

CITY OF SALISBURY, MARYLAND

REGULAR MEETING

JULY 8, 2024

PUBLIC OFFICIALS PRESENT

*Council President D’Shawn M. Doughty
Vice President Angela M. Blake
Councilmember Michele Gregory*

*Mayor Randolph J. Taylor
Councilmember April R. Jackson (via Zoom)
Councilmember Sharon C. Dashiell*

IN ATTENDANCE

City Administrator Andy Kitzrow, Housing and Community Development Director Muir Boda, Executive Administrative Assistant Jessie Turner, Fire Chief Rob Frampton, City Attorney Ashley Bosché, City Clerk Kim Nichols, and members of the public

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE – CITY INVOCATION

The City Council met in Legislative Session at 6:00 p.m. in Council Chambers of the Government Office Building and via Zoom. Council President D’Shawn M. Doughty called the meeting to order and invited everyone to recite the pledge to the flag, followed by a moment of silent meditation.

ADOPTION OF LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

President Doughty called for a motion to adopt the legislative agenda. Ms. Gregory moved, Ms. Blake seconded, and the vote was unanimous to approve the legislative agenda.

CONSENT AGENDA- *presented by City Clerk Kim Nichols*

The Consent Agenda, consisting of the following items, was unanimously approved (5-0) on a motion and seconded by Ms. Gregory and Ms. Dashiell, respectively:

- *April 23, 2024 Budget Work Session Minutes*
- *May 6, 2024 Work Session Minutes*
- *May 6, 2024 Special Meeting Minutes*
- *May 6, 2024 Closed Session Minutes (emailed separately)*
- *May 13, 2024 Council Meeting Minutes*
- *May 20, 2024 Work Session Minutes*
- *May 20, 2024 Special Meeting Minutes*
- *May 20, 2024 Budget Work Session Minutes*
- *June 3, 2024 Work Session Minutes*
- *June 3, 2024 Special Meeting Minutes*
- *June 3, 2024 Budget Work Session Minutes*

RESOLUTION- presented by City Administrator Andy Kitzrow

- **Resolution No. 3355**- to approve the City's substantial amendment for Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds for CDBG Program Year 2023

Ms. Gregory moved, Ms. Dashiell seconded, and the vote was unanimous to approve Resolution No. 3355.

ORDINANCES- presented by City Attorney Ashley Bosché

- **Ordinance No. 2877**- 2nd reading- to lower the posted speed limit in the Village at Tony Tank Creek neighborhood to prevent traffic fatalities and serious injuries in keeping with the City's Vision Zero goal of eliminating all traffic deaths and serious injuries by January 1, 2030

Ms. Gregory moved, Ms. Blake seconded, and the vote was unanimous to approve Ordinance No. 2877 for second reading.

- **Ordinance No. 2878**- 2nd reading- amending Title 10, entitled "Health and Safety" of the Salisbury City Code, by adding a new Chapter 8.36 entitled "Abandoned Shopping Carts"

Ms. Dashiell moved and Ms. Blake seconded the approve Ordinance No. 2878.

Ms. Blake motioned and Ms. Gregory seconded to discuss amending the ordinance.

President Doughty stated Council was informed that the language needed amending. Ms. Bosché said there were concerns with what was referred to as business retail establishments. Provided they demonstrated adequate procedures were in place for restricting or deterring the theft of shopping carts, the City had the discretion to not impose fines. Council wanted her to amend the ordinance to add language consistent with that request. President Doughty said Council's concern was that it penalized the businesses that had measures in place to deter shopping carts from being removed.

Council reached unanimous consensus for Ms. Bosché to amend the language. The amended ordinance would be placed on the July 22, 2024 agenda for second reading.

- **Ordinance No. 2879**- 1st reading- to approve a budget amendment of the FY24 General Fund Budget to appropriate funds received from the Blue Heron Agility Association of Delaware

Ms. Blake moved, Ms. Dashiell seconded, and the vote was unanimous to approve Ordinance No. 2879 for first reading.

