



Regular Town Hall Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, July 09, 2025 at 7:00 PM

3820 40th Avenue Cottage City, Maryland 20722

This meeting will be hosted Hybrid: Town Hall & Zoom

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88443290181?pwd=XSLVwrHmKilQIAWRg5qcMYiF4v4x4C.1>

Phone: 301-715-8592 | Meeting ID: 884 4329 0181 | Passcode: 485512

Call to Order at 7:04pm

Attendees:

1. Ward 1 – Commissioner Salsich (via Zoom)
2. Ward 2 – Commissioner Henderson
3. Ward 3 – Commissioner Wheatley (via Zoom)
4. Ward 4 - Commissioner Givens (absent)
5. At-Large – Commissioner Brooks
6. John Hoatson – Town Manager
7. Todd Frankenfield – Treasurer Alta CPA Group (via Zoom)
8. Kevin Best – Town Attorney (via Zoom)

Consent Agenda

1. Approval of Minutes

June 3, 2025 Work Session, June 11, 2025 Regular Town Meeting, and June 19, 2025 Special Called Meeting

Commissioner Wheatley already sent in her edits to the minutes. No edits from Commissioners Henderson, Brooks, or Salsich.

2. Approval of June 2025 Financials

No comments, questions, or concerns from Commissioners Henderson, Brooks, Salsich, or Wheatley.

The motion to approve the June 3, 11, and 19, 2025 meeting minutes and June 2025 financial report was made by Commissioner Brooks and seconded by Commissioner Henderson. Salsich - Aye, Henderson - Aye, Wheatley - Aye, Givens – absent, and Brooks - Aye. Motion passes, no nays or abstentions.

3. Public Safety Report

Mr. Hoatson stated that the Police Department took a total of 99 service calls in the month of June 2025. The Police Department participated in the benefits meeting on June 5, assisted with Brentwood Day on June 7, and supported the Bladensburg fireworks on July 2. Sergeant Hayes attended training at the MML Summer Conference in Ocean City.

No questions from Commissioners Brooks, Henderson, Salsich, or Wheatley.

4. Public Works Report (Verbal)

Mr. Hoatson stated that the new skilled Public Works Laborer, Jorge Montiel, has been doing an excellent job, including pruning around the Public Works building, watering the flowers on Bladensburg Road, and sprucing up the town. Mr. Hoatson is very happy to have him on board.

Commissioner Henderson has seen Mr. Montiel working diligently and compliments him for the good work he is doing. Commissioners Salsich and Wheatley agree and appreciate the awesome job.

Commissioner Reports

5. Ward 1 Commissioner Salsich inquired if Roundup is used in town. Mr. Hoatson replied that the town does not use Roundup in any public areas, rather we use an organic weed killer.
6. Ward 2 Commissioner Henderson is wondering about the broken trash and recycling cans and the process for getting repair assistance. He confirmed with Mr. Hoatson that 311 could be called to request a new recycling bin, that Jeda Trucking would come out to assess the need and repair the bin. Mr. Hoatson is in contact with Bates when residents call in regarding their broken trash bin. Mr. Henderson requested to put a reminder in the newsletter regarding codes – refraining from amassing debris on porches and cars up on jacks, for example. Mr. Hoatson added open storage and grass cutting concerns; he will include a ‘Code Dos and Don’ts’ in the August newsletter.
7. Ward 3 Commissioner Wheatley asked if the vehicle permits have arrived and requested for the resident information to be included in the August newsletter since it was missed in July. Mr. Hoatson will add it to the August newsletter, post it to social media, and send it via constant contact.
8. Ward 4 Commissioner Givens is absent.
9. At-Large Report Commissioner Brooks yielded his time.

Old Business

10. Resolution 2025-05: Mid-Year Budget Amendments (Commission Vote)

Mr. Hoatson read the resolution into the record.

Commissioner Wheatley asked what the \$1,106.97 Danton and Sons expense was for. Mr. Hoatson replied that this was a garden expense. Mr. Frankenfield stated that this expense is ARPA eligible since it was spent and paid for before December 31, 2024.

Mr. Frankenfield stated that the \$59,000 included Bates, Chalk Riot, A Cat’s Life Rescue, and a police storage container, and does not include the garden. Mr. Frankenfield clarified that the \$20,000 on the budget resolution was for the Private Property Tree Maintenance Program, for a total budget resolution of \$79,000.

