

## Regular Meeting Minutes

The meeting of the Pocomoke City Mayor and Council was held in the Council Chambers at City Hall on Monday, January 07, 2019. The meeting was called to order at 6:29 PM.

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

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance and Prayer @ 6:29 PM

Review and Approval of Minutes from Meeting of December 03, 2018:

Motion to accept minutes from December 03, 2019 (Tasker, Nock passed) @ 6:30 PM

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

Review and Approval of Bills:

Motion to approve and pay City of Pocomoke bills as presented on bill list (Nock, Downing passed) @ 6:31 PM

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

Pocomoke Middle School Update by Matthew Record:

Matthew Record, 8330 1<sup>st</sup> Street, Snow Hill, MD, Mr. Record stated that he has a brief over view of Pocomoke Middle School. There is a staff of approximately 100 and 400 students. They have gone through a very comprehensive evaluation and were rated a 4-star school out of 5 stars. This was the most comprehensive school evaluation program in the country. They evaluated teachers in Music, Health, Math, Science, Computer Science and what percentage of students passed those classes. Algebra I students for 3 consecutive years had a 100% passing grade. Out of 300 schools they are in the top 100. Strategic School Improvement Process is the most intense in the State of Maryland. Science, Art, Math, Reading, Safety, Communications and Collaborations. Every inch of the school is mapped out to accommodate these subjects. The teachers also deserve mention for being awarded an additional \$50,000.00 in additional grant money. Grants can be anywhere from \$500.00 to \$5000.00 or more. We have been a school of giving as well as receiving. We have been able to donate over \$5,000.00 to the United Way Campaign and the school has donated almost \$3,000.00 to charities locally and nationally. The school has received the distinction of being a Maryland Green School. Only 27% of schools in Maryland have achieved that status. We have evening recreation programs for which we credit the the County Commissioners. The school is open 12 hours from 8 am to 8 pm. This keeps kids off the streets. Juvenile justice referrals are down to 1%. We have a great partnership with the local police and Sherriff's office for school safety. We are proud of our Art Department and the Christmas card being displayed, that was designed by a student. The school appreciates the support we receive. We have the potential to do great things with our students and we hope our school shows that.

Certificates of Appreciation for Artwork by 8<sup>th</sup> Grader Bailey Suplick and Teacher Heather Riser:

Both the Teacher, Heather Riser and the student, Bailey Suplick, had other Art events and could not be present tonight. Mr. Matthew Records accepted the Certificates of Appreciation, gift cards and a finished Christmas card on their behalf. Councilmember Troast read both Certificates of Appreciation aloud. She also said that we ordered 75 Christmas cards and all except 5 were mailed out all over the State of MD to the Governor Hogan, Lt Governor Boyd Rutherford, MD House and Senate including Mary Beth Corozza and Carl Anderton, Jr, several County Departments and local Municipalities in the State of MD and businesses such as The Discovery Museum and Pocomoke Karate and Judo and Samaritan Ministries Shelter to name a few. The Council is planning to hold a contest for best artwork for Christmas cards next year also.

Approve Disposal of 7 Vacant Lots for Planning and Zoning:

Planning Director Dan Brandewie stated that these lots have been declared surplus property for sale by the City. Now the City has to decide how sales will be conducted. Planning Director Brandewie said contacted Habitat for Humanity. They said they didn't have a lot of availability in this area. It depends on the number of volunteers in an area. He wanted to know if a Resolution was necessary or just a vote by Council to decide on manner of sale. City Attorney Leslie stated that a Resolution was not necessary. Once the Council settled on a price was whether it was sealed bid, listing offer or auction, as long as the deal is finalized there is a certain number of days waiting period or Public Notice period then the contract could be signed.

Councilman Nock stated that one of the properties currently on the list 713 Short Street is near the New Macedonia Church and they have been interested in the property for sometime now. The Council has no objection to open a Public Hearing and move to a motion to transfer the deed tonight. Councilman Tasker thought he recalled that that piece of property was already gifted to the church and the deed transfer was never finalized. Councilmember Troast asked James Jones to come forward. He said New Macedonia Church accepts and appreciates the gift and New Macedonia Church is prepared to pay fees for transfer of ownership.

