

# TOWN OF SNOW HILL, MARYLAND

*Life on the River*

TOWN MEETING

JANUARY 13, 2014

A Regular Meeting of the Mayor and Town Council of Snow Hill, Maryland was held at the Train Station at 200 Belt Street on Tuesday, January 13, 2014 with Mayor John C. Dorman presiding and was called to order at 7:00pm.

## **PUBLIC OFFICIALS PRESENT**

Mayor John C. Dorman; Councilwoman Alison Cook; Councilwoman Jenny Hall; and Councilman Michael Pruitt.

## **STAFF IN ATTENDANCE**

Asst. to the Town Manager Trish Greene; Karen Houtman, Town Planner; Public Works Director Bob Donnelly; Joe Pishtey, Economic Development Coordinator; Nancy Hickman, Assistant Director of the Julia A. Purnell Museum; and Kirk Daugherty, Chief of Police.

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## **OPENING COMMENTS**

Mayor Dorman welcomed everyone to the meeting. He addressed a recent editorial in The Daily Times, where resident Susanne Knudsen had stated that Snow Hill could not afford an aerial truck to reach third floors. Mayor Dorman sent a response via e-mail that stated the Snow Hill Fire Department does have a new ladder truck in service that reaches third floors. The truck was on site to be viewed.

Mayor Dorman called attention to the cover page of the packets, stating the first paragraph was newly added. This informs the audience of the new format for meetings, where all comments will be heard in Open Discussion only and those wishing to discuss a topic must submit a request to the Town Manager for approval. Trish Greene read the new policy into record.

Mayor Dorman advised that the Lord's Prayer was being removed from the opening of meetings and there will be rotating ministers to provide an invocation to open each meeting, similar to the County Commissioners meetings.

## **SALUTE TO THE FLAG / INVOCATION**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited, followed by the invocation by Bishop Elbert Davis of Free Indeed Ministries.

## **MEETING MINUTES**

A motion was given to adopt the December 2014 Town Meeting minutes by Councilman Pruitt and was seconded by Councilwoman Cook. A roll call vote was taken and the motion was carried.

## **FINANCIAL REPORT**

Councilman Pruitt questioned the over 90 days for septic leachate. Trish Greene suggested it may be that some are paying quarterly but will check and report back.

Councilwoman Cook questioned the over 90 days for water and sewer billing. Trish Greene explained that most of this applies to vacant and/or foreclosed properties. Trish will check with the Account Clerk to confirm and report back.

A motion was given to approve the December 2014 Financial Report by Councilwoman Cook and seconded by Councilwoman Hall. A roll call vote was taken and the motion was carried.

## **TOWN MANAGER REPORT**

Kelly was absent from the meeting. Trish updated the Mayor and Council on staff's attempt to contact DHCD to obtain answers regarding not adopting the Strategic Plan. Unfortunately, no response had been received.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REPORT**

Joe advised that the 2015 Calendar of Events brochure was received today for distribution. The Outdoor Brochure has first draft completed and is being reviewed.

A Main Street Maryland representative will be in town on January 21st to meet with staff and elected officials, as well as business owners, and will also tour the town.

Joe has been working with Bill Badger to look for tenants for town-owned businesses. The former Opera House and old Firehouse have good potential. They will be meeting with the owner of Burley Oak Brewery from Berlin to discuss interest in Snow Hill.

Joe has been working on scheduling for the next Rock the River Music Festival which will be held in October 2015.

Joe has met with potential business owners who are looking at downtown. Some are: gourmet coffee house; deli/sub shop; brick over pizza; ice cream shop; furniture maker; and custom surfboard designer.

Two 30-second commercials are scheduled to air on CTG 96.5 radio through the winter months, one for branding Snow Hill and the other addressing business and investment opportunities.

A Business Merchants meeting is scheduled for tomorrow evening at 5pm at the old Firehouse. Michael Day will be the speaker. Councilman Pruitt asked if Council could attend. Joe advised that he hope all the Council attends, as Mayor Dorman will be attending.

## **PUBLIC WORKS REPORT**

Bob reported residents are seeing yellow marking on the streets and some yard areas. These are from the gas company making areas for leaks.

## **WWTP REPORT**

Bob reported that they are meeting tomorrow on remaining punch list items.

## **PLANNING & ZONING REPORT**

Karen advised that she included the Planning Commission meeting minutes with her report because work with the consultant for the Zoning Ordinance and Floodplain Ordinance has begun.

The next meeting will be held on January 22, 2015 at 7pm.

## **MUSEUM REPORT**

Nancy reported that the Museum is closed for the season and staff is working on repairs and exhibits.

## **FIRE / EMS REPORT**

John commented that the department is proud of the new ladder truck and encouraged people to come to the station to see the equipment they have.

## **POLICE REPORT**

Chief Daugherty advised that a suspect is in custody on \$10,000 bond for the burglary on Covington Street. He commended Officer Harris for an excellent job of securing witnesses and identifying the perpetrator. Ironically, no other reports have been filed since the suspect has been in custody.

Chief Daugherty advised that there was a report of a sexual assault; however, the victim knows the suspect and requested law enforcement not pursue it.

Councilman Pruitt questioned the number of animal complaints being 14, wondering if this was normal or considered high. Chief will research this and report back, adding that there was an incident with an aggressive dog that charged animal control and SHPD officer, who ultimately had to destroy the animal.

