

## Meeting Minutes

The meeting of the Pocomoke City Mayor and Council was held in the Council Chambers on Monday, May 6, 2024. The meeting was called to order at 6:34 pm.

Present: Mayor Todd Nock  
First Vice President: Monda Marsh

Council Members Present: Diane Downing, Scott Holland, C.L Marshall and Brooke Cottman  
City Manager John Barkley  
City Attorney Andrew Illuminati

### Pledge of Allegiance, Prayer by Council member Marshall and Call to Order

### Approval of Minutes from Meeting of April 15, 2024

Motion to approve minutes for April, 2024, (Downing, Cottman, passed)

Acclamation: Holland-aye, Marshall-aye, Cottman-aye, Downing-aye, Marsh-aye; none opposed, motion carried

### Review and Approval of Current Bill List

Motion to approve current bill list (Downing, Marshall, passed)

Acclamation: Holland-aye, Marshall-aye, Cottman-aye, Downing-aye, Marsh-aye; none opposed, motion carried

### Update on Current Development Initiatives

Sara Chapman of MS Shore Properties, LLC provided an overview of the initiatives that MS Shore Properties is working on in Pocomoke City and answered questions from Council members. Ms. Chapman mentioned several projects in the works, with one of the projects in the sale contract review currently. They are working with Davis Strategies on plans to take up space in the Newberry Building for a farmers market style venue. They have rehabilitated 6 homes, are doing repair work on city ambulances, renovated 3 more homes that were vacant, and are working on an additional home near the fairgrounds and a rezoning for a multi-family unit across from the library. Ms. Chapman is also working with the Fairgrounds Board to plan for the fair events. The multi-family home plan is designed to keep the home as it has been for many years and get the rezoning approved to make it compliant with current zoning regulations and make the living space more efficient.

Bret Davis of Davis Strategies provided an overview of the several projects. Ms. Davis updated the Council on the firehouse apartments project, which also houses a data center, and provided an update on the simple fiber project, a service plan for public employees to take advantage of discount rates for internet service, and plans for affordable internet service and housing opportunities for all qualified citizens through a partnership with the State. Davis would like to provide a "dark fiber network" for an intranet, or managed service to connect all City-owned facilities, as they have for other jurisdictions, utilizing light speed rather than electric based service. Mr. Davis provided information about the respective discount rates offered through this program. The goal is for any City citizen to be able to access internet, with the help of a grant from Worcester County. Mr. Davis suggested that the City doesn't need to purchase other products independently or outside of the proposed network. Davis can provide advice on ways to set it up, and will work with the City's IT manager to coordinate the installation. The City's current infrastructure can house the new system, with minimal improvements required. Davis also works with many jurisdictions and school systems to provide similar service, as well as

telephone services, which are not necessarily the primary focus of Davis Strategies. The Mayor and Council members expressed support of the concept, but there needs to be follow discussion about the City's needs, including communications between City facilities, pump stations, etc. City Manager Barkley will follow up with Mr. Davis to provide additional information on City Facilities.

Davis is now leasing apartments at the old firehouse and repaved the parking area. They are securing grant funding for planned improvements at 153 Market St. (Newberry), and have a lease agreement with Sara Chapman for a locally based farmers market there as well as plans for businesses and apartments on site. Parking will be a challenge, but it can be accommodated with public parking or site acquisitions. There are new grant programs offered through the State that they will take advantage of to promote tourism and additional improvements to downtown as well. Davis also has offered to buy the golf course, and the remaining lots in the industrial park, and will write contracts and business plans and present to the Council for all intended projects. Davis is interested in purchasing the Armory as well. Pocomoke qualifies for a State program that would help make residential living more affordable at the Armory site.

#### Second Reading, Public Hearing, and Possible Action - Ordinance No. 465, Establishing a Historic District

Mayor Nock read the ordinance and opened the floor for public comment. Mayor Nock read a statement from a citizen into the record. No public comments were received. Council member Holland noted that the District could place several restrictions on redevelopment and create another new Board, in addition to the PC and BZA. The legislation should be placed on line in addition to being advertised in the newspaper. Council member Cottman stated that it is unclear what regulations will follow. Mayor Nock stated that many older homes are being repaired right now. Council member Marsh noted that there are no regulations or restrictions in this ordinance. It simply identifies the City Historic District, and will open the door for homeowners to apply for grants. Sara Chapman stated that prices will increase beyond the affordability of the Pocomoke housing market if there are additional regulations, and that it will encourage demolition. Council member Marsh stated that this is a way to recognize our history and that we are not talking about regulations at this point. Council member Holland mentioned that Davis did a great job on the fire house without historic regulations and restrictions. Council member Marshall thanked the Chapmans for their investment in the town, and stated that he shares Council member Holland's concerns. The public hearing was closed.

