

CITY OF SALISBURY
WORK SESSION (VIA ZOOM MEETING)
SEPTEMBER 21, 2020

Public Officials Present

Council President John “Jack” R. Heath
Councilwoman Angela M. Blake
Councilwoman April Jackson

Council Vice President Muir Boda
Councilwoman Michele Gregory

Public Officials Absent

Mayor Jacob R. Day

In Attendance

City Administrator Julia Glanz, Deputy City Administrator Andy Kitzrow, Department of Infrastructure & Development (DID) Director Amanda Pollack, City Planner Anne Roane, Business Development Director Laura Soper, Field Operations (FOps) Director Tom Stevenson, City Attorney Mark Tilghman, and City Clerk Kimberly Nichols.

On September 21, 2020 the Salisbury City Council convened in a Work Session at 4:30 p.m. via Zoom. The following is a synopsis of the topics discussed:

Resolution to accept donation of walk-in freezer at the Zoo

FOps Director Tom Stevenson reported on accepting the donation of a walk-in freezer from the Zoo Commission. The Zoo has used the same freezer for 20 years. The donation of \$25,339 would include the installation and rental costs for a freezer while the new freezer is assembled and installed on site.

Council reached unanimous consensus to advance the resolution to legislative agenda.

Resolution to restrict parking on Webster Street

Mr. Stevenson reported on the resolution to restrict parking along a two-hundred-foot portion of Webster Street. The concern was with the commercial structure on one side fronting Eastern Shore Drive and a residential structure across from the back of the commercial facility. The commercial facility used a combination of off-street and on-street parking. If the resident parked on the other side of the street, it was nearly impossible for sanitation vehicles and would be a problem for emergency vehicles/ambulances. Mr. Stevenson suggested “No Parking” on 200 feet of the north-east side of Webster Street, which would clear the commercial property and continue allowing parking on the other side of the street.

Mr. Boda and Ms. Jackson wanted to hear from the residents in the area before moving forward with the restriction since many citizens lived in neighborhoods and had to park on the streets. No businesses should be allowed to park on the street whether or not they could legally park there.

Ms. Blake asked which entity was being blocked in the roadway, and Mr. Stevenson said it was a combination of both. Parking was currently allowed on both sides of the street. The commercial business vehicles parked diagonally on private property and extended out into the roadway. Combining the diagonal parking and resident parking narrowed the street. The residential property also had parking on Prince Street. He offered discussing the situation with the resident but was sure they were not in favor of it. The entities could not resolve the problem themselves.

Ms. Gregory was concerned that emergency vehicles were unable to pass through. If the resident would not discuss the problem, she was unsure what could be done, and was willing to move the resolution forward. If the rest of Council wanted to hear from the resident first, she would agree.

President Heath reported Webster Street was barely wider than an alley. He offered to visit the site with Mr. Stevenson to look for another area for the resident to park. Mr. Stevenson said he thought the resident just preferred using the back door which backed up to Webster Street. The front of the house faced Prince Street with available parking. He thanked President Heath for the offer, and due to the safety issue suggested placing “No Parking” on both sides of first 200 feet. This would require the business to make some concessions and adjustments so that the roadway was not blocked by anyone.

President Heath suggested to City Administrator Julia Glanz for Chief Tull or a Deputy Chief to visit the site and offer a recommendation before moving forward with the parking restriction.

Ordinance to amend Chapter 12.36- Sidewalk Cafes

Business Development Director Laura Soper reported after COVID-19 hit, there was the need for outdoor restaurant seating. Code updates were needed regarding Sidewalk Cafés and to formalize some of the agreements in the public right-a-way spaces on sidewalks pertaining to Downtown. The ordinance cleaned up the legislation and allowed for a little more development including canopies and fencing, and how the City allowed the owners to operate. The type of license was already in the Fee Ordinance, and so Ms. Soper did not propose fee changes.

President Heath discussed the continuity of appearance with concerns if there were no standards. Ms. Soper said there was leverage in the legislation to allow oversight from DID. They also needed approvals from the Fire Marshal and the Historic District Commission.

Ms. Glanz said that if I & D could provide recommendations, uniformity would be provided along with the uniqueness of each business.

Council reached unanimous consensus to advance the ordinance to legislative agenda.

