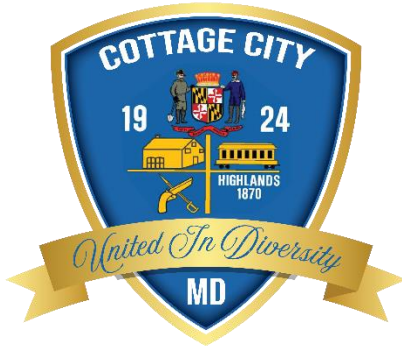




Regular Town Hall Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, March 12, 2025, at 7:00 PM

Hybrid Meeting

3820 40th Avenue Cottage City, Maryland 20722

This Meeting Will Be Hosted on Zoom & In Person at Town Hall:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82573671277?pwd=Unl6eEJrNTVoNjFmTHIJLzViZlITdz09>

Phone: 301-715-8592 | Meeting ID: 82573671277 | Passcode: 361522

Call to Order

Attendees

1. Ward 1-Commissioner Young
2. Ward 2- Commissioner Henderson
3. Ward 3- Commissioner Wheatley
4. Ward 4- Commissioner Givens
5. At-Large Report- Commissioner Brooks
6. John Hoatson-Town Manager
7. Anthony Ayers- Chief of Police
8. Todd Frankenfield- Alta CPA Group
9. Kevin Best- Town Attorney
10. Joseph Pruden- Congressman Glenn Ivey's Office
11. Lindsay Ancellotti-Chalk Riot (Via Zoom)
12. Lucia Proctor-Resident (Via Zoom)
13. Denise Hamler-Resident (Via Zoom)
14. Josh Durant- Resident (Via Zoom)
15. Laura Guischarde-Resident (Via Zoom)
16. Bill Kopecki-Resident

Pledge of Allegiance

Consent Agenda

1. Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Chair Wheatley stated that the minutes for January and February will stay as they are with the edits she provided.

2. Approval of Financials: February

Commissioner Comments on the Consent Agenda Items

Ward 1:

Commissioner Young asked about the cost of Cottage City's 100th celebration (Cottage City Community Day)

The Town Manager did respond to Commissioner Young's statement; the Town Manager stated that there is no need to worry about the overages on Cottage City Day. There were donations made for Cottage City Day, and once everything comes through, as Todd has mentioned it will balance out on the revenue side.

Commissioner Givens responded to Commissioner Young's question. He explained how the process of a budget works and stated that maybe they can pose that the information be reflective of the donations for the 100th anniversary.

Ward 2:

No comments

Ward 3:

No comments

Ward 4:

No comments

At-Large

No comments

Motion to Approve the January and February Minutes and the Financial Report for February 2025

The Motion was made by Commissioner Brooks and seconded by Commissioner Henderson. Young-Abstained, Henderson-Aye, Wheatley-Aye, Givens-Aye, and Brooks-Aye. Motion Passed.

1. **Public Safety Report**

Chief of Police Athony Ayers stated that currently the department is working on passing out information on the streets that were hit with auto theft. They are informing the residents not to leave valuables in their vehicles and to make sure they are locking their doors. There are individuals going around the town grabbing on-door handles, if the doors are open, they are rummaging through the car trying to get change or anything of value. The Chief mentioned that if the residents are parked outside their house and have handicap placards to remove them from the inside of the car because people are breaking into the cars to steal those and sale them. The Chief mentioned that due to government workers returning to work to avoid traffic the GPS and WAZE are instructing them to cut through the town. The Chief and Police staff are passing out literature to the people who are coming down the road. They are doing this in an effort to try and change the pattern which is currently on. The citations will begin on Tuesday April 1, 2025, for violators.

The Chief requested volunteers for the Easter event and if anyone would like to volunteer, they can contact him or the Town Manager, John Hoatson.

During the Police Safety Report the Town Manager also stated that he has been in contact with Google Maps to let them know about the sign that was installed. Local traffic only so hopefully that can be updated in their system, and it won't direct people through the town. He also stated that he plans to stay on top of the situation until it is rectified.

During the Police Safety Report Commissioner Chair Wheatley inquired if the Town Manager also notified Waze. She also asked if the Chief of Police, town attorney Kevin Best, and the Town Manager could investigate to see if in the future they should put speed cameras on the residential streets. She also recommended that a study be done in reference to speeding.

