

Regular Meeting Minutes

The meeting of the Pocomoke City Mayor and Council was held in Council Chambers and via Zoom/Facebook livestream on Monday, May 3, 2021. The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm.

Present: Mayor Susan Marshall Harrison
First Vice President: Todd J. Nock
Council Members: R. Scott Holland, Diane Downing, Daniel J. Tarr, Esther Troast
City Manager: Jeremy Mason
City Attorney: Andrew Illuminati
City Clerk: Michelle Beckett-EI Soloh-Not Present

Pledge of Allegiance, Prayer by Councilmember Esther Troast and Call to Order:

Approval of Minutes from Meeting of April 13, 2021:

Motion to approve minutes for April 13, 2021 as written (Nock, Tarr passed) @ 6:35 pm

Acclamation: Troast-aye, Holland-aye, Nock-aye, Tarr-aye, Downing-aye; none opposed; motion carried

Review and Approval Current Bill List:

Motion to approve the bill list (Troast, Nock passed) @ 6:37 pm

Acclamation: Troast-aye, Holland-aye, Nock-aye, Tarr-aye, Downing-aye; none opposed; motion carried

Swearing in of Councilmember Elect, District 5, Esther Troast:

Mayor Susan Marshall Harrison, swore in by oath Councilmember Elect, District 5, Esther Troast.

Swearing in of Councilmember Elect, District 4, Todd J. Nock:

Councilmember, District 5, Esther Troast, swore in by oath Councilmember Elect, District 4, Todd J. Nock.

Reorganization of Council First and Second Vice Presidents:

Councilmember Nock made a motion to nominate Councilmember Troast as First Vice-President (Nock, Downing passed) @ 6:44 pm

Acclamation: Troast-aye, Holland-aye, Nock-aye, Tarr-aye, Downing-aye; none opposed; motion carried

Motion to nominate and Councilmember Downing as Second Vice-President (Nock, Tarr passed) @ 6:45 pm

Acclamation: Troast-aye, Holland-aye, Nock-aye, Tarr-aye, Downing-aye; none opposed; motion carried

Approve FY-2021/22 Tax Abatement List of Certain Real Property Taxes:

Finance Director, Janet Wilson, explained that every year the City presents to Worcester County, a list of properties that do not receive City services. The real property taxes are waived. There was only a small increase from last year. That amount of increase is \$19.35 for a total of \$4,757.43.

Introduce Resolution No. 537, Tax Rates, 1st Reading:

Ms. Wilson read:

**Resolution No. 537
Tax Rates for FY 2021-2022
Pocomoke City, Maryland**

Introduce Resolution No. 538, Fee Schedule for City Services, 1st Reading:

Motion to table, until 5/17/2021, Resolution No. 538, Fee Schedule for City Services, for amendments (Tarr, Troast passed) @ 6:55 pm

Acclamation: Troast-aye, Holland-aye, Nock-aye, Tarr-aye, Downing-aye; none opposed; motion carried

Comments from Council

Councilmember Holland congratulated Councilmembers Troast and Nock for being sworn in. Information for the bike week at Newtowne Park will be coming out. Some complaints from his District were concerns about water and sidewalk concrete. He has taken all concern to the City Manager.

Councilmember Downing also congratulated Councilmembers Troast and Nock.

Councilmember Tarr thanked the Human Resources Manager, Jeff Gleason, for helping to pick up debris in City Hall yard area. He didn't know he was being watched but he did a good job.

Councilmember Nock thanked God and his district for entrusting him for another 3 years. He thanked his fellow colleagues for their well-wishes. He got a call from a person in District 3 about posting more speed limit signs. Most of the citizens he has spoken to have the same concerns. Also, Councilmembers can make a list of potholes that need repair.

Councilmember Troast also thanked her District for entrusting her with another 3 years. She recently has had surgery and may appear to be in a little discomfort but is doing well. She thanked City Hall and employees for the get-well card that she received.

