



Regular Town Hall Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, February 12, 2025, at 7:00 PM

Hybrid Meeting

3820 40th Avenue Cottage City, Maryland 20722

This meeting will be hosted on Zoom:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82573671277?pwd=Unl6eEJrNTVoNjFmTHULzViZlITdz09>

Phone: 301-715-8592 | Meeting ID: 825 7367 1277 | Passcode: 361522

Call to Order 6:59 PM

Roll Call (07:35)

- 1.) Commissioner Chair Wheatley
- 2.) Ward 1-Commissioner Young
- 3.) Ward 2- Commissioner Henderson
- 4.) Ward 3- Commissioner Wheatley
- 5.) Ward 4- Commissioner Givens
- 6.) At-Large Report- Commissioner Brooks

Attendees:

- 1.) John Hoatson-Town Manager
- 2.) Todd Frankenfield- Alta CPA Group
- 3.) Kevin Best- Town Attorney
- 4.) Jason Hancock (Brentwood V.F.D.)

Pledge of Allegiance (08:06)

Review of Agenda No Changes (08:40)

Consent Agenda (09:22)

1. **Public Safety Report: There were no issues with the report.**
2. **Public Works Report (Verbal):**

Commissioner Givens stated that the repair of the salt spreader turned out to be \$2, 500.00 with Odyssey Shankle due to not receiving the needed maintenance over the years. It could've been avoided if it washed down at the end of every season and then sprayed with diesel fuel. Without that maintenance at every end of the season the equipment will rust. The leaf machine had to be repaired due to it not dumping the leaves and the cost for that was \$3,300.00. The cap was left off and motor water got into the system and damaged the hydraulic system. The snow was cleared, the Town Manager, Commissioner Brooks and Commissioner Givens started off the senior,

elderly and disabled volunteer program and helped with clearing their sidewalks and walkways. Once that was completed, they cleared the required paths owned by the Town of Cottage City. Commissioner Givens stated that they were working on getting the equipment up and operable and he has made some additional repairs to the equipment that was minor but all in the best interest of moving forward. Commissioner Givens stated that he is going to work with the Town Manager to get pre-paired for dumpster day and come up with a date for that event. Mr. Kopecky has been doing it for years so if there were any volunteers to assist with him to make sure people aren't throwing away hazardous and unwanted items in the dumpster that would be good. The Town Manager gave thanks to Commissioner Givens, Commissioner Brooks and Joe Mayo for really helping at this time. The Town Manager also stated that they are really getting organized in the Public Works warehouse and it looks good, and things are really starting to progress. Commissioner Givens stated that he thinks it's a great idea to start working on SOPs so that no matter who is in the positions they will have instructions on how to go about their assigned task. Commissioner Givens also stated that he will start working on the SOPs.

3. Approval of Financials:

The Commissioner's had no comment for Todd (treasurer). Todd stated that he would flag a loss year to date. January is the last month that property taxes come in, so after the revenue slows down for the rest of the fiscal year all we really do is pay for operations. It's showing a net loss through January due to a lot of outflows on the CBDG grant, which he saw the reimbursement being processed. The town will collect its grant spending as soon as the county processes the payment. Commissioner Young asked Todd would that make up the difference. Todd stated that he remembers it being like a hundred and sixty or a hundred and seventy thousand, which would put the town in a plus once it comes in.

4. No Meeting Minutes for the Month of January:

The Town Manager stated that we are in the process of pivoting too minutes and hopefully by the next meeting, you will have the minutes updated for 2025. He also stated that the 2024 minutes will be worked on also.

Motion (17:42)

Motion to approve the Public Safety, Public Works and January's Financials

The motion was made by Commissioner Givens and second by Commissioner Henderson. Vote 5-5: Young, Henderson, Wheatley, Givens, and Brooks. Motion passes no nays or abstentions.

Commissioner Reports (18:17)

5. Ward 1:

Commissioner Young stated that there have been complaints about people not using the bags for dogs because of the waste from the dogs around town. Commissioner Young stated that maybe it would be good to get new stations built and remind people online and in the newsletter. There were also complaints about rough dogs.

6. Ward 2:

Mr. Kopecki reported that when we had the big rain some of the water was running off where they repaired in the back alley mainly in his back yard and others. Commissioner Henderson will forward the photos to the Town Manager and the Town Manager informed Commissioner Henderson they will correct the problem.

7. **Ward 3:**

Commissioner Chair Wheatley stated that progress is being made with the Black History Month program and that she is really looking forward to bringing a great program for the community as it has been done in the past. Several residents did attend District 47th legislative night last Monday on the 3rd. The Towns shuttle driver did provide transportation for Cottage City residents and a few residents from Bladensburg. It was a good night, Commissioner Chair Wheatley stated that it was good seeing our Senator and delegates also seeing the sister municipalities all celebrating and hearing great news for the legislative leaders. Commissioner Chair Wheatley strongly encourages others to go out and participate at least once because it's very informative and a great way to hear about what is going on in Annapolis. Commissioner Chair Wheatley mentioned that Chief Ayers received an award for community service at the 47th legislative dinner and it didn't make the newsletter but maybe something can be sent out about it on constant contact a congratulations.