During the Police Safety Report the Town Manager responded to Commissioner Chair Wheatley and informed her that he would investigate reporting the issue to Waze.

Commissioner's Comments on the Public Safety Report

Ward 1:

Commissioner Young asked if it could be possible to get a red light put there.

Chief Ayers commented and stated that they can't put a red light there and he is working on getting the button flashes. He will follow up at the next meeting in reference to the flashing lights.

Ward 2:

Commissioner Henderson agreed with Commissioner Wheatley and stated that he also recommends doing the study. Commissioner Henderson also stated that people are coming down on 38th and Parkwood Street where there is a sign that states you can't come down the road between the hours of 4 PM- 7 PM. Commissioner Henderson feels that someone needs to enforce at the other end of the street so that people won't disregard the sign.

Ward 3:

No additional comments

Ward 4:

Commissioner Givens stated that if they were to make the street a one-way which must be done by ordinance through the town that would inconvenience most of the town residents. The town's residents need to really consider how they would like to go about the situation in reference to the traffic.

At-Large:

Commissioner Brooks asked the Chief of Police if the residents that were turning onto Cottage Terrace were able to continue forward.

The Chief of Police stated that we must find a balance on how they will instruct and move the traffic so that the residents can be satisfied. Once the citations start on April 1, 2025, hopefully that will deter nonresidents from using these roads.

Commissioner Brooks stated that the town has an infrastructure problem, and this does need to be limited. There is a lot more traffic coming in and the streets in the town aren't meant for it. Is it possible to cite people randomly until they get the hint?

The Chief of Police stated that on April 1, 2025, him and the Police officers will be outside everyday writing citations for several weeks. He stated that he may need to rearrange the schedules so that it can be coverage. He also stated that he will be getting a new sign that states residents only. The Chief stated that Senator Augustine is working on getting stop sign enforcement cameras. This will be beneficial to the town because a stop sign enforcement camera can be placed on 40th Place and the four-way stop as well as the three-way stop on Parkwood and 37th Place.

Residents Comments:

Lenny Ortiz stated that he understands that the Police need to do their job, also that the residents should be able to come through because after sitting in traffic all day you want to be able to get to your home as quickly as possible. He also stated that when he leaves out early in the morning, he has seen people speeding up 40th place going up to 60 MPH. They also run the stop signs and that is why there needs to be more Police officer's enforcements and different time frames.

Commissioner Chair Wheatley also commented after the resident and stated that she agrees with him because when she leaves out early as well, she sees people flying down Bunker Hill to get to 38th Avenue. She stated that people are running the stop signs constantly not even making a stop and roll just speeding through. She also stated that the Officers schedules need to be switched around and it might help.

Mr. Romero, who lives at 4205 Cottage Terrace, stated as a suggestion maybe they can provide the residents with hangers for their vehicles so that the Police can recognize they are residents, and they can keep going on their way.

The Chief of Police commented that he still has money in his budget that can go towards the purchase of the placards to hang in the residents' cars and give out three hangers to each resident once they prove they are residents of the town.

Commissioner Young also commented that she agrees with the placards and that the meeting should be advertised more so that the residents can share their input. She also stated that the speed bumps would be good and also that more speed signs need to be added in.

Brandon Pecker of 4002 Cottage Terrace inquired would the studies that is being referred to in the meeting be because of the chilling effect or deterrent of people not speeding due to the presence of the cameras; or measuring the revenue that would be generated by the violation of the law.

The Chief of Police commented that it regulates how many vehicles without any cameras or signage go through that area at a speed greater than 12 mph over the speed limit. It does create deterrents for reckless and hazardous driving, and it also creates revenue.

Resident Brandon Pecker stated that the study can't measure chilling effect or deterrent of people not speeding due to the presence of the cameras.

Resident Josh Durant asked if the Town could communicate with the residents about the new traffic patterns, and that he appreciates the cones and signs on Parkwood Street. Will Cottage Terrace be permanently closed between 4 PM- 7 PM? There should've been prior communication before today. He does appreciate the goal of reducing traffic. Waze is owned by Google so they should share the same information. With the traffic existing and the cones and signs, there was no way for residents to safely turn around down the street today.

