

**COMMISSIONERS OF RIDGELY
OCTOBER 6, 2025
TOWN MEETING**



Summary of September 18, 2025, closed session:

DATE: September 18, 2025, TIME: 3:01 PM PLACE: Town Hall PURPOSE: To consult with counsel to obtain legal advice.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: Closed under General Provision Article

- 1) To consult with counsel to obtain legal advice; § 3-305(b)(7).
- 2) To consult with staff, consultants, or other individuals about pending or potential litigation; § 3-305(b)(8).

ATTENDING: President Brad Sears, Commissioner John Hurley, Commissioner Chad Leister, Director of Operations David Crist, Clerk-Treasurer Stephanie Berkey, Assistant Clerk-Treasurer Melissa Leonard, Town Attorney Patrick Thomas, LGIT Attorney Kevin Karpinski, Former Commissioners Anthony Casey and Leonard Buckle.

VOTE TO MEET IN CLOSED SESSION: In favor: President Sears, Commissioner Hurley, Commissioner Sears; Opposed: None.

TOPICS DISCUSSED: Pending litigation regarding the former Ridgely Police Department

ACTION TAKEN: No action was taken at this time.

The Commissioners of Ridgely met on the above date at 6:00 pm for the October 2025 town meeting. The following were in attendance: President Brad Sears, Commissioner John Hurley, Commissioner Chad Leister, Director of Operations David Crist, Clerk-Treasurer Stephanie Berkey, Assistant Clerk-Treasurer Melissa Leonard, CCSO Sgt. Rick Baker, Financial Assistant Gerald Sutton, Ken George, Krista Carter-Smith, Rick & Cathy Schwab, Domingo Llanes, Andrew Myer, Anna Mansfield, Alicia Moxley, Thomas Moxley, Christine Eckrich, Jeff Eckrich, Scott Barron, Gordon Geesey, Yolanda Mayers, Annie Rossi-Gilil, Clint Gill, Norma Pinkney, Sue Cherry.

Pastor Ken George of the Ridgely Church of the Brethren led the invocation.

President Sears opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Former Ridgely Police Sargent Gordon Geesey presented the town with a shadow box to honor retired Ridgely Police K-9 Keita. Sadly, this past August, Keita suffered a stroke and the painful decision to lay Keita to rest was made. Keita served the town for 8 years and successfully had over 100 drug seizures and successful tracks. She will be greatly missed. Her shadow box will be displayed in the lobby of the town hall. The Commissioners thanked former Sgt. Geesey and his wife, Yolanda, for the shadow box.

President Sears read a statement to address some concerns that were brought up on social media. Per the fire Marshall, the state does not issue occupancy certificates for

rooms that accommodate under 50 people. He will continue to investigate the matter and report back. He apologized for the late delivery of the meeting agenda. It was due to concerns that Commissioner Hurley and President Sears raised (separately) at the last minute. The concerns required input from the town attorney. He apologized for his tone in prior meetings. Ice sculptures at the Winter Festival were paid for with a grant from Maryland Arts Council. All other activities were paid for with sponsorships, fundraisers and donations. Town staff were paid to produce the event with the approval of the commissioners.

Commissioner Hurley made a motion to approve September 8, 2025, town meeting minutes, September 17, 2025, Commissioners Workshop minutes, September 18, 2025, vote to go into closed session, September 18, 2025, closed session minutes. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Leister, all in favor, approved.

CLERK-TREASURER

Commissioner Huley made a motion to approve paying the bills, 2nd Commissioner Leister, all in favor, approved. Total general fund reconciled \$207,989.05, sewer funds reconciled \$8,004.95, water funds reconciled \$18,864.09, ARPA funds reconciled \$30,240.20. The Commission chose to have the upcoming Commissioners' Workshop meeting on October 16, 2025, from 6-8 pm. Justin Smith from Midshore Technology Solutions discussed the plan to decommission the current server. He would like to see the town migrate to the cloud-based server. It will be more cost-effective over time. A discussion followed. After all questions were answered, Commissioner Hurley made a motion to approve the purchase of the new server system, seconded by Commissioner Leister, all in favor, approved.

DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS

David Crist said that street paving for Lister Lane, Robins Court, and East Second Street is slated for late autumn or early spring, depending on the weather. We received the official funding notification from MDE and EPA for the sewer line replacement grant. It is a reimbursable grant and 100% funded. This is a six-phase project, and the funding will cover phase one. We are marked for funding from 2025 through 2029, so it seems that we will be funded for all phases, unless the funding dries up. Leaf collection is beginning. David asked all leaves be raked out to the curb for the leaf vac to pick up. Public Works have been going through all the snow removal equipment in preparation for the winter. David had previously spoken with Commissioner Leister about lighting the town with green lights for Veteran's Day. The decision was made to display the lights from November 7 – 11. David pointed out that with the acceptance of the sewer line grant, past MDE grants required a water/sewer rate study.

CAROLINE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Sgt. Rick Baker presented the attached report to the Commissioners. He noted that the Sheriff's Office will be doing more press releases in the future.

ZONING ADMINISTRATOR

Melissa Leonard said that two homes have been completed on Sunrise Avenue and a third one has broken ground. Infrastructure for Maryland Avenue at the old Rob Roy is being installed.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANT

Gerald Sutton said that the FY25 audit field work has been completed. We hope to have the final report in early 2026.

HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Thomas McKay of MDOT has 3 signs and 2 poles for the Railroad Park. They can be cleaned up and installed in the park. They must stay on MDOT property. Commissioner Hurley made the motion to accept the offer, 2nd Commissioner Leister, all in favor, approved. The new Christmas ornaments will be available soon. They will have the 1950's Ridgely Skyline. A seal from the Bank of Ridgely was donated to the society from Linda Walls.

OLD BUSINESS

Melissa Leonard said that the park is scheduled to be completed in November. The grand opening will be held on November 22nd from 12-3pm.

President Sears gave an update on the charter amendment and the town code changes. Revisions from the attorney have been received for the charter changes and chapter 64 to allow for chickens in town, of the town code. Both still need more work before we are ready to introduce them. Changes will need to be made to the zoning ordinance and will require a public hearing. We will discuss the Charter amendment proposed changes, the changes to Chapter 64 (ANIMALS) and the chapter for economic development. President Sears discussed his plan to have a committee to help promote the town and bring business into Ridgely. He hopes all legislation will be ready to introduce at the November town meeting and voted on in the December meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

President Sears read a proclamation for United for Caroline, proclaiming October as Domestic Abuse Awareness Month.

President Sears presented Lawrence E. Wheeler, III a proclamation for the Brigadier General Billy Mitchell Award and congratulated him for his achievement.

Domingo Llanes of Caroline North Little League thanked David and the town for the help that was provided to maintain the grass at the park. They had a great year and are still playing fall ball. They have had lots of positive feedback and numbers are growing. They want lights for the Junior League field. They are looking into grants and donations, so there will be no cost to the town. He requested that if they receive a grant to have the town administer the grant. A discussion followed. A public hearing may need to be held to allow for changes to the zoning. Domingo requested 2 light towers for use at movie night later this

month. He will come back at the March 2026 meeting for renewal of the lease and grass maintenance.

Stephanie and Melissa reviewed the information about Town Hall Streams. The company has had a lot of success providing streaming services to municipalities. We have had multiple issues with zoom and teams. Justin Smith from Midshore Technology Solutions said that he has seen that other municipalities have had great success with them. Commissioner Leister made a motion to approve Town Hall Streams, 2nd Commissioner Hurley, all in favor. We will try to have the new system working for the November meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Scott Barron told President Sears to address people by names, regarding the speech he gave at the beginning of the meeting. He was upset with Commissioner Hurley for his attitude towards the live streams. He asserted his First Amendment rights.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:29 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Stephanie L. Berkey, CMC
Clerk-Treasurer