

Regular Meeting Minutes

The meeting of the Pocomoke City Mayor and Council was held in Council Chambers on Monday, February 18, 2025. The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm.

Present:

Mayor: Todd Nock
Council Members C.L. Marshall, Diane Downing,
Brooke Cottman
City Manager: John Barkley
Attorney: Andrew Illuminati
City Clerk: Melinda Stafford

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

Approval of Minutes from Meetings of January 14th and February 3, 2025

The Mayor asked if the minutes can provide more detail. There were a couple things talked about in the last meeting and most of what was said was extremely condensed. We need to be more intentional about making sure matters are recorded. In the meeting, the minutes are going to be a gateway for the future. That's how they'll know what can protect you, and often times we have to go back and read things from previous time to know what they were thinking to know what their intentions were. We have to be intentional about that framework as well. Council is there any discussion. Councilman Marshall states he has none. Mayor states he will entertain a motion. Councilwoman Downing makes the motions to approve the minutes of January 14th and February 3rd, 2025. Okay, second by Councilwoman Cottman. The motion is properly made and seconded, all in favor, say aye. All those that opposed you have the same right, so moved.

Review and Approval of Current List of Bills for Payment

Moving forward to item number three review and approval of the current bill list for payment. Council, is there any discussion? Councilman Marshall asks last few bills, uh, there was something a little different I've seen before, and I think it deals with wastewater Bill? Are there some? There are some testing MDE testing. Is that a standard of there? Plant testing is once per year for the next two more years. We've had it for three, and this is the last year of it. Thank you. Is there any more discussion? Motion to approve by Councilman Marshall, seconded by Councilwoman Cottman. All those in favor say aye, all those that oppose you have the same, right. Thank you, pay the bills.

Invoices for Approval – Public Works, Horse Farm.

Moving forward to item number four. Invoice for approval. Public Works Director Mr. East. Okay, so the prices went up from last year. We didn't count on that. Went from 25 to 29k on two Wells, and then they got something else. We would like to do that on the Maryland well. Council. My thing is, this is something that has to be done. We understand that we're living in a world where prices are skyrocketing and everything. So, what's your recommendation? Mr. East said that's pretty much the only person around here that does it. We've called two other places, one said no, we don't do commercial, another one hasn't called us back. I'm very comfortable with the contractor who responded. We do all four wells. These are the two that are down. We did it twice a year. If I may Mr. Mayor you had two of the same invoices in your package, okay, representing each of the wells that were going to be rehabbed. The Williams and the Maryland. In support of Mr. East is there consensus? Yes, yes. Thank you. Consensus to pay is yes. For the horse stables, Mr. Ennis got us a quote for 6132 dollars to get some windows and doors and stuff repaired there. We only had that one quote because nobody else wanted to do it. And as far as the budget. We haven't received a check

yet, so it's going to be upside down. Yes, okay. That's just for the windows and the other guys doing the installation correct? I understand, I see where we need to deposit before ordering. Yeah, he needs the money for the material, and then the labor would be the last part okay. While I'm here, we have a mixer. We're getting it rebuilt. That was not in the budget also. A new one is about eleven thousand and the rebuild. It was half. The finance director is prepared to do a transfer to cover that expense because it is very necessary. Hills will repair it. It's the middle one that went up and is not mixing up good enough. Just something we could wait on until the next meeting in March, but it pretty much needs to be done now, because it's like a four or five week wait. March 3rd, it should be fine. Thank you.

Councilman Marshall states that he is looking forward to getting that horse barn back up to where it needs to be, based on our tour there. The other day was very educational. I think the City can do a little bit better there.