#### Motion to Table the Ordinance to a date within 60 days (Marshall, Downing, passed)

Acclamation: Holland-aye, Marshall-aye, Cottman-aye, Downing-aye, Marsh-opposed, motion carried

#### Award of Contract for Cypress Park Flooding Mitigation Study

Council member Holland asked why staff recommends a higher bid than the lowest bid received. Staff recommends Rauch to be awarded the contract in the amount \$49,730 primarily because of the detail involved in proposal as well as the fact that DNR highly supports the award to Rauch. The other 2 bids were GMB at \$47,200 and Davis-Bowen at \$67,000. Mayor Nock suggested that the entire bids be distributed to Council so that they have a chance to read through them prior to taking action because they are the ones representing their constituents. Council member Marsh expressed concern that Rauch has a limited number of employees and asked how long the company has been in business. City Planner Brandewie indicated that each of the companies that bid have been in business for over 20 years. Council member

Marshall stated that he is comfortable with the recommended company because they have DNR's support.

Motion to Approve (Marshall, Holland, passed)

Acclamation: Holland-aye, Marshall-aye, Cottman-aye, Downing-aye, Marsh-aye; none opposed, motion carried

#### Approval to Utilize ARPA funds

Mayor Nock read City Manager Barkley's memorandum providing an overview of the request. City Attorney Illuminati recommended a resolution be drafted to formalize the request. Mr. Barkley will draft a resolution to be presented to Council at the next meeting.

#### Introduce Resolution No. 593 – Declaring Certain City Properties (Vehicles) as Surplus, First Reading

Mayor Nock recommended that the subject Resolution be tabled so that it will include not only Police vehicles, but also all City vehicles from every department intended to be declared surplus. City Manager Barkley will amend the resolution accordingly and bring the resolution back to the Council with a comprehensive list of vehicles for approval.

Motion to table (Holland, Downing, passed)

Acclamation: Holland-aye, Marshall-aye, Cottman-aye, Downing-aye, Marsh-aye; none opposed, motion carried

#### Event Permit Request to Serve Alcohol – Pocomoke City Volunteer Fire Company

Council member Marshall mentioned that he had been contacted by Mike Shannon, Fire Company Treasurer about the permit. City Manager Barkley indicated that the permit is a County permit that requires the City to sign-off. Mayor Nock suggested that a list of the permit applications and dates be presented to Council at one time to avoid these last-minute circumstances. In this case, the Fire Company is hosting an event on May 18<sup>th</sup> and needs a signature to get the permit into the County to provide enough lead time for approval. Mayor Nock stated that a policy needs to be drafted that will provide for approvals ahead of time.

Motion to Approve (Holland, Marsh, passed)

Acclamation: Holland-aye, Marshall-aye, Cottman-aye, Downing-aye, Marsh-aye; none opposed, motion carried

#### Council Comments

Council member Holland asked for a list of paving projects on City roads.

Council member Downing had no comments.

Council member Cottman had no comments.

Council member Marshall had no comments.

Council member Marsh thanked the owner of Dawn's Homestead Foods for providing baked goods from her own kitchen as an entrepreneur, marketing and providing treats all around town.

Mayor Nock expressed thanks to all for their support of the Mayor and his family during this difficult time. Mayor Nock also suggested to Janet Bernosky of the Eastern Shore Post that they begin a weekly Pocomoke business highlight series.

City Manager Barkley congratulated Dominic DiLegge, Superintendent of Water and Wastewater, on the occasion of receiving the 2024 Maryland Rural Water Association Operator of the Year Award, and invited all citizens who are interested to join us for the May 13<sup>th</sup> Budget work session and any future work sessions that the Council may schedule through the end of the fiscal year.

Comments from the Audience

County Commissioner Purnell expressed condolences to Mayor Nock and family, and also expressed support of the City's initiative to create a Historic District.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the meeting and enter into closed session (Holland, Downing, passed)

Acclamation: Holland-aye, Marshall-aye, Cottman-aye, Downing-aye, Marsh-aye; none opposed, motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 8:20 pm.

Approved: *John C. Barkley*  
City Manager