- **Ordinance No. 2880**-1st reading- amending Section 15.26 of the Salisbury City Code, entitled "Rental of Residential Premises", to require registration of short-term rental properties

Ms. Gregory moved, Ms. Dashiell seconded, and the vote was unanimous to approve Ordinance No. 2880 for first reading.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Fifteen members of the public provided the following comments:

- The City not allowing and supporting the public space singled out the LGBTQ+ Community. He hoped the Mayor would reconsider. Anything could be called a political issue. We were not talking about political candidates, but a community feeling safer in Salisbury. There was rhetoric from people who were citing their beliefs, but if those beliefs were dug into, they were used in this country to not only criminalize this behavior in ways of loving, but to call for the death sentence. When he studied theology and these issues, people moved him to self-reflection. Saying this was political, therefore, the City must be neutral had no validity.*
- Speaker was not here on behalf of any organization but as a taxpayer in the City that he chose to call home because everyone was welcome and treated with kindness. He opposed the Mayor's belief that he could to erase any piece of artwork that he deemed unfit for the City. It was not his decision to make and hoped Council agreed. The Pride crosswalks were the first in Maryland and deserved to be protected as a cultural landmark, and if allowed to be removed, what would be next? The Mayor wanted to incite a cultural war, and he wanted to sit with each Council member and discuss who should be in charge of all City art. Told the Mayor to stop the nonsense, and then said that 65% of the City voted against him.*
- Thanked the City Council for the opportunity to speak. Maryland Main Street was now in Salisbury and they did several things to support the community's transformation by enhancing the physical and visual assets that set the Commercial district apart, which to her included the crosswalk. It was a statement of who part of our community was, and we were made up of a lot of different people.*
- Speaker agreed with the previous speakers before her. She lived in Johnson's Lake Neighborhood and was a neighbor to Newtown. Homes bought and used as short-term rentals (STR) resulted in extensive overcrowding. A house close by her had male tenants relieving themselves in the yard. There were 17 people coming and going at the house and children were not included in the count. She thought there was a restriction of four unrelated people per dwelling. This STR had 17 disrespectful people living there. The policy seemed more geared towards the Airbnb industry or regular rental properties. How would it be enforced? She did not see an answer to the problem of old neighborhood homes being purchased specifically to house large numbers of transient immigrants into old communities already protected from commercial entities by zoning. Renting to a transient population on a weekly revolving basis was a business. On Ferndale in Johnson's Lake Neighborhood, neighbors were upset with overcrowded occupants. Some recklessly drove cars without licenses or insurance. When the porch light was off, they were full, and if it was on, not full. She was very inclusive and not insensitive to immigrants, but our old neighborhoods and neighbors did not deserve the resulting effects they were having on their quality of life, property values, and parking. Accidents were happening more often because they did not have licenses or insurance. She did not see how this was good for the community.*
- Speaker thought the STR ordinance was something that recognized and legitimized the idea of illegal housing uses in the community. There was an upswing in investors purchasing*

- large, older, single family homes and rental properties and filling the houses well over capacity creating unsafe and unhealthy conditions for the tenants. Fire safe issues placed the neighbors in jeopardy. They were essentially establishing rooming houses. Speaker suggested that the Mayor appoint a committee composed of eight City residents and a Council member and report back to the Mayor in sixty days. This issue was city-wide.
- Speaker concurred with previous speakers and spoke in support of the rainbow crosswalks. When she came to Salisbury many years ago to attend college, she immediately felt at home. She did not want to leave because she had the quality of life and culture here that she had longed for. Crosswalks represented inclusiveness and a history and the power of these crosswalks across town could be amazing. The pride from many groups and the diversity we shared here was important. As a musician she felt it was very important because it did not just stop at art but also went into music. The community and City could find a solution.
 - Speaker echoed the previous speakers on the housing issue and thought there was a balance they could strike between rental property owner, their business, and the neighborhood. When neighborhoods declined, property values decreased. That was no good for everybody. Many words have developed connotations with inclusiveness and even altered from their original definitions. Everyone wanted to feel valued as a community member. What if we all invested our time and money into something that was common to us all?
 - Speaker agreed with previous speakers regarding the STR. She was concerned about hand picking where speed limit changes were placed. She said she thought the City had other things to worry about other than shopping carts. She addressed the thought that several people made this evening about not thinking the City should be neutral and preferential and seemed to find that neutrality was threatening. It wasn't removing pride or anyone's pride. As soon as the banner is hung that said "we are all equal" on the insignia of a particular group, then we were not equal. She thought that was not inclusive. If there were all these groups in the City, why were we only focusing on one? We were not all equal if we were focusing on one. It was a political statement because this group had singled itself out very loudly around the country of the political candidates they endorsed and why, and marches and making it very political. She saw no problem with a municipality simply being neutral and then by definition everyone was equal. Focusing on one issue or another and being preferential was saying the group was more important than others. If there was problems with some crimes against people, that was a crime that needed addressing.
 - Speaker said these City Council meetings had an uncomfortable vibe. At the meeting on July 1, the agenda listed the 5:00 p.m. topic as Lot 10 subrecipient agreement- Administration and Council discussion. Mr. Simpson, who was not on the agenda, was invited to sit at the table so he could add his comments to the discussion. Also, recently an item was added at the last minute on the agenda but attendees did not know about it and the discussion added at least one hour to the meeting. These actions seemed rude because it did not seem the citizens were being taken into account to plan to attend and set aside time to attend and possibly speak. Speaker thought there was hostility between some Council members and the Mayor. The citizens voted for everyone to work together for the good of the City. She had the impression this was not happening. A good leader could help all Councilmembers work together for the City. Another impression she had was that a number of good people had helped with some of the difficult issues that Council had discussed by doing research, etc. Council seemed to brush them off but were lucky to have so many good citizens who cared about Salisbury and were interested in what was happening in the City. Please take advantage of good advice.

