

## Regular Meeting Minutes

The meeting of the Pocomoke City Mayor and Council was held in the Council Chambers at City Hall on Tuesday, January 28, 2020. The meeting was called to order at 6:30 PM.

Present: Mayor Bruce Morrison  
First Vice President: Todd J. Nock  
Council Members: R. Scott Holland, Diane Downing,  
Esther Troast  
City Attorney: Andrew Illuminati  
City Manager: Jeannette DeLude  
City Clerk: Michelle Beckett-EI Soloh

Pledge of Allegiance, Prayer by Grace Holland and Call to Order @ 6:30PM:

Reading and Review of Council Meeting Rules of Order (Adopted August 5, 2019):

1. Everyone in the audience will have 3 minutes to speak, if they choose.
2. There will be no interrupting or comments while other parties are speaking.
3. When at the podium, you must state your name and address or you will be asked to sit down.
4. Speakers will face the council and at no time address the audience.

Review and Approval of Minutes from Meeting of January 6, 2020:

Motion to approve minutes from January 6, 2020 (Troast, Downing passed) @ 6:32 PM

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

Review and Approval of Current Bill List:

Motion to approve current bill list (Downing, Holland passed) @ 6:33 PM.

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

Appoint New Board of Elections Supervisor:

Motion to table until Monday, February 3, 2020 (Nock, Troast passed) @ 6:35PM

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

Approve Beer/Wine Permit for 4<sup>th</sup> Friday Events:

Kara Lacey, Events Coordinator & Downtown Association Director and Amber Thompson, who serves as President of the Downtown Association and is a huge asset. This is the seventh season of the 4th Friday Events. The Downtown Association would like to request that the City Council approves the application to sell beer and wine at the events April through September. Karah and members of the DPA have taken classes through Worcester County Health Department to be tip certified to serve and sell alcohol. The consumption of alcohol is in non-glass containers and only in marked, designated areas from Front Street to Second Street. The event has the support of the Pocomoke City Police Department. The money raised from beverage sales allows the association to pay for several downtown events, advertisement and beautification for the downtown area. The DPA also gives back to the community by donating to local charities and nonprofits. Last year they raised just over \$400 from beer and wine sales from just 4 events as two events were rained out last year. To date, there have been no negative incidents that have occurred by selling beer and wine at 4th Fridays. We hope you understand the importance of our request and approve our application.

Motion to approve beer/wine sales at 4<sup>th</sup> Friday events, April 2020 through September 2020 (Troast, Holland passed) @ 6:38PM

Acclamation: Holland-aye, Nock-nay, Downing-aye, Troast-aye; 1 opposed; motion carried

Pocomoke Area Train Club business plan for the Train Station:

Rick Choquette said the Pocomoke Area Train Club has been in discussion with the City for several weeks with plans to have a model trains on display at the Train Station. Councilmember Troast said the proposal that the club has presented to the Council was very well articulated and meticulous. She was very impressed and looks forward to moving ahead.

Motion to accept and move forward to proceed with Train Station plans with a few amendments (after City Attorney review and lease signing), (Troast, Nock passed) @ 6:45PM

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

Mark Frostrum to address Council regarding sewer hookup fees:

Planning Director Brandewie said approximately 3 weeks ago regarding a commercial building property on Rt 13 next to Buchanan Buick has a tenant interested using that property. He is asking for permission to hookup to the sewer system. He was advised that the hookup fee is approximately \$8,250.00 and asked if there was any consideration to reduce the fee. Planning Director advised him that was a Council decision. It could be considered at a later date after budget time. The single-family hookup fees were reduced by half temporarily. Councilmember Nock said he didn't feel that this is a Council decision. City Attorney Illuminati said that the fees were voted on on June 2, 2016 and shall apply for the next 5 years. There was no language in the Charter that allows for an exemption. The fee is not a tax so there is authority for the Council to defer or suspend taxes but this a fee. Before making a final decision, the City will research prior exemptions to see on what date and under what conditions they occurred.

Motion to defer sewer hookup cost for further research (Nock, Downing passed) @ 6:50PM

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

Councilmember Holland said if there is something that can be done to reduce the cost, he is in favor of it to encourage business growth.

