

**TOWN OF SOUTH BETHANY
TOWN COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
JUNE 12, 2020**

**This meeting was conducted electronically pursuant to Governor Carney's State of
Emergency declaration, effective March 13, 2020, as amended.**

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

Mayor Saxton called the June 12, 2020, Town Council Regular Meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

ATTENDANCE

Councilmembers Derek Abbott, Randy Bartholomew, Sue Callaway, Dick Oliver, Carol Stevenson, Frank Weisgerber, and Mayor Tim Saxton; Town Manager Maureen Hartman; and Administrative Assistant Pam Smith.

ADOPTION OF MINUTES

May 8, 2020, Town Council Regular Meeting: Motion by Councilmember Abbott, seconded by Councilmember Oliver, to accept the May 8, 2020, Town Council Regular Meeting Minutes. The voting was as follows:

FOR THE MOTION: Councilmembers Stevenson, Weisgerber, Callaway, Bartholomew, Oliver, Abbott, and Mayor Saxton

AGAINST THE MOTION: None

Motion unanimously carried.

May 19, 2020, Town Council Meeting: Motion by Councilmember Abbott, seconded by Councilmember Oliver, to accept the May 19, 2020, Town Council Meeting Minutes. The voting was as follows:

FOR THE MOTION: Councilmembers Stevenson, Weisgerber, Callaway, Bartholomew, Oliver, Abbott, and Mayor Saxton

AGAINST THE MOTION: None

Motion unanimously carried.

May 27, 2020, Town Council Organizational Meeting: Motion by Councilmember Abbott, seconded by Councilmember Callaway, to accept the May 27, 2020, Town Council Organizational Meeting Minutes. The voting was as follows:

FOR THE MOTION: Councilmembers Stevenson, Weisgerber, Callaway, Bartholomew, Oliver, Abbott, and Mayor Saxton

AGAINST THE MOTION: None

Motion unanimously carried.

UPDATE ON COVID-19 AND THE TOWN AND DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE VOTE ON SUMMER ACTIVITIES

The State of Delaware will go into Phase 2 on Monday, June 15. Town Hall will be open, however the door to Town Hall will be kept locked. The walk-up window on the front porch, which has been very successful, will continue to be open. To meet with a staff member, advise staff at the window of who you would like to see. One person is permitted in the lobby with the staff member. A face mask is required. The Town Council meeting room is set up for social distancing. Mayor Saxton encouraged committees to meet virtually but noted they have the option to meet at Town Hall. Due to social distance requirements, the meeting room can only accommodate committee members. The public may participate electronically.

Mayor Saxton reviewed the Town Council Meeting Times Survey Results. The following question had 295 responses: Which time is best for you for a regular Town Council meeting which would include electronic participation and remain the second Friday of each month? 36.27% chose 10 a.m., 12.88% chose 1 p.m., 22.71% chose 3 p.m., and 28.14% chose 6 p.m. Based on the survey results, Council agreed to start the Town Council Regular Meetings at 10 a.m. beginning with the July 10, 2020, Town Council Regular Meeting. It was noted that electronic participation will be available to the public. Town Council Workshop Meetings will continue to start at 3 p.m. Council agreed to begin meeting at Town Hall starting with the June 25, 2020, Town Council Workshop Meeting. Due to social distance requirements, the meeting room can only accommodate Council members and Town Staff. The public may participate electronically.

Councilmember Callaway stated that she has been discouraged with the placement of bikes and bicyclists disregarding the bike rack effort the Town has put forth. She believes it is a safety issue. Mayor Saxton agreed that it is a safety issue. Councilmember Callaway suggested putting up signs at beach access ways. She is also concerned about damage to the new artwork on Ocean Drive from bikes and chairs leaning against the artwork. It was noted that the Police Department has been moving bikes into bike racks, putting letters on bikes, and talking to people to educate them. There was a consensus among Council to put up signs indicating that all bikes must be in a bike rack. After discussion, Mayor Saxton asked Town Manager Hartman to consult with the Town Solicitor on whether the Police Department has the authority to remove bikes that are chained to a street sign and Council will discuss at the June 25, 2020, Town Council Workshop Meeting.

MEDIACOM SURVEY RESULTS

Councilmember Callaway reviewed the Mediacom survey results report that she prepared. The report included a list of comment responses sorted into categories, a summary, and recommendations. The report can be found on the Survey Results page of the Town's website. Councilmember Callaway feels the report will be a useful tool to help the Town in its discussions and negotiations with Mediacom.

