

Regular Meeting Minutes

The meeting of the Pocomoke City Mayor and Council was held in Council Chambers on Tuesday, January 17, 2023. The meeting was called to order at 6:31 pm.

Present: Mayor Susan Marshall Harrison
First Vice President: Esther Troast
Council Members: R. Scott Holland, Diane Downing,
Daniel J. Tarr and Todd J. Nock
City Manager: Jeremy Mason
City Attorney: Andrew Illuminati
City Clerk: Michelle Beckett-El Soloh

Pledge of Allegiance, Prayer by Mayor Marshall Harrison and Call to Order:

Approval of Minutes from Meeting of January 3, 2023:

Motion to approve minutes for January 3, 2023 as written (Tarr, Downing passed)

Acclamation: Troast-aye, Downing-aye, Holland-aye Tarr-aye, Nock-abstain; none opposed, 1 abstain; motion carried

Review and Approval Current Bill List:

Motion to approve the bill list (Nock, Tarr passed)

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

Student and Teacher Recognition for Christmas Card Contest

Motion to table student and teacher recognition until next meeting (Nock, Downing passed)

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

PHS Hockey Team Recognition

Motion to table Field hockey team recognition until the next meeting (Nock, Downing passed)

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

Police Officer of the Year/ Supervisor of the Year Awards and Recognition

Chief Hancock stated department statistics for this week are 13 Arrests (1 juvenile), 43 Traffic Stops (18 violations/36 warnings/46 citations), 1 Motor Vehicle Accidents, 31 Foot Patrols, 64 Business Checks and 128 Patrol Checks. Additionally, PFC Northam and PFC Fitchett have been assigned to the Boys and Girls Club to be weekly representatives. They have built up a really good rapport with the kids. Approximately \$2,000.00 will be used out of community grant funds to buy car seats to distribute to the public. Also, note pads and other supplies with the police department logo will go to the Boys and Girls Club. He received paperwork from MD Police Training Commission that requires them to do a community policing report to see if certain items are in compliance. Three officers were presented with the Distinguished Duty Award: PFC Tyler White, PFC Conner Bauer and Cpl. Anthony Rhodes. This group of officers helped to apprehend someone who was involved in armed robberies in the Virginia area on December 23, 2022. One officer went the the Duck-Inn, the other went to Goose Creek. A car that matched the description was spotted and pulled over. The driver fled but was apprehended when Cpl. Rhodes sent his K-9 after him. The man was later identified to be the

suspect involved in the armed robberies. Together this group, in the last year, has had 679 traffic stops, multiple DUI and handgun arrests in 2022. PFC White had only five and a half months and PFC Bauer had 10 months out of field training in 2022. Each of them has a very bright future in Pocomoke and are irreplaceable. Just six days later there was another serious incident, a 1st degree assault, where a stepson attempted to cut his stepfather's throat and the officers were able to safely apprehend the stepson. In 2022, the department maintained full staff for the majority of the year. There were 419 total arrests in 2022. The highest production in six years. In 2021, total of 231. In 2021, there were 1,056 traffic stops and in 2022 there were 2,169. Total calls for service in 2022 were 17,664 and in 2021 there were 13,374. This shows the hard work that is put in daily. Another award for Officer of the Quarter, which is given four times a year, goes to PFC Tyler White, Supervisor of the Year for 2022 award is presented to; Cpl. Anthony Rhodes. Officer of the Year for 2022 award is presented to Patrolman Jon Laverty, with 92 total arrests and attention to detail.

Mayor Marshall Harrison said the commitment of the officers is greatly appreciated by the community. We recognize that they risk their lives daily. Councilmember Nock said he went on a ride along with PFC White just after one of those incidences. He sees what the officers endure. He appreciates their diligence and responses to the community,

Low Income Household Water Assistance Program Discussion and Approval to Implement Program

The City Manager has worked with the State to get information about the water program. There is funding available through the State for help with water and sewer bills. You must apply. The benefits are based on income. You might be eligible to receive as much as \$2,000.00 to assist with water and sewer bills. He would like the Mayor & Council to approve implementation of the program. Information will be placed on the city's website and Facebook.

Motion to approve implementation of State of Maryland low-income household water assistance program (LIHWAP) in City Hall to benefit residents (Tarr, Nock passed)

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

Comments from Council

Councilmember Troast said she has been approached by several officers that asked if there was any place to locate a substation. It was suggested the old Public Works office or the gas station at the Delmarva Discovery Museum. Councilmember Nock called a point of discussion. It was brought up before and was decided that a substation was not needed. Now, due to recent statistics, it would decrease response time and create a police presence in other areas of the city. Mr. Mason said that the old gas station had board meeting being held in it and wasn't available. That might have changed. Both areas can be reviewed. Cost would be minimal to set up as most of the equipment needed, such as electronics, is already available. Chief Hancock said either area would suit. A substation is not manned 24/7 but is more sporadic. Demolition will be happening in the spring in the area.

Councilmember Troast said there is also an election coming up. She has had people ask her if there is an election. She thought it can be added to Facebook also. She said that she hasn't noticed any payments for training and certification for Public Works. She wants to make sure that their safety training is up to date. Mr. Mason said he will check and schedule if necessary. Councilmember Troast asked for an update on Royal Farms sewer connection. Mr. Mason said yes, Royal Farms is connected to the city system. It was turned on without authorization in the beginning but as soon as he had knowledge about it, it was shut off again. The city had to wait for authorization from both

Maryland and Virginia. Authorization was recently received. Everything was done publicly despite what might have been said.

Councilmember Holland asked for updates on the cameras at the recycling bins. Mr. Mason said some electrical work needs to be done. That will be completed soon. The construction at the lift stations in the Heights is 39% done. Dorchester Avenue had some supply issues. Supplies are here. Payne Avenue will be next. Code Enforcement can focus on the trash complaints in the area soon.

Councilmember Nock said Happy New Year to everyone. He has had discussions with several people about historic sites on the historic registry. The Stephen Long house is still standing. We need to get back to the days of old and make positive changes and make things stand out. He wants Pocomoke to be the cleanest, most historically-preserved place on the eastern shore.

Councilmember Downing was glad to hear about the water program assistance. It will benefit many people in the community. Mr. Mason it will be advertised on Facebook and the city website. The Finance Department can assist with getting paperwork to the citizens. Payments do not go to the citizen. Payments go directly to the Water Department to pay or decrease a person's water bill.

Comments from the Mayor

None

Comments from City Manager

Mr. Mason met with DNR and MDE regarding flood prone areas in Cypress Park, 8th Street, White Oaks, Front Street and Winter Quarters. Public Works is also continuing to dig out ditches. An electrician was needed to do work at the Log Cabin. The wiring has not been updated since the 1980's. An electrician is also needed for Cypress Park. It was becoming dangerous. Some business information is interest has been expressed in opening an arcade on Willow Street. A site has been sold to Starbucks and they plan on putting a location near Ruby Tuesday's.

Comments from Chief of Police

Chief has been contacted for training. Minimum in-service training in Maryland is 18 hours. Pocomoke does a minimum of 40 hours. Any safety training that is required, he tries to double the amount of time. He recommends the guardian Angel lights that are able to be worn on uniforms and makes a person very visible. They cost \$135.00 per person.

Comments from Audience

None

Motion to adjourn to closed session to discuss EMS billing and New-Hire Police Contracts (Nock, Holland passed)

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

Motion to adjourn meeting (Nock, Tarr passed)

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

Approved: *K. Michelle Beckett-El Soloh*

City Clerk