



Townsend Town Council Meeting Minutes
February 7, 2024 @ 7:00 pm
VIA CONFERENCE CALL &
Town Hall
141 Main St, Townsend, DE 19734

7:00 pm Town Council Meeting

- I. Call to Order: 7 pm.
- II. Opening Ceremonies
 - A. Roll Call: Mayor S. Lobdell, Councilman J. Mertz, Councilman J. Bangura, Councilman M. Chapman, Councilman M. Suhr, Town Manager A. Tantillo, Town Engineer E. Van-Otoo, Town Solicitor L. Hatfield, Chief of Police R. Longo, Financial Officer J. Helms, and Town Clerk M. Rivera.
 - B. Pledge of Allegiance: All present recited the Pledge of Allegiance.
 - C. Recognition of Visitors: Dwain Haines, New Castle County (NCC) David Carter, Bob Taylor, Richard Boyer, Loraine Gorman, Rob Deck, James Winfield, Randy Becker, and Ron Schwartz.
 - D. Announcements:
 1. CM Mertz thanked the Town and Town Manager Tantillo for repairing the little libraries on West Founds Street.
 2. CM Mertz announced it is Black History Month and that there is a resolution that will be read later during the meeting to recognize the month.
 3. TC Rivera announced the Town is continuing to receive donations for the Town's Community Food Pantry.
- III. General Citizen Comments
 - A. Ms. Gorman asked if there are plans for the Town to renew the NCC sewer agreement. Mayor Lobdell confirmed this is an ongoing discussion. NCC Carter advised he is available to assist with this discussion.
- IV. Review/Adoption of Agenda
 - A. *CM Mertz made a motion to adopt the agenda as written. CM Chapman seconded the motion. Voice vote of Council: all yea's.*
 1. Council adopted the agenda.
- V. Approval / Rejection of Minutes:
 - A. **ACTION ITEM:** Approval/ Rejection of Town Council Minutes from the January 10th, 2024, Town Council Meeting.
 1. Mayor Lobdell provided a title reading of the minutes for approval.
 2. *CM Suhr made a motion to approve the minutes as listed. CM Chapman seconded the motion. All yea's*
 - a. Council approved the minutes from the January 10th, 2024, Town Council Meeting.
- VI. Departmental Reports:
 - A. Mayor Scott Lobdell

1. **ACTION ITEM:** A discussion and reading of the Mayor’s Proclamation to proclaim Wednesday, February 7th, 2024, as “Mayor’s Monarch Pledge Day” in the Town of Townsend.
 - i. TM Tantillo advised the Town is part of the National Wildlife Organization and takes the pledge annually to earn points towards recertification.
 - ii. TM Tantillo provided a reading of the proclamation.
 - iii. Mayor noted this pledge has been done for many years. TM Tantillo noted Ms. Gorman worked on this for many years during her time on the Townsend Town Council.

B. New Castle County Councilman David Carter

1. NCC Carter advised Interfaith Housing is waiting for Delmarva to disconnect the electricity and will move forward with their project shortly. NCC Carter confirmed once disconnected, they will be able to move forward with permits. TM Tantillo advised the Town is still waiting for permits. TM Tantillo advised she is available to assist Interfaith Housing with contacting Delmarva.
2. NCC Carter advised the Town to apply for a grant for the Town Fair, however, is unsure if there will be funds available. NCC Carter noted grant funding will be renewed in July.
3. NCC Carter advised NCC performs inspections for Code Enforcement to assist with unregistered vehicles. NCC Carter advised the Police Department (PD) must be there to assist NCC with removing vehicles. NCC Carter noted the process for removing an abandoned vehicle may take up to a year. Additionally, NCC zoning will determine availability.
4. NCC Carter advised he is raising the concern with DeIDOT regarding transportation improvement districts.
5. NCC Carter advised he is meeting next Friday with the Townsend Fire Department regarding an upcoming fundraiser event that he is assisting to coordinate. NCC Carter confirmed the event will be held in the field between 4 – 8 p.m. and there will be no road closures. TM Tantillo confirmed there are no permits needed from the Town; however, if there are any road closures of Main St. they must apply through the State.

