

MINUTES

CITY OF WESTMINSTER
Mayor and Common Council Meeting
Monday, June 22, 2020 at 7 pm
<https://www.facebook.com/westminstermd/>

CALL TO ORDER

Elected Officials Present: Councilmember Chiavacci, Councilmember Dayhoff, Mayor Dominick, Councilmember Gilbert, President Pecoraro, and Councilmember Yingling.

Staff Present: Director of Human Resources Childs, Director of Community Planning and Development Depo, Director of Public Works Glass, Police Chief Ledwell, City Attorney Levan, City Administrator Matthews, Director of Finance and Administrative Services Palmer, and City Clerk Visocsy.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

President Pecoraro requested a motion to approve the following minutes;

- Special Mayor and Common Council Meeting of June 3, 2020;
- Mayor and Common Council Meeting of June 8, 2020; and,
- Closed Meeting of June 8, 2020.

Councilmember Chiavacci moved, seconded by Councilmember Gilbert, to approve the minutes.

VOTE

AYES: President Pecoraro, Councilmember Chiavacci, Councilmember Dayhoff, Councilmember Gilbert, and Councilmember Yingling.

NAYS: None.

PRESENTATION

Mayoral Proclamation

Mayor Dominick read the Mayoral Proclamation, proclaiming July 2020 as Recreation and Parks Month.

CONSENT CALENDAR

President Pecoraro requested a motion to approve the Consent Calendar that consisted of the following items:

- Approval of May 2020 Departmental Operating Reports;
- Approval – Conifer Public Works Agreement No. A-1134, Stormwater Management Deed and Easement; and,
- Approval – Subrecipient Agreement between Carroll County Commissioners and City of Westminster for CARES Act Relief Fund Grant.

Councilmember Dayhoff moved, seconded by Councilmember Chiavacci, to approve the Consent Calendar.

VOTE

AYES: President Pecoraro, Councilmember Chiavacci, Councilmember Dayhoff, Councilmember Gilbert, and Councilmember Yingling.

NAYS: None.

REPORT FROM THE MAYOR

Mayor Dominick reported that progress was being made on updating the City's website. He shared that an industry layout would be sent out to the Common Council for their review and feedback.

Additionally, Mayor Dominick updated the Common Council on his work with Ms. Matthews and the department directors to transition City staff back to customary operations. He informed his colleagues that the proposed plan reflects their feedback and suggestions. Mayor Dominick then outlined the key elements of the transition plan:

Overarching Transition Plan Principles

- Appropriate PPE use and common space disinfection/sanitization measures will be implemented.
- Staff will adhere to 6' physical distancing guidelines.
- Virtual meetings should be held in lieu of in-person meetings when feasible.
- Productive teleworking arrangements should be continued to limit number of onsite staff.

Recreation Facilities

- Outdoor recreation facilities have been re-opened, with two exceptions. Bathroom facilities at City Park remain closed, and Community Room rentals are not being accepted; no status change is recommended at this time.
- The Westminster Family Fitness Center re-opened on June 22, 2020, at 50% capacity.

Police Department

- The Command Staff is working staggered schedules, in part to minimize the number of personnel in headquarters at any one time.
- Patrol Bureau staff are continuing modified personal contact efforts, use of telephone reporting, etc.
- Staff in the Criminal Investigations Bureau has been split into two shifts to minimize the number of personnel in headquarters at any one time
- The Police Department is continuing the use of teleworking where feasible.
- The building lobby will remain closed to the public.

Recreation and Parks

- Benefited staff are now working onsite and have relocated to the Babylon Building, both for physical distancing reasons and to free up space for holding fitness classes.

Streets

- As proposed, the Streets Department would resume normal staffing operations on June 29, 2020.
- The staff would be split into two teams that would work out of separate parts of the building to minimize unnecessary employee exposure. Staff report to work times will be offset by one hour between the two teams to further minimize exposure.
- To the extent possible, only one employee would be allowed per truck.
- Lunch/break times would be staggered to further minimize employee contact.

Utility Maintenance

- As proposed, the Utility Maintenance Department would resume normal staffing operations on June 29, 2020.
- The staff would be split into two teams. One team would work out of the Utility Maintenance facility, while the other team would work out of 17-25 West Main to minimize unnecessary employee exposure.
- To the extent possible, only one employee would be allowed per truck.
- Lunch/break times would be staggered to further minimize employee contact.

Water Plant

- As proposed, the Water Plant would resume normal staffing operations on July 13, 2020. Staff requested the longer timeframe given the criticality of this service, the specialized training needed to operate the Plant, and the increasing number of virus cases in other parts of the country.
- To the extent possible, no more than one employee would be allowed per truck.
- Lunch/break times would be staggered to further minimize employee contact.

Wastewater Treatment Plant

- As proposed, the Wastewater Treatment Plant would resume normal staffing operations on July 13, 2020. Staff requested the longer timeframe given the criticality of this service, the specialized training needed to operate the Plant, and the increasing number of virus cases in other parts of the country.
- To the extent possible, no more than one employee would be allowed per truck.
- Lunch/break times would be staggered to further minimize employee contact.