- *The shopping cart legislation was a waste of time. He did not know if it addressed Airbnb type rentals. If the legislation addressed overoccupancy and bad behavior, then it did not do much. Council should go back to the drawing board and do police and zoning enforcement to stop it. We were in delinquency on the HORIZON Program review as the deadline was June 30th. If The Ross was 95% rented for the fall, why did they need a huge tax break? The same went for the new hotel and the apartments proposed on the parking lot. One-bedroom units started at \$1,700 was not affordable housing and they did not need a tax break. At the last meeting some Council members were “all over” the Mayor about the \$4 million grant giveaway for Lot 10. The City was not obligated to give them anything and could use the money just for infrastructure. If this was a viable development, why did they need public subsidy? The County would subsidize the Airline Training School for \$50,000. It was suggested that they get money from the City. He told the County Council that 30% of revenue from property taxes came from Salisbury. Of the income the residents pay, 80% plus went to the County. The City was already paying a large portion of the County subsidy.*
- *Speaker said that a group of citizens created a new Public Access television show called “Open Agenda.” It allowed people to talk about any issues happening in the City or County.*
- *There was never equality in this country and her people were never considered equal. There was an amazing block party and the Fire Department was asked to attend but they would not come out. They were shunned because they were a black community from the West Side. Most of the City Council did not attend. She said they (her group) had never been considered equal. What was the meaning of being diverse if we can’t mesh together? This was supposed to be the land of the free, but she never felt free and was born on a black list. The Pride community paid for the walk themselves. You will see red, green and black all up and down these streets because she wanted to feel included, too. You talk about wanting to come together in the community, you have leaders who do not want this.*
- *Short term rentals jumped ahead of landlord accountability. This was not addressed as there were people living in sub-par conditions and fearful to speak up. The Mayor spoke at the NAACP meeting and they requested he talk about landlord accountability, and he did not. He was not trying to connect with them. She asked what the City was doing about Lot 10. Juneteenth was a national holiday and the Mayor did not attend one of the events.*
- *Speaker thanked Mayor Taylor for taking on issues that directly impacted lives. When the North Prong was under water he went out himself to find the problem and a solution. Mayor Taylor went to the West side to address a similar issue that should have been addressed years ago but was delayed and ignored until he discovered the issue. Since the Mayor had the instrument installed on June 6, there had been no flooding. She appreciated the concerns and issues shared and the time Council took to listen. Three Council members seemed to be jockeying over who could insult the Mayor the worst. She was surprised because she had so much respect for all of Council. She asked for more civility to allow the Mayor to take time to exercise the responsibility that he signed up for to get an understanding of what you all have been working on and allow him to bring his expertise or convictions to that, particularly with Lot 10. She thanked Council for listening to everyone’s concerns.*
- *Speaker on Zoom graduated from Salisbury University in 2019 and one of the reasons she stayed here was the welcoming environment in the City. Her loved ones and friends in the LGBTQ community felt safe walking around supporting small businesses downtown. She wanted all groups and communities in Salisbury to feel welcomed and supported. Some have commented that they did not. If public displays of artwork helped people to feel supported and welcomed then any community should have that. If anyone else wanted to join us in*

celebrating who they were, that would be wonderful. If we added a black and blue crosswalk for Bull near his portrait in downtown, people would love that. Wicomico Goes Purple was another important initiative that could be represented with a crosswalk. Neutrality was only a threat when you erased something that recognized a minority group. All members of the community should be welcomed and celebrated, just as around the winter holiday season we had a Christmas tree, a Kinara and a Menorah. We should continue celebrating our vibrant community instead of trying to erase the celebrations we already had in existence.