The Town Manager stated that he will put it on Constant Contact. The measures today were about awareness, really making sure everyone was aware of what is coming starting April 1, 2025, the enforcements will start for the non-residential people.

2. Public Works Report (Verbal Update)

Commissioner Givens stated that they went around the town and cleaned the streets, and they are looking much better now. Commissioner Givens also thanked the residents for cooperating and moving their vehicles when there were signs stating no parking. Commissioner Givens stated that he wanted to introduce an opportunity for a street sweeper since the budget season is approaching. Commissioner Givens stated that the town is looking for a skilled worker for the Public Works Department, like a handy man. The job announcement closes on Monday March 17, 2025.

Commissioner Givens stated that the current trash cans in the town cost \$500.00 and there is a need for trash cans around the town. Commissioner Givens stated that he is requesting that the Commission consider the barrel method. The barrel method is a steel 55-gallon drum. The cost is \$20.00 on Facebook Market Place, and they range from \$20.00-\$40.00 depending on the seller. The lid prices would range from \$75.00 to \$120.00, which is the lowest price for metal ones. Commissioner Givens stated that this would also be an opportunity for local artists in the town to promote their artistry by designing and painting the barrels. Commissioner Givens is requesting that the Commissioners give him between 9-11 barrels so that it can be more trash cans in the neighborhood. Commissioner Givens also stated that there is a need for more dog poo bag stations. Commissioner Givens stated that he also wants to add hand sanitizer to the dog stations as well. Commissioner Givens stated that we purchased plastic boards so that we can post notifications around the town so that we can get more participation from the town residents when there are events.

Ward 1

Commissioner Young thanked Commissioner Givens for all that he does, she also stated that it would be a good idea to add the information in the newsletter and tell residents about the doggie stations, hand sanitizers like a reminder.

Ward 2

Commissioner Henderson thanked Commissioner Givens for all the hard work and effort he has put into the town. Commissioner Henderson stated that Commissioner Givens is a hard-working guy and Commissioner Henderson thanked Commissioner Givens again.

Ward 3

Commissioner Chair Wheatley also thanked Commissioner Givens for all the hard work he has put into the town. Commissioner Chair Wheatley also asked Commissioner Givens the cost of the barrels.

Commissioner Givens informed Commissioner Chair Wheatley that the cost of the barrels is \$20.00, and the tops of the barrels can range from \$75.00 to \$120.00. Plus, if the Artist charges a fee or it can have the Cottage City logo or painted a color.

Ward 4

Commissioner Givens stated that he wants to thank Officer Perez and Joe Mayo for helping. Commissioner Givens stated that he isn't out there by himself and that sometimes either Officer Perez or Joe is driving the truck. Commissioner Givens stated that there will be a system put in place to move forward so that the town can be cleaned efficiently and that everything can be accomplished.

At-Large Report

No comment.

Resident Josh Durant stated that he would also like to thank Commissioner Givens, Commissioner Brooks, as well as Joe Mayo, Officer Perez, and the Chief for helping during the transition of the Public Works Department. Josh also stated that he is excited about the skilled Public Works Laborer who will be hopefully coming on board soon. Josh also stated that he is happy Commissioner Givens has serviced the equipment that hasn't been done in a long time, we discovered a lot of deficiencies in that department, so the necessary changes are being made, and we are moving forward.

Commissioner Reports

Ward 1:

No comment.

Ward 2:

Commissioner Henderson stated that he was happy to see the ladder removed from the corner house on 40th Avenue and that the car that was up on a jack that was very hazardous was taken down. Commissioner Henderson also wanted to know if the drainage issue was fixed on the back of Mr. Kopecki's house.

The Town Manager responded to Commissioner Henderson and informed him that they are currently working on the issue with Charles P. Johnson & Associates, Inc. (CPJ) "the Architecture firm the town hired" and D&F Construction to work out that issue. The Town Manager stated that once they come out and assess the situation, he does believe that it will be an easy remedy for the situation.

