



Town of Capitol Heights

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**TOWN COUNCIL
PUBLIC SESSION MINUTES
December 6, 2021
7:00 PM**

Meeting Purpose: Mayor and Town Council Work Session		
Date: 12/06/2021	Time: 7:03 PM	Room: Teleconference
Chair: Renita A. Cason, Mayor Pro Tem		Scribe: Acting Town Clerk – Robin Bailey-Walls
Call-in Number: (301) 715-8592 Meeting ID: 894 8925 1876		Password: 264883

P= present; E = Excused Absence T = present via teleconference; A= absence (not excused) R= Resident G = Guest

Chair/Voting Members:			
T	Mayor Pro Tempore – Renita A. Cason		Town Administrator – Beverly Habada T
T	Council Member Rhonda A. Akers		Town Clerk – Robin Bailey-Walls T
T	Council Member Caroline Brown		Chief of Police – Mark Cummings T
T	Council Member LaTonya Chew		Dir. NSD/Public Works – Charles Simpson T
T	Council Member Faith T. Ford		
T	Council Member Elaine Williams		
Guests/ Residents			
R	James Brown		Ms. Monica Johnson R
R	Ms. Finley		Former CM Linda Monroe R
R	Melissa		Elliott Reed R
R	Jean Johnson		Donna Parks G
G	Amanda Anderson		Kentasha R
G	Kush Elamin		Dr. Darrell D. Cummings G

- I. **Call to Order:** Mayor Pro Tem – Renita A. Cason
- II. **Roll Call:** Robin Bailey-Walls, Acting Town Clerk
- III. **Approval of the Agenda – Council**
Motioned to Approve the agenda by CM Brown; Seconded by CM Akers
CM Brown requested to add Protocols and Motions to the agenda; Rescinded the 1st Motion; Agenda was approved
- IV. **Holiday Celebration – Town Event- Planning Discussion – Council/TA Habada**
 CMs Akers and Chew would like to take the Town Seniors to the Festival of Lights in Watkins Park. Flyers will need to be created and distributed; Asked to coordinate with Admin and Public Works. A driver will need to be secured for the bus; Two evening trips planned.



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CM Williams discussed the Celebration of First Fruits. She would like to do something on the day Cooperative Economics is celebrated. She also suggested talking a bus tour to see the decorated homes in the Town.

TA Habada will check with NSD and look at coordinating schedules.

CM Akers inquired about decorating for the holiday; NSD will see what we have to decorate with.

CM Brown suggested lighting the tree near the Metro Station.

V. **Protocols and Motions** – CM Brown

CM Brown has created forms including a draft index of Motions and Resolutions. She also stated a flyer form had been previously approved and that protocols have been changed.

CM Cason stated CMs Ford and Brown worked with the flyer distribution form but she does not remember it being voted on.

The Town Clerk also didn't recall a vote on these forms.

CM Cason suggested that TA Habada review these forms for use or modify for staff use and allow TA Habada to do her job. **(A more in-dept discussion can be heard on the Zoom audio recording beginning at 21:27 minutes posted on the website.)**

VI. **For Review - Resolution 2022-09 Resolution to Purchase the Electric Bus** – VW Mitigation Funds –

Explanation of Sole Source Purchase – TA Habada/NSD PW Director Charles Simpson

CM Akers asked about the number of wheel chair accommodations and about whether there is an air brake suspension. Is there documentation?

Dir. Simpson stated he was aware of one wheel chair accessibility but would check again. The bus doesn't require a CDL driver. I will provide the documentation.

CM Chew asked what the amount of the Town's contribution.

TA Habada stated it is 20% of the cost which is \$39,380.

CM Williams inquired about the if difference in cost could be used for something like branding.

TA Habada is sure we can ask for Town branding to be done.

VII. **For Review- Resolution 2022-11 To Approve the Purchase of the Propane/Electric Dump Truck**

– VW Mitigation Funds – Explanation of Sole Source Purchase – TA Habada/NSD PW Director Charles Simpson

CM Williams asked if funds can be recuperated for the metal?

