



Regular Town Hall Meeting Agenda

Wednesday, June 11, 2025 at 7:00 PM

3820 40th Avenue Cottage City, Maryland 20722

This meeting will be Hybrid - Town Hall & Zoom

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86918964855?pwd=WfZaLO7buaQTHq7afVQDUCV8SJjqPI.1>

Phone: 301-715-8592 | Meeting ID: 869 1896 4855 | Passcode: 412935

Call to Order at 7:04pm

Attendees

1. Ward 1 – Commissioner Salsich
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. Anthony Ayers - Chief of Police (via Zoom)
8. Todd Frankenfield - Treasurer Alta CPA Group (via Zoom)
9. Kevin Best- Town Attorney (via Zoom)
10. Ciera C – resident (via Zoom)
11. Jeff – resident (via Zoom)
12. Zoom User - resident (via Zoom)
13. Denise Hamler – resident, Community Garden Co-Leader
14. Diana Guespe – resident, Community Garden Co-Leader and Treasurer
15. Tom Campos – resident
16. Ms. Katie – resident
17. Rose Bemis – resident
18. Sadia Gomez - resident

Consent Agenda

1. Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Wheatley stated that she already sent her edits for the May 14, 2025 regular meeting minutes.

2. Approval of Financials

No questions posed by the Commission on the May 2025 financial report.

The motion to approve the May 14, 2025 regular meeting minutes and May 2025 financial report was made by Commissioner Brooks and seconded by Commissioner Henderson. There was a unanimous vote by the Commissioners. Salsich - Aye, Henderson - Aye, Wheatley - Aye, Givens – Aye, and Brooks - Aye. Motion Passes no nays or abstentions.

3. Public Safety Report

Chief Ayers stated that he is working with the County on the nuisances from the residence on 37th Place and working with the Motor Vehicle Administration to address issues with out-of-state and outdated tags. The MVA's enforcement unit will drive around town to monitor unregistered vehicles and out of state tags.

Ward 1: Commissioner Salsich – no questions.

Ward 2: Commissioner Henderson – His question about out of state tags was answered.

Ward 3: Commissioner Chair Wheatley asked about the status of resident permits for vehicles to assist with rush hour traffic and how residents would be notified. Town Manager Hoatson replied that he talked to HW Printing and the permits should be ready to release by Wednesday of next week. Mr. Hoatson will use constant contact, Facebook, and all of their other channels to communicate about the permits to residents. Commissioner Wheatley asked how residents who are not online or use social media would be notified. Mr. Hoatson stated that it would be included in forthcoming editions of the newsletter as an ongoing campaign. The permits will come in before the July newsletter, so the information will continue to be published.

Ward 4: Commissioner Givens stated that the time of day/Do Not Enter driving restrictions on Bunker Hill causes inconvenience to residents on that street and in the Towers; he would like to know if the resident permit could grant them access to their property instead of having to circle around the block to get home.

Commissioner Wheatley asked for clarification if Commissioner Givens was asking to allow residents to enter the posted one-way street.

Commissioner Givens stated that the historical reason why that street was designated as Do Not Enter was because of the out-of-town cut-through rush hour traffic. Over the years, it has caused convenience to the residents of that block, who have requested that he bring this issue to the Commission for consideration.

At-Large: Commissioner Brooks - no questions.

4. Public Works Report (Oral)

Commissioner Givens stated that Jorge Montel is a skilled laborer and has started to work on multiple projects in town. Mr. Montel submits daily reports of his to the Town Manager. If there are any projects needing attention in town, residents can provide that information to the Town Manager who will add it to Mr. Montel's assignment list. Over the next few weeks, a full assessment of the needs in the town will be prepared and presented to the Commission.

Ward 1: Commissioner Salsich - no questions

Ward 2: Commissioner Henderson – no questions

Ward 3: Commissioner Chair Wheatley asked who will be providing the Public Works report moving forward. Commissioner Givens stated that once Mr. Montel is fully trained, Mr. Givens

will be backing out of day-to-day activities, which the Town Manager will then oversee. Mr. Givens will only participate in special projects. Commissioner Wheatley stated that she has seen Mr. Montel working around town and that he has been doing a great job.

Ward 4: Commissioner Givens - no additional comments.

At-Large: Commissioner Brooks stated that he has seen Mr. Montel knocking out a lot of projects and has been doing an amazing job.

Commissioner Reports

5. Ward 1 – Commissioner Salsich - no comment.

6. Ward 2 – Commissioner Henderson stated that the recycling company has been breaking the top off the bins, and many bins don't even have a top. He would like to talk to the company and ask the Commission to consider how to replace the bins.

Mr. Hoatson stated that he would contact Trisha at Jetta Trucking tomorrow regarding this concern and to ask that they take better care when servicing the bins. Mr. Hoatson added that residents can dial 311 to report any issues with their recycle bin and believes there is a 45 day waiting period right now to get a new bin. Their process is to come and assess the bin to determine if it can be repaired or needs to be replaced.

