

Regular Meeting Minutes and Closed Session

The meeting of the Pocomoke City Mayor and Council was held in Council Chambers on Monday, January 5, 2025. The meeting was called to order at 6:31 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

Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the minutes of 12/02/2025 open and closed by Councilman Marshall and seconded by Councilwoman Downing. 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 BEAUTIFICATION COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Summer Cherokee, Katrina Mason, and Sharon Love were sworn in as members of the beautification committee. The oath of office was administered.

During the ceremony, there was discussion about bicycles given away at a recent event. Mayor Nock reported that 94 bicycles were distributed, funded by donations from city residents.

SWEARING IN OF PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION

Motion was made by Councilman Holland to table the swearing in of the planning and zoning commission until the next meeting due to concerns that needed to be discussed in closed session regarding nominations. Motion made by Councilman Holland and seconded by Councilman Marshall to table the swearing in. Motion passed unanimously. Holland – aye, Marshall – aye, Tull – aye, Downing – aye, Cottman – aye

SWEARING IN OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Mayor Nock and Councilman Marshall provided an overview of the Economic Development Commission's responsibilities, including developing policy positions on housing, community and economic development, land use, recreation and parks, historic preservation, and regional competitiveness. The commission will support the economic development director and work to make Pocomoke a better place to work, play and live.

James Russell and John Boston were sworn in as a member of the Economic Development Commission.

SPECIAL EVENT PERMIT

Motion to approve a special event permit for the fire company to hold an event on March 7, 2026 from 3:00 PM to 10:00 PM with beer license was made and seconded. Motion to approve by Councilman Marshall, seconded by Councilman Holland. Motion passed unanimously. Holland – aye, Marshall –

aye, Tull – aye, Downing – aye, Cottman – aye

There was discussion about the application process and a draft letter that has been going out. Questions were raised about missing information in the letter and the portal system used by the county for submissions. City Manager Brandy Matthews explained the process to the council.

Comments

a. Comments from the City Council Members

1. Councilman Holland – stated he had received many questions since the last meeting and received some answers via email on Saturday night at 11:00 PM, but still had additional questions based on the information provided.
2. Councilwoman Tull - expressed excitement about community members joining boards and commissions, emphasizing that everyone must work together for the city's success.
3. Councilwoman Downing – wished everyone a Happy New Year and expressed appreciation for those serving on city commissions.
4. Councilwoman Cottman –Happy New Year to everybody, everybody. Glad
5. Councilman Marshall – wished everyone a Happy New Year and Merry Christmas. He expressed hope for hiring additional staff to separate the city manager and finance director positions. He inquired about the status of the dockside lease, noting that renovations have started and there is an agreement in principle on lease terms. He encouraged seeking reputable news sources rather than relying on social media for information.

b. Comments from the Mayor

Mayor Nock wished everyone a Happy New Year and addressed concerns about the appointment process for commissions, stating he had submitted names but noticed some names he did not submit on the lists. He requested clarification on the process for these appointments.

The Mayor proposed having a priorities meeting before the February County meeting to discuss the city's requests. He also suggested a public safety meeting with the mayor, council, police chief, county commissioners, sheriff, and state's attorney based on recommendations from Commissioner Abbott.

c. Comments from the City Manager

City Manager Brandy Matthews announced that the next mayor and council meeting would include appointments or reappointments to the board of elections. She noted the filing deadline for the upcoming election is Friday, February 6, 2026, with election day on April 7, 2026.

Ms. Matthews also reported that the CIPP line project has reached substantial completion and Terra Firma is scheduled to repave during the third week of January.

Councilman Holland raised concerns about HR responsibilities and the need for separation between city manager and HR functions. He expressed that employees have reached out to him with concerns about the current arrangement where the city manager handles HR duties. He also requested credit card statements and questioned travel expenses that appeared on recent bill lists. City Manager Brandy Matthews replied she does not process payroll at all that is completely done by the accounts payable payroll specialist. She only oversees and reviews those changes and she only approves the payroll and it's not the payroll I approve the time of all of the department heads so I have no control over finance of the actual payroll itself.

There was extensive conversation about travel expenses, with Councilman Holland requesting documentation of trips and approval processes. City Manager Matthews explained that travel is for the betterment of Pocomoke and residents, and that other employees were invited but unable to attend certain conferences.

Mayor Nock suggested implementing monthly financial snapshots and work sessions to address transparency concerns and review finances regularly.

d. Comments from the Audience

1. Ed Popchuk, 1100 Cedar Street, commented on the importance of personal contact with council members and expressed concerns about the status of the Riverfest committee. He emphasized the need for a planning and zoning director due to proposed development in his area. Mayor Nock confirmed that GMB has been brought in as a direct consultant for planning and zoning until a permanent director is hired. Mr. Popchuk also raised traffic safety concerns at 11th Street and Cedar Street intersections, noting children walking to school due to lack of sidewalks in some areas. He mentioned changes to recycling services, specifically that steel cans are no longer being accepted.
2. Mr. Matthews, husband of City Manager Brandy Matthews, expressed concerns about what he characterized as attacks on his wife in public council meetings. He defended her dedication to the city and stated his obligation to defend her as her husband.
3. Councilman Holland responded that he was simply doing his job asking questions and that all his communications have been transparent and copied to the entire council and mayor.
4. Commissioner Caryn Abbott emphasized the importance of accountability, transparency, and honesty, expressing appreciation for elected officials asking questions.
5. Johnny Boston from Winter Quarters commented on his corporate experience, noting that his company requires approval for all travel and has multiple HR staff. He suggested the council should approve travel before it occurs and agreed on the need for dedicated HR support.
6. Harold White from Jenkins from Orchard Street emphasized the need for processes and procedures, noting that having one person doing three jobs leads to missed details. He encouraged respectful dialogue and focusing on solutions.
7. Dr. Lynn Duffy expressed gratitude for Councilman Holland and Marshall's focus on integrity and accountability. She offered to serve on city boards and referenced Matthew Chapter 18 regarding addressing problems directly.
8. James Russell, newly appointed to the Economic Development Commission, discussed the need for better communication about city events and activities. He mentioned positive feedback from business owners about the mayor's roundtable meetings and raised concerns about public restroom availability downtown and sidewalk safety on Old Virginia Road.

Mayor Nock addressed the sidewalk concerns, explaining that Cedar Hall Road (Old Virginia Road) is a state highway requiring coordination between the State Highway Administration, Board of Education, and the city. Multiple meetings have been held to address proper crosswalks and safety measures.

Motion to adjourn to close session at 7:48 pm by Councilman Holland, seconded by Councilwoman Downing

Approved: Melita H. H.
City Clerk

City Clerk