TA Habada pointed out that the VW Mitigation requires that the engine must be removed.

CM Chew inquired if additional training is required to operate the truck?

Dir. Simpson stated no additional; Nothing different but the but the fuel source; Fleet can provide the propane; They also have the sub-contract on the maintenance of the propane dump truck as well as the bus.

CM Akers asked if there will be any issues with attachments such as snow plows?

Dir Simpson said it can be outfitted with the same equipment.

CM Brown inquired about funds to pay for the dump truck.

TA Habada responded that the funding for the Dump Truck is in accounted for in Budget Amendment #1.

VIII. **Resolution 2202-13 A Resolution Authorizing the Town Administrator and the NSD Director of Public Works to Sign a Three-Year Salt Agreement from the MD Department of Transportation State Highway Administration (MDOT SHA)** – TA Habada/NSD PW Director Charles Simpson

CM Akers asked if we've always had an agreement. Is this three-year agreement something new for the Town?

Dir. Simpson – We've had it before based on information I've found in the truck. Unfortunately, I have found a previous agreement.

IX. **American Rescue Plan Projects – Part 1 – Review Project List and Discussion** – TA Habada/ Council

The intent is to ensure nothing has been missed and also to communicate that I don't feel the sense of pressure to spend by April. Based on information read and received from MML, folks in Maryland are taking their time planning for what to do. There are some municipalities that have already begun deploying funds for emergency



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rental and mortgage assistance. TA Habada provided an overview on how other municipalities are planning to use their funding. Her recommendations are to obtain solicitation of citizen comments on how the Town's allocations should be spent; by holding a Town Hall, gather comments through the website to an email address or hold a Public Hearing Session, hold another Listening Session or all the above. Then to decide when you want to make a decision on your allocation; set a deadline for the first batch of funding.

CM Ford asked if funds can be used to provide staffing up the Police Department due to things that happened as a result of the pandemic and also provide assistance for training to increase/improve community engagement?

TA Habada identified under public health that mental health aspect as a result of the pandemic. Others have identified revenue losses and will use funds for staffing and purchasing cruisers. I have not looked at our revenue losses yet. I will do that to see what it looks like.

CM Brown suggested using a form similar to what Laurel used for guest-estimates. She expressed concern on there being a final vote by Council on allocations.

CM Akers inquired about lighting for the Town; LED lighting to assist with crime prevention.

CM Williams is ready to work with what we have; Chart it out. She would like to move forward with having a poll; Announce the date and see who is in favor of each project.

Former CM Monroe has offered innovative ideas (to include signage) on how to connect with residents other than the use of flyers; No one has reached out to her to work on her ideas.

Ms. Monica Johnson suggested convening a resident working group to gather ideas. Both Ms. Johnson and Former CM Monroe disagreed with CM Williams's idea to move forward with what ideas currently suggested.

Additional discussion took place regarding the High Tunnel, the Coop, taxpayer monies paying for and services offered by Abundant Life. Mr. Kush offered more information regarding the High Tunnel and a discussion about his services and the Coop also took place. **(A more in-dept discussion can be heard on the Zoom audio recording beginning at 2:41:23 posted on the website.)**

X. Charter Resolution Amendment 2022-10 - A Charter Amendment Resolution to Amend the Town Charter to the Offices of President and Vice President of the Town Council, and Said Offices, and To Permanently Abolish the Elective Office of Mayor and the Appointed Office of the Mayor Pro Tempore– TA Habada/CMs Akers and Williams (The Zoom recording begins at 2:52:41 on this discussion)

CM Ford asked why are we changing to remove the office of the mayor? Formally the Mayor presided over the meetings; now the president and vice president will preside over and lead the body. She asked if everything will come to the table now for all to vote on; currently not doing that and are rushed to vote on things; Voiced concern on having these two people only to talk with the Attorney and impact changes. What does that look like? We only have a year in office so but so much can be done and put on the table for two minds. She voiced great concern about this.