Termination of Grant - Dockside

Now, we are looking forward to working together on item number five, termination of Grant. Mr. Young. Would you like to come up? Yeah, sure. Good evening. Hello, good to see you all. Western Young, Chief Administrative Officer with Worcester County. So the current property Dockside, was acquired back in 2008 through a CBGD grant. It's been some time, and there were certain conditions that were put in that Grant that with three different restaurant owners. Riverside, Mallards and Dockside. They've been unable to meet those terms. In that time, the County has continuously been having to do Grant paperwork for terms that there's no way we're ever going to be able to meet those. We'd be doing this in perpetuity. So the ultimate request was to the State. How do we proceed on the grant terms that we're never going to be able to achieve? The terms of and one of them. The ultimate ask to the State was to get out of these Grant terms. Ultimately, the goal has been to give you all the freedom to do whatever you want with it without any strings attached. If you wanted to sell it right now, prior to this, we would need to go to the State and they're going to want a cut of that. What this lien does is, it stays for a five-year period, that's still in place like it is today. However, effective with you all signing it, the Mayor signing it, and our Commission President signing. We no longer have to do the grant paperwork, and from this date to five years, once that time period is up, there are no State strings, so if you decide to keep it, that's great. You can decide to sell it after the five-year period. It's all yours. Try to sell it now or within that five-year period. The State's going to want their cut and the county is purely a pass-through, and it's just been from, you know, one of the first complaints I got when I came to the County back in 2020 was, we've been doing this grant paperwork since 2008, and it's ridiculous, so that's sort of the history of this. Again, you know, the County is not saying what to do with the property. It is your property. It's just the State strings that we're looking to sever, and this seems to be the cleanest way of doing it. So, with that, I'm glad to take any questions.

This is a long-standing issue, probably since 2008. It's always been a bone of contention. This conversation comes up every single year when it's time to be renewing. It's gotten a little bit better than what it was in the past, but nonetheless, this will alleviate all of that. I think this is a great thing. We've spoken with the current tenant in the restaurant. We've explained all of this to them, they're not being put out. That's not the intention of the County or the City. So Council, if you give the approval, I will sign. With the strongest approval of this, it does nothing but benefit. Councilman Marshall makes a motion that we sign this to terminate this grant and unencumber the citizens of Pocomoke for repayment, Councilwoman Cottman seconds the motion. The motion has been properly made and seconded all in favor. Use the sound aye. Those that are opposed who have the same right. Motion passes. Mr. Young, I will deliver it to you in a couple days. I appreciate it, Mr. Young.

I'd like to personally thank you and Kim Reynolds, for carrying the load on this for so long. Yeah, Kim's the one that's carrying the water for years now. So, thank you very much.

Resolution No. 2025-R-9: Acceptance of Land Donation

Moving forward to item number six. We're on resolution number 2025-R-9. This is a request by Joan and Susan Stevenson, who are heir and daughters of the late William B Stevenson, who acquired two properties located at the intersection of Front Street and Linden Avenue. As part of their efforts to clean up the legal descriptions, they are asking the City to accept a donation of a 0.98 and a .02 acre remnant partial. This would be adjacent to another property that they donated to the City back in 1992 that borders Bridge Street. There are wetland and floodplain conditions and borders and along Terrapin run, which is a drainage ditch. We believe it might be in the best interest to accept a donation and have more control over that drainage ditch. It can be built upon. It's a logical donation. I think they did a great job of explaining it in their correspondence back on December 6th. Some great illustrations are included in the resolution for Council action. Thank you. Resolution number 2025 R-9, a Resolution of the Mayor of the Council of Pocomoke City, Maryland, to accept the conveyance of property, whereas pursuant to title.

Proclamation for Mr. Norman Ennis

Moving forward to item number seven Proclamation for Norman Ennis.

So, it's so long, it's two pages. So, bear with me. The Mayor read a Proclamation, honoring the life and Legacy of Mr. Norman Morrison Ennis. For this recognition, Norman loves the Pocomoke Fair, but when he got so he wasn't able to drive, you had to go to the fairgrounds at least one time a week to check things out. So, miss Alice Jean, who is the woman who we recognize that behind every good man, there's an even better woman, so we want to recognize you tonight, too. She states, these are my favorite flowers. Thank you.

4th Friday Street Festival Season

That's a tough act to follow. Let me introduce myself to you that you might not know, I am Susan Brennen and I am a proud resident of Pocomoke City, Maryland, and I have lived here all my life, minus a couple of years of college, and I am your new Pocomoke City Events Coordinator, and I'm just thrilled and excited to be working with each one of you. I'm just really excited to bring some great ideas to our families and to our residents of Pocomoke and just really showcase what our town has to offer, and I'm really excited to get the ball rolling in April with a couple of our events. Um, so just thank you so much for giving me this opportunity.

We are approaching our 12th season of Fourth Fridays Street festivals in downtown Pocomoke, and in coordination with the downtown of Pocomoke Association, we would like to request that the City Council to approve the application to sell beer and wine in the event that take place on the Four Fridays April through September, starting this April.

