

COMMISSIONERS OF RIDGELY

APRIL 1, 2024

TOWN MEETING



Summary of the March 11, 2024, closed session:

DATE: March 11, 2024

TIME: 10:00 AM

PLACE: Caroline County Courthouse 109 Market Street, Room 208, Denton, MD 21629

PURPOSE: To discuss personnel matters and possible or potential litigation.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: Md. Code Ann., General Provision Article § 3-305(b)(1) "To discuss the appointment, employment, assignment, promotion, discipline, demotion, compensation, removal, resignation or performance evaluation of an appointee, employee, or official over whom this public body has jurisdiction; or any other personnel matter that affects one or more specific individuals." AND (8) To consult with staff, consultants, or other individuals about pending or potential litigation."

VOTE TO MEET IN CLOSED SESSION: In favor: President Hurley, Commissioner Buckle; Opposed: None. Commissioner Casey was absent.

TOPICS DISCUSSED: Potential lawsuit and related allegations against certain town employees.

ATTENDING: President John Hurley, Commissioner Leonard John Buckle, Director of Operations David Crist, Town Attorney Patrick Thomas, Assistant Clerk-Treasurer Melissa Leonard, Clerk-Treasurer Stephanie Berkey, State's Attorney Sloan Franklin, Sheriff Donald Baker, Captain RJ Helmer.

ACTION TAKEN: No action was taken at this time.

Summary of the March 11, 2024, closed session:

DATE: March 11, 2024

TIME: 6:00 PM

PLACE: Town Hall

PURPOSE: To discuss personnel matters and possible or potential litigation.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: Md. Code Ann., General Provision Article § 3-305(b)(1) "To discuss the appointment, employment, assignment, promotion, discipline, demotion, compensation, removal, resignation or performance evaluation of an appointee, employee, or official over whom this public body has jurisdiction; or any other personnel matter that affects one or more specific individuals." AND (8) To consult with staff, consultants, or other individuals about pending or potential litigation."

VOTE TO MEET IN CLOSED SESSION: In favor: President Hurley, Commissioner Buckle; Opposed: None. Commissioner Casey was absent.

TOPICS DISCUSSED: Meeting requested by former employee and potential lawsuit.

ATTENDING: President John Hurley, Commissioner Leonard John Buckle, Director of Operations David Crist, Town Attorney Patrick Thomas, Assistant Clerk-Treasurer Melissa Leonard, Clerk-Treasurer Stephanie Berkey, State's Attorney Sloan Franklin, James Joles.

ACTION TAKEN: No action was taken at this time.

Summary of the March 15, 2024, closed session:

DATE: March 15, 2024

TIME: 5:00 PM

PLACE: Town Hall

PURPOSE: To discuss personnel matters and possible or potential litigation.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: Md. Code Ann., General Provision Article § 3-305(b)(1) "To discuss the appointment, employment, assignment, promotion, discipline, demotion, compensation, removal, resignation or performance evaluation of an appointee, employee, or official over whom this public body

has jurisdiction; or any other personnel matter that affects one or more specific individuals.” AND (8) To consult with staff, consultants, or other individuals about pending or potential litigation.”

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

TOPICS DISCUSSED: Office of State Prosecutor investigation and related status of certain Town employees; legal advice from Town Attorneys regarding temporary assumption of Town law enforcement services by the County Sheriff.

ATTENDING: President John Hurley, Commissioner Leonard John Buckle, Commissioner Anthony Casey, Director of Operations David Crist, Town Attorney Rebecca Guay, Clerk-Treasurer Stephanie Berkey.

ACTION TAKEN: Revisions will be made to the request for temporary assumption of responsibilities over and management of all law enforcement duties to the Caroline County Sheriff’s Office, by the town attorney.

The Commissioners of Ridgely met on the above date at 6:00 pm for the April 2024 town meeting. The following were in attendance: President John Hurley, Commissioner Leonard John Buckle, Director of Operations David Crist, Clerk-Treasurer Stephanie Berkey, Assistant Clerk-Treasurer Melissa Leonard, Town Attorney Patrick Thomas, Sheriff Donald Baker, Financial Assistant Gerald Sutton, Brenda Walls, Stephanie L. Larimore, Joe Anderson, Sue Cherry, Richard O Smith, Barbie Utz, Donna Eveland, Carol Balderson, Domingo Llanes, Ryan Walls, Cody Gross, Chad Leister, Tina Smith, Kara Pollak, Heather Martino, Harry Cooke, Rodney Dobson, Kelly Buckle, Cathy & Rick Schwab, Connie Connoley, Lakia Pierce, Patrice Flamer, Thomas Moxly, Alicia Moxly, James Ralph, Kate Mann, A Concerned Citizen, Norma Pinkney, Scott Barron, Clinton Gill, An Rossi-Gill, VIA ZOOM: Brandon Samuel, Jeff Eckrich, Steven Lone, Renee Frankowski, Tom’s iPad, Valerie Douglas (2 views) Keith Johnson, Dalton DeCrispino, Marian’s iPhone, Megan Clarke, Lauren Miller, Bobby Utz, Jessica Duerstine, Angel Perez, Jenifer Nesselroad.