Ward 3:

Commissioner Chair Wheatley wanted to give a quick update. Commissioner Chair Wheatley stated that she did attend the Maryland Mayors Association (MMA) in Annapolis last week. They discussed the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to use AI to catch up on minutes, also Maryland Municipal League offering training to the municipalities, assistance with goal setting, strategic planning, and team building working through difficult situations. Commissioner Chair Wheatley stated that they offer these services

at a discounted rate. Municipalities less than 10,000 residents, the cost would be \$2,500.00 and if you have more than 10,000 residents the cost would be \$4,000.00. Commissioner Chair Wheatley stated that they talked about the executive orders and how that will affect the budget. Commissioner Chair Wheatley stated that she will share more information with the Commissioners later.

Ward 4:

Commissioner Givens asked the Commissioners would they prefer the plastic or metal dome, and how many barrels they are authorizing for purchase.

Commissioner Chair Wheatley Stated that she recommends the metal tops vs the plastic because with animals it can be an issue to have plastic. Commissioner Chair Wheatley then asked the price difference between plastic vs metal.

Commissioner Givens stated that the price for the metal tops ranges from \$121.00-\$160.00. Commissioner Givens also stated that he feels the price for the barrels and the cost of the metal tops are cheaper than the cost of one regular trash can.

Commissioner Brooks stated that he thinks metal trash cans would be a better option for the long run. Commissioner Brooks suggested that Commissioner Givens buy eleven trash barrels.

All the Commissioners agreed with Commissioner Givens to purchase eleven barrels and tops.

At-Large:

Commissioner Brooks gave a shout out to The Green Team, he stated that they have been working with the Chesapeake Climate Action Network (CCAN) to cut the invasive vines from the trees. Commissioner Brooks also stated that he and Commissioner Givens would be tagging the drainage systems in the town so they can identify them so that it can prevent flooding in the town. Commissioner Brooks also stated that he spoke with the Chief of Police, and he informed him that it's a way to have the county come out frequently without having to keep putting in 311 tickets. Commissioner Brooks gave kudos to Commissioner Givens and the Chief of Police for clearing out the end of Cottage Terrace. Commissioner Brooks stated that it was a drain there and they were able to get all the invasive vines out of there and the Chief of Police put a ticket in with the county and they will be coming out June 9, 2025. Commissioner Brooks thanked everyone for doing an amazing job. Commissioner Brooks stated that the Town Manager (John Hoatson) is doing an amazing job.

The Town Manager made an announcement that Commissioner Brooks, and Denise Hamler (Green Team co-leader) received a grant from Chesapeake Bay trust for the Town of Cottage City and was awarded \$70,000.00 for maintenance of Cottage City vast tree canopy, and invasive species training for the community. The Town Manager thanked all that was involved with getting the grant.

Remarks and FY 2026 Budget Discussion

10. Joseph Pruden, Congressman Glenn Ivey Office Remarks:

Mr. Pruden is Congressman Ivey's Veterans and Military Affairs Liaison and a field representative. He came to the Town of Cottage City to relay a message from Congressman Ivey. Mr. Pruden stated that there will be resource fairs that Congressman Ivey will sponsor. If you are unable to attend the resource fair or if you are not sure you received the help you need, call the office. There will be a Congressional Art competition for high school students which can assist with paying for college if they win the competition. The deadline for the Art Competition is April 11th. There will be Military Academies, Congressman Ivey would like to submit as many people as possible for consideration to enter the Service Academies. The five academies that was discussed are the United States Military Academy of West Point, the Naval Academy in Annapolis, the Air Force Academy at Colorado Springs, the United States Merchant Marine Academy at Kings Point in New York and the Coast Guard Academy in Connecticut. The Coast Guard Academy in Connecticut doesn't require Congressional nominations to attend, the other four require it. You can go online and fill out the form to the academy of your choice

to get the process started. The Congressman has (non-paid) internships that are geared towards high school students. It will be available from June to August, you can go online and fill out the application. There are grants (Community Funding Projects) available that you can apply for to assist with the placards and speed cameras. Once the information is available Mr. Pruden will send the information to the Town Manager.

11. Budget Discussion: Police Department, Grants & Capital Improvement Projects

The Chief of Police stated that everything in the budget will pretty much stay the same minus him wanting to transfer the \$8,000.00 for Avio (Staff Benefits). To Silver Track because Silver Track was brought out by another vendor and the price increased from \$2,000.00 to \$10,000.00.

Old Business

17. Resolution 2025-02: Organizational Chart (Commission Vote)

Motion to approve Resolution 2025-02: Organizational Chart

The motion was made by Commissioner Givens and seconded by Commissioner Brooks.

