

Regular Meeting Minutes

The meeting of the Pocomoke City Mayor and Council was held in Council Chambers and via Zoom/Facebook livestream on Monday, September 20, 2021. 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, Todd J. Nock
City Manager: Jeremy Mason
City Attorney: Andrew Illuminati

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

Review and Approval Current Bill List:

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

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

Approval of Minutes from Meeting of September 7, 2021:

Motion to approve minutes for September 7, 2021 with two amendments, Rob Clarke as the Manager of MarVa Theater and City Attorney changed to Michael Mathers (Holland, Tarr passed)

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

Approve Hunting Permit on City Property for Mark Speta:

Councilmember Holland asked that anyone submitting an application to hunt on City property should be present for the approval process, especially if it the first time applying.

Motion to approve Mark Speta between outside fence of w/ww pond and end of property line and rear woods in front of solar panel farm at Water/Wastewater Treatment facility (Tarr, Downing).

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

Approve Hunting Permit on City Property for Roger Nelson:

Motion to approve Roger Nelson to hunt on Parcels 2401010646 behind fairgrounds and 2404079515 near fish farm (Nock, Troast)

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

Introduce Ordinance No. 458, To Amend Zoning Text for Cell Towers, 1st Reading:

Planning Director, Dan Brandewie, said the City would like to introduce Ordinance No. 458. This Ordinance essentially modifies the Zoning text to allow towers, 40ft in height, in all non-residential B1 and B2 Districts. F1 (light industrial) allows towers as a conditional use but they are presently not allowed in the other two Districts. Situations have come up that made us realize that it is a conflict of Zoning and this will address that situation. The matter still has to go in front of the Board of Appeals and be advertised for two weeks. We expect to do the first reading on October 4, 2021.

Approval by Council to Submit Special Sunday Permit for American Legion Post #93 Event on October 24, 2021:

Mr. Giddens, President of American Legion Post #93, said they are planning to host a District meeting on October 24, 2021. Councilmember Troast confirmed that it is not a party or gathering and is, in fact, a meeting for all American Legion leaders and it will include a meeting and watching some of the game on tv. The meeting is open to all members. She also stated that on this past Saturday night, she received several calls regarding noise and racing cars in the area of the Legion. Mr. Giddens said that sometimes employees will stay late to clean up instead of having to come back on Sunday morning. Councilmember Holland suggested that he come with complete information. Councilmember Nock said the incident of 2018 is still being brought up. Police Chief Hancock said he can confirm that Mr. Giddens has been cooperative and seems to work hard at keeping order. Sometimes the number of people at an event is an issue but the Fire Marshall's office has done a recent surprise inspection and everything was found to be in compliance. Mr. Giddens pointed out that a lot of people don't realize that that road doesn't connect with Rt 13 and they do see a lot of that kind of traffic. The City Manager stated that he has seen less complaints. The Mayor suggested that they observe the 11:00 pm closing time be strictly observed.

Motion to grant Special Sunday permit application for October 24, 2021 American Legion meeting (Troast, Holland)

Acclamation: Troast-aye, Holland-aye, Nock-nay, Tarr-nay, Downing-aye; 2 opposed; motion carried

Comments from Council

Councilmember Tarr responded to a citizen request regarding voting on alcoholic beverage requests. This was his response to that person. He will read what he wrote to that person. Hopefully, it will help to understand what he does and you don't have to agree with his decisions. Proverb 20 verse one, the deception of alcoholic beverages and nature of influencing good judgement. He is not naïve enough to think that everyone has the same thoughts about drinking that he does. It would be hypocritical of him to suggest for his church, his family and him personally. When it's not medical use. The distribution of alcohol in public or recreational consumption is not reason enough and may not make him popular and some may argue that it's not events where children are allowed and is a family event. He cannot agree with someone attending something that helps undermine family values, including the entertainment choices. He wrote in favor of encouraging a strong society, even if it makes others think that he is just a stick in the mud. Sometimes he votes for things without explanation and appreciates people like the person who cared enough to ask and seek answers. He thanked the public for reaching out. He wants to do what is best for citizens and he never claimed to be perfect. He encourages opinions as much as possible.

Comments from City Manager

The City was awarded a grant for K-9 training for Sergeant Lewis so we do not need to use the City budget for that expense of \$3,100.00. The Grant Writer, Linda McNeil, is responsible for obtaining that grant. The Finance Department Director, Janet Wilson, has just completed a new audit and got a clean bill of health for City finances. The speed cameras are now fully deployed and effective as of the 9/23/2021 to issue fines. The information is still on the website. He congratulated Councilmember Tarr and his wife on the arrival of a new baby.

Comments from Chief of Police

Chief Hancock said the arrest totals from September 7th to current the total arrests are: ten traffic, 5 criminal, 2 DUI and 1 drug. Seventy-one traffic stops and out of that produced 16 warnings and 22 citations issued. In the last 13 days, seven motor vehicle accidents and during the bike week event in Ocean City, there were 4 confirmed fatalities and as many as 6 fatalities, in Worcester County alone, but none inside City limits. Fifty-two foot patrols, 113 business checks and 135 patrol checks with emphasis on speeding on; Lynnhaven Dr, Cedar Dr, Clarke Ave, Linden Ave. As the City Manager said, the City received a K-9 grant and covers the expense of Sgt. Lewis becoming the head of the K-9 Handler program. Sgt. Lewis is also the first female handler in the department. There was also a grant in the amount of \$23,500.00 for recruitment and retention that includes advertising that we are in the process of putting together for WBOC. Thanks goes to Grant Writer, Linda McNeil for over \$25,000.00 in funding for the Police Department. He attended an MML Conference with Department Heads for the State of Maryland that included information on Bills in the House and Senate that focus on being in compliance with the Bills. One was approved back in 2016 and we need to bring that up to compliance. The speed cameras are up and running however there was an issue with a power line but it will be functional by September 23rd. There have been a few interviews dispatch communications candidates, an offer will be made soon. We have 16 applicants for new police officers and are reviewing those and do backgrounds in October. Plans for a scrimmage game with the Pocomoke JV team is still in process. Our recruits in the academy are doing very well. There was information about a possible large party to take place last Thursday night, there were a few arrests but no major issues. A bike event to use Cypress park as a rest stop is occurring at the same time as the Fall Festival downtown will take place. There will also be a K-9 demonstration. An active shooter simulator will be available and we are trying to set that up. Once someone is in that position, your perspective will change. Councilmember Nock complimented him for his quick response to an issue that was raised regarding burning. Councilmember Holland also thanked him for his cooperation with the American Legion and Mr. Giddens.

Comments from Audience

None

Motion to adjourn meeting (Nock, Troast)

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

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