Commissioner Givens stated that Mr. Montel knows how to fix/replace the lid and can assist with repairing town trash bin lids (not the County-owned recycling bin lids).

7. Ward 3 Commissioner Wheatley - no comment.

8. Ward 4 Givens requested the Commission to approve the purchase of the street sweeper. He would like to place the purchase by July 1 to be prepared.

9. At-Large – Commissioner Brooks - no comment.

Old Business

10. Vision InSite Software for CCPD (Commission Vote)

Chief stated that they are looking to replace Silver Track with a new vendor, Vision InSite, due to a threefold increase in cost to Silver Track after they were bought by a different company. The cost of Vision InSite is comparable to the current cost of Silver Track, at \$236.25/month (calculates to \$2835/year).

The motion to approve Vision InSite software for the Cottage City Police Department for police monitoring and tracking by the Chief and Town Manager at an annual cost of \$2835 was made by Commissioner Givens and seconded by Commissioner Brooks. There was a unanimous vote by the Commissioners. Salsich - Aye, Henderson - Aye, Wheatley - Aye, Givens – Aye, and Brooks - Aye. Motion Passes no nays or abstentions.

11. Migration from Barracuda to Proofpoint (Commission Vote)

Mr. Hoatson stated that the cost of Barracuda Essentials is projected to increase, and the Commission has not found it to be a great product. Peake Technology recommended using Proofpoint Advanced Email Security at a recurring monthly charge of \$107.73.

The motion to approve moving from Barracuda Essentials to Proofpoint Advanced for Cottage City email at a monthly cost of \$107.73 was made by Commissioner Givens and seconded by Commissioner Henderson. There was a unanimous vote by the Commissioners. Salsich - Aye, Henderson - Aye, Wheatley - Aye, Givens – Aye, and Brooks - Aye. Motion Passes no nays or abstentions.

12. Community Garden ARPA Fund Carryover (Commission Discussion)

Mr. Hoatson stated that they have been going through the community garden expenses and were informed that there were coding errors on items between ARPA funds and garden funds. After consultation with the Town Treasurer, it was determined that there was not ARPA funds obligated to the garden in December.

Commissioner Givens stated that the \$25,00 ARPA decision was made well over a year ago in 2020, and December 2024 was when the calculation of what remaining ARPA funds remained to be obligated. Mr. Givens recalled that \$25,000 was set aside for the garden.

Todd Frankenfield, Town Treasurer, stated that "obligation" per the treasury's guidelines means a contract and scope and a signed agreement between two parties. The town didn't have that in hand because the garden didn't come up at year end when they discussed what projects they were going to finish with the remainder of the ARPA funds. The issue is that there is no paper trail to support the decision to continue that project after 12/31/2024. Mr. Frankenfield stated that he is not saying the town can't use general funds to alleviate the discretion between what was leftover in 2023 for fiscal year 2026; he is saying there is no paper trail to state that they properly obligated the funds.

Commissioner Wheatley stated that the town didn't have a contract for the family relief program (the gas cards) but continued those programs. She asked Mr. Frankenfield how it was possible that we could continue those funds, and even borrow from the business relief to continue the family relief, without contracts in place?

Mr. Frankenfield stated that there was an M.O.U. (Memorandum of Understanding) signed which obligated the funds; this was the creation of a paper trail. This step was missed for the garden; if we had known about it, would have included it in the M.O.U.

Commissioner Givens stated that he is a huge advocate of resolutions there was a resolution for the garden. He recalls that he voted against the amount yet believes that if that was the amount that the garden was given, they should receive it. Mr. Best created a resolution form and Mr. Givens proposes that the town maintain a resolution binder so that there is no ambiguity and you can reference the binder for the specific resolution. Mr. Givens recalls specifically that this was completed under the former Town Manager Ms. Richardson, and perhaps it got lost in transition. Mr. Givens advocates for keeping a binder so we don't have this problem again in the future and have a historical record. He states that the garden should be funded for whatever the remaining balance is.

Commissioner Wheatley stated that when the Commission was trying to figure out how to obligate the remaining funds, they reached out to the community to see if there was a service, program, or project that could utilize some of the remaining ARPA funds as long as it fell within the guidelines. This is when the garden came back and requested \$25,000 for various projects in the garden. She stated that she and Commissioners Givens and Brooks were on the Council at that time. She recalls doing a document where they had to state how much each project would receive. If it wasn't a resolution, it was something they wrote down on an excel spreadsheet which they voted on.

Mr. Frankenfield clarified that budgeting money is not enough documentation, as that it is not a contract as per the Treasury guidelines. They would need a paper contract similar to the M.O.U. they completed at the end of calendar year 2024.

Commissioner Brooks asked the balance of how much the garden is supposed to get? Mr. Brooks suggested that they cut some of the Bates spending and use some of the general funds to cover that since we've already done the savings for Bates. He stated that it was a mess up and they should fix it.

