



Town of Capitol Heights

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TOWN COUNCIL SPECIAL PUBLIC MEETING Minutes January 21, 2022 at 7:00PM

Meeting Purpose: Town Council – Special Meeting – Discussion of Police Staffing		
Date: January 21, 2022	Time: 6:45 PM	Room: Teleconference
Chair: CM Renita Cason		Scribe: Acting Town Clerk – Robin Bailey-Walls
Call-in Number: (301) 715-8592 Meeting ID: 894 8925 1876-		Passcode: 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
A	Council Member Rhonda A. Akers		Acting Town Clerk – Robin Bailey-Walls T
T	Council Member Caroline Brown		Police Chief Cummings T
T	Council Member LaTonya Chew		Deputy Police Chief Morgan T
T	Council Member Faith T. Ford		
T	Council Member Elaine Williams		
Guests/ Residents			
R	James Brown		Elliott Reed R
R	Monica Johnson		

- I. Call to Order: Mayor Pro Tem – Renita A. Cason stated we’ll give Council some extra time to call in. She believed the meeting was called by CM Chew. **(Conversation at 0:45)**
CM Williams questioned what time is posted on the website for this meeting and it is posted inside the agenda. **(Conversation at 2:05)**
Acting Town Clerk responded that it should be 7pm. Normally he posts outside the agenda and inside the agenda. **(Conversation at 2:15)**
TA Habada stated that she has the agenda and it states the meeting is at 7PM. **(Conversation at 2:18)**
CM Williams stated it’s on the agenda but what if someone is looking at the web page what do they see? **(Conversation at 2:25)**
Acting Town Clerk stated the webpage usually has the time announced as well as the agenda along with it. **(Conversation at 2:29)**
CM Williams asked if there’s someone that can see verify the website. This is unusual. **(Conversation at 2:47)**
Acting Town Clerk stated it is unusual but all of the Council Members were emailed the materials as well.
CM Cason stated our normal meeting time is 7PM. **(Conversation at 3:02)**



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CM Williams begged to differ stating the Thursday, Charter Meetings start at 7:30PM. She thought that if we looked at the website, she didn't know but was looking for reason we don't have all the Council Members here. **(Conversation at 3:15)**

CM Cason stated none of our public meetings with the exception of the Charter Meetings start at 7:30. It's always at 7 O'clock. **(Conversation at 3:19)**

CM Williams stated this is a special meeting. **(Conversation at 3:45)**

CM Cason stated we had a quorum. CM Brown was on the line and she dropped off. **(Conversation at 3:59)**

CM Williams asked if there was anyone else here at that time. **(Conversation at 4:10)**

CM Cason said CM Brown was here. That's why she thought there was a quorum. When CM Ford called in **(Conversation at 4:12)**

Acting Town Clerk said Mr. Brown texted me and said the posting doesn't have a time however inside of that posting the agenda does. Again, all the Council were sent emails and acknowledged they would be on the call. CM Akers called to say she'd be in attendance. She asked TA Habada if that was correct. **(Conversation at 4:17)**

TA Habada said she got confirmation from ... yes. **(Conversation at 4:55)**

CM Cason stated confirmations by email came from CM Brown and CM Chew. She stated that TA Habada's email stated the date and time for the meeting. **(Conversation at 5:03)**

TA Habada stated she just talked with CM Brown who stated CM Chew doesn't have the link. She's looking for a special meeting link. **(Conversation at 5:30)**

CM Cason she's on now and she was on earlier. We have a quorum and we're ready to start our special meeting **(Conversation at 5:37)**

CM Brown asked if CM Williams was on. She stated this should be a special link and asked CM Williams to send it to everyone. **(Conversation at 5:59)**

CM Cason said to CM Brown that we're getting ready to start. The Zoom information was sent out and posted on the website. Everybody has received it via email. **(Conversation at 6:07)**

Call to Order by CM Cason at 7:15PM.

II. Roll Call: Acting Town Clerk – Robin Bailey-Walls

CM Brown called for a point of order during the Roll Call **(Conversation at 7:33)**

CM Cason asked what was her point of order. **(Conversation at 7:36)**

CM Brown stated that she's getting a call from CM Chew who's the organizer. This is not the correct meeting link. She asked CM Williams if she could create a special meeting link. **(Conversation at 7:38)**

CM Cason stated the Town Clerk sends out the information for the meetings, not CM Williams. The information was sent to each one of us in the email. **(Conversation at 7:47)**

CM Brown stated they didn't get the information. **(Conversation at 8:02)**

CM Cason suggested that someone can send it to them. She stated that CM Brown cannot stop the meeting to ask CM Williams to send out a special link. All of us on this phone call has the link that we're using. **(Conversation at 8:05)**

CM Brown asked TA Habada if this is a regular Town link. **(Conversation at 8:19)**

CM Cason asked CM Brown to stop so the meeting can continue. She stated if the other Council Members don't have the information someone can give it to them. It's the same meeting ID number that we use for our public meetings. **(Conversation at 8:24)**



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CM Brown asked if CM Williams is available. This is a special meeting and **(Conversation at 8:56)**

