



April 2025 Work Session Minutes

Tuesday, April 1, 2025, at 6:30 PM

Virtual Only Meeting

3820 40th Avenue Cottage City, Maryland 20722

This meeting was hosted on Zoom:

https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/wikXeD2tS9CYUgILYh0_oV8IUPDyq_l6_2lanNjaFHQJAXHYelljhfVSyCEWaWg_b.tHEI2LX8GJ9TiSAK?startTime=1743546649000

Phone: 301-715-8592 | Meeting ID: 896 7022 5884 | Passcode: 7r+&s5Zv

Call to Order at 6:30 PM

Attendees

1. Ward 1 – Commissioner Young
2. Ward 2 – Commissioner Henderson
3. Ward 3 – Commissioner Wheatley
4. Ward 4 – Commissioner Givens
5. At-Large – Commissioner Brooks
6. John Hoatson – Town Manager
7. Todd Frankenfield – ALTA CPA Group, Town Accountant
8. Kevin Best – Town Attorney
9. Anthony Ayers – Chief of Police
10. Lucy Proctor – resident
11. Bill Kopecki – resident

Agenda

1. Call to Order and Roll Call (0:15)

All commissioners are present and accounted for. Commissioner Givens wants to add one Public Works related item to the discussion.

2. Swearing-in of Election Judges (3:08)

Election judges are:

- Ward 1 – Angela Jenkins
- Ward 2 – Frederick Hill
- Ward 3 – Richard Anderson
- Ward 4 – Demetrius Ramsey

They were sworn in by Commission Chair Wheatley. Certificates were handed out. The election is May 5.

3. Budget and Town Tax Schedule (7:51)

Discussion on constant yield which means that tax rates stay the same and income rises slightly because of increase in property values. This is the town's biggest source of revenue. The current proposal is that the tax rate stay the same and revenue would have a slight increase owing to increased values. The rates are .4538 % for residential and .6735 % for commercial.

The budget as drafted shows a shortfall of \$368,000, which is acceptable to pull out of reserves. Town Accountant suggests maintaining tax rates and pulling from reserves, but that is up to the Commission. This deficit accounts for grant monies coming into the town. Some of the increased spending is because of ARPA funding that is still to be disbursed.

Commissioners Young and Wheatley want to explain in the simplest way possible to residents that Maryland and Prince George's County are raising taxes but Cottage City isn't. Commissioner Givens clarified that tax revenue is going up but the tax *rate* is staying the same. Constant yield and maintaining the tax rate aren't the same.

Town Attorney Best wants to research to see if the laws have changed.

Commissioner Brooks wants to know what neighboring communities' commercial tax rates are to make sure Cottage City is on par. Commissioners Givens and Wheatley also agree that the commercial tax rates should be raised. Raising it to .72 would create approximately \$15,000 of revenue for the town.

More discussions will occur before the budget is adopted for FY26.

4. Old Firehouse Project (44:09)

Architecture Board provided an opinion and it requires further discussion which will happen in a closed session

5. Use of Town Shuttle Bus (45:05)

Town of Cottage City Resolution 2025-04, a resolution approving a policy to authorize the Town Manager to schedule the use of the town shuttle bus. Spells out the policy to request the shuttle by other communities. The idea would be that town residents are prioritized and that other drivers are arranged and insured. Town Attorney Best suggested including language about ensuring the Town is reimbursed for gas.

6. Resident Only Zone for Cottage Terrace (54:05)

Suggestion of hang tags or stickers to identify Cottage City residents so only they can turn onto Cottage Terrace during the rush hour time between 4 PM and 7 PM. This would help police monitor the area better. This does not have to do with parking on Cottage Terrace.

Commissioner Hernderson is concerned that parking can be congested as well and suggested a parking permit as well. Commissioner Givens disagrees.

Chief Ayers does not believe an ordinance is necessary.

Commissioner Young feels a sticker is better than a hang tag.

7. Lawn Maintenance Contracts (1:16:29)

American Landscaping and OakLawn Landscaping have submitted bids for \$17,897 and \$14,040 respectively. Still waiting on a bid from Keeping it Green Landscaping in DC.

8. Using AI for Meeting Minutes (1:18:28)

E-Scribe is going to do a demonstration tomorrow. Also considering using Municode Minutes to do minutes in real time. Pricing is not yet available.

Commissioner Young does not trust AI technology and believes that the Commission should hire someone to keep on top of minutes.

Commissioner Wheatley would like to see at least three proposals.

Commissioner Givens is generally pro-AI.

Commissioner Brooks suggested going with the Municode services that the Town has already purchased.

9. Commission and Staff Retreat (1:25:34)

MML Services proposed a retreat one Saturday for the soon-to-be elected commission to align goals, roles, and responsibilities for \$2,500. Commission supports the idea.

10. Impeller for Leaf Machine Replacement (1:29:40)

The leaf machine's impeller needs to be replaced. The replacement should be under \$500.

11. Public Comments (1:30:34)

Commissioner Givens mentioned the new trash barrels and suggested someone paint the Cottage City logo on them. Lucy Proctor sent example resident decals in the chat. Mr. Kopecki wants more than three estimates for lawn maintenance.

12. Motion to Suspend the Rules (1:33:15)

The motion to suspend the rules was made by Commissioner Brooks and seconded by Commissioner Henderson. Young-Aye, Henderson-Aye, Wheatley-Aye, Givens-Aye, and Brooks-Aye. Motion passes with no nays or abstentions.

13. Move to a Closed Session (1:34:53)

Closed session proposed to be able to discuss personnel matters under Article 3-305 (b), to discuss the appointment, employment, assignment, promotion, discipline, demotion, compensation, removal, resignation, or performance evaluation of appointees, employees, or officials over whom this public body has jurisdiction, any other personnel matter that affects one or more specific individuals, to consult with attorney to obtain legal advice, and with staff or consultants or other individuals about pending or potential litigation.

The motion to move to a closed session was made at 8:06 PM by Commissioner Brooks and seconded by Commissioner Henderson. Young-Aye, Henderson-Aye, Wheatley-Aye, Givens-Aye, Brooks-Aye. Motion passes without nays or abstentions.

14. Report From Closed Session (1:36:54)

Commission, Town Manager, Town Attorney, and Police Chief discussed alternatives for patrolling the town and that discussion was tabled in favor of discussing it in an open forum. The decision was made to change contractors for the firehouse project. The Commission adopted a policy about handling confidential documents.

15. Adjournment (1:40:32)

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.

The motion to adjourn was made at 9:10 PM by Commissioner Brooks and seconded by Commissioner Henderson. Young-Aye, Henderson-Aye, Wheatley-Aye, Givens-Aye, Brooks-Aye. Motion passes without nays or abstentions.