Comments from City Manager

None

Comments from Audience

Ashley East, 5011 Linden Dr, she heard Councilmember Holland mention the streets. Hers is in bad shape and needs to be fixed, as are most of the streets in the Heights, for the amount of money she pays for taxes. Secondly, she isn't sure how the City can address speeding when there is a lack of officers to enforce speed control. She is concerned about coverage and response times. Mayor Marshall Harrison stated that Mr. Bill East, Public Works Director, had just called in and said that streets would be worked on next week. City Manager, Jeremy Mason, said that there have been meetings and conversations with the Council and other law enforcement agencies regarding restructuring the police department. There will be new recruits coming in soon. The current officers

are being recognized for putting in extra time and spending less time with their families. Councilmember Holland said that is exactly what happened in Delmar. The officer responded alone and there was no immediate backup. Every incident is different and an officer never knows what he/she is responding to. There are bigger concerns than speeding that are currently being addressed as a team. Councilmember Nock said that this is happening all over the country. Just as there is a shortage of teachers, there is now a shortage of police officers. What has happened in Pocomoke City and Delmar is the harsh reality and very unfortunate that every community is dealing with. It is up to the mayor, Council, City Manager and citizens to come together and figure out a solution that other places will mirror. Mayor Marshall Harrison said she has the same concerns that she has voiced tonight. Be patient and bear with the City as they continue to work through it. He would like to step back in and work with Councilmember Tarr on the neighborhood watch.

Angel Jones, 103 8th St, she has a concern regarding how the Councilmembers were sworn in. Doesn't the Mayor usually do it? Mayor Marshall Harrison said the Mayor or a notary public or the Circuit Court Clerk has also done it many times. She saw that Councilmember Troast was sworn in by the Mayor but Councilmember Nock was not. Things she does need to be brought to the forefront. Mayor Marshall Harrison said she is welcome to come in and speak to her personally. Her other concern is Councilmember Tarr and the City Clerk's video conversation. She wanted to know if any disciplinary actions would take place. Mr. Mason said he could not discuss City employee disciplinary actions in public. Councilmember Tarr said that discussion began as a conversation about the City Clerk's upcoming vacation. He wasn't aware that the conversation was live. Things in the office should not be discussed publicly.

Darren Olsen, said the City Clerk never brought his issue to the Council and was handled improperly. He has heard a rumor that the stable is losing money because half the horses have been kicked out. Mr. Mason said that is not the case. Mr. Olsen was removed from the stables because of reports of threats made to other tenants, stalking Mr. Mason at City Hall and other reports of threats. Two police officers were called by the City Clerk and had to be calmed down by them. Mr. Mason said according to everyone else's recollection it was the other way around. Mr. Mason said his eviction there have been no issues. No reports of tenants being watched or approached. Mr. Mason is trying to understand his points. The reason why there are no issues is because the other party has not been in the stable and has no horses there yet. Mr. Mason said he has had to explain this, seven or eight times, to Mr. Olsen. If someone rents a stall and pays money, they do not have to have a horse in the stall. It's like renting a house. Mr. Olsen said that the City Clerk said it's dangerous to padlock a horse in the stall but now there are padlocks on over half the stalls. Mr. Mason said there has been no complaints since Mr. Olsen's eviction and that Mr. Olsen is very mixed up on this subject. Councilmember Holland asked if the City Manager if he had spoken to the police about what Mr. Olsen had called in about. Mr. Mason said the only reason that the police were involved is because the City Clerk didn't feel comfortable by herself at the stables. Both the City Clerk and City Manager tried to work with him and explain to him that paying rent for a stall allows a person to put a horse, equipment or nothing in a stall. Mr. Mason thought the issue was over because Mr. Olsen had moved his horses to Virginia. Since the eviction there has been no further issues.

Brenda Blake, 803 Market St, her concern is that there seems to be a soft spot on her road. There is always a banging noise when large trucks go by. It sounds like they hit the ground and makes the house rumble. Mayor Marshall Harrison said there was a report of something similar before and it was a loose manhole cover. Mr. Bill East can check the area.

Motion to adjourn meeting (Nock, Holland passed) @ 7:26 pm.

Acclamation: Troast-aye, Holland-aye, Nock-aye, Tarr-aye, Downing-aye; none opposed; motion carried

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