

Regular Meeting Minutes

The meeting of the Pocomoke City Mayor and Council was held in the Council Chambers at City Hall on Tuesday, September 3, 2019. 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, Dale Trotter
City Attorney: Roscoe Leslie
City Manager Interim Basis: David J. Deutsch
City Clerk: Michelle Beckett-EI Soloh

Pledge of Allegiance, Prayer by Deacon Wendell White and Call to Order @ 6:30PM:

Reading and Review of Council Meeting rules of order:

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, after 2 violations you will be asked to leave.
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 August 19, 2019 and August 26, 2019:

Motion to approve Minutes from August 5, 2019 and August 26, 2019 with an amendment to August 5, 2019 open session Minutes (Troast, Holland passed) @ 6:34 PM

Acclamation: Trotter-aye, 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 (Trotter, Downing passed) @ 6:35 PM.

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

Approve Special Sunday Liquor Permit for American Legion Post #93 for Their District Meeting on October 27, 2019:

Mr. Steve Giddens explained that the American Legion Post #93 is having a District meeting on Saturday, October 27, 2019. There will be a few more members than usual since it is a South-Eastern District meeting. Councilmember Nock called for a Motion. Councilmember Troast and Trotter both asked for the application to be amended with the time of the event. Mr. Giddens stated the hours are 4:00PM to 7:00PM.

Motion to approve Special Sunday Liquor Permit for American Legion Post #93 for a District meeting on Sunday, October 27, 2019 with the amendment adding the hours, 4:00PM to 7:00PM, to the application (Troast, Trotter passed) @ 6:38PM

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

Approve Application for Land & Water Conservation Fund Grant:

Planning Director Dan Brandewie stated he sent an email out on August 26, 2019 reminding the Council has the opportunity to apply for this grant. It's a funding opportunity for outdoor recreation and activities. The City has applied for it before. There is a match requirement for the City of \$50,000.00. Employees have offered some ideas as to what they would like to see. The Department is also looking for outside recommendations. Councilmember Trotter said he would like to proceed with the basketball courts. Councilmember Holland said the Recreation Committee have talked about that area. Have we found out who is in charge of that property behind the middle school grounds? Planning Director Brandewie said, it is school property. The School Board would have to donate or the City would have to buy the property to put anything on it. The grant wants to see water related activities. Updating the restrooms at Cypress Park or kayak launch ramps is another idea. Councilmember Nock said he had the idea to put a reading nook in the area of Young St or Moore Avenue or even somewhere closer to the water.

Motion to approve the application to apply for grant funds through the Land & Water Conservation (Trotter, Troast passed) @ 6:40PM

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

Request to Enter Into Real Estate Listing Contract for City Owned Industrial Lots:

Planning Director Brandewie states that last year the City had an agreement with a real estate company called SBN. The City had an agreement with them to sell industrial properties for an 8% commission. This is now a different company, some of the same individuals who broke away from the original company. Councilmember Nock recommended that this Agenda item be tabled until the Economic Development Committee meets next week and can be presented to them and then brought back to Council.

Introduce Ordinance No. 448, Change "Short Sf" to "Bishop Isaac Jenkins St", 1st Reading:

Councilmember Nock reads: **ORDINANCE NO. 448**

An Ordinance of the City of Pocomoke City, Maryland, proposing to change the name of "**SHORT STREET**" as designated on the city and county street maps, in the current city limits of Pocomoke City, Maryland to "**BISHOP ISAAC JENKINS STREET**".

Introduce Resolution 526, Create Revitalization/Beautification Commission, 1st Reading:

Councilmember Nock reads: **Resolution No. 526**

**To Create a Revitalization/Beautification Committee
Pocomoke City, Maryland**

Authorize Mayor to Sign Proclamation for "Worcester Goes Purple":

Donna Nordstrom came forward for Worcester County to accept signed proclamation. She appreciates the support of the Mayor & Council to raise awareness of addictions, reduce the stigma and encourage conversations during the month of September, National Recovery Month.

Motion to authorize mayor to sign "Worcester Goes Purple" Proclamation to raise awareness of substance abuse for the month of September (Trotter, Nock passed) @ 6:51PM

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

Council Comments:

Councilmember Troast said she usually doesn't have any complaints about water in her district but this week she has had a couple complaints. She explained that There has not been the normal amount of flushing due to the water tower being down and under repair. The water should clear back up in District 1 soon.