The following are Councilmember Callaway's recommendations for follow-up:

It is apparent that Mediacom continues to provide low-grade services to the property owners in South Bethany. A look back at previous South Bethany survey results dating back to 2009, clearly demonstrates that the quality of service delivery and the cost for those services has continuously failed to deliver the kind of Cable TV, Internet and phone coverage that our citizens deserve to have. Responses indicate that our Mediacom customers are tired and frustrated with the service and wish the town could/would do something. Quite frankly they cannot grasp why we are unable to do something when they hear of some other changes made in surrounding towns. While we are not responsible for the quality of the service delivery – we do have some control over what we do about that. As we head into contract negotiations, it appears now is the time to take more definitive action.

After reading and categorizing 30 pages of specific written comments, I recommend that we present Mediacom with the following list of most important issues to address over the forthcoming year. If Mediacom is responsive to the list, citizens may indeed be good with staying with the "known provider" rather than making changes.

- 1) LOWER RATES – the cost for their current services does not align with the quality of product and service – offering better rates for long-time customers who have "stuck" with Mediacom through the years*
- 2) IMPROVE CONNECTIVITY ON CABLE TV AND INTERNET - South Bethany customers are hungry for reliable, dependable, consistent Cable TV and Internet*
- 3) ADJUST SEASONAL RATES AND IMPROVE "RETURN TO SERVICE" PROCESS – This is a consistent appeal from seasonal property owners. Such disastrous and frustrating circumstances and adventures as some called it, is causing many to cancel Mediacom TV and turn to other alternatives.*
- 4) IMPROVE CUSTOMER SERVICE – Lost time with hours on the phone waiting to speak with someone or get an answer is driving people away. They want faster response, a more responsive/informed call center, and a designated Mediacom specialist or group that is trained to be responsive to South Bethany customers.*
- 5) IMPROVE SERVICE RESPONSE AND COMMUNICATION – Service response that includes timeliness, flexibility, faster outage response and a sincere focus on the customers' needs.*
- 6) PROVIDE MORE WELL-TRAINED SERVICE TECHNICIANS – there is a need for more service technicians who are knowledgeable and can address the problems. Confidence in getting a well-trained professional is diminishing.*
- 7) UPGRADE EQUIPMENT – Requests for better software and inside equipment such as modems and routers that are obsolete will provide customers with the most current, functioning equipment that will help eliminate repeated service calls and customer frustration.*
- 8) BETTER MAINTAIN EXISTING EQUIPMENT LOCATED ON THE STREETS OF SOUTH BETHANY – South Bethany takes pride in its community and having old defective cable wires and boxes on our streets not only look bad but likely contribute to multiple service issues.*
- 9) INCREASE CHANNEL SELECTION – A frequent comment expressed was a need for better selection of channels and HD channels – better channel offerings in package plans. This goes back to cost vs value.*
- 10) ELIMINATE THE PHONE OPTION/REQUIREMENT TO RECEIVE A BETTER PACKAGE RATE – The need and interest in having a landline is almost obsolete. Better package rates without the phone option would be well-received.*

Mayor Saxton thinks the contract should be no more than a three-year contract considering how fast things change in the IT world. Mayor Saxton said the Town's current contact with Mediacom is highly responsive. The Town will meet with him regarding Councilmember Callaway's list of 10 items and ask to see some progress before going to contract. It was noted that the current contract expires July 10, 2020. Mayor Saxton, Town Manager Hartman, Councilmember Callaway, and Councilmember Oliver will meet to prepare for a meeting with Mediacom.

LEADERSHIP REPORTS – REPORTS POSTED ONLINE

Mayor Saxton added to his report that performance reviews on every employee have been completed.

COMMITTEE AND COMMISSION REPORTS – REPORTS POSTED ONLINE**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Tom Roche, 141 Henlopen Dr. – Thanked Town Manager Hartman for emailing Mediacom the photographs he took of precarious Mediacom temporary and permanent hookups. Mr. Roche said he does not have faith Mediacom will come back to clean them up. Mayor Saxton said it is important to have this cleaned up and it will be a major point of impasse.

Mayor Saxton stated that the Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFB) lights on Route 1 will probably go live next week. The Town will put out information on how they work. Councilmember Stevenson suggested placing plantings around the meter boxes.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Councilmember Oliver, seconded by Councilmember Abbott, to adjourn the June 12, 2020, Town Council Regular Meeting at 4:20 p.m. The voting was as follows:

FOR THE MOTION: Councilmembers Stevenson, Weisgerber, Callaway, Bartholomew, Oliver, Abbott, and Mayor Saxton

AGAINST THE MOTION: None

Motion unanimously carried.

phs:2020 06 12 Regular Meeting Minutes Approved 7/10/20