C. Town of Townsend Police Chief’s Report

1. Chief Longo confirmed the new cadet is doing well.

D. Town Solicitor Lisa Hatfield

1. TS Hatfield announced if the April land transfer for the NCC Park goes through properly than NCC will be donating the land to the Town.
2. TS Hatfield confirmed the previously discussed issues are pending verifications of lot lines.

E. Town Engineer Edwin Van-Otoo

1. TE Van-Otoo confirmed they are currently reviewing the previously approved 2008 plans and bringing the items up to code. TE Van-Otoo advised their goal is to combine these plans with the irrigation system as one project.

- i. CM Chapman suggested the Town should seek if NCC is available to install with the electrical install or to obtain a bid by the next council meeting along with the irrigation as well. TE Van-Otoo advised the intent to bid is in March.
 1. TE Van-Otoo will discuss with TM Tantillo regarding the bid posting. TE Van-Otoo confirmed the bid documents for irrigation portion are complete; however, the electrical documents need to be prepared based on the investigation performed.
 2. TE Van-Otoo advised he has been in discussion with the Army Corp of Engineers and has confirmed that as long as the Town does not touch the wetlands then the other portions of the land may be used. Additionally, there must be a 50-foot buffer in accordance with the Town's Municipal Code (TMC). TM Tantillo clarified the Town is awaiting the official notice and once received the Town will be able to determine if the location is sufficient for the pole barn. TE Van-Otoo confirmed the letter should be received by the end of the month.

F. Town Manager Antonina Tantillo

1. TM Tantillo advised the solar speed signs have been secured and the Town will continue reviewing. TM Tantillo confirmed cameras will be installed to deter anyone from damaging the solar speed signs.
2. TE Van-Otoo confirmed a site visit has been performed on East Founds Street regarding CM Mertz concern for safety of the sump pump that are on properties. TE Van-Otoo advised he is in the process of drafting a letter to residents to advise on where the proper locations of the sump pumps should be.
3. TM Tantillo advised she is working on sending friendly reminders to residents regarding snow shoveling and moving their vehicles to advise of safety and allow for proper plowing within the Town. TM Tantillo advised postings have been made to the website. TM Tantillo advised she does not want to fine people yet but will start with friendly reminders.
4. TM Tantillo announced the Townsend Election is coming up in May and the Board of Elections (BOE) has held their first meeting. TM Tantillo explained per the BOE meeting that there are two seats up for election and notice for solicitation of candidate will be in March until April. Additionally, all packets will be verified by TC Rivera and the BOE will determine if there will be an election. TM Tantillo advised the candidate qualifications are in her report and posted to the website. Noting, questions may be directed to TC Rivera.
5. TM Tantillo confirmed applications for the Part-Time Administrative Assistant position have been received and interviews are ongoing.
6. TM Tantillo confirmed the Town is still awaiting application for the open Part-Time Code Official position. CM Chapman advised for TM Tantillo to reach out to the Brian Conley House.

7. **ACTION ITEM:** Discussion and possible vote on appointment of one Board of Elections Member.
- i. TC Rivera advised only one letter of interest has been received and provided a reading of Bruce Russell’s interest for the Board of Elections, “While in the Air Force, I served as the installation voting representative for Joint Base Langley/Eustis. My primary responsibility was assisting the 8,000 military and civilian personnel assigned to the Base with the Federal Voting Assistance Program (absentee voting). I also coordinated federal level/in-house training for all military and government agency voting reps in the Greater Hampton Roads Virginia area.”
 - ii. CM Mertz advised he knows Mr. Russell and believes he would be a wonderful person to have serving the Town of Townsend. CM Suhr agreed. TM Tantillo advised Mr. Russell has expressed a lot of interest and seems to have a lot of experience in elections. TC Rivera noted Mr. Russell was present for the first BOE meeting that was held.
 - iii. *CM Mertz made a motion to appoint Mr. Russell as the new member of the BOE. CM Chapman seconded the motion.*
 1. *Roll call: Mayor Lobdell – yea, CM Mertz – yea, CM Chapman – yea, and CM Suhr- yea.*
 2. Council appointed Bruce Russell as a member of the BOE.
8. **ACTION ITEM:** Possible swearing in of new Board of Elections member.
- i. TM Tantillo advised this action item may be held at the next meeting.
9. **ACTION ITEM:** Discussion and possible vote regarding Major Subdivision with possible rezoning request at Parcel #: 25-008.00-002, 100 Karins Blvd.
- i. TM Tantillo introduced the item.
 - ii. Mayor Lobdell recused himself from discussion advising his firm is involved the project. Mayor Lobdell advised the applicant will be presenting their application. Mayor Lobdell turned the meeting over to Mayor Tempore Mertz to run the meeting in his absence and left the Council Meeting Room.
 - iii. TM Tantillo advised the applicant is in the concept planning stage. TM Tantillo confirmed the applicant has submitted drawings of the site per the TMC and Flowchart. TM Tantillo noted Council has received letters from the Planning Commission (PC) and the Public Works and Land Use and Development Committee.
 - iv. Mr. Winfield presented the concept plan and noted the following:
 1. Approximately 25 feet will be removed from the center aisle on Karins Blvd to allow for traffic to enter the development and the exit to be right turn only, as it is a one way only throughout the development. Furthermore, preventing any additional traffic into Karins Circle or the Townsend Village Development.
 2. Retention Pond is handled by DNREC on the north side and is a 16-foot drop into the wooded area.
 3. Only seven of the 11 acres on the lot will be used, leaving the rest as a wooded area.

