

TOWN OF SNOW HILL, MARYLAND
Life on the River

WORK SESSION

January 29, 2019

A Work Session of the Mayor and Town Council of Snow Hill, Maryland was held at the Train Station on Tuesday January 29 2019 with Mayor Steve Mathews presiding and called to order at 4:30pm.

PUBLIC OFFICIALS PRESENT

Mayor Steve Mathews; Councilwoman LaToya Purnell; Councilwoman Alison Gadoua, and Councilwoman Jenny Hall

STAFF PRESENT

Kelly Pruitt, Town Manager; Trish Goodsell, Assistant Town Manager; Jon Hill, Code Enforcement Officer; Jordy Kuczak, Economic Development; and Randy Barfield, Public Works Director

POLICE DEPARTMENT

Mayor Mathews reported that Chief Tom Davis tendered his resignation and will be leaving in two weeks. The Sheriff's Department has approved Lt. Edward Schreier to fill in as interim Chief while the town is looking to fill the position. Staff is working on the employment advertisement at this time.

DE-ANNEXATION – SUMMERFIELD PROPERTY

Mayor Mathews advised that he met with the Planning Commission last night to discuss the idea of de-annexing the properties that are owned by Summerfield, the Powell's and the Holland's. Letters have been received from these property owners requesting the de-annexation.

Mayor Mathews expressed that Mark Odachowski's initial vision was wonderful and he was completely dedicated to Snow Hill. Sadly, the market crash prohibited his development and left the property with an onerous annexation agreement, prohibiting current owners from doing what they want with their property. Additionally, Maryland DNR is in negotiation with Matt Odachowski to purchase land for a walking trail but the sale is contingent on the property being released from the agreement.

The Planning Commission voted in favor of proceeding and the Mayor and Council will be scheduling a public hearing. The process will take a couple of months before an Ordinance could be adopted.

MAYOR AND COUNCIL SALARIES

Mayor Mathews stated that while previously in office he attempted to have the salaries increased for the positions of Mayor and Council. The citizens voted it down in referendum. He pointed out that the election is coming in May and it will be for two Council seats and the Mayor. He feels that there needs to be some incentive to encourage people to want to serve and the current salaries do not cover the time that the elected officials give to the community. The current salary for Mayor is \$2500/year and the salary for

Council is \$1200/year. He added that this salary only provides for people who are retired or wealthy who wish to serve.

Resident Catherine Freeman questioned if we could look at comparative salaries for local municipalities. Mayor Mathew advised that the lowest they have seen for Mayor is \$10,000/year and the citizens will not vote to approve that amount.

Councilwoman Gadoua stated that she would like to see more diversity with the elected officials. She added that there needs to be incentive to have a young mom leave her kids to attend meetings or to have other interested parties leave work to attend functions.

Resident Haley Miller questioned what the town could afford for a salary increase. Mayor Mathews stated the maximum would be \$5000 for Mayor and \$2500 for Council. Ms. Freeman asked Kelly Pruitt, Town Manager if she felt the budget could withstand this increase. Mayor Mathews advised that Mrs. Pruitt is currently working on next year's budget and it will be discussed. Mrs. Pruitt advised that budget sessions will be held in March.

Ms. Freeman questioned if the town's lack of police officers is due to low salaries. Mayor Mathews stated this is part of the issue but it is also about them wanting a better retirement system with LEOPS. He added that the police officers do have town-paid health care benefits and take-home vehicles, which are excellent perks.

STRATEGIC REVITALIZATION PLAN

Mayor Mathews thanked Edward Lee for asking to discuss this plan, adding that this was drafted after he left office and it has been an interesting read for him. He reminded everyone that this document was drafted by the citizens and not the government. He also stated that the initiatives discussed in the Plan are fund-driven.

