

Regular Meeting Minutes and Closed Session

The meeting of the Pocomoke City Mayor and Council was held in Council Chambers on Tuesday, January 20, 2025. The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm.

Present:

Mayor: Todd Nock

Council Members: R. Scott Holland, S. Tull,
Diane Downing, Brooke Cottman, C. Marshall

Deputy City Manager: Brandy Matthews

Attorney: Andrew Illuminati

City Clerk: Melinda Stafford

Pledge of Allegiance, Prayer by Councilwoman Downing, Call to Order

CLOSED SESSION SUMMARY

Mayor read the post session summary from the previous meeting.

Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the minutes of 01/05/2026 open and closed by Councilwoman Downing and seconded by Councilwoman Cottman. Motion passes. Holland – aye Cottman – aye, Downing – aye, Tull – aye, Marshall – aye.

Approval of Bill List

The bill list was presented for payment. Motion to approve by Councilwoman Downing, seconded by Councilwoman Cottman. Motion passes. Holland – nay, Marshall – aye, Tull – aye, Downing – aye, Cottman – aye

SWEARING IN OF CITY FINANCE DIRECTOR

Dominique Bias was sworn in as City Finance Director. She recited the oath of office.

SWEARING IN OF PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION

Nola Tuller and Harold White were sworn in as Planning and Zoning Commissioners. The oath of office was recited.

SWEARING IN OF ELECTION OFFICIAL

William Haynie, Lendora Bonneville, and Sylvia Fletcher were sworn in as Election Judges for Pocomoke City. The oath of office was recited.

SPECIAL ONE DAY PERMIT FOR POCOMOKE CITY VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY

Motion to approve a special one-day permit requested for Pocomoke City Volunteer Fire Company cash bash to be held on March 28th, 2026. Hours will be 11:30 AM to 6:30 PM was made and seconded. Motion to approve by Councilman Marshall, seconded by Councilwoman Tull. Motion passed unanimously. Holland – aye, Marshall – aye, Tull – aye, Downing – aye, Cottman – aye

RENEWAL OF GMB ON CALL ENGINEERING AND PLANNING AND ZONING SUPPORT SERVICES

Ms. Matthews explained that GMB provides on call engineering services normally for water and wastewater, but due to not having a qualified applicant for planning and zoning, GMB is willing to

provide 20 hours per month of planning and zoning services including writing staff reports and attending meetings with assistance from planning and zoning attorney Erica Witz.

Motion made to approve renewal of GMB for on call engineering and planning and zoning support services by Councilman Holland. Motion was seconded by Councilwoman Cottman. Motion passed unanimously. Holland – aye, Marshall – aye, Tull – aye, Downing – aye, Cottman – aye

DISCUSSION FOR BUSINESS DISCOVERY MUSEUM LOAN FORGIVENESS

Ms. Matthews presented information about forgiving a loan to the Discovery Center. A letter was sent on March 17, 2026 to Stacy W. Smith regarding the loan. The original loan term was six years with first payment due August 1, 2021. During budget talks, discussion was held about forgiving the loan in its entirety to avoid hindering operations of nonprofits in town.

Councilman Marshall expressed strong support for the Discovery Center, noting it brings 15,000-17,000 visitors annually and is important for tourism. He encouraged more fundraising activity at the center.

Another council member noted receiving a call from a Discovery Center employee about exhibits and community programs, reinforcing the decision to forgive the loan.

Motion to approve by Councilman Marshall, seconded by Councilwoman Cottman. Motion passed unanimously. Holland – aye, Marshall – aye, Tull – aye, Downing – aye, Cottman – aye

ORDINANCE NUMBER 2026-0-3 SECOND READING AND PUBLIC HEARING

Second reading, public hearing and voting on Ordinance Number 2026-03 to amend the City Zoning Code to eliminate the keeping of lodgers, roomers or boarders by a resident family in residential zoning districts. The ordinance amends Chapter 230 Article 2 terminology, Article V R1 residential district, Article 6 R2 residential district, and Article 7 R3 multi-family district. The Mayor and City Council received complaints regarding property owners who rent rooms to individuals for profit, disturbing residential neighborhood tranquility. The Planning Commission conducted a public hearing on July 17, 2025 and recommended approving the zoning text change with amendments to add definitions for family and housekeeping units and prohibit keeping of lodgers, roomers or boarders in R1, R2 and R3 districts. Public hearing was opened. No public comments were received.

