

Regular Meeting Minutes

The meeting of the Pocomoke City Mayor and Council was held in the Council Chambers at City Hall on Monday, September 17, 2018. The meeting was called to order at 6:28PM.

Present: Mayor Bruce Morrison
First Vice President Esther Troast
Council Members: Diane Downing, Todd Nock,
George Tasker, Dale Trotter
City Manager: Robert L. Cowger, Jr
City Attorney: Roscoe Leslie
City Clerk: Michelle Beckett

Prayer & Pledge of Allegiance

Open regular meeting @ 6:28PM

Review minutes:

In a motion (Trotter, Troast passed) to approve the minutes from September 4, 2018 @ 6:29 PM

Review and approval of bills:

In a motion (Downing, Tasker passed) the bills presented to be paid @ 6:31PM

Councilmember Tasker asked about the \$16,000.00 charge for laptop computers for police dept. He thought money had already been spent last year for that equipment. City Manager Cowger explained that was a budgeted item for police dept and there is grant money for some reimbursement on those items.

Discuss status on properties scheduled for demolition and additional unsafe properties:

Planning Director Dan Brandewie stated there are 4 properties scheduled for demolition. 114 Market St, 126-128 Willow, 618 Clarke Ave and 415 Oxford St. Planning Director Brandewie has had a couple meetings with property owner, Mr. Collins, for 126-128 Willow St, who is still getting estimates for engineers and appraisals. He is supposed to get back to Planning & Zoning but he has been advised that demolition will still move forward if he does not meet the deadline. Property owner at 114 Market St called Planning Director Brandewie and stated he is interested in selling the property. The City will explore that possibility but demolition is moving forward. The property at 618 Clarke St is currently having asbestos shingles removed. 415 Oxford St cannot have any further work done on it and will be scheduled for demolition by knocking it down or burning. Update on Lusby building that we have received plans from the architect. Current plan is to demolish the front and side and recover with another material. Cost of different options is still being explored. City Manager Cowger stated a time limit needs to be established to make sure plans for repair or demolition keep moving forward on the building.

In a motion (Tasker, Trotter passed) to extend 30-day time limit from the day plans were submitted to Planning & Zoning to move forward with a decision and implementation @ 6:40 PM

Acclamation: Tasker-aye, Downing-aye, Troast-aye, Trotter-aye, Nock-aye; none opposed

Planning Director Brandewie stated there are 4 properties to place on "unsafe building" list for demolition due to structural failures. A public hearing will be scheduled for November 5, 2018 @ 6:30 PM in Town Hall, Council Chambers.

- 1) 704 4th St-Exterior structure failure, black mold inside, vacant

In a motion (Tasker, Nock passed) to place on unsafe building list, schedule a public hearing on 11/05/2018, 6:30 PM and possible demolition to above property @ 6:45 PM

Acclamation: Tasker-aye, Downing-aye, Troast-aye, Trotter-aye, Nock-aye; none opposed

- 2) 411 Maple Ave-Structural failure, roof collapse, vacant

In a motion (Trotter, Tasker passed) to place on unsafe building list, schedule a public hearing on 11/05/2018, 6:30 PM and possible demolition to above property @ 6:46 PM

Acclamation: Tasker-aye, Downing-aye, Troast-aye, Trotter-aye, Nock-aye; none opposed

- 3) 408 Market St-Structural failure

In a motion (Nock, Downing passed) to place on unsafe building list, schedule a public hearing on 11/05/2018, 6:30 PM and possible demolition to above property @ 6:47 PM

Acclamation: Tasker-aye, Downing-aye, Troast-aye, Trotter-aye, Nock-aye; none opposed

- 4) 210 Walnut St-Structural failures in porch/roof areas, unclean conditions, neighbor complaints

In a motion (Nock, Downing passed) to place on unsafe building list and unsafe dwelling list, schedule a public hearing on 11/05/2018, 6:30 PM and possible demolition to above property @ 6:48 PM

Acclamation: Tasker-aye, Downing-aye, Troast-aye, Trotter-aye, Nock-aye; none opposed

City Manager Cowger states that buildings scheduled for demolish are first scheduled for asbestos removal by AIM Environmental, if necessary then they will be burned down and Public Works will be cleaning lots and putting top soil if necessary. Cost should be approx. \$5,000.00 per lot instead of \$10,000.00-\$12,000.00 if it was contracted out.

Discuss City Charter work-session plans:

Scheduled for tomorrow, 09/18/2018 5:30 PM was agreed upon. Councilmember Tasker said he found his copy from when it was revised but never voted on. Old wording was revised. City Manager Cowger stated we can make copies and work from that.