There was a unanimous vote by the Commissioners. Young, Henderson, Wheatley, Givens, & Brooks. Motion Passes no nays or abstentions.

18. Final Chalk Riot Design (Commission Vote)

Ward 1:

Commissioner Young stated that she likes red, yellow and blue with stars and stripes. Commissioner Young also stated that if there were going to be speed humps implemented into the roads that the speed humps should be put down first then have the designs painted.

Commissioner Brooks added that the speed humps don't have to be right at the stop signs.

Commissioner Brooks stated that the speed humps can be pushed back some. Commissioner Brooks also stated that there is no need for a delay, the speed hump can be pushed back.

Ward 2:

Commissioner Henderson stated that he liked the orange train with the blue and vines coming out of the back.

Ward 3:

Commissioner Chair Wheatley stated that she does not have a preference but if she needs to pick, she likes both trains.

Ward 4:

Commissioner Givens stated that he likes the train with an orange background because it's bright and it fits perfectly.

At-Large:

Commissioner Brooks stated that he likes the orange train with the vines coming out of the back.

Commissioner Chair Wheatley asked how many they are installing. The Town Manager stated that they are installing one for the price of \$5,000.00.

Commissioner Givens stated that considering the price and quantity it should be placed at a different location. He suggested Parkwood Street.

Town Attorney Kevin Best stated that it didn't strike him as something being regulated by the Maryland Uniform Traffic Control Device Manual (MUTCD). Attorney Best stated that when you paint the curb, and you expect to give notice to the public not to park or whatever its regulated to be you can cite people for violating that painted image. Attorney Best stated that he believes that it may need to be a

straight white line on either sides, because it can become an issue if someone violates it as a crosswalk. Attorney Best stated that the Commission might want to investigate the regulations for the MUTCD. Attorney Best stated that he is reading from the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) Bicycle and Pedestrian Design guidelines which are different from the MUTCD. Decorative crosswalk markings: some residents request decorative crosswalk markings because they find them to be more aesthetically pleasing than other types of crosswalk markings. In general, there is high visibility. Crosswalk markings are strongly preferred over decorative markings because they are easier for motorists to see. If decorative crosswalk markings are used in place of high visibility markings, they should be edged with 12-inch wide, reflective white lines. In addition, the decorative surface must be firm, stable, and slip resistant vertical displacement shall not exceed 1.4 inches, and the horizontal gaps shall not exceed one half inch. Attorney Best stated that he thinks the big thing is the 12-inch wide, reflective white strip on either side. So instead of being irregular yellow, it should be white on either side. Attorney Best stated that if you place more crosswalks in the town that will cause people to slow down.

Lindsay Ancellotti with Chalk Riot stated that they can definitely paint white on the outside if that is what is preferred, but it is legal either way.

Resident Lucy Proctor stated that she appreciates the presentation and time to explain the purpose of the work, however \$5,000.00 for temporary art is not a great budget choice. How many crosswalks could be painted on the streets with the \$5,000.00.

Resident Bill Kopecki stated that if you put a 12-inch-wide white stripe on either side of the painting it would change the aesthetics.

Commissioner Chair Wheatley stated that the town attorney Kevin Best stated that this is a requirement for them to do so.

19. **MOU Red Light Cameras (Commission Vote)**

Motion to approve MOU Red Light Cameras

The motion was made by Commissioner Givens and seconded by Commissioner Brooks.

There was a unanimous vote by the Commissioners. Young-Aye, Henderson-Aye, Wheatley-Aye, Givens-Aye, & Brooks-Aye. Motion Passes no nays or abstentions.

20. **Salt Spreader Quotes (Commission Vote)**

Commissioner Givens asked the question does the Commission want to take the \$11,000 out of the current FY25 budget to pay for the salt spreader or move the money to the FY26 budget and take it out then.

Commissioner Brooks stated that he would prefer it to come out of this year's budget vs next year's budget.

Commissioner Givens stated that he would have all the information for next month's meeting.

The vote was tabled by the Commission and a third quote was requested from Commissioner Chair Wheatley.

