

**TOWN OF SOUTH BETHANY
TOWN COUNCIL WORKSHOP MEETING MINUTES
SEPTEMBER 24, 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 September 24, 2020, Town Council Workshop Meeting to order at 3 p.m.

ATTENDANCE

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

REVIEW OF SUMMER CHANGES IN SOUTH BETHANY

Town Manager Hartman reviewed some of the following changes that were made for the 2020 season and recommendations from her and Chief Lovins:

Bike racks: Worked - Addition of numerous racks throughout town, particularly N. 6th St. and Anchorage locations and bike racks on Ocean Drive against retaining walls. Didn't Work - Sandpiper Village bike parking, some racks located near/at beach walkways (people continue to encroach on private property), taking parking spots on Ocean Dr. to place racks, bicyclists still locking bikes to Town signs. Recommend - Racks should be placed along retaining walls and along areas where bicyclists and racks do not infringe on private properties; possibly hire someone specific for bicycle enforcement, more racks at canal ends at Rt. 1.

Walk-up Window at Town Hall: Worked – Everything. Safety/security for staff as well as visitors and residents, zero complaints. Didn't Work - need a better window. Recommend - continuing this concept. It was well received by all.

Resident Oceanside Parking: Worked - Residents loved it, traffic didn't seem as congested on Ocean Dr., new parking enforcement officer, Dee. Didn't Work - Some complaints from visitors about walking across Rt. 1. Recommend - Extend the posted 'parking permit required' signage on west side, increase replacement parking permit price from \$50 to \$100 and limit to two.

Virtual Meetings: Worked - Had to be done due to COVID restrictions, allowed more versatility for Town and more participation by residents. Didn't Work - Hybrid meeting, i.e. conducting in-person and virtual in meeting room. Recommend - we are currently rewiring the meeting room and have purchased new audio equipment, microphones, and speakers once in-person goes into effect.

Mayor Saxton and the Councilmembers agreed that the recommended changes are within the Town Manager's purview. Mayor Saxton stated that increasing the replacement parking permit price from \$50 to \$100 and limiting the number of replacement parking permits to two will require Council approval. Mayor Saxton agreed with the recommendation not to place bike racks anywhere where it could infringe on someone's private property. The Town Manager noted that Public Works pulled the bike racks that were in the street in Sandpiper Village and on Ocean Dr. as the department prepares for inclement winter weather.

**DISCUSSION & POSSIBLE VOTE OF CAPITAL PROJECT PRIORITIES, INCLUDING
DECORATIVE LIGHT POLES**

Mayor Saxton reviewed previous Budget and Finance Committee and Town Council discussions and votes on the Route 1 light poles topic.

Councilmember Bartholomew stated that in the analysis presented to Council at the September 11, 2020, Town Council Meeting the missing ingredient was the estimated surplus of \$476,000

generated from FY 2020 (with the caveat that the Town is waiting for the audit results). Councilmember Bartholomew reviewed two scenarios discussed at the September 23, 2020, Budget and Finance Committee Meeting for the reallocation of the FY 2020 estimated surplus of \$476,000 into the various reserve buckets. Scenario one includes the expenditure of \$90,000 for decorative light poles on Route 1. Scenario two does not include the expenditure of \$90,000 for decorative light poles on Route 1 and reallocates \$90,000 to the canal program (\$25,000) and the operating reserve (\$66,000). Councilmember Bartholomew stated that in both scenarios the Town has a balance in reserves of 3.185 million dollars. He said this is money that is fully funded – it is not speculative.

Councilmember Callaway stated the following:

I appreciate the thorough financial analysis conducted by the Mayor, Councilman Bartholomew, the Budget & Finance Committee and the Town staff. Two weeks ago on September 11, 2020, I presented a statement expressing my strong support for choosing the Option 2 decorative lights for the 29 Route 1 Median lights that will soon be installed by the DE Department of Transportation and as directed by DELDOT. It is a decision that I feel is one of the most critical ones we have had to make during my 10 years serving on the Town Council. The reason I say it's critical is that it's a decision that we only have ONE chance to make – right now – and ONE chance to get it right; it's a decision that will last for 30 years – once the lights are installed they are INSTALLED; and it's a decision that completely impacts the view and atmosphere of our Town's main street and the impression our Town projects day in and day out.

Since that last meeting, pertinent financial information has been reported that was not available to the voting Town Council Members at the September 11th meeting. Today we have heard again from our Town Treasurer and Town Councilmember, Randy Bartholomew detailing the findings and also outlining how investing \$90k on the decorative lighting will still allow the town to fund ALL of its existing list of future priorities.

Has the process for this initiative been unconventional? – YES. In hindsight, should the Town and Town Council have conducted more rigorous research when this lighting installation was first introduced in November 2019? – YES. But for me and I know many others, the realization of what this decision meant was not so blatantly clear until the Option 1 industrial style lights were installed in Dewey Beach and the Option 2 decorative lights were installed in Bethany Beach. To me the difference was dramatic. There was no doubt to me that the Town Council had to re-visit the November 2019 decision. Thus we discussed and voted on September 11th and here we are again today with additional financial information that will lead to more informed decisions being made by all Town Council members. I know this Mayor and Town Council want to get the decision right. We are South BETHANY not South DEWEY! We are the "Best Little Beach in Delaware" and our Main Street must reflect that attitude that we adopted years ago. I am asking my fellow Council members to support investing in our town and vote YES on the decorative lighting. I am confident that is the right choice for the future of our town!

Motion by Councilmember Callaway, seconded by Councilmember Oliver, that Council move forward with option 2, decorative lights, at a cost of \$90,625 for the 29 lights as directed by DelDOT which will be installed by DelDOT. After further discussion, the voting was as follows: FOR THE MOTION: Councilmembers Stevenson, Callaway, Bartholomew, Oliver, Abbott, and Mayor Saxton. AGAINST THE MOTION: Councilmember Weisgerber. The motion carried with a 6-1 vote.

DISCUSSION OF CHANGING A SEASONAL POLICE OFFICER FROM PART-TIME TO FULL-TIME STATUS

In order to provide 24-hour police coverage, Chief Lovins proposed changing the seasonal part-time police officer position to a full-time (year-round) police officer position and requested that Council consider sending this request to the Budget and Finance Committee for an analysis. By

consensus, Council agreed to send the proposal to the Budget and Finance Committee for analysis and then come back to Council at a future meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Greg Christensen, 101 Brandywine Dr. – Thanked the Town for trying to control major algae blooms in the canals but stated that his house backs up to the Petherton Canal and the jets in his back yard are an extreme nuisance. Councilmember Weisgerber said he will reach out to Envirotech to see what the solution to the issue is.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Councilmember Abbott, seconded by Councilmember Bartholomew, to adjourn the September 24, 2020, Town Council Workshop Meeting at 4:20 p.m. FOR THE MOTION: Councilmembers Stevenson, Weisgerber, Callaway, Bartholomew, Abbott, and Mayor Saxton. AGAINST THE MOTION: None. Councilmember Oliver had dropped off the call.

phs:2020 09 24 Workshop Meeting Minutes Approved 10 9 20