to approve the golf course for six months with hopes that there be outside funding.

Mr. Jim Covington gave an update on the National Historic Registry application. He stated that the site work has been completed at the Log Cabin. He has spoken to Mr. Eric Yoder Bowden concerning the writing of the application which will be completed by the middle of January. He stated that the consensus was that it would be approved by the National Historic Registry. Mr. Bowden stated that he would need to come back to get the measurements for the site plans and he would like to speak with a couple of people. Mr. Covington stated that getting the designation does not guarantee money, it means you are eligible to apply for grants to maintain the golf course and Log Cabin. It will be for such things as new irrigation system and replacing a beam going into the log cabin. It will not pay for labor, but it will pay for all expenditures, such as equipment, upkeep, improvements to maintain the golf course. Mr. Covington asked could we really afford to lose the amenity of the golf course. He asked what does the City have to offer to tourist, does the MarVa Theater or Discovery Center make money. He stated that he is convinced that if the golf course had the historical status and with marketing the course the way it needs to be marketed that it would be a success. Before making a decision to close the course you need to have a budget to turn it into a park and what the maintenance will cost and what it entails to keep the park.

Councilman Hirshman asked if the grant would pay for advertising.

Mr. Covington was not sure if the grant would pay for advertising.

City Manager Cowger went over the last few years and last five-month expenditures and revenues. He stated that the revenue for this year is \$38,340, includes \$9,225 membership dues which is about seventeen (17) members. The golf play compared to last year has picked up significantly. The golf course has improved from last year. The expenses for the golf course is \$84,467 as of date the golf course is \$46,254 in the negative. When adding in the month of December we are looking at around \$53,000 for a loss of the first six-months. For the past three years the golf course has lost \$449,000. The worst loss this year could be around \$100,000.

Councilwoman Downing asked if he did a comparison of fertilizing from last year to this year. Councilwoman Downing stated that when the last superintendent moved on, because he was told that the golf course would be closed. The City spent more money on the golf course because the new superintendent had to spend more money on supplies to get the golf course back in shape, as there wasn't anybody there to make sure the fertilizer and other chemicals were not put on the course. She stated that she wasn't in favor of taking something away from one group to give to another group. She agrees that the youth needs something to do, but why take the golf course away from the seniors, retirees, and people that like to play golf.

City Manager Cowger stated that the present superintendent has done an excellent job keeping the expenses down and keeping the course maintained.

Acting Mayor Troast stated that she has kept silent through all of the golf course, because her heart doesn't want to close the course, but on the business side the City can't keep spending over \$150,000 dollars back into the golf course when we have streets that are dilapidated, and need repairing and water issues that we had to borrow \$250,000 to take care of. She stated that she was on the fence, her better judgement says to close. She asked if the golf course could have one more month before closing.

Councilman Tasker was in favor to table for January 8, 2018 to make a decision. He asked that maybe we could close the course for three months to save money and open back up in the Spring.

In a motion (Trotter, Downing passed) to table making the decision on closing the golf course to the January 8, meeting.

City Manager to discuss replacing water lines in Pocomoke Heights area:

City Manager Cowger stated that they have put a plan together to begin tomorrow, to start on 14th and Market Street go to Lynnhaven Drive replacing the water lines. Because we will be doing this in-house we will only have approximately \$25,000 for materials. This is the longest road in the Heights and we are going to start tomorrow. He stated that MDE grants funding applications are open now and will close July 1. GMB will put a grant application together to replace the piping in the Heights and other areas in town. We feel that we have a good chance in getting a grant because of the quality of our infrastructure and the quality of water coming out to the pipes. This total project will cost approximately \$2M. A lot will be funded by grant money and the City will match maybe 25%. The City has to repair this problem.

