

Regular Meeting Minutes

The meeting of the Pocomoke City Mayor and Council was held in Council Chambers on Monday, March 20, 2023. The meeting was called to order at 6:30 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: Vacant
City Attorney: Christopher Smith
City Clerk: Michelle Beckett-El Soloh

Closed Session Summary

A Closed Session was held on Monday, March 6, 2023 at 5:30 p.m. The Closed Session was voted to be held unanimously by the Council under the provisions of Sec. 3-305, (b) (1) ___ "To discuss the appointment, employment, assignment, promotion, discipline, demotion, compensation, removal, resignation or performance evaluation of appointees, employees, or officials over whom this public body has jurisdiction; any other personnel matter that affects one or more specific individuals". (7) ___ "To consult with counsel to obtain legal advice." The topic discussed was "Resignation of the City Manager". Each Councilmember was present, Susan Marshall Harrison-Mayor, Andrew Illuminati-City Attorney, Michelle Beckett-El Soloh-City Clerk

Pledge of Allegiance, Prayer by Councilmember Downing and Call to Order:

Public Statement by Mayor Susan Marshall Harrison

The Mayor & Council announce that starting tomorrow on March 21, 2023, Mr. John Psota will begin as the Interim City Manager. John has years of experience in administration as Fruitland's city manager, Wicomico County Chief Executive Administrative Officer and is also retired for Maryland State Police. We are looking forward to working with Mr. Psota as we work to continue to improve Pocomoke City.

Approval of Minutes from Meeting of March 6, 2023:

Motion to approve minutes for March 6, 2023 as written (Nock, Troast passed)

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

Review and Approval Current Bill List:

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

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

Recognition of EMS Employees

Chief of EMS, Ryan McCreedy said on March 5, 2023 at 7:45 a.m. EMS was dispatched to a house fire. There was an incident involving a structure fire. The dispatcher reported that the resident was possibly still inside the structure. EMS was the initial responder. There was smoke and flames emanating from the windows. EMS knocked on the front door; when no one answered, he opened the door and called for assistance. A woman responded, "I'm inside." Mr. Chris Barrs crawled into the kitchen, where he could just make out her ankles through the thick smoke. She refused to leave her dog behind. Mr. Barrs was able to get her outside, and Allen Miller, Jr. was able to locate the canine inside and bring it outside as well. Mr. Chris Barrs and Allen Miller, Jr. were both presented with Distinguished Service Award certificates for their heroic response in this incident.

Mayor Susan Marshall Harrison read:

**Resolution No. 575
Worcester County Loan Agreement for Demolition
Pocomoke City, Maryland**

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

Motion to adopt Resolution No. 575, Worcester County Loan for Demolition (Troast, Tarr passed)

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

Councilmember Nock stated that the city had applied several times for a grant to cover the demolition of the Armory. The mistakes were addressed and the city reapplied for the grant and was again denied. The County had offered a loan in the event of a denial of the grant. It was rumored that the loan from the County would not have to be paid back. That was never said by the County Commissioners. The agreement is that it is an interest-free loan. What we can all agree on is that the buildings have to be demolished. They are blighted, an eye-sore and a safety issue. Shame on previous elected officials who let buildings get to that point. It looks like occupants of the building picked up their phone and computers and walked out the door. It is time for elected officials to do better and make better decisions. We cannot bring new things into the city without cleaning up the blight. He has fond memories of karate and other activities in that building as a kid. It is a historical building that should have been saved.

Council Comments

Councilmember Troast said that ditches in White Oaks development will be dug out by Public Works in the near future.

Councilmember Nock said that blighted buildings in Pocomoke have to come down. He will focus on that. This is his last meeting as a Councilmember. He is committed to the city. He began on the Board of Elections Supervisors when he was 25 years old. He has seen great strides, weak moments and hard moments but the good outweighs the bad. He is asking everyone to get involved in the committees. It is time to take our city back and run with it. The drama on Facebook has to end. We need to get on board and work together.

Councilmember Downing said she also wishes that the Armory could have been renovated. When it was evaluated in 2012, it was over a million dollars to renovate it back then. She wishes that the kids had somewhere to go to have things to do and get their energy out. Councilmember Troast added that she remembers when Councilmember Downing fought for renovations. Every avenue was explored. She also agrees with Councilmember Nock about Facebook. If someone doesn't understand something or has a question, please reach out to the Council to have a discussion instead of gossip. She always had documentation and is happy to share what she is able to.

Councilmember Tarr said spring is here and he looks forward to seeing everyone there.

Mayor Comments

She agrees with colleague comments regarding the Armory. This is a time for revitalization. She sees several projects as a starting point such as the library.

Audience Comments

Mona Margarita, 407 2nd St, said she would be happy to see the blighted, run down, asbestos and lead infested buildings come down. She asked if the County loan was connected to the demolition. Is it going to be a library or other building.

Commissioner Karen Abbott said that the library is, right now, undecided. There has not been a final vote by the Commissioners. There is information that they are waiting on and she is not at liberty to say what that information is. The best thing to do is watch the agendas of the County meetings.

Ms. Margarita commented that since it is Pocomoke's land, why can't Pocomoke decide what goes there?

Councilmember Troast and Councilmember Tarr both said that the way they understand the loan, it is not contingent on a library being built there.

Monda Marsh, 1 2nd St, said the city appreciates her service and since her term is ending soon, could she elaborate on her accomplishments. Mayor Susan Marshall Harrison said it has been a pleasure to serve in Pocomoke City. She grew up here then went to live in Richmond and came back in 2010. She has had the opportunity to develop a Boys & Girls Club, developed a 4H club that meets monthly in the Log Cabin, attended meetings for the library project and worked with various departments on the city's infrastructure projects including water improvement projects as the CIIP Lining project.

Motion to adjourn meeting (Troast, Downing passed)

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

Approved: *K. Michelle Beckett-El Soloh*
City Clerk