Members of the downtown Pocomoke Association have taken a class at the Worcester County Health Department and our tips certified to serve alcohol. We have always had the support from the Worcester County Board of License Commissioners and will continue to successfully and safely follow the rules and regulations, the consumption of alcohol and non-glass containers will only be allowed within the closed areas of Market Street from Front Street to 2nd Street signs with no beer and wine past this point.

And we also have the assistance and support of the Pocomoke City Police Department. Money raised from beverage sales, allows the Downtown Association to host several free events to our public. It allows us to promote and beautify the downtown area while also giving back to local charities and non-profits. We hope you understand the importance of our request and approve the application. Thank you, April 5th, 2025, May 23rd, 2025, June 27, 2025, July 25th, 2025, August 22nd, 2025, in September 26, 2025. Motion to approve by Councilman Marshall, seconded by Councilwoman Downing. The motion has been probably been executed. All those in favor use the sound aye. Those that oppose you have the same right. Motion passes.

Special One Day Liquor License Permit – Annual Cash Bash

We've received an application for the annual cash bash and 1410 Market Street. It's going to be on March the 22nd, 2025, from 10 a.m. to 8 P.M, I just need your approval with a motion to approve. The motion that's been made and properly seconded and approved.

Presentation – The Nature Conservancy

Good evening, everybody. Um, thanks for the opportunity for having us come here. So, my name is Joe Galarraga. I'm with the Nature Conservancy, Maryland, DC chapter. I have my project team college with me here as well. Liz Vandola, Nicole Carlos from Maryland, Department of Natural Resources. Id we're here today to talk to you about our NOAA funded project, um, and this opportunity for Pocomoke City, so our project team is offering direct technical assistance to help with audit projects and Coastal Solutions at no cost to the city, so we know there's already been some work in this area. Analysis, additional flood modeling and Community engagement, and data collection. Our project can expand the understanding of the proposed projects in Cypress Park and Beyond. As an example, there is hope to explore the longevity of proposed Solutions. Even projections beyond the year 2060, as recommended by the route report. We can see how projects can support resilience and economic Development by protecting assets in the community.

The team can deliver actionable information into support, local planning efforts, and future Grant applications regarding flooding, Economic Development, and more. This could come in the form of maps that demonstrate how various policies and adaptation measures could modify flood risk, the costs and benefits of various plans and Community identified resilience goals to Anchor and planning efforts. Ultimately, the nature Conservancy wants their work to support your goals when it comes to flooding and resilience.

Comments

a. Comments from the City Council Members

1. Councilman Marshall – I also want to echo what Councilwoman Downing said.
2. Councilwoman Downing – I don't really have any comments. Just thank everybody for coming out, and it's good to see everybody.
3. Councilwoman Cottman – I don't have any comments

b. Comments from the Mayor

I think it's wonderful Community. Engagement's a wonderful thing, um, I will add that recently we toured the many of us always toward the city-owned properties. And, um, it was very educational on a lot of like, you know, I'm pleased to say that many of our properties were in better shape than I anticipated, and that made me feel good.

We were able to identify some actionable items, such as the horse barn, with these windows and a few other things around town. Mr. Barkley was key in identifying some things that that we could do better as a time they were beginning to address them.

It has been a long time since I've been in the train station, but what a beautiful place. And what an excellent job. These folks have done with that train station. If you have the opportunity to go see it, you go. I would interior person to people with a train club to make it more accessible to the general public because we had a ball in there.

So, we've got a couple things that we're going to be working on. In the near future, based on some conversations that we had. We did see our attorneys. We did see LGIT we were very excited that we have. I had to really talk to LGIT in a long time.

I was excited because I didn't know who I was. That was a great. That was a great thing, but moreover, I think that we have a lot of work to do in our little town, but we are capable of doing it. Definitely seeing the Armory come down is bittersweet.

I don't think anybody's really. Doing bad clips about it, but I also don't think anybody's crying about it out there. Um, as I said before. The Armory is coming down, as y'all can see most of it is now. Um, but you never take something away without replacing it with something better.

The Armory was a place I can speak about my experiences there. I learned how to sew there. I learned how to write a check there. I learned how to I learned my social security number there. Um, and it was a place where we had a lot of social interaction with other kids outside of the school.

