

Regular Meeting Minutes

The meeting of the Pocomoke City Mayor and Council was held in Council Chambers on Monday, March 4, 2024. The meeting was called to order at 6:32 pm.

Present: Mayor Todd J. Nock
First Vice President: Esther Troast
Council Members: R. Scott Holland,
Diane Downing and Monda Marsh
City Manager: John Barkley
City Attorney: Andrew Illuminati
City Clerk: Michelle Beckett-El Soloh

Pledge of Allegiance, Prayer by Councilmember Troast and Call to Order

Approval of Minutes from Meeting of February 20, 2024

Motion to approve minutes as written for February 20, 2024 (Holland, Downing passed)

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

Review and Approval Current Bill List

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

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

CIP (Capital Improvement Plan) Presentation

Amy Somner, Civil Engineer for Charles P Johnson & Assoc. in Silver Spring, MD said they were contracted by the city last year after the RFP process to plan large scale capital projects. CIP goals were to meet with city staff and come up with a priority list and apply for grants to fund those projects. Creating new jobs, increase business, create anchor businesses, create destination places and improve existing places. Projects were categorized by priority need, project cost, cost by year and funding. The goal is to update the CIP every five years based on city needs. A STEM Park was also included in the plans that will have activities that accommodates different age groups. It includes playground offering music and pace, a solar system area and a nature and biology walking path. Mayor Nock said that the Armory project will have to be revised as the county changed plans for the library. Mayor & Council had never seen the schematics for the STEM Park. He hopes that the few revisions can be made.

Possible Action on Comprehensive Plan Bids

Planning Director, Dan Brandewie said he advertised an RFP for the Comprehensive Plan, which is updated every 5 years, and got two bids. One for \$39,600 from Peter Johnson and Assoc. and another for \$129,644.46 from Wallace Montgomery. The staff feels that Peter Johnson and Assoc should be awarded the bid due to cost and presentation. They previously won a bid for a prior Comprehensive Plan. Mayor Nock said when you look at all the capable employees with all the certifications they have, we need to think about doing the work in house. With the amount of money that it costs to outsource a project. The last time a Comprehensive Plan was done citizens nor Mayor & Council did not have input. Mr. Barkley agrees that the city has the talent to do it inhouse and save money. Councilmember Troast agrees with Mr. Barkley to attempt to do it inhouse. Councilmember Downing is in agreement with doing it inhouse. There is no specified deadline. The GIS office for the county can assist with the mapping. The money saved could be used to hire another employee.

Motion to not accept bids and keep the Comprehensive Plan project inhouse with the City Manager and Director of Planning in charge of the project (Troast, Marsh passed)

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

Introduce Resolution No. 592, Extend the Cannabis Moratorium, 1st Reading

Mayor Nock said that the previously adopted moratorium will expire soon and we do not have a clear path yet on State legislation. Mayor Nock read:

**Resolution No. 592
Extend the Cannabis Moratorium
Pocomoke City, Maryland**

Public Hearing & Adopt Resolution No. 591, Council Approval to Accept MD Dept. of Health Grant Funds, 2nd Reading

Mayor nock read:

**Resolution No. 591
Council Approval to Accept MD Dept. of Health Grant Funds
Pocomoke City, Maryland**

Public Hearing opened. There were no comments or objections from the public. Public Hearing closed.

Motion to adopt Resolution No. 591, Council Approval to Accept MD Dept. of Health Grant Funds (Marsh, Downing passed)

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

Comments from Council

None

Comments from the Mayor

A post went up on Facebook about a gentleman going around in the Heights offering to change their lightbulbs. Calls were made to the Police Department to see if this was a legitimate service. Some people called the Police Department because they didn't think it was credible. The Police Department did post about the incident on Facebook and it did get a lot of shares. Some people posted that the Mayor's response, as an African-American person, wasn't sufficient and that is their opinion. It shouldn't matter if he is black or white, his response was cut and dried. The Mayor looked into the situation and found that the person was legitimate and the post was taken down. He apologizes to the young man but we have to think rationally and maturely why the post went up. There are incidences of people going around selling things trying to get access into people's homes. He believes that the incident was handled appropriately by getting the information out there. Councilmember Holland said that the Heights is his District. Last weekend someone was knocking on doors, doing the same thing and couldn't be verified. The Police Department did call Delmarva Power and Light and they weren't aware of anyone in the area offering services. It is necessary to remain vigilant about watching what is going on in neighborhoods and the Police Department is available to answer any questions.

Comments from City Manager

The Chief of Police held a community forum last week. He was impressed by the way that the Police Department articulately presented information and pausing to give people the chance to add to the conversation was a good example of how the city is trying to work with citizens. We are heading into budget season and he suggests holding as many Work Sessions as possible to make it a community process. We will schedule the first Work Session for budget for March 25, 2024 at 6:30 p.m. Tomorrow he will be in Snow Hill to present budget needs at the county meeting for different city projects such as sewer and water projects and the Log Cabin electrical updates.

Comments from Audience

None

Motion to hold Closed Session (Troast , Holland passed)

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

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