4. The townhomes are proposed to be a modern barn style with two- and three-story elevations and with one or two car garages. Furthermore, there will be feasibility studies performed for the needs and desires of the community at the site.
 5. Seven additional parking spaces have been added since their original concept plan was presented.
 6. There will be no parking on the street.
 7. DeIDOT will be involved with the road standards.
 8. The development would generate one tenth of the traffic for commercial use and a third of traffic if approved for apartments.
 9. There are hammerhead turn arounds within the development.
 10. There are sidewalks that are throughout the development and connect with the other development.
- v. Council raised the following concerns:
 1. Egress for emergencies:
 - a. The applicant advised the exit may be widened for emergency personnel to enter through the exit.
 2. Constituents making a U-turn at the top of the median or going through LifeHouse Church to make a U-turn to enter the development:
 - a. The applicant advised the median can be extended.
 3. Traffic Light need at the Summit Bridge Road and Karins Blvd intersection.
 - vi. TM Tantillo advised Council may add specific foot notes such as requiring the applicant to obtain a traffic study and median, as part of their motion of approval or denial. TM Tantillo advised the letter to the applicant will include the motion given by Council.
 - vii. *CM Chapman made a motion to approve Major Subdivision with possible rezoning request at Parcel #: 25-008.00-002, 100 Karins Blvd. CM Suhr amended the motion adding the considerations to ensure a traffic impact study is reviewed and updated as necessary. CM Chapman seconded the motion. Voice vote of Council: all yea's – CM Bangura abstained.*
 1. Council approved the concept plan on the contingency that the traffic impact study is conducted.
 - viii. Mr. Boyer confirmed the proposal presented is the best way for the Church to have return on their investment.
 - ix. Mr. Lobdell returned back to the Council Meeting room. CM Mertz turned the meeting back over to Mayor Lobdell. CM Mertz debriefed Mayor Lobdell on the discussion and vote.
 - x. CM Suhr asked how he should discuss real estate questions. TM Tantillo confirmed general real estate questions may be held during the executive session.

VII. Committee Reports

- A. **Finance Committee:** Chair: Mayor Lobdell, Co-Chair: Councilman Bangura

1. Finance Committee confirmed they will be holding a meeting on February 14th at 11 a.m.
2. Review and possible discussion on the December 2023 Budget vs. Actual Reports.
 - a. FO Helms confirmed the town is halfway through the fiscal year.
 - b. TM Tantillo confirmed the Town revised the Investment Policy which allows the Town's Financial Advisor to perform necessary changes needed.
 - c. TM Tantillo confirmed she will coordinate availability with the Town's Financial Advisor to present an overview and highlights of the Town's Financial standing; goal to meet is during the March or April Town Council meeting.
 - d. TM Tantillo confirmed that the Finance Committee is revisiting discussion regarding the Town's Insurance expenses while discussing the budget for the Town. Additionally, open enrollment is in May; therefore, Council will review in advance.
 - e. TM Tantillo confirmed funds under the street repairs line item have not been utilized. However, she is working with TE Van-Otoo on a timeline for street repairs utilizing the Municipal Street Aid (MSA) Funds. TM Tantillo explained large street repairs are contracted out due to the cost; small repairs are done by the Town. TM Tantillo advised the budget for street repairs is based on how much Municipal Street Aid (MSA) funds has been received previously by the Town.
 - i. TM Tantillo explained MSA funds may be applied towards plowing and stop sign repairs. TM Tantillo advised a plan will first be presented to the Public Works and Land Use and Development Committee and then to the Town Council.
 - ii. TM Tantillo confirmed MSA funds rolls over.
 - iii. TM Tantillo advised approximately \$13,000 has been spent on snow plowing utilizing the MSA funds for the year.
 - iv. TM Tantillo confirmed unused street repair funds roll over. TM Tantillo advised there is a concern of not being able to make all repairs at one time with funding which has prompted the development of the program.
 - v. TM Tantillo to provide the Public Works and Land Use and Development a deadline so Council may discuss the plan for repairs.