Council Comments

Councilmember Troast said she has been involved in activity to find money for the City water project. Senator Carozza was here in November 2019 and held a listening session at which quality of water in Pocomoke was discussed. Mary Beth Carozza's office reached out to Councilmember Troast for discussion. At that point, Councilmember Troast informed her of the emergency sewer situation that closed Bank St and that that situation caused work to be stopped in the Heights. On Tuesday night, the Mayor, Councilmember Troast and the City Clerk attended the ESAM dinner in Stevensville, MD and had discussion with Senators Mary Beth Carozza, Charles Otto and a liaison from Governor Hogan's office. On Wednesday, Councilmember Troast attended a Tri-County Council meeting. There is a committee for Wastewater/Sewage/Water Quality. A speaker that attended the meeting was from MD Department of Planning. She learned that Pocomoke City is in a preapproved emergency area and that they can do a free of charge assessment of water issues and help to form a treatment plan to make sure we are on the right track. The City held a meeting which brought together all the MD State agencies to put together a plan to assist Pocomoke City with water quality issues. It has been a positive step so far and we will keep working with County and state officials. A new resident who purchased property in the District 1 called Councilmember Troast with a concern. There is a drain ditch with 2 large open-ended pipes. He was concerned about his young children or others getting stuck in or injuries because of the pipes. The City Manager, Planning & Zoning and Public Works were notified and arrangements are being

made for grates and a full assessment of the ditch area will be made to see if any other modifications are needed.

Councilmember Holland said he had another successful game night at the library last night put on by the Recreation Committee. There were approximately 30-40 people who attended. His daughter was excited to meet new friends. There will be another game night with the addition of a craft table next month. The 2<sup>nd</sup> video game night will be February 22, 2020, 2:00PM-6:00PM and the game will be "Fortnite".

Councilmember Nock stated that he wanted to thank everyone who congratulated him for receiving the MLK award last Monday night. He also received a message from a citizen regarding painting of the crosswalks on Cedar St. The County has already painted one crosswalk. It is the responsibility of Pocomoke City to paint the connecting crosswalk. The City will be moving forward with that.

#### Department Comments

Mike Thornton, EMS/Safety Director, said first half fiscal year statistics for service calls are 693 total calls, 220 of those were non-transport, the remainder of those were assisting fire department and public service calls. 473 calls were transport for a total 14,190 total transport miles. The new ambulance should arrive at the end of the month and will be able to have equipment installed. Graphics will be put on and radios installed. It should be in service my mid-March.

Bill East, Public Works Director, there are 3 roads left in the Heights to complete. Digging will be as consistent and hopefully completed sometime in April 2020. A trash truck was broken down but has been repaired and is back in service.

Kristie Eberly, Circuit Rider, has been working on 2 grants. One for MDE to address sewer pump stations at 10<sup>th</sup> St and Market St, Cedar St, Payne Ave and Dorchester Ave. Market St and 10<sup>th</sup> St lift station is partially working and the lift station at Cedar St is completely nonfunctioning. The application is for \$1.1M to cover replacement costs. The other application is for water tank mixers for help with disinfection byproducts. That application is for \$1M. We should have an answer on both grants by the end of this year.

Dan Brandewie, Planning Director, he received communication from Jennifer Rand in regards to doing Brownfield Phase I investigation on a property the County is considering for a new library. Cost estimate is needed for the Brownfield investigation. The County has also explored the senior center and Board of Health complex to see about housing several services under one location. Councilmember Nock suggested extending an invitation to the County to meet with the Pocomoke City community to see what suggestions they might have for a new library. The City has also worked with Gordman's. They are projecting a grand opening for mid-February.

Karah Lacey, Events Coordinator, has just finished submitting a final report for the 2019 Community Legacy, Downtown Building Improvement grant. The total money awarded was double the amount received last year. One property owner has applied to receive funds for improvement. There re more property owner who are interested. First Downtown Pocomoke Association of the year is scheduled for Wednesday, January 29, 2020. Events calendar should be updated for the year afterwards.

Chief Brumley, Pocomoke City Police Chief, said painting of the interior is complete. Open house for visitors will be on February 5, 2020 from 5:00PM to 7:00PM. Tonight, don't be alarmed if you see red and blue lights. Interdiction teams for Md State police and the Sheriffs Department are doing work tonight. Councilmember Holland forgot to mention about game night is that he took the championship at chess but Chief intends to that the title back.