Councilmember Downing stated that there were no complaints in her District. She has something to set straight for the record. There have been things posted on Facebook. Eddie Young had gotten up at the last council meeting and talked about a letter that was presented in closed session to the Mayor asking him to step down. Mr. Young presented the information like Councilmember Downing was the only one who signed the letter. For the record, she is saying for the last time, that she was not the 1st Vice-President, she was the 2nd Vice-president, Councilmember Troast was the 1st Vice-President at the time. Councilmember Troast was doing everything for the Mayor filling in, in his place. At that time, the Mayor's abilities were a lot less that what they are now. Everyone seems to think that Councilmembers Downing and Nock were the only ones who signed and were the ones who initiated the letter. Councilmember Troast asked Councilmembers Nock and Downing for their support at the MML meeting. Councilmember Downing was going to support Councilmember Troast because she was getting worn out and the City didn't need 2 members of Mayor & Council sick. The Mayor refused to step down and the issue died. Councilmember Downing said stop posting her name on Facebook. If anyone has questions, address her directly.

Councilmember Holland said he has several complaints regarding water issues. One lady sent pictures to him and her water was literally black. He believes it is because of the lack of flushing due to the water tower being down. Hopefully this ill clear up. There was a Recreation Committee meeting. If anyone has any ideas regarding activities outside of "ball" related sports, please let him know. The last issue is grass-cutting in the City. Right now, we are giving 2 notices before the City cuts the grass. It takes longer to get the job done. When he lived in Salisbury, there was 1 notice given with so-many days to cut it, then you get a fine. A small change in that process might make the City look better without the grass having the chance to get so long.

Councilmember Nock said he has only 1 comment. There was a certified letter sent to City Hall. We later found out that each member of the Ethics Commission has also received the same letter by certified mail. The letter was sent by a group of citizens who call themselves "The Concerned Citizens of Pocomoke". These Concerned Citizens of Pocomoke felt like the Council was doing things unethically. Item #1 on the list discussed the Mayors health and his performance. Item #2 discussed the restaurant selection process. Item #3 discussed a meeting that only 2 Councilmembers had with lorex. To further touch on the lorex issue, the City was still in a contract with lorex. Many people that lived in the Heights said that lorex did not work as did Frank Daniels, Water/Wastewater Superintendent. Councilmember Nock reached out to the lorex company to discuss the contract. lorex said representatives they would be in Salisbury the next day and they would be available to meet. Originally, Councilmembers Trotter and Troast were going to attend the meeting. Both of them ended up having something to do so Councilmembers Nock and Downing went to the meeting. When the lorex deal was made. Councilmember Nock was not yet on the Council. He felt the other Councilmembers had been more privileged to that information. The people who actually attended the meeting were Councilmembers Nock and Downing, Jeremy Mason, Frank Daniels, Jeff Gleason, Mayor Morrison and his wife as well as a couple citizens on the phone. The objective was to work out the contract. What was posted on Facebook was that this meeting was a ploy to demonize someone.

When Councilmember Nock saw that post, he immediately responded with the explanation that was not the reason why the City was meeting with Iorex. The end result of the contract was that the City could not get our money back but the City was not obligated to purchase any more units which would have cost the City \$100,000.00. The 4th item basically said the City was not following the Open Meetings Act and had had a meeting that wasn't advertised. Councilmember Nock said this was not true, The City Clerk does a great job of getting the meetings posted via the boards in City Hall, on the website and the City Facebook site. The 5th item was the budget. The budget was in question. The ones who signed the certified letter were Susan Marshall-Harrison, Robert L. Cowger, KeriAnn Foster, CD Hall, George Tasker, Kathleen Palmer, George E. Young and Dawn Sparrow. Councilmember Nock confirmed that the Ethics Committee has met and has found no ethical wrongdoing on the Mayor & Council's behalf. If you would like a copy, please ask your Councilmember.

Councilmember Trotter said he would like to ask citizens to extend a bit of leniency to Public Works and Bill East this week as they will be very busy preparing for the storm, Dorian. He would like to take this opportunity to introduce the Council's selection for the City Manager on an Interim Basis. His experience will help remove a lot of questions and concerns that have been at the forefront, Mr. David J. Deutsch.

Department Comments:

Frank Daniels, Water/Wastewater Superintendent, said the water tower is still undergoing repair and updates and feels that is affecting the water. It should get better as soon as the water tower is operational. Councilmember Holland asked if Mr. Daniels can address the maintenance contract for the water tower. Mr. Daniels stated the maintenance company is Suez. It is a 10-year contract. One year they do a washout and inspection, the next year is paint inside, then the next year paint the outside. They must be behind because they are doing it all this year. It's a 10-year contract to spread out the cost.

Bill East, Public Works Director, said he was approached by Snow Hill who requested use of the City tent. As mentioned, his department will be busy the next few days getting ready for the storm. Councilmember Nock asked what is the normal process for the tent? Mr. East said he will send 2 workers down to meet the trustees and help with set up.