Zoning Text Amendment to allow warehouses in Shopping Centers

City Planner Anne Roane reported the text amendment was initiated by Sperry Van Ness Commercial Real Estate on behalf of Oakridge Baptist Church. The old K-Mart building was being used partially for warehouse storage, which was not permitted in the Code. She reported

seeing more and more vacancies with the big box businesses, and they were very difficult to do an adaptive re-use on because of their size. This amendment would allow warehouses in the Shopping Center districts. The Planning Commission held a Public Hearing on June 18, 2020, and another Public Hearing was required with City Council.

Council reached unanimous consensus to advance the Text Amendment to legislative agenda.

Utility Meter reading discussion

President Heath reported receiving many phone calls from citizens who had large water bills due to leaks they were unaware of. Billing adjustments were made, but he was concerned with the loss of water, as one case lost over 30,000 gallons. He and Deputy City Administrator Kitzrow discussed options for detecting water leaks sooner to prevent water loss and large bills.

Mr. Kitzrow said the City had physical meter readers who read meters on a quarterly rotation. He and Mr. Stevenson were presented information from a company called Neptune on automated meter reading. Mr. Stevenson said the City meters were read monthly, but the City was divided into three sections. One third of the City was read each month, and each customer had their meter read only once per quarter. He explained a meter reading team went out with a receiver device that automatically read the meters. If problems occurred with the readings, they stopped and manually read them. In order to resolve the problem of substantial water loss and the large billings, each meter would have to be read each month everywhere in the City. Mr. Stevenson indicated the team thought they would be able to read all the meters on a monthly basis.

Mr. Stevenson discussed the Neptune 360 software and how it would streamline the City's water meter process. The majority of the City's meters were past their 10-year warranty and failing at a rate of 80 to 100 per month. Replacing the meters was on the CIP for numerous years, and the problem to fund the failing meters would have to be figured out eventually. Mr. Kitzrow said that Neptune's system would improve the City's operations and was very customer friendly. The City would have to decide if the investment was something they were willing to pay. (Ms. Glanz emailed the presentation to Council). DID Director Amanda Pollack informed Council that the City had done some studies on the AMI (automatic meter installation) which was expensive, but when there was the meter infrastructure where the meters read automatically, they sent the signal to cell phone towers, and City employees no longer needed to drive around. Readings were daily and instantaneous. Leaks were detected within a day and flagged within the system. MDE had grants for green infrastructure and reducing unaccounted for water, and this project was eligible.

Mr. Kitzrow reported the price for the system was approximately \$2 million. New transmitters cost \$185 each and FOPs installed them in-house. The failure rate was more than the department could financially keep up with. The meters they have installed for the past two years were compatible with Neptune, and the annual software cost was \$12,000.

President Heath said he preferred investing in technology to prevent water loss rather than adjusting billings. Council unanimously supported the Neptune system.

Mr. Boda said detecting leaks early was important in preventing water loss and saving citizens from having to deal with large billings. It would push the City towards providing monthly bills.

Ms. Jackson thought monthly billings would be much better for those who struggled to pay their water bills. She supported applying for grants to help defray the cost of the system.

Ms. Blake agreed to move forward with the system.

Ms. Gregory said she recently had a leaky outside faucet, but had no knowledge of the leak until she received a huge water bill. The new system would have notified her of the leak after a day.

President Heath told Ms. Pollack she could begin researching grants. He asked Ms. Glanz to notify Finance Director Cordrey that he could investigate financing options, and suggested for Mr. Kitzrow to bring a couple of cost options for obtaining the system over a period of time.

Ms. Glanz asked if Council wanted to see this system as its own topic before reviewing the CIP. President Heath did not think there would be enough time, but to let him know. She asked Ms. Gregory to save her receipt for reimbursement after having the faucet repaired.

Motion to convene in Closed Session

At 5:19 p.m. President Heath called for a motion to convene in Closed Session 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; or any other personnel matter effecting one or more specific individuals in accordance with the Annotated Code of Maryland §3-305(b)(1).

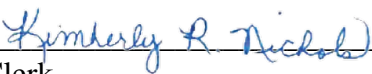
Ms. Blake moved, Mr. Boda seconded, and the vote was unanimous to enter into Closed Session.

Reconvene in Open Session / Report to Public

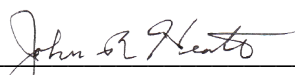
At 6:10 p.m., upon a motion and seconded by Mr. Boda and Ms. Jackson, respectively, and approved by unanimous vote in favor, the Closed Session adjourned. At 6:13 p.m. President Heath reported to the Public that while in Closed Session Council had evaluated an appointee.

Adjournment

With no further business to discuss, the Open Session immediately adjourned.



City Clerk



Council President