Motion to transfer deed of ownership for 716 Short Street to New Macedonia Church as a gift (Downing, Trotter passed) @ 6:55 pm

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

Action: City Attorney Leslie stated he would be in touch with New Macedonia Church to complete the legal process for deed transfer.

Planning Director Brandewie asked what the Council preference would be for the method of disposal for the rest of the properties. Auction, sealed bids or listing.

Motion to accept sealed bids with a 30-day deadline with a minimum bid requirement to meet the amount of money that City has put into the individual property and City right to refuse a bid on remaining 6 properties (Trotter, Downing passed) @ 6:57 pm.

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

Public Hearing-First Reading Ordinance 443: Zoning Map Amendment; Case No. REZONING 1-ZM-2018: To rezone from R-2 Residential to B-2 Business property located on Linden Avenue, Parcel 421, Tax Map 400, LOT 8, Tax Account 01-023667:

Motion to open Public Hearing for audience comments regarding rezoning from Residential to Business of above-mentioned property on Linden Ave (Trotter, Downing passed) @ 7:00 pm

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

Planning Director Brandewie stated this information was presented to the Planning and Zoning Commission on October 3, 2018 who acted favorably on the request. Ordinance 443 is included in your paperwork packet tonight. Map and pictures of the property are also included. The owner is present tonight and has included a site-plan for a 3,500 sq ft building for the property that would be further reviewed by the Planning and Zoning Commission at a later date. This is first reading of the Ordinance. A second reading of the Ordinance is required. One letter from an adjacent property owner has been received. It expresses concerns about the drainage situation and rerouting the drains toward the back of the property.

Public Comments

Veronica Gillette, 420 Linden Avenue is here representing her brother Frank Gillette at 422 Linden Avenue. Ms. Gillette asked what kind of business did the owner have in mind for the area?

Mr. Zaheer stated he was never aware that the property was zoned Residential. He used to own the pharmacy on the property. He stated that at this time he had no definite plans for a business but he was thinking of a grocery with a pharmacy. He does not intend to sell alcohol.

Ms. Gillette stated she had no objections to a grocery store but would object to alcohol being sold.

Councilman Trotter clarified that Mr. Zaheer's intentions were to have the whole property rezoned to Business

Motion to adjourn Public Hearing for audience comments regarding rezoning from Residential to Business of above-mentioned property on Linden Ave. (Tasker, Trotter passed) @ 7:10 pm

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

Introduce Budget Revision FY 2019:

Janet L. Wilson, Finance Manager Pocomoke City stated that she and the City Manager have been working diligently on the FY 2019 budget revision. They wait to do the revision until after the audit. Budget for new fiscal year is presented in June. Finance holds off on doing any major changes until the City can see where the revenue is compared to the previous year. This year a few items were over budgeted. That money can be moved to other departments to allow for some raises. The Council has been advised of the necessary changes and must vote. Health insurance expense was one area that was over-budgeted the most and had room for adjustment.

Councilman Tasker asked how does that affect the City if some one has a catastrophic event health wise. Finance Director Wilson answered that there was Capital Outlay and grant money that was not expected. Councilman Nock said if the City breaks even with bills this year, next year we will not. He also stated that City employees work hard and in the past raises were not distributed fairly. Certain people and departments were singled out while others went without. He would like Council to be

advised of raise distributions. City Manager Cowger stated that the City Charter states things were done differently in prior administrations. The Charter states that employees and departments cannot be singled out for raises. It must be across the board and will be overseen by the Finance Director, City Manager and HR Director.

Introduce Emergency Resolution 518 for HSB-Tabled until next Council meeting

Discuss Winter Quarters Golf Course Green Renovation Project:

Worcester County came to look at the Golf Course. Mr. Rantz and his wife have been running it for the last 6 months and have had some success. It's the greens that have been an issue. Worcester Parks and Recreation has extensive knowledge of greens. The proposal is what the County suggests it will take for the greens to be playable. The County said they will continue to work with us. A.W. Rantz and his wife can do most the labor under another 6-month contract. There are grants that might be forthcoming because the golf course and the log cabin have been designated has a historical destination area. City employees only need to do some clean up and tree trimming.