56 West Main – Administrative Offices

- Each department director would determine the return to work plan for their staff.

- Productive teleworking arrangements should be continued where feasible to limit the number of staff in the building.
- To offer additional protection, staff was exploring installation of plexiglass barriers for cubicle space arrangements.
- City offices would remain closed to the public.

Mayor Dominick informed his Common Council colleagues that he would provide the proposed transition plan to them in writing.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC UPDATE

Ms. Matthews reported that the Westminster Police Department continued to report minimal issues regarding executive order violations.

Ms. Matthews then reported that the Westminster Family Fitness Center re-opened on June 22, 2020, with restricted capacity as required by the Governor's Executive Order. Assistant Director of Recreation and Parks Mullendore reported to Ms. Matthews regarding operations on the first day of its re-opening:

- Customers were patient and respectful of the new operating procedures;
- There were 47 facility entries as of 4:30 pm on June 22; and,
- Customers were calling to reserve spots in group fitness classes and childcare, as it is required that reservations were made 48 hours in advance.

President Pecoraro shared that he had gone to the Family Center earlier in the day and was pleased with his experience. Before entering the facility, a staff member took his temperature. He noted that cardio equipment was spaced out to comply with physical distancing guidelines.

REPORTS FROM STANDING COMMITTEES

There were no reports from the following Standing Committees: Arts Council, Economic and Community Development, Personnel, Public Works, and, Recreation and Parks.

President Pecoraro, on behalf of the Finance Committee, noted the adoption of the FY 2021 budget on June 8, 2020. He thanked the elected body and City staff for working through the complex and challenging issues that arose during the budget process.

Councilmember Chiavacci, on behalf of the Public Safety Committee, reported the Westminster Police Department's annual award ceremony was held virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Chief Ledwell would provide the winners of each award during his departmental report later in the meeting.

COUNCIL COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

Councilmember Chiavacci inquired when the Mayor and Common Council would resume in person meetings. Councilmember Pecoraro agreed that it would be beneficial to discuss this matter at an upcoming meeting.

Councilmember Gilbert announced that Caroline Freundel of Francis Scott Key High School was the contest winner for the Year of the Woman Scholarship award. She shared that many wonderful essays were received.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

FY 2019 Audit Findings and Associated Corrective Action Plan

Ms. Matthews stated that, on May 7, 2020, Ms. Wanda Lynn of Brown, Shultz, Sheridan, Fritz, CPAs presented the FY 2019 financial reports to the Mayor and Common Council. The Mayor and Common Council agreed to schedule a follow up discussion of the FY 2019 audit findings, and the associated corrective action plan.

Ms. Matthews stated that there were eight audit findings. Ms. Matthews and Ms. Palmer then provided information on each of the eight findings, and the corrective action plan associated with the each finding. The eight findings included the following:

- Finding 2019-001 concerns transactions not recorded in the period of benefit.
- Finding 2019-002 relates to the number of post-year adjustments.
- Finding 2019-003 involves Capital Assets being posted in the wrong period.
- Finding 2019-004 addresses inventory not correctly reflected on invoices
- Finding 2019-005 relates to deposits not made to City accounts.
- Finding 2019-006 involves not allocating expenses to the Public Housing Agency consistently.
- Finding 2019-007 concerns the Public Housing Agency deposit agreement not being up to date.
- Finding 2019-008 addresses the Public Housing Agency Voucher Management System not being updated in a timely manner.

Ms. Matthews noted that Finding 2019-005 relates to accounts through the Carroll County Community Foundation. While the corrective action plan noted that all accounts had been closed, one account (Supports of Westminster Police Department Fund) remained technically open although all account monies had been expended. The City was awaiting confirmation from the Community Foundation regarding the account's closure. President Pecoraro asked that Ms. Matthews and Ms. Levan identify an alternative way for the City to receive donated funds that could be managed internally.

President Pecoraro inquired if the elected body had any questions regarding any of the audit findings or the associated corrective action plan. There were no further questions by the Mayor and Common Council.

Councilmember Chiavacci stated, that although the City strives to not have any audit findings, if they do occur, staff can address them. He complimented Ms. Matthews and Ms. Palmer for taking action and addressing each of the findings. In addition, Councilmember Chiavacci noted that, when he was first elected to the Common Council, the City had many more audit findings compared to the eight for FY 2019.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS

City Administrator

Ms. Matthews reported that the job announcement for the Director of Human Resources position was posted by The Novak Consulting Group. The position would remain open until filled, with the first review of the applications occurring on July 31, 2020.

Ms. Matthews noted that the public hearing and adoption of Ordinance No. 924, an ordinance proposing issuance of \$1.225 million in bonds for improvements to the Westminster Municipal Pool Complex, were scheduled for the special Mayor and Common Council meeting on June 29, 2020. Due to State regulations, specific parameters were included in the newspaper advertisement for this public hearing. Ms. Matthews stated that those wishing to testify would be admitted in the Zoom meeting; requests must be sent to Ms. Visocsky at Comments@westgov.com. For those who would like to submit comments or requests to dial in during the public hearing the by the close of business on June 26, 2020. Ms. Matthews informed the Mayor and Common Council that this information would be publicized via the City website and Facebook page, in addition to the required newspaper advertisement.