Councilman Pruitt questioned the report that shows 1 sex offense with 8 officers utilized. Chief will check this matter, as well, and report back.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

### **1. Cultural Heritage Committee**

Mayor Dorman presented a letter to Edward Lee, which contained a formal request to have certain questions answered prior to any decision or action being taken by the Mayor and Council.

### **2. Investigation Request**

Mayor Dorman advised that Councilman Pruitt and Councilwoman Cook had performed an investigation at the request of Edward Lee regarding Town Hall staff and misinformation regarding a work session. Councilwoman Cook advised that they had met with Town staff and no one recalls Mr. Lee calling about the work session dated December 2, 2014. They do, however, remember that he called the prior week and was informed that the meeting would be held. It was actually cancelled and another staff member sent Mr. Lee an email advising of this. Councilwoman Cook advised that they could not find where he was deliberately misled or misinformed. A formal written response was given to Mr. Lee.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **1. Resolution No. 2015-01 Strategic Revitalization Plan**

Trish Greene read the Resolution into record. This resolution accepts and adopts the 2025 Strategic Revitalization Plan.

A motion was given to adopt the Resolution by Councilwoman Cook and was seconded by Councilwoman Hall. A roll call vote was taken, showing a vote of 2 in favor and 1 opposed. The motion was carried.

## **OPEN DISCUSSION**

Mayor Dorman advised that anyone wishing to speak would be given 3 minutes, according to Robert Rule.

1. Edward Lee stated that he had 4 issues to discuss and he would not be doing so in 3 minutes. He referred to the new statement the Mayor addressed in the beginning of the meeting, regarding the order of the meetings. Mayor Dorman stated that he decided to use this format because the former way was not working and he wants to follow the format used by the County Commissioners. Mr. Lee asked if Council was consulted and if they all were in favor. Mayor Dorman advised that they were consulted and all were in favor.

Mr. Lee stated that only in the past six months has a broader part of the community been willing to be more involved with the government and now a decision has been made to limit the discussion in the meetings. Mr. Lee stated that over the years the town prided itself in having an open forum and he now sees that with increased citizen participation the elected official are limiting them. He commented that he does not feel this new format is a model for the town and is a tremendous mistake, as it stifles discussions.

Mr. Lee stated that the Mayor continually accused Mr. Lee of "being against him" and added that at a recent work session Mayor Dorman stated that he had supported Mr. Lee. Mr. Lee stated that the Mayor's comments are hurtful and disrespectful, as they are not true.

Mayor Dorman and Councilman Pruitt jointly stated that Mr. Lee had limited time to discuss each of his concerns. Mayor Dorman added that one of the reasons for the change in meeting format was due to Mr. Lee constantly dominating the meetings. Councilman Pruitt concurred.

Councilwoman Cook commented that no one is being stifled, adding that everyone is welcome at work sessions and that the change in format was to provide better organization for meetings. Everyone will be given opportunities to speak. Resident Sylvester Bratten asked why notice was not provided on the change instead of enacting a new policy starting today. Councilwoman Cook advised that it's a new format for a new year.

Mr. Lee stated that the government has not been open and this policy will stop everyone from talking, as he represents a community of people. Mayor Dorman advised that he has spoken to community members that expressed not wanting to attend meetings due to Mr. Lee dominating the meetings.

2. Mr. Lee referred to the Town Meeting minutes for December 2014 and requested they be changed due to mischaracterization. He submitted a correction to the Town Manager

regarding inadvertently using the term “committee” when he should have said “commission”, not a request for change. Mr. Lee requested Mayor and Council review the letter submitted.

3. Mr. Lee questioned when the next town election is scheduled and what offices would be part of the election. Councilman Pruitt stated his seat for Western District would be open and he was not seeking re-election. Central District Council would also be up for election. Mr. Lee stated the regretted this night, adding that Mayor Dorman now has someone not supporting him and on the opposite side of him. He added that he was appalled that Council submitted to this decision which divides a community.
4. Carolyn Brown commented that the change in meeting format should have been done with notification to the citizens. She added that the instructions on the front page have not been followed regarding conduct of meetings, citing the last meeting when Mr. Lee was disrespectful, he should have been asked to leave. She doesn't like that questions cannot be asked until the end of the meeting and feels the openness of the meeting has been affected by Mr. Lee's behavior. Richard Mitchell added that the conduct of meeting section had not been enforced again this evening and the format section has been announced this evening so it should be followed next meeting.
5. Richard Mitchell asked if trash collection could be moved to 8am to prevent residents from putting trash out the night before and weather causing it to blow in other's yards. Bob Donnelly advised that trash collection has been 7am-3pm for the past three years and that some put it out at night due to work schedules. Mr. Mitchell requested notifying residents of the time to encourage trash to go out the morning of collection.
6. Carolyn Brown asked Joe Pishtey if the New Year's Eve party paid for itself. Joe advised that this was a Chamber of Commerce event, not a town event.
7. Rosaline Dale of Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church thanked the town for putting information on the website so quickly for an event they are sponsoring. “Teach Them to Fish” is a first-time home buyer's seminar being held on January 31, 2015 from 10am-1pm at the Snow Hill Middle School. This event is free and all are encouraged to attend.
8. Mayor Dorman announced that the Tri-County Martin Luther King, Jr. banquet is scheduled for Monday, January 19, 2015. Tickets are \$35 each and the Mayor and Council will be there.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

With no further discussion, Mayor Dorman adjourned the meeting at 7:41pm.

Respectfully submitted:                      Trish Greene, Asst. to Town Manager