Diana Guelespe, resident and garden treasurer, stated that the garden is not a separate entity from the town and is not a 501c3; the garden is a town program. She questions who the contract would be between and who would sign a contract from the garden? Ms. Guelespe stated that her accounting is based off the numbers she obtained from the town in March, which ended in May 2024. Ms. Guelespe has added the expenditures they've made since then. Her total is \$13,552.39 that has been expended under the \$25,000 ARPA funds. For the town budget, she has \$1,395.42 expended out of the garden's \$3,500. She stated that the town's reports reflect the garden as way over budget because they were charging everything to the general account and not the ARPA account.

Resident and garden co-leader Denise Hamler stated that it shows \$5,000 on the report operating as of this month but it should be \$1,395. The difference is money they thought they had to spend so they bought more garden beds to install in the fall. They were told by the commissioners that they had until June 2025 to spend everything. They believe they've spent \$13,552. Beyond a couple of requests from the beekeepers, they have bought everything they need for the garden.

Commissioner Givens stated that ARPA ends in December 2025 and the annual \$3,500 garden budget is what ends on June 30; whatever balance isn't used goes back into the general fund. The new budget begins on July 1. Mr. Givens requested Md. Guelespe and Ms. Hamler provide the information they read tonight to the Town Manager.

Ms. Hamler asked for confirmation of her understanding of next steps: in order to right the wrong, the garden has approximately \$11,000 to spend until December 2026. She would like a memorandum of agreement that when they allocate this through the budget it doesn't go into operating and get messed up. She and Ms. Guelespe are volunteers and have spent a lot of time on this and would appreciate clear direction on what to do and how to do it.

Commissioner Wheatley confirmed that from her calculations, the remaining ARPA funds the garden has is \$11,447.61. Despite ARPA being done, the town will continue to fund that amount out of general funds through the end of December 2026. Ms. Wheatley confirmed that of the garden's \$3,500 budget, they have spent \$1,395.42, which leaves \$2,104.58 to be spent by June 30th for the end of this fiscal year. Ms. Wheatley reminded them that they still have approximately \$11,000. To make sure that money doesn't get touched again, they must identify it in the budget and call it the garden's ARPA spending and give it a number on its own. Ms. Hamler stated that there are some recent fencing issues that came up with varmints, so that is likely where the money will be spent.

Commissioner Wheatley offered that if there is anything the commission can do to help make this go smoother and make sure the accounting number match, to let them know.

The motion to allocate \$11,447.61 out of the FY26 budget toward the community garden to replace the money that was lost out of ARPA funds was made by Commissioner Brooks and seconded by Commissioner Givens. There was a unanimous vote by the Commissioners. Salsich - Aye, Henderson - Aye, Wheatley - Aye, Givens – Aye, and Brooks - Aye. Motion Passes no nays or abstentions.

13. Ordinance 2025-02: FY 2025-2026 Budget Approval (Commission Vote)

Mr. Frankenfield stated that the budget could be voted on as-is and the previous decision on the garden allocation could be added as an amendment.

Mr. Hoatson stated that the budget is on the agenda for voting tonight. The packet contains the ordinance and individual line items, the taxes as were presented and discussed and voted on in a previous meeting. The tax information was reported to the state and the county, as the business commercial tax was increased this year.

Ward 1: Commissioner Salsich – no comment

Ward 2: Commissioner Henderson – no comment

Ward 3: Commissioner Chair Wheatley stated to make sure the garden's money is in the budget.

Ward 4: Commissioner Givens – no comment

At-Large: Commissioner Brooks – no comment

The motion to adopt the budget 2025-02 An Ordinance of the Cottage City Commission to Adopt a Budget and Levy Property Taxes for Tax Year 2025-2026 was made by Commissioner Givens and seconded by Commissioner Brooks. There was a unanimous vote by the Commissioners. Salsich - Aye, Henderson - Aye, Wheatley - Aye, Givens – Aye, and Brooks - Aye. Motion Passes no nays or abstentions.

14. Application for Secondary Employment of CCPD Officers (Commission Vote)

Mr. Hoatson stated that up for discussion and vote tonight is the application for secondary employment for the Cottage City Police Department. Mr. Best is in attendance and provided the recommendations that the police officer may not use their assigned take-home police cruiser for secondary employment duty and that the secondary employer should provide workers compensation if required by law. The change can be added to the language within the documents.

The General Orders would also need to be changed from the current maximum of 32 hours of extra duty down to maximum of 20 hours for weekly secondary employment so that the officers will conduct more patrolling on Cottage City streets.

Ward 1: Commissioner Salsich agrees with Attorney Best's recommendations.

Ward 2: Commissioner Henderson agrees with Attorney Best and with the maximum hour reduction in the General Orders.

Ward 3: Commissioner Chair Wheatley agrees with Attorney Best and has concerns about 20 hours a week, that this is a lot of hours and worries that the officers may be exhausted when they come to work or need to call out.

Mr. Hoatson stated that 20 hours was originally in the General Orders and it gradually kept increasing over time and would like to now revert it back. Mr. Hoatson asked Attorney Best what recommendation he would suggest.

Attorney Best stated that public policy in Maryland is that you must allow secondary employment and the reasonable amount would be 20 hours. He confirmed John's comment that it used to be 20 and slowly moved up to 30-35 hours, so it was 70-80 hours total. He recommends reducing it back down to 60 hours combined between their primary and secondary employment.