ADMINISTRATION AND COUNCIL COMMENTS

Mayor Taylor said the crosswalk debate began when we moved the flag and in no way was he trying to curtail the Pride events. The crosswalk subject came up at the Public Arts meeting. They had a good discussion and would come to a good resolution. There was a lot of people in the community with different opinions. Housing was a big piece of his goal as Mayor as it related to landlord accountability. We had a lot of work to do in that area. There were landlords that needed to be addressed. We had a 15 or 20 year old organization in the landlord licensing world that should have been called out. We were going to figure out with HCDD what we were doing well, what we were not, what we did efficiently, and what were we spending time on that was not giving the most fruit. Overcrowding, landlord accountability, and affordability had to be considered. He told speaker he did not mean to ignore the topic at the NAACP meeting. Housing was a big piece of who he was in terms of his career and as Mayor.

Ms. Dashiell thanked everyone for coming out. She was thankful for the information people shared with Council. If all the emails were not answered, do not think they were not read and appreciated. She reported as member of the Airport Committee that they had hoped the AMT school would open in the Fall. The FAA created roadblocks for them, and they were trying to complete the certification process. They hoped to welcome students in January for the 12-month class requiring 1900 hours and in collaboration with UMES. We were trying to address the issues. Thank you to everyone and we would continue to do our best to serve you.

Ms. Gregory said it was good to see more seats with people sitting in them than empty. She gave a shout out to her friend KT for Disability Pride Month. She thanked EMS for being so prompt and good on the job. Her son, Nick was already home. She appreciated how fast and efficient they were when they got a call, and how kind they were to the patients they treated. She reported the Citizen Reported was down. She wanted to get an update on Fire, Police and other departments on staffing.

Council Vice President Blake said Council spends a lot of time reading the materials but also had email, phone calls, visits, and events to attend. There were upgrades on streets through Safe Streets For All and wanted updates on Rails to Trails, and the best step for where we needed to go. She signed up for the State Initiative "Enough" which was funding through the Governor's Office to bridge the gap of poverty. Ms. Manning would also attend and it would provide information and programming for our Youth Centers. The Human Rights Committee was still very active. The next discussion was going to be how they were accepted in their memberships. She said that last year on July 6, 2023 at Hopper's, she and Mayor Taylor were talking and clarifying a meeting they had earlier in June. One of things he said to her was the very first thing he would do if he became mayor was to paint over that crosswalk. She said he didn't just say it


to her, but to many people in Salisbury. That was a position and was above and beyond what his role should be. She was unable to attend but the Juneteenth celebration was fantastic. Our Christmas programming, Haitian Day, and Black Lives Matter were phenomenal. We were about everybody. A lot of groups had never been included. We needed to continue our message in Salisbury that we were safe and included everyone. She not only supported that crosswalk, but supported the Arts Council in other crosswalks. Mayor Taylor said that what Ms. Blake said was ridiculous. He had never had a strong position on the topic. He and she never talked about it.

President Doughty said he heard nothing but great comments on the events Ms. Marshall-Leonard mentioned. He was very glad so many good events were happening there. He could not attend all of them, but was at "A Cousin's Wish" event. It was amazing! Council tried to be at all the events and spread themselves around. There were many comments on the Short Term Rental legislation. Some of them were brought up with the Housing Action Committee. It's second meeting was tomorrow (July 9th) and it was a community effort. Everything he did was according to the Charter and he tried to do things in a sophisticated and polite manner. What you were seeing was government at work here. The executive and legislative branches were there for checks and balances. We heard your concerns with crosswalks and human rights. Council's purpose was to represent all. There were certain things we were permitted to do, and that was by the Charter.


Ms. Jackson apologized to the West side of Salisbury and the entire City for not attending these events, especially in her community. It was very important to her but because of the surgeries she had she was unable to attend. Saturday's "A Cousin's Wish" event was held outside and it was too hot for her to attend. When she comes back, Ms. Jackson said she would be stronger than ever. She told Ms. Marshall-Leonard that as a Council person, she personally had to invite her Council persons, County Executive, and County Council. If she had an issue with the Fire Department she wished she had called her or someone in the City. She apologized that things happened the way that they happened. She understood there was a large crowd attending it.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to discuss, the Legislative Session adjourned at 7:38 p.m.



City Clerk



Council President