

Commissioners of Cambridge Minutes, July 11, 2022

The City Commission held its regularly scheduled meeting on Monday, July 11, 2022. Commission President Lajan Cephas opened the meeting at 6:00 p.m. Those present in person or virtually were Commissioners Brian Roche, Commissioner Jameson Harrington, Commissioner Spotty Cephas, Commissioner Chad Malkus, City Assistant Attorney Patrick Thomas, City Police Chief Mark Lewis, Fire Chief Adam Pritchett, and City Manager Tom Carroll. Citizens were able to observe the meeting by going on-line to TownHallStreams.com.

Commission President Lajan Cephas asked for a moment of silence for the youth in our community and the police department. Commissioner Spotty Cephas led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Commission President Cephas moved to amend the agenda to move 2022 Groove City request to the New Business. The motion was seconded by Commissioner S. Cephas and approved 5-0. A motion was made to approve the amended agenda by Commissioner S. Cephas and seconded by Commissioner Malkus. The motion was approved 4-1 with Commission President Cephas voting no. The agenda was approved as amended.

A motion to approve the Consent Agenda was made by Commissioner S. Cephas and seconded by Commissioner Malkus. Approved 5:0

City Attorney, Patrick Thomas, read the title of Ordinance No. 1202 – An Ordinance of the Commissioners of Cambridge, Maryland amending § 9.2 and Table 1: permitted uses by zoning district of the City’s Unified Development Code for the purposes of providing that dry cleaning plants shall be a permitted use in the Industrial zoning District and defining dry cleaning plants; providing that the title of this ordinance shall be deemed a fair summary and generally relating to dry cleaning plants in the City of Cambridge.

There were no ordinances on the agenda for second reading.

City Manager Tom Carroll shared that City staff had reached terms with True Ballot, the company the Commissioners approved to assist with the upcoming special election. Once the Commissioners call for a special election, the community has 15 days for interested parties to submit the necessary paperwork to run for mayor. Assuming the Council for a special election, the deadline to file to run for mayor will be Wednesday, July 27th. The election will be at Chesapeake College on Tuesday, August 23, 2022. Council President Cephas moved to call for a special election with the deadline being July 27, 2022, for any qualified candidates with the election date being August 23, 2022. The motion was seconded by Commissioner S. Cephas, and the motion was approved 5-0.

Council President Cephas asked the city manager to discuss the \$1.7 million for non-Bonded Municipal Debt. Mr. Carroll explained this was to procure financing for a replacement rescue fire truck and the pricing had been secured through solicitations by Finance Director Deborah Cooper. Discussion ensued about the fire fleet, the budget, the investments that have recently

been made on fire equipment, and the financing. A motion was made by Commissioner S. Cephas to table discussion until the next meeting so the City Finance Director and City Manager can explore if better financing options can be found for the new fire truck. This motion was seconded by Commission Malkus and approved 5-0.

Council President Cephas asked the city manager and police chief to discuss the agenda item asking the Commissioners to approve a contract for community-oriented policing with Melvin Russell. Chief Lewis explained that the community-oriented policing is like the long-ago police officer on foot or bike, who would communicate daily with those he sees in the community and interact with the public daily. Mr. Melvin Russell is retired from the city of Baltimore and will help us see our community with a new set of eyes and advise us on some ideas to the policing of the city. Commissioner S. Cephas made and Commissioner Harrington seconded a motion to approve the contract with Mr. Russell. The contract was approved 5-0.

Council President Cephas next turned to the 2022 Groove City CultureFest funding request for \$5,000. She noted this is the fourth year for the Groove City CultureFest, and Ms. Veronica Taylor (founder and President) is asking for \$5,000 in sponsorship from the city. Ms. Taylor explained they will be having more bands than last year, and the extra support will be needed. It was noted that Groove City has previously applied for ARPA non-profit community assistance and discussion ensued around this separate support for this event. Council President Cephas moved to defer this item till the next meeting to give the Finance Director time to find where the funds \$5,000 will be coming from in the 2023 Budget. The motion to defer was seconded by Commissioner Malkus and approved 5-0.

Council President Cephas next invited public comment. Ms. Jeanette Churchill of Teal Lane responded to the cost of the repairs to the fire trucks seem to be going higher every time this Council defers to a later date. She is also from the Baltimore area and is familiar with Mr. Melvin Russel and thinks he will give Cambridge a lot of advice and make a difference. Lastly, she asked about the role and responsibilities of the mayor's position and if they will apply to the new elected Mayor.

Ms. Atkiss of High Street, Cambridge encouraged this Council to please vote on the fire truck finance issues before the price increases again.

Council President Cephas invited reports from city department heads. Ms. Ina Holden of the Department of Public Works reminded residents to please stop blowing their grass clippings into the streets because it eventually clogs the storm drains. She also noted a garbage truck that had been in the repair shop for the last month is now back in service to pick up the commercial trash and bulk items.

Chief Lewis (CPD) informed all of the community meeting at Mace's Lane Middle School on Thursday, July 14, 2022, at 6:30 pm

City Manger Carroll discussed a request from the Residences at River Marsh Homeowners Association for assistance fixing the bridges on the property.

Commissioner Roche noted that the role and responsibilities of the mayor were not changed and will stay the same after the election. He added that the 2023 Budget has \$100,000 for the various traffic measures.

Commissioner S. Cephas offered prayers for the Johnson family after the July 4th homicide.

Commissioner Malkus thanked the community for sharing diverse opinions and added social media may not always be the best place to do that. He added all the commissioners have an email that they can be reach at for comments and complaints.

A motion was made by Commissioner S. Cephas to close the general meeting and to enter a closed session pursuant of MD. Code Ann. § 3-305(b)(1) and (7) to discuss personnel matters affecting specific individuals. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Malkus. The motion was approved 5-0.

At 8:07 p.m., Commissioner Harrington moved to return to open session. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Roche and approved 5-0. A motion was then made by Council President Cephas to have the City Manager review the disbursement the COVID pandemic pay and report his conclusions to this Council at a later date. The motion was seconded by Commissioner S. Cephas. A roll call vote was taken, and Commissioner Roche voted nay, Commission President Cephas voted yea, Commissioner Harrington voted nay, Commissioner S. Cephas voted yea, and Commissioner Malkus voted nay. The motion did not pass by a 2-3 vote.

A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner S. Cephas and seconded by Commissioner Roche. The motion was adopted 5-0. With no further business, President Cephas adjourned the meeting at 8:20 p.m.

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and accurate account of the Council meeting Monday, July 11, 2022, insofar as I personally am aware.

Lajan Cephas

Commission President