Chief Harden to discuss adding an additional officer to the Police Department:

Chief Harden stated that the timing of this request is not the best, he realizes quality of life issues that may supersede some of the other issues. But at the same time, he needs to stand up for the department and the City. He gave an idea of what the officers are contending with, with only two officers on the street at a time. Chief Harden went over the statistics from January 2016 to December 2016. The totals call for service was 21,753 which does not include Walmart calls. Monthly stats for this year we are already at 20,503, this again does not include Walmart calls, you could easily add another 300 plus calls. Some stops that have been made from Rt. 13, making stops, drugs, cigarettes, guns, and possible human traffic. He would like to work Rt. 13 more as the seizures made, we spent some of the money for two new cars. We are anticipating getting about \$17,000 from a cigarette stop. Our goal to be on Rt. 13 would not to be the City null and void, they would be additional manpower to cover, parade, the Mayor's Old Fashioned Christmas and other special events that we cover with overtime. We are down two officers at this time, one retired and one moved onto another agency. I believe two additional officers will reduce our overtime. The Mayor a few months ago asked me if I needed a Captain, I told him I don't need a Captain, I have two Lieutenants. He asked what do I need, I told him I needed more officers. So that's why I'm here this evening to make this request to you. I believe also, that it gives us more coverage and allows us to be more proactive than re-active. If an officer goes to PMRC with a person, we only have one officer in the City. If something goes down, we have to

call Worcester County to help and if we have the two additional officers, it will help us with vacation, special assignments, court dates. Working twelve hour shifts they must have a certain amount of time off before coming back to work, I try to comply with that as much as possible. In hiring another officer for the academy that officers are in there for six months, plus we have to give them an additional 80 hours of training before they hit the street, but I have them train for 120 hours to make sure they are ready to hit the streets. He believes saving on overtime and stops on Rt. 13 the City will recoup any money the City puts out for these additional officers.

Councilman Hirshman asked where Chief stood on hiring for the two positions that are currently open.

Chief Harden stated that he has hired Austin McGee as a cadet for the academy in January. There is another person from another agency that is retiring that is thinking about applying.

Councilman Hirshman asked if he had a third candidate to bring on board.

Acting Mayor Troast asked if the Chief had another officer in mind hiring and if that person would be in need of benefits.

Chief Harden stated that he had somebody in mind and he would not need benefits.

Councilman Trotter asked if the Finance Director looked at the budget for two additional hires.

City Manager Cowger stated that she has not. If there is money in the budget that can be moved around or where the money would come from.

Acting Mayor Troast stated that he needs to meet with Finance Director to make sure money is available before making a decision.

Councilman Trotter stated that if the money is available, they could make a decision at the January meeting.

City Manager to discuss a letter from Chris Gilkerson to reduce the rate of water and sewer connection fees.

City Manager Cowger stated that Chris Gilkerson, from Amber Ridge II, LLC has purchased all of the unimproved residential building lots in Southern Fields Subdivision. He is requesting to reduce the water and sewer hook-up fee by 50% for the first twenty (20) homes in the subdivisions.

In a motion (Trotter, Tasker passed) to reduce the hook-up fee for water and wastewater by 50% starting January 2018 to December 2018.

Comments from Council:

Councilman Trotter stated that he visited the Mayor on Sunday. One of the things that touched his heart was all across the windows and walls were cards that were sent in and the prayers. In speaking for the Mayor and his family it is very heartwarming as to how the City has stepped up and prayed and showing support for the Mayor.

Comments from Audience:

Mr. Jim Covington thanked the Mayor and Council for allowing him to speak tonight and he is 110% in support of the Chief's request for new police officers.

Acting Mayor Troast asked everyone to get more citizens involved in attending meetings, it helps her in making decisions for the City.

Following a motion by Councilman Trotter and seconded by Councilwoman Downing, the Council voted to meet in a closed session at 7:45 P.M. in the Council Chambers. Present were Acting Mayor Troast, Councilman Trotter, Councilman Tasker, Councilwoman Downing, City Manager Cowger, City Attorney Leslie, and City Clerk Carol Sullivan. The Mayor and Council to discuss the appointment, employment, assignment, promotion, discipline, demotion, compensation, removal, resignation, or performance evaluation of appointees, employees, or officials over whom this public body has jurisdiction; or any other personnel matter that affects one or more specific individuals.

Approved: January 8, 2018

Carol L. Sullivan

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City Clerk