New City Manager, Jeannette DeLude, introduced herself and said she is looking forward to working with everyone and hopes that we can complete great things in Pocomoke City.

### Audience Comments

James Jones, 2216 Worcester Hwy, he is speaking on behalf of the NAACP for Worcester County. There are some concerns that have arisen due to the hiring of a new City Manager for Pocomoke City. He doesn't know her personally but there have been some racial concerns about some actions that have not benefited the African-American community, not here in Pocomoke but her previous employment. Ms. DeLude has a track record that the City should be concerned with before investing in hiring her. She might not display adequate and proper concern for all citizens in Pocomoke City as was the case in previous counties. She has had negative doings which have caused criminal actions as well as a death because of poor judgment that was made. His question is, "Has an adequate background check been completed?". There have been terrible situations here in Pocomoke City. There have been some racial inequalities that have allowed negativism between community members. We need nothing to happen here that would separate our City as far as racism is concerned. We appreciate everything that Council does and has done so far but we would like to get clarity and understanding on the decision to bring in this city manager. The documented track record behind her is not favorable to our people.

Richard Potter, PO Box 716, Easton, MD, he is the cofounder for the Coalition of Justice for Anton Black who was a 19-year-old African-American male who lost his life in 2018 as a result of poor decisions and follow through from the Greensboro, MD Police Department under the supervision out of a town manager who is now the newly hired city manager, Jeannette DeLude. There is a series of factual information that outlines Jeannette DeLude's gross negligence as the town manager of Greensboro, MD. On February 13, 2018 she was quoted on a WBOC interview as saying that the town of Greensboro had an opening for a patrol officer. After a thorough background check Patrolman Webster was found to be an applicant of the utmost qualifications. His position is pending successful completion of compliance and certification by the State of Maryland. On January 29, 2019 the coalition filed an official complaint against the former chief of police in Greensboro, Michael Pettio, for unbecoming conduct as a police officer and giving false statements as it relates to the hiring Patrolman Webster. Sadly, the action remained unanswered. There was an email and a phone call from Mr. Potter to Jeannette DeLude on January 29, 2019 where she was asked, does the chief of police report to the town manager and she answered, yes. The officer left Greensboro, MD and went to Camden, Delaware as a lieutenant. November 14, 2019 the former chief of police of Greensboro was charged with misconduct while in office. He was charged with falsifying an application for certification for Patrolman Webster. On January 17, 2020, Michael Pettio, pled guilty for that charge. He received 2-years incarceration suspended for 3 years supervised probation. Documentation was available supporting what he said tonight and it was his recommendation to Council to go into emergency executive session. Mr. Potter said, "Ask yourselves, at any point, did Mrs. DeLude the share the specifics with you as it relates to her previous role as a town manager and did you hire her under false pretenses?". If you can answer yes then my response is to you to terminate her effective immediately. Is she the best choice to carry out the consent decree? Dr. King said set it best with 'what affects one directly affects us all indirectly'. The members of the Coalition vow to stand with the African-American community of Pocomoke to make sure that justice is done and carried out.

Victoria Holley, 126 Carnation Dr, Delaware, she is one of the sisters of Anton Black. She is here tonight with the coalition for Justice of Anton Black to discuss the hiring of Jeannette DeLude. She said as a family they did not have any direct contact that was positive with Jeannette DeLude that was positive in reference to her brother's killing that happened on September 18, 2018. There was one specific incident that happened 6 months shy of her brother's death. On March 8, 2019 the Coalition for the Justice of Anton Black was going to address the Mayor and Council regarding the town's handling of police matters. The sign-in sheet for meeting attendees had been altered and the column indicating "wishing to speak" had been removed. Jeannette DeLude was asked how to address the Council. She informed Mr. Potter that the Council had decided not to

allow public comments at Council meetings and the policy had been changed. Mr. Potter asked for and received a copy of the policy. Mr. Potter asked when the Greensboro Mayor & Council approved the new policy and why was it not in the February meeting minutes. Mrs. DeLude stated it was done through email and didn't need approval. The Coalition filed a complaint to the Open Meeting Compliance Board indicating a lack of transparency regarding drafting of new policies. We, respectfully, went to the Council asking to take certain measures that were not unreasonable within the police department. They were not listened to and fought 100% of the way.