Commissioner Wheatley agrees with Attorney Best's recommendation.

Ward 4: Commissioner Givens – no comment.

At-Large: Commissioner Brooks agrees with Commissioner Wheatley's concern that 20 hours is a lot but will go with Attorney Best's recommendation. Mr. Brooks stated that just a month ago a request was made to bring in a secondary security company to patrol our streets because we didn't have one officer, which is something to consider.

Mr. Hoatson asked the commission if gas deduction should be considered for take-home vehicles but limited to only taking the patrol vehicle from home to work and back. Right now there is no gas deduction in place.

Mr. Best replied that if using a take-home vehicle is nixed for use while on secondary employment, the gas deduction would also be nixed, as the original reason for the gas deduction was to reimburse the town for use while the car was being used for secondary employment purposes.

Commissioner Wheatley doesn't think that's what the \$35 was originally for, that it had nothing to do with secondary employment.

Commissioner Givens stated that years ago the gas prices had spiked and at one time the take-home policy was eliminated. It was later reincorporated with a \$25 deduction toward gas. It is an employee benefit but there is excessive mileage and costly repairs on these vehicles, even though the town only covers one square mile. Some vehicles are 10 years old and have 70,000 miles on them. A new police car costs between \$50,000-\$70,000. A recent one month gas bill was \$3,500. As some officers live more than 25 miles away, Mr. Given encourages the commission to consider increasing the gas reimbursement to more than \$25. Mr. Givens suggested giving the officers an option: either a take-home car or an increase in pay, for example. Paying an officer a few thousand dollars more would dramatically increase the life of the patrol cars.

Commissioner Wheatley stated that the fuel reimbursement was for a take-home car that has been in place for many years and has nothing to do with secondary employment.

Ward 1: Commissioner Salsich agrees with having a \$45 stipend due to the wear and tear on the cars. The town should get a little bit back and can re-assess as needed.

Ward 2: Commissioner Henderson agrees with Commissioner Salsich at \$45 per pay period which could go up.

Ward 3: Commissioner Chair Wheatley agrees with Commissioner Salsich and is okay with them taking the car home and believes they should have responsibility and reimburse for gas so that they take better care of the car. She stated she believes it should be more than \$25, more like \$50 or \$75 per pay period in this economy.

Ward 4: Commissioner Givens believes that it should be \$45 or \$50. He stated that there has only been one officer currently paying the fuel reimbursement and that he should be paid back. Mr. Hoatson confirmed that he was paid back. Every employee should be consistently charged the fuel stipend with the exception of the Chief who is on call to the town 24/7.

At-Large: Commissioner Brooks stated \$45 per pay period is fair and the commission could re-assess in the future.

Commissioner Wheatley summarized that a majority of the commission agreed that \$45 per period is reasonable regardless of secondary employment, as reimbursement for the take-home car program.

A resident asked a question without presenting their name. It was unintelligible on the recording but was about a \$10,000 cost. Commissioner Givens replied to the resident that they could discuss it later, that it was a different conversation, and were currently talking about gas.

The motion to approve the Application for Secondary Employment as designed was made by Commissioner Givens and seconded by Commissioner Brooks. There was a unanimous vote by the Commissioners. Salsich - Aye, Henderson - Aye, Wheatley - Aye, Givens - Aye, and Brooks - Aye. Motion Passes no nays or abstentions.

19. Port Towns Joint Resolution 2025-01: Form A Community Development Corporation (CDC) (Commission Vote)

Mr. Hoatson stated that the name of Community Development Corporation was chosen as BCCE Port Towns Community Development Corporation (BCCE = Bladensburg Colmar Manor Cottage City Edmonston). The total amount of the project to get it off the ground working with Common Resilience and Tom Litke is \$60,000, so that fee divided between all four Port Towns is \$15,000 each. Mr. Hoatson is asking the commission to approve the resolution and determine how much Cottage City will put in toward the fee (will they put in the \$15,000 each of the other towns is contributing?).

Ward 1: Commissioner Salsich stated that Cottage City is smaller than Bladensburg and Edmonston and would like to know why there isn't a proportional ask of each town for the fee. Mr. Hoatson does not have background beyond that the fee was divided equally between the four towns.

Ward 2: Commissioner Henderson questions why they were are only looking at this one proposal and not 2 like we do for other proposals? He would like to see competition at work. Mr. Henderson would also like to know what we would get out of it.

Ward 3: Commissioner Chair Wheatley stated that the argument could be made that if we ask Bladensburg to chip in more, they would likely ask for more benefits from this company. The CDC does more than just business development, they do grants and façade improvements. Ms. Wheatley would like to know if they spoke to more than one consultant and would've preferred that they did.

Mr. Best stated that 15 years ago he was asked to incorporate the Forest Heights Oxon Hill CDC and shared that it does not cost \$60,000 to prepare the articles of incorporation, bylaws, and the 501c3 application for an entity like this. He understands that they are seeking seed money in addition to the legal fees and finds it odd that they haven't provided a budget to indicate how the balance of the funds they're collecting from the 4 municipalities will be spent for a 3 to 6 month period.