There was ongoing discussion due to confusion between Mr. Frankenfield and the town about garden spending, as Mr. Hoatson and Commissioner Wheatley recalled an earlier conversation where the garden had more funds to spend from FY25 because of a needed fix to the ARPA allocations. Ms. Wheatley stated that the garden is under the impression that they are spending FY25 now and have some fence repairs planned in addition to buying new beds and making some other purchases. Mr. Frankenfield stated that if they are spent in FY25 and present for reimbursement now, there are plenty of appropriations to absorb it, and that the remainder of what they talked about in the last meeting will be appropriated for them in FY26.

Mr. Hoatson will follow up with Mr. Frankenfield and the garden to sort this out. Commissioner Wheatley agrees that she wants the garden to understand what is going on.

No further questions about the budget amendment from Commissioners Salsich, Henderson, or Brooks.

The motion to approve Resolution 2025-05 Mid-Year Budget Amendments for \$79,000 was made by Commissioner Brooks and seconded by Commissioner Henderson. Salsich - Aye, Henderson - Aye, Wheatley - Aye, Givens – absent, and Brooks - Aye. Motion passes, no nays or abstentions.

11. Tree Trimming or Removal (Commission Vote)

Mr. Hoatson presented the American Landscaping estimate to prune or remove the leaning pine tree hanging over a resident's house next to Town Hall.

The motion to remove the pine tree, paid for by the CB Trust Grant, and replace with one or two new trees in its place in the amount of \$1,795 was made by Commissioner Brooks and seconded by Commissioner Henderson. Salsich - Aye, Henderson - Aye, Wheatley - Aye, Givens – absent, and Brooks - Aye. Motion passes, no nays or abstentions.

12. MML Fall Conference (Commission Discussion)

Mr. Hoatson would like to confirm which Commissioners will attend the MML Fall Conference in October at Wisp Resort so registrations and reservations can be finalized.

Commissioner Brooks would like to assess the total budget for the conferences so they could make an educated decision about how many commissioners could reasonably attend in the fall and preserve enough funds to pay for the summer conference. Mr. Frankenfield stated last year they spent \$2,000 in the fall and \$8,000 in the summer for \$10,000 total, with the total training budget line for the conferences at \$14,700.

Commissioner Wheatley concurred that they budget for all 5 Commissioners in the summer, even if they don't attend, and that the fall conference is shorter and therefore not as expensive as the summer conference.

The training expense for the Town Manager and Office Manager to attend the conferences falls under a separate budget line. Commissioner Wheatley encouraged Mr. Hoatson to see if Liz would like to attend.

The body reached consensus that Commissioners Brooks, Henderson, Salsich, and Wheatley would like to attend the fall conference. Commissioner Givens will not be attending.

New Business

13. Approval of 43rd Avenue Stormwater Maintenance Contract from SFMS (Commission Vote)

Mr. Hoatson presented the SFMS LLC contract to perform the 43rd Avenue stormwater maintenance work. Mr. Hoatson stated that while the State website indicates SFMS is not in good standing, the online information is outdated, and he secured a copy of the certificate of good standing from the Maryland Comptroller's office. Mr. Hoatson also gained the approval of SFMS from our engineering firm, CPJ, in addition to checking SFMS's references. The grand total of the contract is \$304,100.26. This project must be completed by September 30, 2025. The contract meets the Davis-Bacon wage requirements; SFMS is familiar with this requirement and has worked with Federal funds before.

Resident Cynthia Henderson asked what companies provided references and what their rating was. Mr. Hoatson said he would follow up with her to provide the information.

The motion to approve the SFMS contract to perform the 43rd Avenue Cottage City Stormwater Maintenance project in the amount of \$304,100.26 was made by Commissioner Brooks and seconded by Commissioner Henderson. Salsich - Aye, Henderson - Aye, Wheatley - Aye, Givens – absent, and Brooks - Aye. Motion passes, no nays or abstentions.

14. Acceptance of Resignation from Cottage City Employee (Commission Vote)

Sergeant Hayes submitted her resignation with her last day of July 14, 2025.

Commissioner Brooks thanked Sergeant Hayes for her service to Cottage City.

The motion to accept Sergeant Hayes' resignation was made by Commissioner Brooks and seconded by Commissioner Henderson. Salsich - Aye, Henderson - Aye, Wheatley - Aye, Givens – absent, and Brooks - Aye. Motion passes, no nays or abstentions.