Mayor Mathews reviewed the entire document and pointed out areas in which the town has progressed with some of the initiatives listed. The highlighted sections were:

- MDH Motorworks on Timmons Street opened in the former Tony's Paint and Auto Body location, bringing 10 full-time positions
- The railroad is repairing track to Tysons, which means they intend to stay in Snow Hill
- Royal Plus established a business incubator
- Town will be applying for Community Legacy funding this year for assistance with second floor apartments downtown
- Sturgis Park Redevelopment Master Plan
- Toy Town improvements
- Spoke with the County about the Route 12 gateway into town and addressing the issues with the old Cannery building
- Floating docks installed at Sturgis and Gateway Parks
- Planned butterfly house in Sturgis Park
- PNC bank purchase for potential restaurant
- New bathrooms planned for Sturgis Park
- Street lights were installed on Washington Street with help from SHA
- Looking at fence mural and beautification in the municipal lot behind the post office
- Working in wayfinding signage

- Branding and the new logo are being worked on
- Addressing issues with flooding in Byrd Park

Councilwoman Gadoua called attention to the decreased number of vacant residential and commercial properties since 2015: residential reduced from 62 to 15 and commercial reduced from 23 to 7.

Ms. Freeman commented that the Route 12 gateway is very important and feels the town should consider running water and sewer to them. Mayor Mathews advised this action is cost prohibitive.

Ms. Freeman commented that she has asked for homes in town to be addressed and is upset that money was spent to purchase PNC bank instead of using those funds to address housing conditions. After mentioning 300 Purnell Street, Jon Hill, Code Enforcement stated that the owner has a permit to demolish and if he doesn't comply the matter will be brought before the Mayor and Council on how to proceed. The property was denied by the fire department for a controlled burn due to close proximity to other homes.

Edward Lee thanked Mayor Mathews for having the wisdom and courage to open this discussion and thanked him for looking forward and trying to build a foundation.

Mr. Lee recommended updating the Plan and evaluating areas of the document. On Page 17 under Public and Private Partnership he suggested engaging BEACON at Salisbury University to review the Plan and decide what steps are needed in moving forward. He added that the town must have the County, State and Federal government support and should have everyone together to review. He feels this will send a message to the business community that the town supports redevelopment.

Mr. Lee recommended, under #2 on the Chart titled Community Action Committee, that a business incubator be established. He added that he gave information on this to Chris Jacubiak during the process.

Mr. Lee recommended under Section I, that some things are being done but the town needs more moving forward, quoting the section where it speaks of using the town website for more community engagement.

Mayor Mathew stated that some of his recommendations have been addressed, with Royal Plus opening the business incubator, Main Street being worked on and the website being updated. He added that we appear to be on track.

A young man in the audience stated that he thinks about what would lift the community up, such as the Surf Riders group in Ocean City. He questioned what the community could do to assist with some of the needs in town. Mayor Mathews stated that there are several Facebook pages related to the town, which is great. He added that it is hard to motivate people to want to be involved, but he hopes that communication can lead everyone to arriving on the same page. Councilwoman Gadoua encouraged him to come to them with ideas, especially for being a voice to his generation and what their vision and ideas are.

Mrs. Miller commented that the town needs to see what attracts industry. She reported that she and her brother began magnet fishing as a hobby and would like to see it become an event on the river, with any artifacts found donated to the museum.

Councilwoman Gadoua thanked Mr. Lee for putting this on the agenda, adding that it is nice to see what they have accomplished and what still needs to be revisited and focused on. She stated she is a bit hesitant to spend more money on the Plan after spending \$35,000 and feels it may be better served to spend money on what needs to be accomplished. She stated they could take sections and grow upon it

while engaging the community. She added she would like to talk more with Mr. Lee if he would be willing.

Mr. Lee feels the plan needs to be looked at due to the lack of participation during its inception. He stated he feels that language on Page 31 needs to be changed regarding housing investment and feels the message has been distorted from the actual conversation.

Mrs. Pruitt reported on Community Legacy awards from the past 4-5 years, highlighting that \$358,000 in grants were provided to downtown business owners; \$83,000 was given for commercial building plans; and \$119,000 was given in 3% interest business loans. The Town continues to apply for assistance through these programs.

Jordy Kuczak, Economic Development Coordinator, discussed business incentives in which she is working on a flyer of information. She gives this information to interested business owners.

ADJOURNMENT

Councilwoman Gadoua made a motion to adjourn the work session. Councilwoman Hall seconded the motion and a roll call vote was taken, 3 in favor. The work session was adjourned at 5:34pm.

Respectfully submitted: Trish Goodsell, Asst. to Town Manager