Motion made to approve Ordinance 2026-0-3 by Councilman Holland. Motion was properly seconded by Councilman Marshall. Motion passed unanimously. Holland – aye, Marshall – aye, Tull – aye, Downing – aye, Cottman – aye

ORDINANCE NUMBER 2026-0-7 SECOND READING AND PUBLIC HEARING

Second reading and public hearing on Ordinance Number 2026-07 authorizing issuance of general obligation installment bond not to exceed \$463,000 for the Water Tank Mixers Project. The bond proceeds will finance construction, repair and rehabilitation of water tank mixers project including installation of tank mixing equipment for water tower number one at 604 Young Street and water tower number two at 1928 Pocomoke Beltway. Ms. Matthews confirmed the tank mixers have already been replaced and there should be no water service interruption. Public hearing was opened. No public comments were received.

Motion made to approve Ordinance Number 2026-0-7 by Councilwoman Downing. Motion was properly seconded by Councilwoman Cottman. Motion passed unanimously. Holland – aye, Marshall – aye, Tull – aye, Downing – aye, Cottman – aye

Comments

a. COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

1. Caryn Abbott - questioned whether recent payments to council members were pay raises or travel stipends, noting an increase from \$30,000 to \$61,740 annually without a public vote. She also asked who appointed the ethics committee and requested transparency
2. Nola Tuller - expressed concern that transparency efforts have become a "witch hunt" that is dividing the city and hurting morale. She supported initial transparency efforts but believes the approach has gone too far and is requesting a different avenue to address concerns.
3. Ryan McCready - provided storm preparation update for upcoming weekend weather. Emergency operations center may open depending on storm track. Residents advised to prepare with water, food, pet supplies, flashlights, warm clothing. Emphasized importance of having house numbers visible and keeping cars off roads during storm.

b. COMMENTS FROM COUNCIL MEMBERS

1. Councilwoman Cottman - thanked residents for attending and emphasized safety during the upcoming storm.
2. Councilwoman Downing –
3. Councilwoman Tull -
4. Councilman Marshall - thanked residents and reported on positive District 5 info session at Market Street Deli. Announced Pocomoke River Duck and Goose Calling Championships to be held at Great Pocomoke Fair on August 2nd
5. Councilman Holland - addressed questions. - Clarified the \$550 per council member was a travel stipend, not pay raise, Travel budget increased from \$3,000 to \$7,000 per council member, did not appoint ethics committee members, expressed concerns about bills list process and transparency, noted some bills are paid without council review, Discussed travel approval process and need for better communication

c. COMMENTS FROM THE MAYOR

1. Mayor reported the city did not receive the \$800,000 DHCD grant. Grant reviewers wanted the funding to be a "finish line" rather than "starting line" after other funding sources were exhausted. Follow-up meeting will be scheduled.
2. Mayor and Councilman Marshall attended opening legislative session and met with Senator Mary Beth Pelosa.
3. Mayor praised Karah Lacey's years of work on Main Street Maryland program designation.
4. Proposed changing community donations to grant process to require organizations to invest money back into the city. Suggested closed session within next month to discuss policy and procedures for bills list, travel, and community donations.

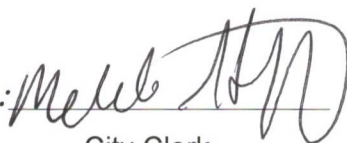
d. COMMENTS FROM CITY MANAGER

1. Departments will fuel up vehicles Friday for storm preparation
2. Requested approval for departments to purchase food and drinks for snow emergency staff
3. Budget work session scheduled for February 4th at 6:30 PM
4. Nature Conservancy meeting options February 25-26 or March 2-4
5. SIP project repaving scheduled for this week, weather permitting
6. Street sidewalk improvement update: GMB marked sidewalks in Winter Quarters and Heights areas
7. Sidewalk repairs from water meter pit replacement to begin with Walnut Street

Mayor asked about lead letter sent to residents. Ms. Matthews explained Part 121 requirements for approximately 1,700 residents who have not confirmed water line conversions. Survey letters were sent to determine which homes still have lead or galvanized pipes. Free water testing available upon request. Mayor reported attending Little Bridges open house to advocate for downtown businesses regarding bridge closure concerns. Possibility bridge will remain open for vehicle traffic during painting project.

Motion to adjourn to close session at 7:43pm by Councilman Holland, seconded by Councilwoman Cottman.

Approved:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Melissa", written over a horizontal line.

City Clerk