Motion to accept the proposal as presented at \$3,432.60 for seed and chemicals and capped at \$5,000.00 (Tasker, Troast passed) @ 7:20 pm

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

Approve Adoption of Charter Changes:

City Attorney Leslie will review the changes and then advise. Then the State process can be started. Hearings and publications will need to be done.

Councilmember Troast stated Charter changes process tabled until next Council meeting

Action: City Clerk to email Charter changes to City Attorney Leslie.

Discuss Board of Elections Appointment:

Councilmember Troast understands there is at least one vacant position on the Board of Elections. All others had been sworn in for a two-year term. Does anyone have names of interested parties? Councilmember Nock said he has spoken with Clara Jackson and she is prepared to run. Marlene Milbourne is also interested but her husband is Chairman.

Motion to appoint Clara Jackson to be sworn in before election on April 2, 2019 (Tasker, Downing passed) @ 7:35 pm

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

Action: Councilman Nock to communicate with new appointee to Board of Elections, Clara Jackson, and set date to swear in.

Discuss Alternate Date for Council Meeting 01/21/2019-MLK Holiday:

Alternate date chosen for Council meeting is Wednesday, January 23, 2019.

Update on New Pocomoke City Website:

Councilmember Troast stated that a new website for Pocomoke City is forthcoming. Council to approve website prototype and move forward with County's partnership in development.

Motion to approve website prototype and move forward with Worcester County IT (Tasker, Troast passed) @ 7:40 pm

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

Unscheduled Agenda Item:

Councilmember Troast said she received a letter that she wants to read publicly. It is from National League of Cities. She stated Councilmember Nock was just elected to the Council last April and has set a blazing trail of accomplishments. The letter reads:

Dear Councilmember Nock: On behalf of the National League of Cities, I am writing to congratulate you on your appointment to the 2019 Small Cities Council. Your experience and commitment will bring great value to NLC, communities around the country and the efforts of the Council. Your membership on the Council begins with receipt of this notification and concludes at the adjournment at the 2019 City Summit in San Antonio, Texas next November.

The letter goes on to list the other Councilmembers.

The Council congratulates Councilmember Nock on his new appointment.

Council Comments:

Councilmember Tasker complimented City Manager Cowger and the work on fixing the potholes around the City.

Councilmember Downing asked Planning Director Brandewie for an update on the 9<sup>th</sup> St house that had the fire. It has been boarded up and ownership responsibility is still being determined.

Councilmember Trotter said the traffic light timers were thrown off after SHA did their work. City Manager Cowger said there is one electric line that is scheduled to be replaced. Also, is there an update on the Lusby building? Planning Director Brandewie stated he has a meeting with Mr. Lusby tomorrow to discuss the schedule of the project. Councilmember Troast asked for a follow-up email of the results of the meeting. And finally, a white vinyl fence at 307 Linden St that a City vehicle had hit. City Manager Cowger stated that the fence had been repaired to to home-owners satisfaction. There have been no other reports.

Councilmember Nock said Councilmember Troast; the City Clerk, Michelle Beckett-EI Soloh, and himself met and applied for a private sector grant. It is money to cover infrastructure cost. There will be 17 cities and towns to be selected. It was submitted on January 4, 2019. We are waiting to hear. Councilmember Nock wanted to address a rumor about his father and drugs. Councilmember Nock was disappointed that this information had been circulated to try and make him look bad. Councilmember Nock chose to take the highroad and said although this hurt him, he realized the need for help for families dealing with drug abuse. Councilmember Nock has worked with colleagues across the State and has established the Todd J. Nock Foundation for families in and around the Pocomoke City area for youth whose families have struggles with drug abuse to provide mentorship and counseling.

Councilmember Troast asked if the Ethics class has been scheduled yet? City Manager Cowger stated that getting the class set up is in progress.

Public Comments:

Mr. James Jones suggested that he is interested in running concessions at the golf course.

Motion to adjourn open session (Trotter, Tasker passed) @ 7:36 pm.

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

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