15. Temporary Employee Promotion (Commission Vote)

Mr. Hoatson stated that due to Chief's impending retirement and the changes in the police department, he is inquiring if the commission would discuss and vote to elevate Corporal Thompson to serve as acting Sergeant. He proposed a temporary increase in salary to align with the increase in duties (from \$29.81/hour \$31.73/hour).

Commissioner Wheatley shared that the personnel manual states the temporary employee should be serving in the position for 120 days before the increase. She finds it to be excessive asking someone to fulfill a job for that long for free and proposed a 30 day wait. She does not advocate providing the salary increase immediately because previously Cottage City temporarily promoted an employee with a pay raise and the employee then proceeded to do nothing for an entire three months. Ms. Wheatley would like to give the employee 30 days to prove they warrant the increase.

Commissioner Brooks believes in paying people for the work they are doing and agrees that the 30 day mark is fair vs 120 days. Mr. Brooks suggests paying \$30.73/hour to split the difference.

Commissioner Salsich inquired if Corporal Thompson has previously served in an acting Sergeant role. Mr. Hoatson confirmed that Mr. Thompson had previously served for 30 days as temporary Sergeant. Commissioner Salsich stated that since he has already performed in the Sergeant role, that in this case she advocates an immediate salary increase to \$30.73/hour. Commissioner Brooks agrees with this sentiment to recognize time served.

Commissioner Henderson believes there should be 30 days for an employee to prove that they can step up and earn the additional salary. He prefers to leave room for improvement so you can increase pay when improvement is shown.

The motion to promote Corporal Thompson to acting Sergeant, raising his pay to \$30.73/hour effective in 30 days, and recognizing his previous 30 day temporary service, was made by Commissioner Brooks and seconded by Commissioner Salsich. Salsich - Aye, Henderson - Aye, Wheatley - Aye, Givens – absent, and Brooks - Aye. Motion passes, no nays or abstentions.

16. August Recess (Commission Vote)

Mr. Hoatson stated that usually the commission takes a recess in August, which allows the town staff to focus on getting things done for Cottage City Day.

Commissioner Brooks shared that a recess does not mean the commissioners are not working, they are still present and often have special meetings and attend Cottage City Day. The recess is more a break from the work session and regular monthly town meeting.

The motion for the Cottage City Commission go into recess for the month of August was made by Commissioner Brooks and seconded by Commissioner Henderson. Salsich - Aye, Henderson - Aye, Wheatley - Aye, Givens – absent, and Brooks - Aye. Motion passes, no nays or abstentions.

17. National Night Out (Commission Discussion)

Mr. Hoatson stated that National Night Out is on August 5 and given the recent changes within the Police Department, wanted to gather the commissioners' thoughts on whether Cottage City partners with Colmar Manor or if we defer to an event in October with the new Chief for Public Safety Month. National Night Out is an annual nationwide event which builds community partnerships and allows the public to meet their local law enforcement. Mr. Hoatson shared that Reverend Addison indicated there are teens who are willing to help support the event.

Commissioner Wheatley doesn't know if it's too late to partner with Colmar Manor and is not sure if doing National Night Out would be too taxing on our Police Department. Commissioner Salsich agrees and thinks it would be nice to do something in October with the new Chief.

Commissioner Henderson thinks it is a good idea to wait until October and provide the opportunity for the town to get to know the new Chief.

Commissioner Brooks attended for the first time last year and really enjoyed the outing. He would like to take the opportunity to work together with Colmar Manor if they are willing and if we are able to support from our side without overburdening our staff. He would like to try to see if it's possible.

Commissioner Wheatley requested Mr. Hoatson to see if our Police Department is up to the challenge, but we should not force anything given the skeleton crew and does not wish to overwhelm them. Mr. Hoatson will check with the Police Department and Colmar Manor and take things from there based on the responses he gets. If they are willing, Commissioner Wheatley supports it.

Public Comments

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).

Resident Yolanda Barnett posted in the chat “has anyone on the Board ever worked in a position to prove themselves? You should already be qualified for the recommendation for the recommended position”. Commissioner Wheatley replied that Corporal Thompson had previously served as acting Sergeant.

There were no other public comments.

Adjournment

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.

The motion to adjourn was made at 8:06pm by Commissioner Brooks and seconded by Commissioner Henderson. Salsich - Aye, Henderson - Aye, Wheatley - Aye, Givens – absent, and Brooks - Aye. Motion passes, no nays or abstentions.