Community Planning and Development Department

Mr. Depo reported that, on June 10, 2020, the Westminster Tree Commission met to discuss the following:

- Determine a date and time to virtually host the Annual Urban and Community Forestry Workshop;
- Conduct a digital Arbor Day celebration on October 24, 2020;
- Review the Comprehensive Tree Plan; and,
- The planting of three street trees on Pennsylvania Avenue and one on West Main Street.

Mr. Depo also reported that the Westminster Planning and Zoning Commission approved the following on June 11, 2020:

- Site Development Plan for Mission BBQ, LLC;
- Signage Permit for Big Lots; and,
- Site Development Plan for 7-Eleven Convenience Store.

Mr. Depo concluded his report by stating that the City had received and approved five outdoor seating permits for local downtown restaurants. Additionally, four requests for outdoor seating for restaurants located within shopping centers located on MD 140 were received: two were approved and two were under review.

Westminster Police Department

Chief Ledwell reported that the Westminster Police Department conducted its annual awards and promotions ceremony by video through the department's Facebook page. The award recipients were:

- 2019 Officer of the Year – Sergeant Timothy Rife;
- 2019 Civilian of the Year – Cheryl Pickett;
- 2019 Police Officer Rookie of the Year – Private First Class Alexander DeAngelis;
- Chief's Commendation – Lieutenant Stephen Launchi;
- Chief's Commendation – Private First Class Spencer Volland;

- Unit Citation – Criminal Investigations Bureau (Lieutenant Jeffrey Schuster, Sergeant Richard Lambert, Sergeant Patricia Parks, Corporal William Long, and Detective John Emminizer);
- Top DUI – Private First Class Allen Ecker;
- Life Saving Award – Detective Evan Kinsey and Officer Noah Saltzman;
- Life Saving Award – Acting Corporal Ashley Stahlman and Private First Class Spencer Volland;
- Volunteer of the Year – Auxiliary Sergeant Larry Myers;
- Unit Citation – Auxiliary Unit (Auxiliary Unit Lieutenant Kenny Carlisle, Auxiliary Unit Sergeant Deb Pujals-Keyser, Auxiliary Unit Sergeant Larry Myers, and Auxiliary Unit Officer Blaine Brown); and,
- Community Partnership – Brook-Owen Real Estate.

Chief Ledwell noted that Lieutenant Stephen Blackwell was recognized for his recent promotion, which was effective March 3, 2020. His March in-person promotional ceremony was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chief Ledwell then reported the following:

- The Police Department conducted its second annual property and evidence audit since obtaining the new software and reorganizing the property room; the audit yielded great results;
- The Human Services Program's women's shelter located on Green Street transitioned to its new location on Stoner Avenue on June 8, 2020.
- Following two recent sprees of theft from motor vehicles, the Police Department conducted directed patrols, distributed community notification flyers to the -impacted neighborhoods, and posted a community notification on social media.
- The Department assisted in coverage for a senior graduation parade for Westminster High School and Winters Mill High School on June 16, 2020 without incident.

Chief Ledwell concluded his report by commenting on the national discussion concerning social justice and police brutality matters. He informed the Mayor and Common Council that the Police Department was participating in two countywide law enforcement groups to be introspective and to ensure that the Westminster Police Department continued to meet best practices and to evolve with any changes to best practices. The two work groups concerned use of force policies and the associated training curriculum and body worn cameras.

Finance and Administrative Services Department

Ms. Palmer thanked the Mayor and Common Council for their attention to the presentation of the audit finding for FY 2019. She stated that the findings did not necessarily equate to any change in City practice; rather, Shultz, Sheridan, Fritz, CPAs provided a more comprehensive review than past firms. Ms. Palmer thanked all department heads and their support staff for providing required information during the audit process. Ms. Palmer noted that work related to the FY 2020 audit was getting underway.

Housing Services

Ms. Valenzisi announced that the Baltimore Office of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development approved the City's five-year Public Housing Authority Plan. Ms. Matthews congratulated Ms. Valenzisi and her staff for this accomplishment.

CITIZEN COMMENTS

President Pecoraro read the written citizen comments submitted via Comments@westgov.com.

Donna Robinson, 33 Cypress Point Court, thanked the City staff who addressed trash and furniture that was dumped at the stormwater management pond located on Tahoma Farm Road and Firestone Drive, as well as fencing that was cut at this location. The residents of Eagleview Estates were grateful for the staff's responsiveness.

Kelly Hambleton, 58 Pennsylvania Avenue, Unit B, shared her appreciation for the work that was done during the budget process. She suggested that consideration be given to providing funding for the homeless, veterans, and low-income families who needed assistance. Ms. Hambleton shared her concerns regarding shelter conditions and overcrowding. She asked the City to consider grants that would address the needs of homeless shelters, veterans, and low-income families who need childcare while working.

ADJOURNMENT

President Pecoraro adjourned the meeting at 7:58 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Shannon Visocky, City Clerk

Full audio version is available on www.westminstermd.gov