Mr. Hoatson has the scope of work which he has shared with the commission; he will forward to Mr. Best to review.

Ward 4: Commissioner Givens stated that Cottage City is the same size as the other towns but has a smaller commercial development opportunity footprint. Mr. Givens would like to know what opportunities are available and what could benefit us.

At-Large: Commissioner Brooks is not sure how he feels about \$15,000 and anticipated that it would be much less. He feels the commission doesn't have the capacity to take on much more at this time. Mr. Brooks stated he would like to start an advisory group and bring in community members who want to see businesses grow here and find out what they want to see. The town just raised taxes on businesses but we need to develop a plan to bring in businesses and build a plan and let the advisory group guide the commission on how we move forward with business development in Cottage City.

Commissioner Wheatley asked the commission if they will put the \$15,000 in the budget, and if so, would have to do an amendment for the \$15,000.

Commissioner Salsich recalled that Tom Liske has a track record of working with small towns and bringing in a lot of grants, even 1 million for a town in Carroll County. She feels okay with the \$15,000 if we'd get a similar return on investment. If everyone else has already allocated it, it could be good for us and is inclined to go with the \$15,000. Ms. Salsich would like to know if there is a way to prevent/protect ourselves against corruption, which was a problem in the past.

Commissioner Henderson would prefer more time to do research. He feels if we get a good return back, it would be worth it.

Commissioner Wheatley stated that if we're going to get our return it would be worth the investment. She'd like confirmation that this is a one-time fee. If we come in offering \$5,000 we may not be viewed as a team player; we would have to do the full amount. Ms. Wheatley agrees that we don't want to have corruption happen again. She requested that Mr. Hoatson bring this topic up in the next CDC meeting.

Commissioner Givens explained that our \$125,000 solar panels came at no cost because someone in Bladensburg did the grant and made it available to us as a package deal through the CDC to get the federal funding. Plus we get money back from the solar generation. Mr. Givens agrees that we should create an advisory committee of people who know how to build economic development because the commission, himself included, does not have the institutional knowledge. Mr. Givens stated that we are either in or out and if we're out, they probably won't include Cottage City in the future.

Commissioner Brooks agrees with Commissioner Salsich that hopefully we can get our \$15,000 back in grants but it is something they will have to stay on top of to make sure they get everything they can out of it.

The motion to move forward and join the CDC in the amount of \$15,000 was made by Commissioner Brooks and seconded by Commissioner Givens. There was a unanimous vote by the Commissioners. Salsich - Aye, Henderson - Aye, Wheatley - Aye, Givens – Aye, and Brooks - Aye. Motion Passes no nays or abstentions.

Mr. Hoatson stated that a letter of support needs to be approved and signed for the DHCD application for the Port Town Projects Façade Improvement Program and Branding and Wayfinding Study. It will work with the four Port Towns to launch a regional façade improvement grant program that will help revitalize commercial corridors, support local businesses, and contribute to long-term economic vitality of our communities. It will support a companion application for our branding and wayfinding study to establish a cohesive and recognizable identity for the port towns as a vibrant destination and interconnected region.

Mr. Hoatson provided a copy of the letter for all commissioners in their packet and will await Commissioner Wheatley's DocuSign signature of support in order to return it and they can submit the grant application to DHCD.

The motion to support the Letter of Support for DCHD for Port Towns Projects was made by Commissioner Givens and seconded by Commissioner Brooks. There was a unanimous vote by the Commissioners. Salsich - Aye, Henderson - Aye, Wheatley - Aye, Givens – Aye, and Brooks - Aye. Motion Passes no nays or abstentions.

New Business

17. American Landscaping Tree Trimming (Commission Vote)

Mr. Hoatson stated that there are several trees in town which need to be taken care of: a huge pine that needs pruning on the 43rd Avenue alley, some trees at 3702 37th Avenue, one at 41st and Parkwood, and another at 4001 Parkwood Street. American Landscaping provided an estimate of the work at a cost of \$2,170 with a savings of \$1,090. The resident at 43rd Avenue is very concerned about the pine tree and it is not her tree, it is the town's.

Ward 1: Commissioner Salsich – no comment

Ward 2: Commissioner Henderson – no comment

Ward 3: Commissioner Chair Wheatley no comment

Ward 4: Commissioner Givens – no comment

At-Large: Commissioner Brooks – no comment

The motion for American Landscaping to perform the tree work at the listed addresses in the amount of \$2,170 was made by Commissioner Givens and seconded by Commissioner Henderson. There was a unanimous vote by the Commissioners. Salsich - Aye, Henderson - Aye, Wheatley - Aye, Givens – Aye, and Brooks - Aye. Motion Passes no nays or abstentions.