B. Human Resources Committee: Chair: Councilman Suhr, Co-Chair: Mayor Lobdell

1. The Human Resources Committee confirmed reviews will be due soon for personnel.

C. Public Works and Land Use Development Committee: Chair: Councilman Bangura, Co-Chair: Councilman Chapman

1. Discussion regarding Annexation Handout.
 - a. CM Bangura presented the Annexation Handout explaining this will be the tool to gain interest in annexing into the Town. CM Chapman confirmed brief discussion has been held regarding the properties the Town will reach out to.

- b. CM Chapman some of the benefits for annexing into the Town is having the Street Lights and Waste Services included with the Taxes which lowers the expenses for owners. Furthermore, the Public Works and Land Use and Development Committee has discussed other monetary items that may be offered to residents within Town; noting, further discussion with the Council is needed. CM Chapman noted the permitting is in line with NCC and may be a faster permitting process in comparison with NCC. Additionally, the Town does have a local Police presence.
 - i. CM Mertz clarified that the Townsend PD does respond to surrounding areas as well.

2. Discussion regarding Community Center Options.

- a. CM Chapman explained the Public Works and Land Use and Development Committee reviewed all the floor plans previously presented and prepared a compact floor plan that is ADA compliant. CM Chapman advised the location may be used for office space that may be rented to provide a revenue source for the Town, in addition to, an event center or a location to how Town Council meetings. CM Bangura noted the conversation is ongoing.
- b. CM Mertz raised the concern of having another community center when there are other local community centers. CM Mertz suggested the committee to consider what the Town may provide that is not provided by the other community centers. CM Bangura advised further research would be facilitated and this will be integrated in discussion.
- c. Mayor Lobdell advised to keep in mind DelDOT's right of way standards for the proposed property, noting a variance may be needed for the setbacks if they take the right of way similar to what was done for Town Hall.
- d. Council advised they will consider placement of the PD at the proposed location. TM Tantillo noted the PD can expand at their current location, which is why the Pole Barn was moved away from that location, to allow the PD to grow there. Additionally, it provides the best access point for the Town.
- e. TM Tantillo confirmed the Community Center is an excepted use under the current R-2 zoning at the proposed location.
- f. CM Chapman advised the Public Works and Land Use and Development Committee has been discussing Concept Plan Two for the proposed layout of the location. TE Van-Otoo advised handicap parking ratio has been considered for the presented concept plans.
- g. NCC Carter advised some social service organizations may need a secure location. NCC Carter noted the Neighborhood House is seeking to build a community center similar to the one in South Bridge.

D. Public Safety Committee: Chair: Councilman Suhr, Co-Chair: Councilman Mertz

- 1. CM Mertz continues to encourage residents to reach out to TM Tantillo, the Town, and the Police, regarding speeding and residents parking on sidewalks. CM Mertz

noted he does forward any comments from residents to the Town. Additionally, CM Mertz thanked the Town for working rapidly on any Public Safety concerns.

2. TM Tantillo confirmed the Town is continuing to accept applications for a Part-time Code Enforcement Officer. TM Tantillo explained the Part-time Code Enforcement Officer will be able to enforce all Town ordinances except for criminal ordinances.