New Business

21. **Proclamation: Tree City USA (Reading)**

The Town Manager stated that the Green Team has been working actively to get designation back for Tree City, U.S.A. and he did reach out to Daniel Coy through the State. and Daniel Coy is very excited that the town is working on the Tree City, U.S.A. Designation. One of the requirements, of course, is we have passed our urban tree ordinance. Our second requirement is the reading of the proclamation, which the Town Manager will do this evening. Next month the Town will hold Arbor Day on April 18th. There will be an event in the town. The Town Manager and Green Team are going to be coordinating and putting something together for this event.

Town Manager Report

22. Walkable Watershed Update

The Town Manager stated that recently he had a meeting with Michelle Kokolis, of the Environmental Finance Center (EFC). They discussed the Walkable Watershed projects that she presented to the Commission. It was determined in the meeting that currently Cottage City has only raised or earned \$2,093.57 of in-kind match. The town is supposed to come up with a \$50,000 in-kind match. To get these projects that we were supposed to get the town of Cottage City would have to come up with \$48,000. Having explained to Michelle that the town of Cottage City did not have \$48,000 to spend on these projects. Michelle went back to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFW) and was able to speak with them about getting everything in our proposal reduced for the town of Cottage City. The Town of Cottage City has \$2,093.57 for in-kind matches. The town of Cottage city needs to provide \$5,000 of in-kind match, which is now attainable. The Town will not need to convert any match to cash and will not be held responsible for the remaining \$45,000 of in-kind match. The towns' information will remain in the walkable watershed plan, as it is relevant to the other Port Towns, and the plan is already in draft form. The Town will not receive any projects or be part of any remaining grant activities. This means that the walkable watershed will not be rehabbing the existing rain garden, completing any design work for the new conservation landscaping or installing the stormwater planters. EFC Walkable Watershed will hold the rain barrel workshop that is scheduled for April 3rd as planned.

23. 43rd Avenue Stormwater Maintenance Project

The Town Manager stated that he has been working Charles P. Johnson and Son's (CPJ) and that if the timeline continues as it progresses the construction will begin in June 2025 and will end in August 2025. Lashan is working with her manager to see if the town can get an additional 2-month extension. The request for a proposal should be submitted by April. CPJ has spoken with the county, and they assured them that they will be able to push it through because they understand the time and the grant requirements that the town is under.

24. Old Firehouse Project: 3805 38th Avenue

The Town Manager stated that he is waiting for the State Architecture Board for an opinion, and to make the Commission aware the Board only meets once a month. The Town Manager did have a conversation with the State Architecture Board. They are in receipt of the letters that were sent to the board. The Town Manager is just waiting for a response. So as soon as he gets that response, he will keep the Commission apprised of what's going on.

25. House Located at 3813 Cottage Terrace

The town of Cottage City will be hosting a strategic planning event this spring regarding the concepts and thoughts about the house located at 3813 Cottage Terrace. The residents' feedback is essential to the project. The Department of Housing and Community Development has a Strategic demolition fund statewide grant, just to make you all aware, for demolition of the house the award amount can range from \$50,000 to 1 million. There is no cap. The average is normally \$250 to \$500,000 funding for fiscal year 26 would be open later this spring in May.

The Town Manager stated that they have identified dumpster day for Saturday April 26th and Sunday April 27th Saturday is cars only and Sunday is cars and pickup trucks from 9:00 AM until 3:00 PM.

Commissioner Givens stated that we can use volunteers to shuffle people through.

Public Comments

Anyone seeking to speak under Public Comments must sign in prior to the end of the Town Meeting. There is a 3-minute time limit. When you come up to speak, you will need to state your name, address, what organization that you represent and your topic of concern(s).

There were no public comments.

Adjournment

All meetings are subject to closure pursuant to the Maryland Open Meetings Act: Pursuant to the Annotated Code of Maryland, State Government Article Section 10-508(a), the Council by majority vote may retire to executive or closed session at any time during the meeting. Should the Commission retire to executive or closed sessions the Chair will announce the reasons, and a report will be issued at a future meeting disclosing the reasons for such closed session.

Motion to Adjourn the meeting.

The motion was made by Commissioner Brooks and seconded by Commissioner Givens.

There was a unanimous vote by the Commissioners. Young-Aye, Henderson-Aye, Wheatley-Aye, Givens-Aye, & Brooks-Aye. Motion Passes no nays or abstentions.