Motion to deliver and assist set up for City tent for event in Snow Hill, MD (Downing, Trotter passed)
@ 7:00PM

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

Councilmember Holland asked if Payne Ave was done yet. Mr. East said there are 3 more laterals then the Heights will be completed. He confirmed that Mr. Daniels had to send water samples to PA. The local lab was too busy. A positive result takes longer, so no news is good news but we should know results soon.

Mike Thornton, EMS Director/Paramedic, all ambulances are up and running. Labor Day weekend went smoothly and his department is also getting ready for the storm. Normally there are 2 crews on during the day and 1 crew at night but during the storm there will be 2 crews at night.

Councilmember Nock wanted to further comment on a rumor about the restaurant selection. Item #2. The rumor that the Mayor was in attendance during the selection process. That is not true, in fact, Councilmember Troast asked the Mayor to excuse himself and the Mayor agreed and did so. That was conformed by the Attorney Leslie's partner, who was at the Council meeting that night, it was Paul Wilbur.

Janet Wilson, Finance Director, she had a meeting with PKS, auditor for the City, on Wednesday and they will be addressing the Council and then reporting to the public in October after the process is finished.

Dan Brandewie, Planning Director, said he spoke with Chief Gladding about the demolition for the property at 608 Clarke Ave and the other properties. Chief Gladding said that in September once temperatures drop, they can move forward with demolition. Councilmember Downing wanted to know if the property on Oxford St was one of the properties to be demolished. Mr. Brandewie answered yes, that is one that will be looked at in September.

Karah Lacey, Events Coordinator, we wrapped up summer events. Unfortunately, we had to cancel the 4th Friday due to rain. The rain held off so we were able to do fireworks and captain's concert on Friday night. The next event will be Shakespeare in the park on Thursday at 7:30PM. It is free. In the event of rain, it will be inside MarVa Theater and still free. In the event of a hurricane, hopefully, it can be rescheduled but the group tours all over Delmarva. 4th Friday festivals will wrap up in September. The school principal reached out and asked about a student advisory committee. Councilmember Nock said he remembers it was discussed but someone from the Council can contact the principal. Councilmember Nock asked if we can go purple for the September 4th Friday? She said yes. Some have the vendors have already inquired. And also, the fountain needs to be purple for the month of September.

Lt. Craven, Police Dept, he reminded everyone that the new school season began today. New speed limit signs have been ordered for the school zone area.

Audience Comments:

Becky Hammond-Jones, 1922 Orchard Dr, her rental tenant on Market St called her and said that she had brown water and the second call was orange water that turned her fingertips and nails orange. She had 2 service calls from a local plumbing company. She installed a water softener. She wanted to know if the pipes to her home were dug up, would the water be better? She said her dad did that to his home and it did not help. She grew up on 205 15th St and that resident, Josh Turner, is here tonight. He says the water is not any better. Once all the pipes have been replaced will it be better? She understands that a resident on Princess Anne Lane was reimbursed for her laundry. What about the rest of the residents who have had problems? Councilmember Holland said there is not much more to say on this. He is sorry that we are going through this. We are all in this together.

Josh Turner, 205 15th St, he is active duty military and has been stationed all over the world in 30 countries. There have only been 2 places with worse water than Pocomoke. He brought 2 water samples tonight and a TDS meter. Tap water and a sealed bottle of drinking water. The bottled water sample tested 25 and the tap water tested 280. Drinking water should be between 0-10. He spends \$100.00 monthly plus another \$100.00 for drinking water. His uniforms are white so he has spent money on uniforms. He also spends on filtration. Councilmember Nock said it's not only the Heights

that has bad water. It's all over the City. The City has never had a public Hearing to discuss the water issue. We need to do that and sit down with Public Works, Water/Wastewater, engineers and Finance Dept. We will schedule a public hearing in the future.

Rob Clarke, 1400 Cedar St, he addressed the Council and said he has been following, with interest, some things that have been going on. The Council needs to remember whom they work for, the citizens. We need to be respectful and not be airing dirty laundry outside the town. He will add that he has no water issues and no filtration systems and water is fine.

Michelle Goad, 809 Market St, for the last year her water bills have run \$57.00 to \$70.00 on the high end. Two months ago, she got a bill for \$216.27 and asked for an adjustment. She was told no; she probably has a leak and that next bill would be high again. When she checked, she found a flapper in the toilet was leaking and paid \$5.00 to fix it. She kept the Water Dept. informed and made a good faith payment and filed a dispute. She got a (shut-off notice) red-tag on the door. She called in on that Monday but Valerie was not in. She called back on Wednesday and was credited a total of \$189.78 and also credited the sewer. After adjustments the bill total was \$301.01. She paid it. The next bill was \$298.56. Councilmember Nock asked her submit something in writing. The Council does not have jurisdiction over water refunds but it will be forwarded to the correct person.

