

COMMISSIONERS OF RIDGELY

APRIL 7, 2025

TOWN MEETING



Summary of April 10, 2025, closed session:

DATE: April 10, 2025, TIME: 10:00 am PLACE: Town Hall PURPOSE: To discuss personnel matters.

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."

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

TOPICS DISCUSSED: Covid-19 overtime pay, Director of Operations use of town vehicle, salary and severance inclusion in the FY26 budget.

ACTION TAKEN: All salary and severance items will be included in the FY26 budget.

The Commissioners of Ridgely met on the above date at 6:00 pm for the April 2025 town meeting. The following were in attendance: President Leonard Buckle, Commissioner John Hurley, Commissioner Brad Sears, Director of Operations David Crist, Clerk-Treasurer Stephanie Berkey, Zoning Administrator Melissa Leonard, CCSO Sgt. Keith Collison, Financial Assistant Gerald Sutton, Kelly Buckle, Connie Connolly, Lakia Pierce, Patrice Flamer, Alicia Moxley, Rev. Kiesha Jones, Rick & Cathy Schwab, Anna Mansfield, Christine Eckrich, Gary Nesselroad, Brenda Walls, Heather Amador, Chad Leister, Owen Bailey, Kathe Ma, Norma Pinkney. Online attendees: Valerie Douglas, Robin Martin, Matthew Ryan, Jen (unverified), Steve Lone, JoElyn Lerp, Heidi K (unverified), Megan Clarke, Tom Morris.

Rev. Keisha Jones, Sr. Pastor of New Beginnings United Methodist Church did the invocation.

President Buckle opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Commissioner Hurley made a motion to approve the minutes from the March 3, 2025, town meeting and the March 19, 2025, workshop, 2nd Commissioner Sears, all in favor, approved.

STAFF REPORTS

CLERK-TREASURER

Commissioner Hurley made a motion to approve paying the bills, 2nd Commissioner Sears, all in favor, approved. Total general funds reconciled \$75,902.41, total sewer funds reconciled \$2,500.89, total water funds reconciled \$23,097.32.

DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS

David Crist said that the North Caroline Little League Lease for the Cowbarn Fields is ready to be signed. Now that public works is fully staffed, the town will mow the fields to help save them money. President Buckle signed the lease. The trash contract with Republic Services will come to an end on June 30th. We have had several issues with their service since our regular driver retired. We reached out to several companies believe that the proposal from Bigg Tyme Trash will be the best for the town. They would provide a can for each household. We would not have to charge anymore for trash collection; the rate could stay the same. They do not do collections for businesses, so business owners could hire their own collectors. The proposed contract is for a 3-year term at the same rate. Republic Services has increased their rates and renews annually. A discussion followed and the Commissioners will vote on the provider at the May meeting.

There was a brief discussion about putting lights up at the Cowbarn fields. Currently, zoning does not allow lights.

The skatepark is locked because of the broken back fence. It is a safety issue. LGIT is going to look at it and see how we can proceed with repairs.

CAROLINE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Sgt. Collison went over the attached report with the Commissioners. He introduced our new deputy, DFC Hafer, to the town.

ZONING ADMINISTRATOR

Melissa Leonard said that code enforcement is starting back up this month. A demolition permit has been issued at 6 Maryland Avenue. The owner will be putting apartments on the property. The infrastructure is going in quickly for the Sunrise Avenue subdivision. We have plans for 3 out of the 7 houses that are being built.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANT

Gerald Sutton said that we received a favorable report from the auditors for the FY24 financial audit. They found no problems or misrepresentations. Some issues that we must consider for the future include raising our rates for water/sewer and taxes. Over the years, we have kept our rates down. FY24 was challenging and with inflation we used some of the positive fund balance. The town now has less than a million dollars in debt, which is good.

HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Cathy Schwab said that she was invited to the visitor's center in Denton for the American Trails Celebration. The trail goes from Cape Henlopen, Delaware to California. Ridgely is on the map for the trail. Denton is the first town on the trail. She thanked everyone that helped and was involved in the Little League parade. Crafted Roots just opened on Central Avenue. They have consignments of local artisans and food products. April 8th is Hannah Henry Day. The Hannah Henry circle will be at Ridgely Elementary School in matching shirts to meet with the teachers before class to honor the teachers. On May 3rd the train station will be open for tours from 10-1.

OLD BUSINESS

Commissioner Sears discussed the 3 options for law enforcement coverage for FY26. We can continue with the MOU with the Sheriff's Office, we can re-establish the Ridgely Police Department, or we can elect to have no paid law enforcement coverage in town. He wants to make sure we are getting the service covered in the MOU. He would like to see the MOU updated and take the time to get it right so that it has more clarity. Commissioner Sears requested the vote be postponed until the May meeting. That would give time to work with the County Finance Department and allow for the newly elected Commissioners to participate in the vote. For budget preparation purposes only, he motioned to use the numbers with the MOU so that we can prepare the FY26 budget introduction. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Hurley, all in favor.

NEW BUSINESS

Spirit and Mind presented their vision for the Martin Sutton Park playground equipment for 2-5-year-olds. She presented both the budgeted and over budget version of the equipment that includes specialty surfacing for \$14,000 over budget. They are looking into additional funding to help with the overage. They asked if the town would be able to donate towards the project by June. The price is inclusive of material, installation and equipment. They hope construction will begin in June or July with a projected finish of 8-10 weeks. There is a warranty with the equipment and a maintenance kit is also provided. Anna Mansfield asked if they would put it on social media to try to raise money. Brenda Walls said that she would donate to the cost.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Heather Amador thanked the Commissioners for delaying the vote. She wants to be an election judge. She discussed how the town of St. Michael's fundraises for their events by making wooden hearts to put up in town. People can purchase a heart to be placed on telephone poles for Valentine's Day. Perhaps we could do something similar as a fundraiser in Ridgely.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:21 pm.

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