

Town of Camden
Regular Town Council Meeting
Camden Municipal Building
August 2, 2021

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Torres called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and noticed that this regular Council Meeting was being held in compliance with the Delaware Open Public Meeting Act by posting the agenda on July 27, 2021, in the following manner:

- a. The electronic sign,
- b. The Official Bulletin Board, and
- c. The official Town of Camden Web Site.

Vice-Mayor Schock led attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Torres led a moment of silence.

Council Attending: Mayor Torres, Vice-Mayor Schock, Councilwoman Rhodes, Councilman Girty, and Councilman Woodall.

Council Absent: None.

Staff Attending: Town Clerk Sarah Cahall, Account Specialist Yvette Yerkes, Code Enforcement & Public Works Manager Harold Scott Jr Town Solicitor Craig Eliassen, and Chief Marcus Whitney.

Staff Absent: Town Manager Jason Stewart

AMENDMENTS

None.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Property taxes are due by the close of business on September 30th, 2021.

Mr. Sweeny presented Chief Whitney with a check and thanked him and the police department for everything they do.

MINUTES

A motion was made by Vice- Mayor Schock, seconded by Councilwoman Rhodes, to approve the July 12, 2021 regular meeting minutes. All in favor; none opposed.

A motion was made by Vice-Mayor Schock, seconded by Councilman Girty, to approve the July 12, 2021 executive meeting minutes. All in favor; none opposed.

FINANCE REPORT

Mrs. Yerkes stated there was \$68,308.88 received from RETT for the month of July. Roughly, \$400,000 has been collected from taxes. Mrs. Yerkes said that a Mrs. Ries will be donating \$2,548.85.

PLANNING & ZONING REPORT

Mrs. Cahall said that there will be a meeting on August 18th at 7:00pm. Modwash submitted plans for a preliminary hearing.

CAMDEN WYOMING FIRE DEPARTMENT

Mayor Torres gave a report that included but was not limited to fire calls.

CAMDEN WYOMING SEWER & WATER AUTHORITY

Mr. Dan Ridgely said the in-person meeting will resume. The next meeting will be in September. He added that building materials are limited, and prices have increased.

He stated that Sunset Village has not received approvals for sewer or water, nor have they applied. He said even if they have received all approvals, they cannot get a Certificate of Occupancy until they get approvals from CWSWA.

Mayor Torres went over an email that was received in reference to 118 N. Main St. and asked if he was familiar with it.

Councilwoman Rhodes said she spoke with CWSWA today and a request was sent to their engineer and they have not received anything yet. No other fees have been paid.

FRIENDS OF HISTORIC CAMDEN

Mrs. Christensen gave their condolences to the Chappell family with Mr. Chappell passing. She said they are working with Brecknock Park with a possible Christmas event. She also said they are looking for board members.

VFW

None

POLICE REPORT

Chief Whitney gave a report that included but was not limited to traffic arrests and criminal activity. He added they are actively looking for a new hire.

Mayor Torres advised all Town residents that Camden Police Department is the lowest paid department in the surrounding areas. She stressed that the officers are putting their lives at risk for low starting pay rates. She said this issue needs be addressed, and the taxpayers may not be the happiest but to maintain public safety and stay secure we need to increase manpower. There is a lot of growth in the Town, and it will only continue. She expressed her support she has to the Police Department.

TOWN MANAGER REPORT

Mrs. Cahall read Mr. Stewart report and he would like to hold a community yard sale at Town hall on August 28, 2021 and September 25, 2021 from 7am-2pm. Each parking spot is \$15.00.

Vice-Mayor asked the reasoning for him charging for parking spots and asked where the money was going.

Mayor Torres said its something her and Mr. Stewart talked about for a revenue stream.

Mayor Torres said that Mr. Stewart and Mr. Scott met with Justin King, and they are going to donate a portion of land so it can be utilized for a bus stop for the children in the apartment complex.

Mr. Scott said the temporary bus stop will have crush and run or will be paved. Once the circle and Camden By- pass come in then they are going to move the bus stop down in between two apartment buildings. He said Mr. King is donating a structure for the children to stand under.

Mayor Torres informed Council that Mr. King is willing to donate a bus structure/shelter but would like to have advertisement on it.

Mayor Torres and Council agreed to the advertisements.

Vice-Mayor said he appreciates Mr. King for the donation.

Mayor Torres asked if Mr. Yerrick was going to donate.

Mr. Scott said the Town Manager said Mr. Yerrick was going to donate but he doesn't know if he has talked to him or the price.

Vice-Mayor asked Chief Whitney if there would be safety concerns with homeless people staying in the shelter and if someone would be there in the morning.

Chief Whitney said that it is dependent on manpower. He stated that day shift is aware that if they are not on an active complaint or call for service, they are to monitor or assist with traffic around the high school. He said the bus stop will be checked periodically.

Mr. Scott stated that the one area for the bus stop will be temporary until the circle and bypass are completed.

MAYOR

Mayor Torres thanked the Town staff for their work ethic. She is pleased with the structure and efficiency.

PUBLIC HEARING

2nd Reading of Text Amendment to Zoning Ordinance Table 240-15

A motion was made at 7:40pm by Councilman Girty, seconded by Vice-Mayor Girty, to enter public hearing. All in favor; none opposed.

Mayor Torres explained this is a text amendment to allow a two-family dwelling in the C-1 zoning.

Mr. Ridgley asked Mayor Torres if this was a practical parcel.

Craig Eliassen said it was for all of C-1

Councilman Woodall asked Mr. Ridgely if he was asking if this is being done for a specific parcel.

Mr. Ridgley is asking for some understanding.

Mayor Torres went over what was permitted in the zoning district. She added this will allow for dwelling of two family.

Mr. Ridgely gave a brief description of the purpose of building codes.