President Hurley opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Commissioner Buckle made a motion to approve the following minutes:

- March 4, 2024, Town Meeting
- March 11, 2024, 10:00 am vote to go into closed session
- March 11, 2024, 10:00 am closed session
- March 11, 2024, 6:00 pm vote to go into closed session
- March 11, 2024, 6:00 pm closed session
- March 15, 2024, vote to go into closed session
- March 15, 2024, closed session
- March 20, 2024, special meeting

President Hurley seconded the motion; the minutes were approved.

STAFF REPORTS

CLERK-TREASURER

Commissioner Buckle made a motion to approve paying the bills, 2nd President Hurley, approved.

Total general funds reconciled \$270,151.82, total sewer funds reconciled \$47,361.74, total water funds reconciled \$40,999.10, total ARPA funds reconciled \$43,203.96.

DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS

David Crist reviewed the Caroline North Little League Lease. It is the same as last year’s lease, minus the grass cutting from the town. David paid the \$1 for the lease on behalf of Caroline North Little League. Tree work in town has started again. There are some big trees on Maple Avenue that will be coming down (at the homeowner’s request) due to damage they have caused the driveway. We have been working with Midshore Technologies to upgrade the camera system. Ditch maintenance has been held up due to the excessive rain the past few weeks.

CAROLINE COUNTY SHERIFF’S OFFICE

Sheriff Donald Baker discussed the Memo of Understanding that started April 1, 2024, for 35 extra hours of coverage a week.

ZONING ADMINISTRATOR

Nothing to report.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANT

Gerald Sutton reviewed the budget revision ordinance. The budget revision is something that is unique to Ridgely that we do to keep a close eye on finances. It is not required to be done, but is an excellent tool, especially during a tight budget year.

HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Cathy Schwab said that the train station will be open on the first Saturday of the month beginning May 7, 2024. She discussed the 250th Anniversary Celebration of Caroline County and encouraged everyone to check them out on their website and Facebook.

OLD BUSINESS

Commissioner Buckle made a motion to approve Ordinance No. 2024-396 an ordinance to reappropriate funds and adjust revenue estimates in accordance with events that necessitate changes in the budget adopted for fiscal year beginning July 1, 2023, and ending June 30, 2024, seconded by President Hurley, approved.

NEW BUSINESS

Joe Anderson of the Ridgely Lions Club discussed the upcoming Strawberry Festival and concerns for parking. David Crist said that hopefully it will dry out in the next month to make parking in the grass an option.

Lakia Pierce of Harriette's Consulting discussed her partnership with Patrice Flamer of Spirit and Mind and the Community & Safety Works grant that they want to apply for on behalf of the town. They are requesting a letter of support from the town to put a space in Martin Sutton Park for an area for 2–5-year-olds. The grant is due on April 25, 2024. It is for up to \$100,000 through DHDC and if approved would automatically roll in to the next round. A discussion followed that included several ideas for the park and where the new attractions could go. David asked if engineering studies would need to be done and was told they would not need to be done. The commissioners agreed to provide the letter of support. Several residents at the meeting asked questions and offered suggestions. Lakia said that community input will be vital to the grant.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Joe Anderson is a local business owner, member of the Lions Club and Caroline Tennis Association. He wanted to vouch for the characters of the Ridgely Police that are on administrative leave and reminded everyone that they have not been convicted of anything.

Rodney Dobson of the Hannah Henry Circle invited the commissioners to attend Hannah Henry Day events, including a yard sale, church service, and group picture.

Brenda Walls, owner of the Ridgely Pharmacy asked how long the 35 hours of police coverage will last. Sheriff Baker said that police coverage will be taken care of by either the Sheriff or the state police when calls are made. They will be doing routine patrols throughout the town. The 35 hours is in addition to this, and the deputies will be dedicated to Ridgely during this time.

“Concerned citizen” wanted to know if the town was being protected, why the admin leave was issued and a copy of the MOU. He was told to fill out an MPIA request form after the meeting.

James Romph said that the suspension of the RPD was unprecedented and international news. He expressed concern regarding the notices. Sheriff Baker said that the investigation is being conducted by the Office of the State Prosecutor and that we do not know the totality of the investigation. He explained that we are not allowed to speculate. Mr. Romph stated that the officers deserve due process.

Carol Balderson, former town clerk, said that she appreciates the Sheriff and the visibility of them in town. She asked if we were paying for the extra coverage? President Hurley responded that we are.

David Crist, speaking as a town resident, said that the officers are innocent until proven guilty. Please keep negativity limited and don't believe everything that you read on Facebook.

Stephanie Larrimore asked where is Commissioner Casey? President Hurley said that he is on a family vacation. She asked about the other meetings that have been held.

Sue Cherry hopes that there will be transparency when all the information comes out.

Chad Leister discussed the upcoming town election and that he was running for Commissioner. He asked about the election process and was given an overview of the process.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:53 pm.

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