18. Stormwater Issues at the End of Bunker Hill (Commission Discussion)

Mr. Hoatson stated that he reached out to the County to get an assessment of the stormwater issue at the end of Bunker Hill and learned that the former Town Manager, Carol Richardson, had been working with CPJ on the issue. Mr. Hoatson read the email he received from Sheryl at County in response to his inquiry, which provided background on the work and parties involved to date:

Office of Storm Drain Maintenance (OSDM) Executive Director Joanna Smith advised that Cottage City contracted with CPJ Associates to do an analysis of the pond at the end of Bunker Hill Road. The pond belongs to MNCPPC and does not belong to PG County Public Works. They suggested that if the pond could take additional drainage from the end of Bunker Hill, they could look at doing some design work to drain the water there. Ms. Smith requested that Cottage City put her in contact with CPJ for follow up. Mr. Hoatson sent that information to them today.

The Prince George's Clean Water Partnership (CWP) also has the pond marked down for retrofit. If the additional capacity exists, the County could work with them to incorporate it into their design. Once the County has the CPJ analysis, they can meet with CWP. If CWP does not plan to do any work there, then PG County Public Works will contract an engineer to put together a design for this area. If that is the course of action, that process will be engaged this summer and hopefully be able to do some work within the coming fiscal year. Ms. Smith has not been involved with the issue at the end of Cottage Terrace and will follow up to find out more information on that issue.

Commissioner Brooks stated that for over a year he has had 311 tickets submitted with the county and the area continues to be a mosquito haven mess.

Mr. Hoatson stated that County has all the photos and are fully aware of the extent of the issue. He will continue to press and speak to CPJ to see what they can do.

Commissioner Wheatley asked if CPJ has done the analysis? Mr. Hoatson is not sure and called Robin about it, but she did not return his call to answer this question. Commissioner Wheatley stated that there would be money left over from the 43rd Avenue stormwater work, so they could use those funds to pay CPJ to get the analysis done, as the town has talked to state, county, park and planning, the lieutenant governor, and nothing has been done. She proposes getting permission from Parks and getting the work started with the initial analysis. This will expedite the process by doing the groundwork to assess the situation and then secure a permit. We have a good point of contact with Parks who could get us connected and take care of it.

Updates

19. Town Manager Update

There will be a Juneteenth ceremony at Town Hall on June 19 from 11am-1pm. There will be light refreshments, and Mr. Wellington will be present (he was here for our Black History Month presentation). We encourage and look forward to hosting residents at the event.

Commissioner Wheatley asked for volunteers to help plan Cottage City Day. Last year was big due to the 100th anniversary, so this year will be a regular one with no parade. She highlighted that they'd like to hear from the community and know what residents would like to have at the event.

Commissioner Brooks recognized the one year anniversary of John Hoatson as Town Manager in Cottage City. Mr. Brooks expressed his thanks on behalf of the commission and the residents.

Mr. Hoatson stated that he enjoys coming to work every day and is really excited that we are starting to see change and looks forward to continuing on that trajectory.

Commissioner Wheatley presented Mr. Hoatson with a card signed by the commissioners.

Commissioner Givens requested a vote to release the funds to purchase the street sweeper.

The motion to authorize the Town Manager to purchase after July 1st the street sweeper as budgeted by the Town of Cottage City was made by Commissioner Givens and seconded by Commissioner Henderson. Salsich - Aye, Henderson - Aye, Wheatley - Aye, Givens – Aye, and Brooks - Abstain. Motion Passes with four ayes and one abstention.

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).

Commissioner Wheatley asked if there are any public comments.

Tom Campos, resident on Cottage Terrace, stated that he hasn't been able to join any of the meetings on the recreation community center and is out of the loop on that. He stated that he knew there were questions if there was any support for it and he states that from his street, his people, his community that his daughter made him join being a parent, absolutely. He doesn't know how far that goes with you guys but just something that was it. Thank you.

Commissioner Wheatley recognized a "Ms. Katie" who did not use the mic and was mostly unintelligible on the recording. The following was pulled from directly from the zoom transcript: "Turn it into reparation. Are y'all still planning to do that. because I know you're in the city. It's not young place to make sure that we have a place to go, but they haven't opened up our since Covid. We have nothing and we were really looking forward to it. But when are y'all are you going to do it, or they're not gonna do it to"

A man interjected, also not on mic: "to second on that, I mean just when I take my daughter out and this is a daily thing, we have to go above and beyond looking into other communities, to join Soccer Leagues, to go to the Skate park, to go to the library. We don't have any of that locally. It's not, you know, for me being a parent. It's not a bother for me to drive 5, 10 min down the street, but that's me. That's not the whole."

Commissioner Givens stated that residents have to stand up and talk to the mic.

A male resident from 3120 Cottage Terrace speaks on the microphone but did not introduce himself. The address was gleaned from later in the conversation. He stated that has been waiting for that for 22 years, but it never happened. He raised his son, who is in the US military, as a single parent. He has been waiting for that for 23 years and it never happened and now he told me they approve it, but we trying to see if they want to do it or not. The resident then spoke about tree cutting, that he has two trees he would like cut because he fears that when that tree comes down it will kill somebody. He stated that he doesn't have that much to spend and asked his neighbor to help him. He stated that his tree went down a couple of weeks ago and damaged a car and the car owner had to call the police. The police came to his house, knocked on his door, and asked him for his homeowners policy number. He didn't believe they had to pay anything for it. He talked to the owner of the car.