CM Williams replied the new offices will provide greater efficiency; for example, the structure of having the TA with one single point of contact.

CM Akers wanted to address some of CM Ford's accusations because she's stating two people and there are two sponsors for this Charter Amendment and respond to some of her questions. She stated these are things to be talked about in a Work Session; She stated from her opening remarks there would be words in the Resolution that you would not probably agree to but it's not pointing a finger at anybody. She also stated there is a protocol for going to the Attorney; the TA and the Town Administrator can explain that.

CM Ford clarified that she was speaking from the Resolution as it states the two; president and vice president roles. CM Williams stated the primary check signers; the work primary is key. They are not the only check signers. Two people are selected by the Council from among themselves for that one-year term. These roles will



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be relinquished to another Council Member the next year. The term lead the body was meant to put the Council in unison.

CM Cason stated if passed at the December 13th Public Session, this will come in to effect during this administration; after fifty days the Mayor Pro Tem will be impacted. She talked about the need to be transparent; there is another Charter Amendment coming up to extend the election until December 2022.

CM Williams responded by stating it can go in to effect once approved if that’s the will of this Council.

Attorney Best interjected about a sentence in the explanatory statement regarding this resolution predating a resolution that may be brought forward regarding the change in the election date. He requested that statement be stricken because on Saturday he was asked to redo the Charter Amendment about the election date. I was given guidance to write it so it would predate this one. If passed they need to be passed in order to keep problems from occurring with the Charter. **(Further about this topic discussion can be heard on the Zoom recording at 3:20:31).**

Former Council Member Monroe stated she has major issues with this Resolution. I agreed with the majority of what CM Ford said. This should be talked about with the citizens. For a small amount of folks to make changes in the structure of the government, it should be put out in a referendum for a vote. She asked about what other municipalities had this form of government. The Council is moving too fast; too much too soon to change the form of government based on what happened with the mayor’s position. There are ways we can try to enhance how we get the word out to citizens. This is a big deal as is the other Resolution to extend your term by seven months. I also heard Akers says we’re going to talk about it and bring it to another Session. We need to get some comradery, some cohesiveness and get rid of the naysayers, the slander and the anger. We need to get rid of the bad name this Town. Attorney Best stated that a referendum is not permitted by the State. **(Further discussion can be heard on the Zoom recording at 3:55:51)**

XI. Charter Resolution Amendment 2022-12 - A Charter Amendment Resolution to Amend Section 304 of the Town Charter to Change the Date of the Town General Election from the First Monday in May to the First Monday in December of 2022 – TA Habada/CM Brown (The Zoom recording begins at 4:15:44 on this discussion)

CM Brown stated the explanatory statement needs to be changed and that this discussion took place at a previous Charter Meetings in June and July. It was drafted in October and redrafted in November. The reasons are stated however in the beginning it was all Council that was interested in this at a Charter Meeting. CM Brown said the prior ATA had those minutes. I would like to get them myself. She also requested other members of the body be included as sponsors of this Charter Resolution.

CM Ford does not support this legislation. She stated it is proposed to extend the election to December 5th because of the budget. I don’t think that would be productive for us to make plans and have the new administration come in and fulfil what we want to put on the table. Also, we have MML training in July. She advised she wants the election to be in May and would like to see the Charter Meeting minutes from June and July where this Charter Amendment was presented, discussed and agreed on unanimously.

CM Williams stated some of the conversation was to get more voter participation. I am in favor of having the date moved.

CM Akers stated that after looking through the document and having the budget done in June, even with MML I think it will work out and am in favor of the Resolution.

CM Cason is not in favor of this Resolution. She as related to the budget, a draft budget can begin in January and it can be ready for the upcoming elected body in May. She also stated she believes it’s a matter of personal gain. November was decided on to coincide with the State and County Elections was what was discussed in the Charter



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Meeting; Voting in December does not help or increase voter turnout. My recommendation is for the term to end in May 2022; You can set-up an oversight Board serve from May 2022 to December 2022. This isn't of benefit for the Town. We were voted to serve for years and should not be able to extend our time in office.