Police Updates:

Lt. Hancock stated Rt 13 northbound bridge Wednesday and Thursday will be shut down from 9:00PM to 5:00AM. On the 21st it will open back up to one-lane traffic. This is due to construction and will last approx. 45 days total. Once done with northbound lane they will do the southbound lane.

The department is working on their Departmental Policy Procedure book. The City Attorney has reviewed and approved the most of the revisions up to this point.

There was an incident that was brought to Lt Hancock's attention last night. He stated it is not uncommon for Pocomoke to be assisted by the Sherriff's office. He just wants the public to understand that that is a common procedure and not a lack of abilities of the Pocomoke Dept in any way. Assistance given by the Sherriff's office is always very appreciated.

The Department has decided to go "One department, one uniform", so they will all be wearing dark shirts.

Wildlife cannons-Buzzards are a protected bird. There are a lot of buzzards at the fairgrounds and they will be setting up the cannons to see if this will drive the buzzards away from this public area. Councilmember Trotter asked that it be posted and advertised when the cannons are to be in use because people mistake it for gun shots and the police will get inundated with calls.

Lt Hancock states that currently they are 2 officers down. They would like to offer positions to local individuals, see them graduate from the academy and see them follow their specialties in Pocomoke and see the take-home police cars parked in town limits. It is an investment in Pocomoke to have local people join the force and succeed.

Council Comments: None

Audience Comments:

Debra Struss, 8028 Quail Lane, Westover, MD; stated that she was disappointed that the City canceled the event so soon before waiting to see what the weather was going to do. She ordered a lot of merchandise for this event and thinks it's important to reschedule it. She also stated that she would like to see more events planned in Pocomoke and the business owners support those events to help bring in business to the area.

Councilmember Nock stated the event was not canceled but postponed. The council had to take into consideration the safety of the workers and participants of the events. They had to go by the weather reports and made a decision based on safety. Councilmember Trotter stated that most of the events in Ocean City were canceled except for Bike Fest because they were able to move the events to the convention center. He said there were definitely fewer tents and vendors set up and fewer bikers in attendance at OC Bike Week. He and all Council Members hope that the rescheduled event will be a success. Councilmember Troast reiterated that she feels the council made the correct decision to cancel the event as they had to take everyone's safety into account.

Tommy Killman of Berlin, MD; stated he felt he needed to apologize for things he said. He still thinks the council decision to cancel Pocomoke Bike Week was not necessary. He said the weather report stated that there was only a slight chance that any serious weather would hit our area. He stated that he had been told he would fail and that he could not get any sponsors or giveaways that he was able to get. He stated that the Council had said that they didn't care if the sponsors and vendors come back. Council wanted to know who said that because the entire Council supported the event and support rescheduling it. Mr. Killman stated that he contacted NASCAR, NASA and WBOC who all said there would be little chance of heavy rain and destructive weather. He felt that Pocomoke lost a lot of potential income.

Keith Hornberger, Wallops Island employee, lives 200' outside Pocomoke City limits, said he gets echo alerts and repeated Saturdays weather forecast and said the weather was very rough on Saturday. He stated he has a lot to do with car events that were all canceled and all OC events were canceled except for what was moved in OC Convention Center. The Council did well by following suit and also canceling Pocomoke Bike Week. He suggested that for the next event the Council put together a committee. He lost money in this also because potentially he might have been able to sell photos.

City Manager Cowger stated that Mr. Hornberger posted that it rained all day and the Council made a great decision by canceling. He had also posted other negative things on Facebook.

Caitlin Evans, XO Beanery & Bites of 129 Market St, Suite A and 3513 Snow Hill Rd, Salisbury, MD; they attended the Downtown Business Assoc meeting and were told the City wouldn't be out any money because there were enough sponsors to cover expenses. City Manager Cowger stated the City is not out any money unless the City has to pay back the sponsors and the vendors. As a business, they were onboard to support the event. Their concern that they were only consulted about setting up downtown but never asked to sponsor. She also suggested that media be handled differently because the grammar that was used and associated with Pocomoke Bike Week didn't look good. She suggested rain insurance for events. She agreed with the Mayor & Council decision to cancel.

Councilmember Troast stated that the Mayor & Council is in support of the event and think it could be a great thing. They need to discuss the events of this evening and follow through with changes.

In a motion (Nock, Tasker passed) to adjourn meeting @ 8:10 PM

Acclamation: Tasker-aye, Downing-aye, Troast-aye, Trotter-aye, Nock-aye; none opposed

Approved: *K.M. Beckett-El Soloh*
City Clerk