E. Community Engagement Committee: Chair: Councilman Mertz

1. Update on the 2024 Town Fair and discussion on upcoming events.
 - a. CM Mertz confirmed there is a great turn out for vendors that have signed up for the Town Fair.
 - b. CM Mertz advised Council to assist with advertising the Parade for the Fair noting not many registrations have been received.
 - c. CM Mertz confirmed the Town Fair and Parade will be held June 1st. Advising the Pet Contest will not be held this year, since there has not been a great turnout. However, there will be new contests such as a pie eating contest.
 - d. CM Mertz advised the Town is seeking donations for the Town Fair and Parade and requested assistance in soliciting for any donations.
 - e. CM Mertz confirmed the following Parade awards:
 - i. Classic Vehicles – 25 year or older
 - ii. Antique Vehicles –
 - iii. Vintage Vehicles – Pre-World War (WW) 2
 - iv. Best performances, etc.
 - f. CM Mertz and volunteer sign-up we be posted soon.
 - g. TM Tantillo confirmed no negative feedback on the forms have been received for the Town Fair and Parade, however any feedback is welcomed.
 - h. Chief Longo will reach out to the Shriners for the Parade.
 - i. TM Tantillo advised the Town has an exciting grand marshal who will lead the parade but no announcements may be made yet.
 - j. CM Mertz confirmed the Town Community Yard Sale will be held same week as last year. TM Tantillo advised documents are forthcoming and flyers will be posted. TM Tantillo explained residents will have the option of being added to the list of all addresses participating in the Community Yard Sale that will be posted by the Town.
2. **ACTION ITEM:** Discussion and possible vote on Resolution 2024-002 A Resolution to Recognize Black History Month
 - a. CM Mertz introduced Resolution 2024-002 A Resolution to Recognize Black History Month. TM Tantillo noted the resolution is co-sponsored by CM Mertz and CM Bangura.

- b. CM Mertz provided a reading of Resolution 2024-002 A Resolution to Recognize Black History Month.
- c. *CM Mertz made a motion CM B seconded the motion.*
 - i. *Roll Call: Mayor Lobdell – yea, CM Mertz – yea, CM Chapman – yea, and CM Suhr- yea.*
 - a. Council approved Resolution 2024-002 A Resolution to Recognize Black History Month.

F. Code Review Committee: Chair: Mayor Lobdell, Co-Chair: Councilman Mertz

- 1. Mayor Lobdell confirmed the Code Review Committee is working on the items that had their first reading.
- 2. The Code Review Committee will be holding a meeting next week, February 15th at 5:30 p.m.

G. Social Services Committee: Chair: Councilman Chapman, Co-Chair: Councilman Suhr

- 1. CM Chapman noted the Social Discussed the following:
 - a. The Mayor Monarch Pledge
 - b. Possible raffle or fundraiser for Memorial and Veterans Day events consisting of a one and a half mile walk or run to commemorate the military fitness standards.
 - c. Possible outreach to honor the Town’s Hometown Heros with banners on the light poles between the months of Memorial Day and Labor Day.
 - d. Working with the Brian Conley House to provide occupation or to assist with suicide prevention and rehabilitation of the Town’s veterans.
- 2. TM Tantillo advised the Town will be posting a Part-time Public Works employee over the summer and confirmed she will reach out to the Brian Conley House.

VIII. Recess Council Meeting to Convene Executive Session.

- A. *CM Mertz made a motion to recess the council meeting to executive session in accordance to the agenda. CM Chapman seconded the motion. Voice vote of Council: all yea’s.*
 - 1. Council recessed to executive session at 8:35 p.m.

IX. Convene Executive Session: Pursuant to 29 Del. C. §§10004(b)(2) and (4), the Town Council will consider a motion to meet in executive session for a strategy session, which will include legal advice or opinions from an attorney-at-law, with respect to potential litigation, as well as discussions that may have an adverse effect on the bargaining or litigation position of the Town, and 29 Del. C. §10004 (B)(9), the Town Council will consider a motion to meet in executive session for a strategy session, to address personnel matters.

X. Close Executive Session & Re-convene Council Meeting.

- A. Council reconvened the Council meeting at approximately 9:36 pm.

XI. ACTION ITEM: Possible vote of Council.

- A. No motion made nor action taken for this agenda item.

XII. Discussion of future agenda items.

- A. No discussion was held for this agenda item.

XIII. Adjournment.

A. CM Mertz made a motion to adjourn the meeting. CM Chapman seconded the motion. Voice vote of Council: all yea's.

1. Council adjourned the meeting at approximately 9:36 pm.
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