8. **Ward 4:**

Commissioner Givens stated that he believes that the town will need to consider putting six more doggy stations around the town. Commissioner Givens stated four doggy stations in ward one and at least one on this side of the town. Commissioner Givens also stated that there is a need for trash cans, and if there is no money in the budget this year then maybe it can be considered placing some in the budget for next year. Commissioner Givens also stated that he sent information about a street sweeper to the Commissioner Chair Wheatley and the Town Manager and will send the information to the other Commissioners. It's a pull behind and not as expensive as a ride on street sweeper. Commissioner Givens stated that he noticed that the red-light cameras were back in place where they were before, so he is assuming that the permits went through. Commissioner Givens stated that he isn't sure if they have been turned back on so he would like to find out if that is accurate.

9. **At-Large Report:**

No Report

Old Business (24:34)

10. Resolution 2025-02: Town of Cottage City Organizational Chart (Commission Vote)

The Town Manager stated that the Resolution 2025-02: Town of Cottage City Organizational chart is a new town government organizational chart that is being introduced by the commission. The Town Manager received the previous feedback and has updated the chart to reflect the feedback. The Residents have been added along with the Commission and the elected board. The Town Manager has been added and under the Town Manager the Chief of Police, The Office Manager, The Town Attorney, and the Town Treasurer. The Office Manager will be responsible for the Grant Manager, The Skilled Public Works Laborer, and the Shuttle Driver. The Police Chief will be responsible for the Sergeant, the Corporal, the Private 1st class and the Private Code Officer. The Town Manager stated that they are proposing in the budget an Academy Trainee which will also fall under the Chief of Police. The Police Clerk would fall under the Sergeant. The Town Manager also stated that he recommends that a part-time admin assistant should be hired, and their duties would be working on the newsletter, making sure that the newsletter goes out in a timely manner, taking care of some clerical items within the office to free up work and for things to get done in a timely manner. The Town Manager stated that the admin assistant would have roughly 20-25 hours a week for this position. Commissioner Chair Wheatley stated that the Academy Trainee position is not an official position. Commissioner Chair Wheatley stated that Chief Ayers did ask for that position to be considered and the Commission stated that if it happened the Commission would make sure that a place would be made for the position in the budget, and she believed there was. Commissioner Chair Wheatley stated that the purpose of this position is to make sure that if one of the officers was to retire, leave or move to another position the Chief of

Police would have an opening to bring in an Academy Trainee at the starting position. Commissioner Chair Wheatley stated that this organizational chart just shows if the town was to bring in a Trainee who they would report to.

Commissioners' Comments in reference to the Organizational Chart:

Ward 1:

Commissioner Young stated that she isn't sure about the organizational chart because it's good to have flexibility in changing duties. In the past the Office Manager has done the Newsletter, and she isn't sure if it's necessary for an extra person to do that. In reference to the Police Clerk that she should be up under the Chief of Police and if he isn't around, he can assign her to report to whoever is there.

Commissioner Chair Wheatley stated that the Chief set up the Police Clerk being under the Sergeant and that if they were both out, she would report to whoever is acting in chain of command.

Ward 2:

No comments

Ward 3:

No comments

Ward 4:

Commissioner Givens stated that the Police Chart is incorrect because it should flow by rank.

Commissioner Brooks stated that usually the Sergeant would be second and the other police officers would fall under the Sergeant.

Commissioner Chair Wheatley stated that the updates for the structure of the Police Station need to be made.

Town Attorney Kevin Best stated that the structure for the Police Station needed to be updated also that he shouldn't be under the Town Manager because he is the gate keeper for the town and he reports to the Commission and the Election Board.

Town Manager will update the chart.

At-Large:

Commissioner Brooks inquired if the admin part-time position was a temporary position or long-term position. The position will be for 3 or 5 months.

Town Manager stated that the position is temporary until things are caught up.

11. Resolution 2025-03: Essential Staffing (Commission Vote)

The Town Manager stated that this resolution sets the standard when there is an emergency or when there is a need for the staff members to come in to resolve those issues in the town.

Town Attorney Kevin Best stated that The Chief of Police raised an issue that if we required the Police officers to come in, they would be subject to a call out pay or something to that effect. Kevin Best stated that he believes the Chief was referring to overtime pay for a non-exempt FLSA employee. The Fair Labor Standard Act requires non-salary employees who work in excess of an 8-hour day or at 40 hours a week to be paid time and one half. If the Police officers exceed the time of over 40 hours a week or what their cap is they will need to be paid time and a half.

Motion (48:12)

The motion to approve Resolution 2025-03: Essential Staffing

The Motion was made by Commissioner Givens and second by Commissioner Brooks.

Vote 5-5: Young, Henderson, Wheatley, Givens and Brooks. Motion passes no nays or abstentions.