(The Zoom recording with resident comments begins at 4:35:17 on this discussion)

Ms. Monica Johnson asked why now change the election date to December; MML happens in June and then again in September or October. The new Council would lose the opportunity to attend and that's where some of the training comes from. Why would you want them to miss out on something that's very important? I think that having the election that has been going on for years at the same time is right.

Mr. Elliot Reed stated this has been a long but productive meeting because there is progress being made. He expressed concern about extension of elected terms; No one has articulated a good reason. He asked where's the urgency for Covid money? If this were being done for the next Council, I could support it.

Former CM Linda Monroe noted that voting to extend your term in office when you went in under a democratic process and now, you're taking that process and are voting for yourself. She stated that we should look at the logic in this.

XII. Council Announcements – No announcements

XIII. Adjournment – Motioned to adjourn the Work Session by CM Ford; Seconded by CM Williams. CM Williams inquired about going in to Closed Session. TA Habada suggested moving that to December 13th. No Objections. Work Session adjourned at 11:53PM.

PUBLIC SESSION MEETING MINUTES

Meeting Purpose: Mayor and Town Council Public Session			
Date: 12/06/2021	Time: 11:55 PM	Room: Teleconference	
Chair: Renita A. Cason, Mayor Pro Tem		Scribe: Acting Town Clerk – Robin Bailey-Walls	
Call-in Number: (301) 715-8592 Meeting ID: 894 8925 1876		Password: 264883	

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T	Council Member Elaine Williams		
Guests/ Residents			
R	James Brown		Ms. Monica Johnson R
R	Ms. Finley		Former CM Linda Monroe R



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R	Melissa	Elliott Reed	R
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- I. **Call to Order:** Mayor Pro Tem – Renita A. Cason
- II. **Roll Call:** Robin Bailey-Walls, Acting Town Clerk
- III. **Non-Denominational Prayer** – CM Akers led the prayer.
- IV. **Pledge of Allegiance** - All
- V. **Approval of the Agenda** – Council Member Ford Motion to Approve the agenda; Seconded by CM Akers; No objections
- VI. **Legislative Items** –
 - Charter Resolution Amendment 2022-12 - A Charter Amendment Resolution to Amend Section 304 of the Town Charter to Change the Date of the Town General Election from the First Monday in May to the First Monday in December of 2022** – TA Habada/CM Brown
 - CM Brown – Attorney Best previously said there’s a process so, I want be sure we are following the process and she asked Attorney best to speak.
 - Attorney Best stated he’s kind of confused at what you’re doing. I think you’re just giving a preliminary go ahead to give twenty-one-day public notice; Then have a hearing and then after this hearing you will approve this Charter Amendment Resolution. The process starts with the twenty-one-day notice.
 - CM Brown – Stated that since that was noted we will follow the twenty-one-day process. I wanted to be sure because we’ve done it differently in the past.
- VII. **Public Comments (The Zoom recording with resident comments began at 4:57:13 on this discussion)**
 - Former CM Monroe stated they all seem to go hand in hand. Attorney Best commented that the Charter Resolution Amendments go in sequence. If you go with the Resolutions discussed tonight, the one on the Election should be passed first.
 - Mr. Eliot Reed reiterated that this is a great opportunity to work together for the next six months. He urged Council to reconsider; Internally this isn’t a good; Externally it’s not a good look either.
 - (A discussion about the Motion began on the Zoom recording at 5:00:06)**

CM Brown Motioned to Move Charter Resolution 2022-12 forward. Seconded by CM Williams

Vote

CM Akers	Yes
CM Brown	Yes



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CM Chew (Not available)

CM Ford No

CM Williams Yes

Vote Carries 3 Yes/ 1 No

VIII. Adjournment

CM Akers Motioned to adjourn; Seconded by CM Williams - Meeting adjourned at 12:23am

APPROVED