Commissioner Wheatley stated that we have a tree program where the town helps the residents with the ARPA funds to cut their private trees. She asked if the resident had applied for that program.

The Cottage Terrace resident responded that no one told him and he didn't know about the ARPA private property tree maintenance program.

Commissioner Wheatley stated that it was in the newsletter, and we've advertised it on social media and on constant contact. She doesn't know if there are any funds remaining in that program and suggested that the resident talk to the town manager. Ms. Wheatley stated she is not sure if we're going to do the private property tree maintenance again because it was funded through ARPA.

The Cottage Terrace resident stated the tree is getting old and big and leans to one side. His neighbor has 5 children and they are there most of the time and play outside. He believes that cutting down the tree is better than losing a life. They have already started cutting the tree down by themselves.

Commissioner Brooks stated that the town secured a \$70,000 grant and most of the money is going to be spent on trees in the city. He encouraged the resident to talk to Mr. Hoatson to get this tree on his radar and if we do have any leftover funds from the grant, then we could possibly add that tree to it.

The Cottage Terrace resident then spoke about three light poles that are deteriorating. They are leaning to the side and there isn't protective plastic around, there is just exposed metal. He spoke to Mr. Hoatson about it previously and called Pepco, who informed him that the little box for the middle would have to be replaced and would cost \$7,000. He reiterated to Pepco that he didn't need the meter replaced, just the cable.

A female resident approached the microphone but did not introduce herself. She asked what was going to be done with the house, if it was just going to sit there. She stated that they're going back on what they promised, that when the house was bought it was going to be turned into something for the community.

Commissioner Wheatley stated that she couldn't indicate when anything would be done to the property because there haven't been any grants secured for funding. She stated that before they start doing anything to the property, they need to hear from the residents. There was one strategic planning meeting held to hear what the residents wanted for the design and programs, but that meeting got derailed. They are going to hold another meeting to get feedback from residents. Ms. Wheatley summarized that it sounded like the resident wanted a community center there and asked what the resident would want – programs for seniors, computer classes, yoga classes, what kind of design (traditional, modern, industrial?). Before the town starts spending money, we need to have a plan.

The resident stated that she thought they already had money, lobbying it out for this and for that.

Commissioner Wheatley stated that the firehouse was purchased for a dollar and a \$500,000 bond bill and grant was secured. She added that the house was legally just secured because there was a lot of

red tape to get through to secure the title. Now that the town has the title, they can start going for grants. The town believes that they have cleared everything and own the property now and can go after funding.

The resident asked when they go after the funding, if it would be something for the community or changed into something else. If they do something else, wouldn't that be breaking a promise of why they said they wanted it?

Commissioner Wheatley stated that she doesn't think they're going to change it into anything else but she doesn't know. She stated that personally she didn't vote for the house and would allow her fellow commissioners to opine.

Commissioner Brooks stated that the commission changes every year, most recently with Ms. Salsich joining and prior to that, Mr. Henderson. When a new commission comes on, things can change. This project is not two weeks or even two years away, even if we got all of the grants today this would be years out. We have potential building designs, maybe, but there is nothing finalized. He would really like to see the firehouse finalized since we have the grants and we cannot have multiple projects just sitting in limbo.

Commissioner Wheatley agreed that there are a lot of projects going on right now and at least with the firehouse, we have the money. She confirmed that the house came up before the firehouse, but there was no legal issues with the firehouse due to a lack of red tape and an easy transfer from the Brentwood Volunteer Fire Department. This was not the case with the house and there has been a lot of stuff going on behind the scenes.

Commissioner Givens stated that the commission made a commitment to the people of Cottage City and voted on the property. If the people didn't want it, they wouldn't have voted for it. He stated that this is going back on a promise, even if it's not a promise Commissioner Wheatley made. It was made as a body to the community.

Commissioner Wheatley stated that if we're going to do the project, we need to start working on it and hear from the community what they want, that this shouldn't be a decision made alone by the commission. She wants the community to have a say and wants to hear how they want it to look and the services coming out of the building.

The resident stated that it would mean a lot for the community to have a place to go.

Rose Bemis, resident of Cottage City Towers, introduced herself and stated that she has been a resident since 2017. She stated that this place is gorgeous and better than Brooklyn, where she came from. She asked the commission about what the plans are for the building. As a senior, she would love for the senior to have it to visit, especially those residents in wheelchairs. It would give her something to do and she would love to see something big come of it.

Tom Campos, resident, approached the podium again. He stated that he would love to see a community center for seniors, kids, somewhere safe to go. He said if there were more meetings that need to be set up or an advisory group, that more people have to get involved. It is a crazy time in the world and things are expensive, people are tired and don't want to make time to come to meetings. But people do talk about it and they do want it. He stated that it's about getting the momentum going and seeing what the community wants.