12. Priorities Reminder:

More Traffic Calming Measures, Stop Signs with Flashing Lights, Speed Humps, Chalk Riot, Patrolling at Bus Stops, Street Sweeping-Trash & Treats, Re-establish a CERT Team in conjunction with the sister municipalities, Emergency Plan for the Town of Cottage City, Pedestrian Street Bridge Fix, Red light Cameras Back in Place, Dog waste and keeping dogs on their leash., Community Outreach Center and the Signage for the scoop and poop.

New Business (56:51)

13. Salt Spreader Quote (Commission Vote)

The estimate for the salt spreader to get repaired is \$2,562.00. It can help cut some of the cost by driving around and spreading the salt vs the contractors.

Motion (59:58)

The motion to approve the cost for the Salt Spreader in the amount of \$2,562.98

The motion was made by Commissioner Givens and second by Commissioner Henderson. Vote 5-5: Young, Henderson, Wheatley, Givens and Brooks. Motion passes no nays or abstentions.

14. Brentwood Volunteer Firefighters (Commission Discussion)

Is requesting the budgeted disbursement towards the maintenance of the 2022 fire engine equipment, recruitment, retention, and the required insurance due quarterly at a rate of \$1,900, with a \$2,500 deductible. The Brentwood Volunteer Firefighters are requesting \$10,000.00 dollars or any donation amount.

Jason Hancock (Brentwood V.F.D.) spoke about the budget constraints in Maryland and how that affects them receiving funding, thus why they requested donations.

15. Emerson House & Parkview Shuttle Pick-Up Request for BHM Program (Commission Consensus)

The commission gave permission for the town shuttle driver to pick up the seniors from the Emerson House and Parkview for the Black History Program.

Town Manager Update (01:16:34)

16. Town Manager Update

1. Bobcat Tire Replacement Quote

There were two flat tires on the Bobcat. One flat tire was replaced. Commissioner Givens requested because the tires are bald if the Commission would approve the cost of replacing the three tires for \$949.65

Motion (01:19:40)

Motion for tire replacement for the Bobcat

The Motion was made by Commissioner Givens and second by Commissioner Brooks. Vote 5-5: Young, Henderson, Wheatley, Givens and Brooks. Motion passes no nays or abstentions.

2. 43rd Avenue Stormwater Update

The Town Manager stated that he met Robin Barnhart and Mr. Ahmed with CPJ on Monday and they are currently working with DPIE on permitting for the project. Before the RFP can be released the permitting needs to be in place. The companies are working diligently to put a timeline in place so that it can be provided to Grant Funder. The project is supposed to be completed by June 30, 2025. Concerns were brought up in reference to getting the permit in time and being able to meet the deadline. The Town Manager requested that CPJ provide an accurate timeline so that he can update the Commissioners in reference to the project moving forward so that the grant funding won't be lost. The Town Manager is trying to get an extension.

3. PEPCO Streetlights

The Town Manager had a meeting with PEPCO regarding the street lights. The town currently has 123 streetlights that the town pays \$2,796.83. Now that they have completed their survey SHA State Highway wants to take the lights that were on their bucket and put them on the town. If that happens the town will increase to 20 additional streetlights at a 3.54% increase which will take the bill to \$2,895.71. It may need to be brought to MML for further discussion.

4. Bladensburg / Cottage City Bridge Lights

Lights on the Bladensburg/ Cottage City Bridge lights aren't PEPCO lights. The state Highway admission and Prince Georges County are responsible for these lights. The Town Manager is working on speaking with both companies to try and resolve who is responsible for repairing the lights.

Public Comment (01:37:36)

17. Anyone seeking to speak under Public Comments must sign in prior to the end of the Town Meeting. There is a 3-minute time limit. When you come up to speak, you will need to state your name, address, what organization that you represent and your topic of concern(s).

Denise Hamler stated that they have been working with Seacan on three invasive cleanups. First one was on February 1st at the Cottage City Park. 105 trees were working on getting vines off. There were 30 volunteers and over 12 bags of trash. The next event will be held on February 23rd. At Cottage City Park and then they will be going out to the residents' private property to work on their trees.

The Town Manager stated that he has reached out to the appropriate personnel in reference to the pedestrian bridge and will follow up again.

Will D stated that the four streetlights on the bridge over the train tracks on 38th are also out. The Town Manager stated that he will get that addressed as well.

Motion To Go into Closed Session (01:52:49)

Motion is not needed for close sessions because all parties are not available.

18. Motion to Go into Closed Session

This meeting will be closed under General Provisions Art. § 3-305(b) only: (1)___“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; any other personnel matter that affects one or more specific individuals”; (7)___“To consult with counsel to obtain legal advice”.

The Commission plans to go into a closed session to discuss code compliance and grant expenditures with employees and the commission.

All meetings are subject to closure pursuant to the Maryland Open Meetings Act: Pursuant to the Annotated Code of Maryland, State Government Article Section 10-508(a), the Council by majority vote may retire to executive or closed session at any time during the meeting. Should the Commission retire to executive or closed session the Chair will announce the reasons, and a report will be issued at a future meeting disclosing the reasons for such closed session.

Motion (01:56:48)

Motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Brooks and Second by Commissioner Givens. Vote 5-5: Young, Henderson, Wheatley, Givens, and Brooks.