

## Regular Meeting Minutes

The meeting of the Pocomoke City Mayor and Council was held in Council Chambers on Tuesday, February 12, 2024. The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm.

Present: Mayor Todd J. Nock  
First Vice President: Esther Troast  
Council Members: R. Scott Holland,  
Diane Downing-Not Present and Monda Marsh  
City Manager: John Barkley  
City Attorney: Andrew Illuminati  
City Clerk: Michelle Beckett-El Soloh

### Pledge of Allegiance, Prayer by Reverend James Jones and Call to Order

### Approval of Minutes from Meeting of January 16, 2024

Motion to approve minutes as written for January 16, 2024 (Holland, Troast passed)

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

### Review and Approval Current Bill List

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

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

### Appointment & Swear in Planning & Zoning Boardmember

Mayor Nock swore in Steven Mills for another term until January 29, 2029 on the Planning & Zoning Commission Board.

### Appointment & Swear in Board of Election Supervisors

Mayor Nock swore in four Board of Election Supervisors for a two-year term until January of 2026. The Boardmembers sworn in were: Grace Holland, Sylvia Fletcher, Lendora Bonneville and Clara Jackson. Grace Holland will serve as an alternate.

### MarVa Theater for 2 Liquor License Special Permits, February 14, 2024, 6:00 p.m.-11:00 p.m. & February 23, 2024, 6:00 p.m.-11:00 p.m.

Mark Thompson spoke for the MarVa Theater. They are planning on having two events and would like to serve beer and wine. The dates of the events are February 14, 2024 from 6-11:00 p.m. and February 23, 2024 also from 6-11:00 p.m.

Motion to approve events request requiring liquor license special permit for the MarVa Theater on February 14<sup>th</sup> and the 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2024 both from 6:00 to 11:00 p.m. (Holland, Marsh passed)

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

### Events Coordinator for Liquor License Special Permit for 4th Friday Events

The Events Coordinator, Karah Burton-Lacey said this is her 11<sup>th</sup> year of 4<sup>th</sup> Friday events. She and the members of the Downtown Pocomoke Association are MD tip certified to serve alcohol. She has the support of the Police Department for the events. Alcohol is always served in non-glass containers and in specific areas for consumption. There have never been any incidences due to alcohol. She is

asking the Council to approve her request to file the application with the county.

Motion to approve 2024 4<sup>th</sup> Friday events request requiring liquor license special permit for the city (Holland, Troast passed)

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

Introduce Resolution No. 590, Council Approval to Accept CDBG Grant Funds, 1st Reading

Karah Burton-Lacey read:

**Resolution No. 590**  
**Council Approval to Accept CDBG Grant Funds**  
**Pocomoke City, Maryland**

Introduce Ordinance No. 463, Chapter 186, Rental Property Registration, 1st Reading 10. Public Hearing & Adopt Resolution No. 585, Create an Arts Committee, 2nd Reading

Mayor Nock read:

**Ordinance No. 463**  
**Chapter 186, Rental Property Registration**  
**Pocomoke City, Maryland**

Set Work Session for Resolution No. 589, Cannabis Zoning Legislation

Mayor & Council set the Work Session for Resolution No. 589, Cannabis Zoning Legislation, for after the Mayor & Council meeting on February 20, 2024.

Comments from Council

Councilmember Holland said he wanted to reiterate the events at the MarVa Theater. Shows featuring comedy and singers. Tickets are for sale online now. He thanked Karah Burton-Lacey for the work done with grants and the decorating of downtown. It looked nice and his kids enjoyed it.

Councilmember Marsh thanked the City Clerk and Public Works. The Councilmember got a call from a neighbor who had water earlier in the day then none. She called the City Clerk who walked her through trouble shooting then called Ray Tilghman, who came immediately to the residence and fixed the the issue quickly. The owner had gotten advice at the onset of the problem and was quoted thousands of dollars to fix the issue. Councilmember Marsh also said that someone needs to look into large trucks coming into town from the highway to Winter Quarters Drive. They cannot make the turn and are destroying sidewalks and property. Thirdly, the city needs to look into establishing a historical district. Pocomoke City has many historical buildings and homes that, in other cities, attract tourism and also enables access to more funding. The city needs input from citizens through public hearings. The city's current Planning & Zoning Director, has experience in establishing historical zones. The MarVa Theater, the Costen House, the Log Cabin, The Crocket House and the Sturgis School House are a few already on the historic registry. This goes along with cleaning up the town.