Sadia Gomez, Parkwood Court resident, stated that she skipped class to attend tonight and her schedule is very busy. She stated that she was really concerned about how long it's taken to get the home and it's funny looking like the papers are good. She is confused because it doesn't seem to be a solidified purpose for the zone. She understood that that's where we're buying it, that's what we're planning to do. She was thinking about a yoga center, Zumba. She does not come to every meeting but she does hear from friends on the commission. She was shocked that a rally came in and deviated the purpose of why the building is being purchased. She thinks you have your say but it's way too far down the line and people have waited too long. "It's an invaluable piece of property that this community will probably never get a chance to have right next to the town, I mean just there's so many different ideas, and I don't know if, when people are thinking, I don't have children, but when I think of a community

center, I think all age groups. I don't know if when people are thinking, community center is only going to be for the kids like, I don't think that I think it is a great idea for every age group, because you have the ability to, even if you have computer classes, it's not just for the kids. It could be for the seniors to learn how to do their whatever they want to do. They could go in there and get a pinterest account, but just opening up their mind that it's not just from one age group. It could really benefit everyone. I know that there was thoughts about doing a walking area in the back, and then the land wasn't right. Those are things that we really don't have an outlet for all age groups to come together and enjoy a space. You know I've come to the salsa classes there outside. It's hot you know, or it's cold. We could probably do salsa classes indoors not to say that this space is not okay, but it's also very dated. People do rent it. I rented it. I had a great party here, but it took a lot to get it to look nice. It's not a very attractive place, so, having that opportunity could also bring new ideas to the community. We can have more volunteerism. We can have city year. There's a lot of things that yes, the funding is a long way down. But I just really hope that we get a purpose, and we solidify what is that purpose, so that we have goals that we can go after grants that will serve those goals versus allowing it to be out there in the limb like anyone could just sway it this way or this way. And I think we just need to like, what is it going to take another community meeting to say, this is what we want. It's not up for grabs like, think community Center think your ideas that way. But it's not just like 3 people speaking for the whole community. It really is not. If I would have known that was going to happen. Trust me, I would have been here. I would have skipped my class. It's like I did tonight, because I want to make sure that we know, like every time I drive by there, I'm already seeing that building I'm already seeing. How can I help? There is a lot of emails that come out about meetings in the community, and I will be the guilty one that once I see the logo I assume it's always a meeting versus like ideas, or you need help with the Cottage City day like I'm for it. But once we sign up like, maybe I just need like an email coming from like whoever is leading that little task so that I'm sure that I don't miss coming to those things, or maybe it could be like a text blast if we sign up for the committee to help us on Volunteer Day. Are you still in? And then I don't know if we have those capabilities that we could do like a little text alert for those individuals because it's a lot of emails. And I'm telling you once I see that cottage city logo I'm like, Oh, you know, I don't know if there's a way to do like a logo with like flowers for the garden or a logo, for, like you know, the Cottage City logo with like something else so when I see it, I'm like, oh, this is about the community center. It's important because it kind of gets lost in the shuffle. One positive. And I know I gotta go because I've taken my time. I love your bilingual emails. I love that, you know. Thank you for doing that because I think it does let the community know what's going on. I think that's everything that I wanted to say and my ideas for the center. I'll make sure that when that meeting comes up I would hope that somebody reminds me. I don't want to miss it, because I do have a lot of ideas. I just didn't even know we were at the idea stage right now because I thought we were still trying to attain. But yeah, I definitely would love to be a part of that, and I guess that is all I have. I will bother you about my leaning pole in front of our street that I still have no luck with Pepco."

Commissioner Wheatley stated that at some point they have to say this is what it is and this is what we're doing because what happens is a few come and they're the loudest ones, so they kind of take over the conversation because they're being heard and the ones who want the community center, they didn't actually show up so the other group was able to take over the meeting.

Resident Sadia Gomez approached the mic again and stated "I totally hear what you're saying, because I've been witness to when people take over a meeting, but you still have an agenda, and I feel like once again, the space has not been solidified with a purpose, and that needs to happen, because just because 3 people showed up doesn't mean that if the topic would have been like, Oh, the location may not be a community center, there would have been a bigger crowd here, and that's where I was like, what do you mean like? I didn't even know it was up for grabs, because 3, 5, 6 people came and just deviated the whole thing. So I guess the community wants to know, or how do we solidify that that is what it is. And even though it may take a back burner whenever it picks up having the goal, like, I said, is, what's going to get us those money? Because when you're coming to the State and saying, this is for kids, adults, seniors, that's all different pots that are going to come in. So that's all I say."

Commissioner Wheatley stated that there were no comments in the zoom chat and the commission was going into closed session. She thanked everyone for coming and sharing their thoughts and comments.

Motion To Go Into a Closed Session

This meeting will be closed under General Provisions Art. § 3-305(b) only: (1)____“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”; (7)____“To consult with counsel to obtain legal advice”.

The Commission proposes to go into a closed session to discuss salary information.

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 session the Chair will announce the reasons and a report will be issued at a future meeting disclosing the reasons for such closed session.