So, we need that same framework. I don't want to say the kids are worse off now than what we were, but it's a lot more out there. Now that it was when I was growing. You know, is it necessarily safe for us to leave our doors unlocked anymore?

No way. No way. So, we're talking about two different eras, but we're also talking about kids needing an outlet so. I look forward to. As I work in a community center, I don't know where it's going to go. We don't know where it's going to go, of course. That's something that we have to talk about.

I did see an email this morning where the state of Maryland, was asking for some documentations and some letters. So, hopefully in the next meeting, we will get an update on that. Council. It has been requested that we go ahead and we meet the first week in March after the meeting or before the meeting or after the meeting to start working on our fees. Historically, fees and fines have taken up most of our time during the budget. I don't want us to keep falling behind. We thought we start in March.

The residents want, and on a final note, which should be celebratory for all of us. About two hours before our council meeting tonight. I don't know if y'all checked your emails, but we officially have the reverter clause for the property in which the Armory now it belongs to us.

No strings attached. It is ours. Finally, this started. Just to give you a timeline. This started in September of 2023. That's when we had our first meeting with the state about getting the reverter clause reversed. We got discouraged along the way. We didn't hear from them. I was calling. I was bugging Andrew to call.

I was about to get John to call, and I know you all were doing the same thing. But when we stick to something and we have a goal. We are unstoppable when we work as a team.

c. Comments from the City Manager

Thank you, Mr. Mayor members of council, just two things I want everybody to be aware of, not have it on their radar, who's interested in participating. Um, in the life of the city here. And that's the comprehensive plan, of course. And the coming redistricting process, these are two very publicly oriented processes that we want to bring everybody in the community into.

Um, we want to do it by committee. As they say, we want as much public. Input into the process, those two processes as we could possibly have, and we'll encourage it both online and at the various

city council or other board and commission meetings along the way. So, we do have a draft of a community profile at section 2.4 of the comprehensive plan that we're going to place online for folks to take a look at. You can take a look at the different elements of it, whatever you may be interested in, or look at it comprehensively. Transportation, economic Development, environment, all the different elements that come into play here. This hasn't been updated since 2014. This is a big deal for this city because it's going to shape our vision.

Salisbury University and their ESRI program to dispatch several of their planners. We've got some maps together, city planner has been very helpful, working with the county to get a lot of the base Maps ready, so we'll be ready to roll when they give us the green light.

And they'll be here at certain city council and the Planning Commission meetings. Along the way, so you'll hear from them as well. So those are two big projects that we just want to make sure stay out there in front of the public so that everybody understands along the way.

With the impending weather, will the Planning Commission meeting still happen if City Hall is forced to close our open. That's a good question. Mr. Mayor, I think Mr. Brandewie is prepared to send out a notice tomorrow.

The gym came down today. It was kind of Bittersweet for a lot of people going on. Yes, sir, it's in progress. Thank you

d. Comments from the Audience

1. Leah Taylor, and I'm here with the great Pocomoke Fair. I am sorry. I am the course committee chairman and I wasn't started to be here by Sarah Chapman to ask permission to serve alcohol at a game show series that we have scheduled for the year.

But I wasn't as prepared as her. I don't know if this needs to go on the agenda. Mayor Nock responds that it is, a form is needed, and it needs to be approved the county as well. So, the first thing you want to do is you want to? I don't even know how they're doing it. Jamie Evans, Dockside Restaurant to Riverside Drive. The reason we're here tonight is the agenda. Says termination of Grants slash Dockside. Our phone's been ringing off the hook. Dockside didn't have anything to do with that Grant, nothing, and then the way this was worded with termination of Grants. People thought that we were now being kicked out of our lease. I'm requesting something from you guys, whether it be a press release or something that comes out in writing, saying that this had nothing to do with Dockside. This was the property owned by Pocomoke. That's currently a restaurant. Mayor Nock responds that people are going to talk. They're going to talk until they're blue in the face. They've been saying for years that you all are going to be kicked out. Yes, sir, and you haven't been kicked out. You know, rumors are one thing. But this is this was put in writing. Councilman Marshall states that he is sorry and does not think it's unreasonable. Mr. Evans states that going along with your Armory, the idea that they've had of taking the stones and using them as invasive flags. I think that's an awesome idea.

Motion to adjourn at 7:25 pm by Councilwoman Downing, seconded by Councilman Marshall.

Approved: 
City Clerk