Scott DeLude, 108 Church St, Greensboro, MD, said he is here in support of Jeannette DeLude and to respond to the untruths put out by Mr. Potter, the NAACP and the ACLU. Mr. Potter, the NAACP and the ACLU have spread lies and no one has done fact checking. Everything that was in the letter that was sent to this Council and to the media... Councilman Nock asked, how do you know about a letter that was sent to the Council? Mr. DeLude answered, it's public information because it was on the news. These organizations are attacking her because no one will challenge him and she does not have the means or funds to fight these huge organizations. It is public information that Maryland State Police did the investigation on the death of Anton Black. Based on that investigation, the MD State Attorney's office found there was no wrongdoing of any of the officers involved. It is also public information that after the complaint was filed by Mr. Potter and the Coalition was reviewed by the Maryland Open Meeting Compliance Board and they found no wrongdoing by the City of Greensboro or Jeannette DeLude. It is a fact that Mrs. DeLude, as a town manager, could not walk into the police department and just do a background check on an officer. A release had to be signed to do a background check by a police officer. A police officer is trained to do background checks, not a city manager. She had to rely on chief of police as all town managers do. With all the facts out there, why is Mr. Potter lying to the people? She's never been implicated or even accused of anything of this manner. Because those organizations are diversified and have resources available to fight back against defamation, slander and malice. Bottom line is Jeannette DeLude simply did her job as directed by the Mayor and Council and sought the advice of the City Attorney and the MD State Police. Mr. Potter's personal attacks on Mrs. DeLude are just a way to further his agenda as a leader. As a smart and educated man, you would think that Mr. Potter would use his power to actually bring people together instead of to fight his own battles to form his own court of public opinion.

Rebecca Cleveland, 201 Church St, Greensboro, MD, she would like to start off by thanking the Council for giving her the chance to speak and she will not comment directly on any of the unfortunate circumstances that happened in Greensboro. She is simply here this evening to address the residents of Pocomoke City as well as the Mayor & Council in regards to the employment of Jeanette DeLude. If you were to ask most people to describe her you would hear words such as kind, caring, friend, mother and wife. She totally agrees with these words but thinks of two other words which are "public servant". Mrs. DeLude has been a public servant for 17 years with a commitment to her employers and employees but first foremost to the town residents. Service and commitment not only to Greensboro but to the neighboring towns in Caroline County. She instituted the creation of parks, water systems and repair of failing septic systems, the preservation of the area of the river area, programs for the youth and fishing derbies. She was also instrumental in seeing that the residents of the town were cared for and assisted during the Sandy super storm. She went days upon days without sleep. The list of great things that she accomplished for the residents in Greensboro and of Caroline County are endless. Jeannette came here years ago wanting not only to build a home but a better life for everyone around her. There's nothing she would not do for anyone in need. When her son's best friend was diagnosed with cancer at a young age she trained for a 5K which she ran while battling her own case of cancer. She never missed a needless day of work. She continued with a grueling schedule that consisted of many weekday nights and weekend events that left her exhausted but she never failed to carry out her duties as expected. An example of putting herself last and everyone in her community first. The City of Pocomoke is lucky to have Mrs. DeLude as a city manager. On a final note the recent media coverage that this has received has left her with a tarnished reputation. That she is not deserving of. The NAACP and the Coalition I have planted seeds for the residence

of Pocomoke that should've never been planted. They are seeds of distain distrust in fear. She has been accused and depicted as an individual who is biased upon color and that is the most hideous thing a person can be accused of. Please do not allow your community to be poisoned by this hate that has nothing to do with this community.

Ronnie White, 804 Walnut St, he is wondering if the Mayor & Council has read the consent decree that was implicated by the federal government. If the City is supposed to comply with that then there is no way that you can hire Mrs. DeLude for this job. The City has been through too much for us to go through it again. We have already paid \$1.9M in a past lawsuit. He doesn't understand why we would want to go backwards instead of forwards. He doesn't understand this.

Councilmember Holland said that the Mayor & Council have all read the consent decree as well as the Human Resources Department and there was nothing in Mrs. DeLude's background that rendered her ineligible for employment.

(Council deliberation information from previous closed sessions will not be printed.)

Motion to adjourn meeting (Nock, Troast passed) @ 7:50PM

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

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