CM Cason requested that CM Brown please stop. **(Conversation at 8:58)**

CM Brown stated she's not understanding what's going on. **(Conversation at 9:03)**

CM Cason said CM Brown, we're having a special meeting. She said she doesn't understand why you don't understand what's going on. Someone can send the information to the other Council Members. It's the same link that we use every Monday. She said CM Brown called in and then back out and continue to disrupt the meeting. She asked the Acting Town Clerk to continue with the Roll Call. **(Conversation at 9:08)**

CM Brown stated that TA Habada would like to speak. **(Conversation at 9:48)**

CM Cason said that TA Habada can speak for herself. (Conversation at 9:50)

TA Habada stated that is her understanding based on a conversation with CM Chew who wanted a special session with Council and the police department. This is an open meeting, whatever you want to call it. It's a special session of the Council to discuss with the police department about an issue that they're facing right now. It's an emerging issue but continues from the past and it needs to be an open public session that anyone can participate in. It's not a special session where's it's reserved only for Council. It can't be a Closed Session because of the topic. **(Conversation at 9:53)**

CM Cason thanked TA Habada **(Conversation at 10:48)**

Acting Town Clerk Called the roll. **(Roll Call began at 10:59)**

CM Akers called the Acting Town Clerk and stated she couldn't get in.

CM Chew called the Acting Clerk and said she was in on the call and was dropped three times.

III. Meeting Rules – TA Habada announced the meeting rules. **(Conversation at 12:04)**

CM Brown called for a point of order **(Conversation at 13:12)**

CM Cason asked what the point of order was. **(Conversation 13:14)**

CM Brown stated she's confused as CM Chew called the special meeting and she is having issues getting on the meeting because she wasn't sent the link and stated she didn't get it either. **(Conversation at 13:15)**

CM Cason asked what was the point of order. **(Conversation at 13:34)**

CM Brown stated the point of order is the individual having the meeting should be on the meeting. **(Conversation at 13:37)**

CM Cason stated if CM Brown read the rules and regulations if we have a quorum that constitutes a meeting; not who called the meeting. In order to have a special meeting four people; elected officials had to agree. She assumed that's what took place. That's why we're here today. **(Conversation at 13:50)**

IV. Discussion of Police Staffing – Loss of Officers to Other Municipalities- Chief Cummings

Chief Cummings began his presentation by stating the special meeting was called in reference to the police department; issues of our officers and other agencies trying to buy our officers away from our town. We have an officer that accepted another position at another municipality. What he doesn't want to happen again is what happened last year and that was the fact that once one or two people left, then we had several leaving because the found they could make more money. We lost seven officers in one year. We've lost two in a short period of two months already to neighboring agencies. At this point we're trying to put together a comprehensive retention plan and maybe a raise package because at this point, we are basically the lowest paying municipality in comparison to the Seat Pleasants, Forest Heights, District Heights and Glenarden; and these are agencies that border us. That's why we're losing officers. We're appealing to the Council to put together some type of raise package for our police officers so we can retain the ones that we have. He gave some ideas and suggestions as



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TA Habada and myself to talked. We looked in some things are we're going to present that to the Council.

(Conversation began at 14:26)

V. Possible use of American Rescue Plan Funds for Premium Pay for Officers During COVID–

Chief Cummings/TA Habada

Chief stated he's done some research and reached out to our neighboring municipalities. Of course everyone's not willing to share because they're trying to keep their officers and keep a leg up on us. They're all using some of the American Rescue Act money. He talked with former Deputy Chief Alston who is the Chief of Police in the City of Mount Rainier. He sent me a Resolution that he and his Mayor and Council signed to pay hazard pay to his officers retroactive from last year; or when the Pandemic started because his officers as we did as well; worked the entire Pandemic when it started and up to this day. We're had officers that went down with COVID and came right back to work and still are here. We also found out there's language within this grant that we could use to fund the police. If we look at that language on the template that we're showing right now, and assist the police department by giving raise packages to our officers. The Resolution that the City of Mount Rainier presented and signed is on the screen. We're looking for something similar to what Mount Rainer presented. **(Conversation at 16:52)**

CM Cason thanked Chief and made not that we no longer have a quorum. She made note that CM Williams and CM Brown have dropped off the call and that CM Chew was in attendance and she has dropped off the call. Therefore, we no longer have a quorum. CM Cason and CM Ford are still on the line and now CM Williams is back on the line. She asked Acting Town Clerk to confirm if there's a quorum. CM Cason stated this is why it's so important that we get the virtual meeting protocol down because this is unacceptable. **(Conversation at 19:27).**

Acting Town Clerk confirmed there's not a quorum. She just sees CM Cason, CM Ford and CM Williams still on the call. **(Conversation at 20:00)**

CM Cason asked Acting Town Clerk to take roll again.

Acting Town Clerk took roll:

CM Akers Absent (note initial roll call)

CM Brown Absent

CM Cason Present

CM Chew Absent (note initial roll call)

CM Ford Present

CM Williams Present

CM Cason stated we did have a quorum but Council left the call not according to the procedures. She thanked everyone for attending.

The meeting ended due to no quorum.

VI. Public Comments (3 minutes for each speaker)

VII. Adjournment