Comments from the Mayor

Going along with what Councilmember Marsh said, the city needs to find its "niche". He feels that out niche is our history. Berlin is the coolest small town. Ocean City is a resort town and Snow Hill is the county seat. But what is Pocomoke's niche? The Steven Long House on Linden Avenue in District 2. The historic registry goes all the way to St. John's Church. Districts 3 and 4 are incorporated into the historic district. Sometimes what is old and outdated are our treasures which we've watched deteriorate over time. We need to support Councilmember Marsh and support establishing the historical district. Also, to comment on a statement made by a representative of Vepo, doing the water

meter installation. There was a comment made to a citizen that if there was a problem to call the mayor who hired them. The mayor would like it to be known that they are contracted through a project manager and do not work for the city. Once the meter installation is completed, they will be done. They are not even using the current city seal on their vehicles. He is making an announcement for the Chief of Police. A public safety forum will be held at the Community Center on February 28, 2024 at 6:30 p.m. EMS will also be there.

#### Comments from City Manager

The City Manager said he is available to anyone to address issues or concerns. He wants anyone to come forward who might be interested in serving on a board or serving in some other capacity. He can help with communications to the mayor and city council. He is dedicated to serving the citizens. He completes a weekly report to the mayor and council. We will work on posting those on the website so citizens can see how tax dollars are used. He is looking at revising policies and procedures and organizing the budget process. He aims to make better use of tax dollars earned.

#### Comments from Audience

Frank Hawk, Boardmember of the Costen House, firstly, he offers his assistance to help develop the historic district. Second, the Costen House sent a letter to request the annual donation but have not had a response in 6 years. In previous years, the city provided \$6,000 as a donation. He was able to renegotiate the insurance by \$200 lower. They have a CD that will be coming due. Once that is cashed, they will have a few funds left over after repaying the loan for the new roof, that might last a year or two then after that they will be bankrupt. They are continuing to work on grants. Mayor Nock said they attempted to send emails but it was sent to the wrong email address. When the letters were sent out previously, they were sent to the Finance Director and former City Manager. In the past several years, the city has looked at donations made and several were cut out for other needs in the city. Councilmember Holland said in the past, funds were being given out with no explanation on how they were being used. That process has changed. He also, has not seen any letters from the Costen House. Councilmember Marsh volunteered her services to help with fund raising.

Reverend James Jones, he presides over an African-American leadership organization that meets by organizing all the counties on this side of the bridge. They had a first-time forum that brought high school students together from all nine counties to cover many subjects that teens face today. Mayor Nock attended that meeting along with other leaders from the counties. Mayor Nock said the most beautiful thing about the event was to see all the diversity of the kids who attended and participated. Reverend Jones has an update on the Steven Long School. The area is almost ready for dedication. The county will refurbish the basketball courts, upgrade the chain fencing and place bleachers as well as the plaque. He invites everyone to the ribbon cutting expected to be in April 2024. He thanks the city for the advice given to him to get these things done. Mr. Steven Long was the first African-American educator, Superintendent, a member of the Masonic Lodge and single handedly built the school. His house still stands on Linden Avenue. That house is also in need of being restored.

Meriam Payne, a retired teacher, said she was invited by Keriann Foster to attend a committee meeting for businesses. When she and Marlene showed up, they were ignored when they tried to contribute. They realized they were being ignored and did not feel welcome and left. No one talked to them or invited them to stay. Later, when it was realized who they were, they started getting calls inviting them back but the damage was already done. Councilmember Marsh said the way she understands it, is that the committee was put together with intentions of being a 501(3)C but as of yet doesn't have any bylaws or covenants. Discrimination should not have been allowed. Mayor Nock

said anyone having an interest in volunteering should be able to do that. There is a racial divide in this city that has to stop. We all have to pay our bills, eat, sleep and die. It's time for us to come together and put petty differences aside. If we want to make Pocomoke a better place, racism and sexism has to stop. Municipal government is the framework of the nation and that's what we have to invest in. Councilmember Marsh said she was sorry to hear that this happened.

Motion to adjourn meeting (Marsh, Troast passed)

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

Approved: Michelle Beckett-El Soloh  
City Clerk