Kathleen Palmer, 1929 Cedar Hall Rd, she is coming forward with a personal issue. She is asking for an apology from the Mayor and Todd Nock. She left the meeting for reasons that had nothing to do with the meeting. She also wanted an apology from the Mayor's son for posting something degrading about her daughter on Facebook. In her opinion, the 3-minute timer should be eliminated. It is disrespectful to tell a citizen they have 3 minutes and that it. And to tell them to take a seat in the middle of what they are saying is rude. The rules of order attached to the Agenda are very clear. At the last meeting, Susan was late, and when she came in, she asked me if I had a copy of the Agenda. I whispered back to her, no, I have KeriAnn's letter. Councilmember Nock shouted back at me, one more outburst and you have to leave. She cannot believe that Councilmember Nock had the audacity to call her out for such a trivial thing. She is not a child and has grandkids his age and hopes that they will never speak to her in the same manner. Councilmember Nock said he will not apologize to her for anything. She comes in and degrades the Council at every meeting. You are part of the same group that calls the Mayor incompetent. As far as, Taylor, he is not here and cannot defend himself. The Council, as a whole, did not see any problems with the timer. If you want to come together and agree to disagree and bury the hatchet, we can do that but you have to be willing to do your part.

Toneisha Jones, 103 8th St, wants to let the Council know they are doing a phenomenal job. She appreciates all the hard work that they do. They take verbal abuse every other week. Other citizens come in and play the victim, they scandalize your names all over Facebook. They come in week after week and complain about water when we all know there is a problem. The City is already trying to resolve the water problem. She started getting involved when Chief Sewell was terminated. She has children and grandchildren that are growing up here. She appreciates the Council and the police force and everything they do. She is interested in participating on any of the Committee that needs her assistance.

Susan Harrison, 2610 Cambrook Dr, said this her 3rd request for the detailed summary budget to be posted on the website. The report that is up is not the detailed budget. She intends to run for Mayor

and having this information would help her to understand the welfare of the City's financial status. She understands that she should go to the Finance Director with any questions but without the documents to help form questions, that is difficult to do. Councilmember Nock said he had something to address with her also. She wrote on Facebook that the Council was immature and she did not tell the truth on one of her posts. She said the Judge Purnell said that Councilmember Nock was a crooked politician was not the truth. He constantly has her posts shared with him and he doesn't really even care to see them. She asks questions and the Council gives an answer but her posts aren't amended. She also said that posting the no trespassing signs at the train station was an immature ploy. The Council did not have the signs put there. The acting City Manager had that authority. There are a lot of things that go on that the Council doesn't handle. He is asking her to stop demonizing the Council on the internet. Mr. Waters, who runs the one room schoolhouse, is ready to retire, as an educator, if she is interested in that, the Council will help her get started with that. Councilmember Trotter said the FY18-19 and FY19-20 budgets are posted. The only information that is missing is specific individuals or companies who received payments. Finance Director said she is asking for the 14-page report that with breakdowns. Councilmember Downing said we aren't going to post every detail on the internet. You can see the Finance Director for the breakdowns. Councilmember Holland said the no trespassing signs that were posted, everyone on the Council saw the signs that Mr. Gleason ordered. No one had issues with the signs. Councilmember Holland said that her post about the Council having items moved to store out at the train station was not correct. It was before most current members of this Council. Councilmember Nock said her post say someone must be accountable. He said someone must be accountable for the truth but that's not what she reports. When she leaves here, she and Kathleen will get on Facebook and say they were attacked. The Council is not attacking, we are just addressing the issues. If any citizen has a concern, they can go to their Council representative and avoid the 3-minute rule. Councilmember Downing said they all think everyone in lying, doing something dishonest. We are mismanaging everything and we don't have any idea what they are doing. Quite frankly, she is sick of it. Rob Clarke, just spoke. He was on the Council. When he was on the Council, we didn't have these problems. Even when there was a disagreement, it wasn't spread around. Everything is posted like they know the Council personally. Every single meeting the same old questions are asked. People were talking about the letter submitted to the Mayor in closed session. How did people know about that? It had to come from the former City Manager or former City Council. And the same for the Mayor that was said to attend the restaurant decision. That also came from former members because that was also closed session. We need to call this what it is.

Motion to adjourn open meeting (Trotter, Downing passed) @ 8:00PM

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

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