Councilman Woodall asked Mr. Ridgely if there is a difference of fire prevention between the two.

Mr. Ridgley said yes.

Mr. Scott said a building permit was submitted to remodel inside and out. He asked if his deadline was in September to start.

Mayor Torres stated water and sewer had to be hooked up by September 15th.

Mr. Scott said there is an active building permit and questioned why the remodeling hasn't started.

Gale Christensen- 21 Main St. questioned why there would be an amendment to the zoning ordinance to speak to one property and wanted to know the Town's process.

Craig Eliassen said its not referring to one property. He explained that one property can be the catalyst and the text amendment would allow two-family homes in any C-1.

Mrs. Christensen said the motivation for this text amendment was 118 N. Main. She added that if the motivation was for one property there is a lot of bias there. She expressed her concern on how the zoning ordinance defines the Town and if one zoning ordinance is changed for one person she added to Mayor and Council it was shameful on them. She felt he should go to Board of Adjustments.

Councilwoman Rhodes asked Mr. Harold if he saw the plans.

Mr. Scott said yes, and with the time dwindling down he wanted to know why no work has not been conducted.

Councilwoman Rhodes asked if he plans on making it bigger.

Mr. Scott said no however during construction he would have to put in the two-hour fire barrier wall.

Mr. Eliassen stated its not uncommon for a situation to manifest and most ways to deal with it is a text amendment. He said it's a policy question for Mayor and Council and certain unique situations come into a text amendment to fix it.

Mayor Torres said there is always going to be one issue that makes you think. She explained an incident with a continuous yard sale. As of now, there is no Ordinance regarding yard sales and there hasn't been an issue before and now there is. She added that an Ordinance is currently being created for yard sales and the Town is going with the times and growing as the times go. Mayor Torres added with the growth of the Town changes will come. She wants to progress with learning as we go.

Mrs. Christensen said she is in C-1 district and this is residential, and it has a direct impact on the historical district. She feels that there could be unintended consequences and felt as if there should be an open-air discussion regarding the matter.

Mr. Eliassen advised everyone that we are in public hearing, and it is an open discussion. He gave a brief synopsis on how Zoning Ordinances have been created over time and with time comes changes.

Councilman Girty stated there has been a lot of open discussion about the property and this did not just pop up. He continued that they are doing their best to handle it.

Councilman Woodall agreed that in that district it does go against the historical character and what they stand for.

Mrs. Christensen said its ironically a C-1 area and the historical residential is C-1. She added she is sure there are reasons.

Mr. Ridgley wanted Council to consider if the owner has a hardship by not having a dual house or just trying to find the easy way to recoup his losses.

A motion was made by Councilman Woodall, and seconded by Councilwoman Rhodes, to exit public hearing and enter regular meeting. All in favor; none opposed.

OLD BUSINESS

2nd Reading of Text Amendment to Zoning Ordinance Table 240-15

Roll call:

Mayor Torres-Yes

Reasoning- Same lines of Councilman Girty as well as to clean up an eye sore because it was a main goal.

Vice Mayor Schock- No

Reasoning- Doesn't want to see historical houses be split up if they get sold and doesn't feel the owner has done what he has been asked to do in a timely matter.

Councilwoman Rhodes- No

Reasoning- Because of Historical district and house. Also, they have bent over backwards for year and is tried of 118 N. Main St.

Councilman Girty-Yes

Reasoning- Town is in a bind from past information he was given and doesn't want the Town to bear legal ramifications.

Councilman Woodall-No

Reasoning- Every family has 2-3 cars and it's a very small lot when you start cramming in two families and junk its going to look awful and doesn't want to see that on Main St.

Two in favor; and three opposed.

NEW BUSINESS

Police Department Vacation Buy Out

Chief Whitney stated that due to covid and protesting there was conflict in scheduling. He stressed that time was limited, and the officers were approaching their carry over amounts. He is requesting that the officers can buy out vacation up to 100 hours. He doesn't want to see the officers lose their time because they have earned it. Chief Whitney provided Mayor and Council with the amount of \$23,126.42 which includes FICA and pension if all officers take the full 100 hours. He added that roughly 3-5 employees will not be taking the 100 hours.

Councilman Woodall asked if that would be coming out of the police salary budget or what fund.

Mrs. Yerkes said she assumed so.

Mr. Eliassen said due to the circumstances it should be able to come from RETT.

Vice-Mayor Schock suggested that after the ARPA money comes through, they can reimburse RETT, so it doesn't affect the budget.

A motion was made by Vice-Mayor Schock, seconded by Councilman Girty, to approve the Police Department Vacation Buy Out in the amount of \$23,126.42 out of RETT. All in favor; none opposed.

Police Department Hiring Bonus

Chief Whitney requested a hiring bonus in the amount of \$1,000.00-\$5,000.00.

Councilman Woodall stated he didn't feel comfortable giving someone an incentive who hasn't proven themselves with the department. He would rather work on the starting salary.

Vice-Mayor Schock advised Councilman Woodall that this was discussed previously and if the bonus was given and they left within 2 years the bonus would be returned.

Mayor Torres asked if a stipulation could be placed on when they receive the hiring bonus such as 90 days.

Chief Whitney said he could put a 3-6 month probation period on the hiring bonus.

Councilman Woodall asked what the calculation would be for them to walk away with an exact amount.

Chief Whitney said the amount of \$5,000.00 would have to be increased to roughly \$6,050.00. He expressed that no one is going to get a \$6,000.00 bonus in their pocket. He advised Mayor and Council that during the hiring process the bonus is contingent upon training and experience.

Councilman Girty said the \$1,000.00-\$5,000.00 will cover everything.

Councilman Woodall wanted a set single amount if they are eligible, he wants them to walk away with that exact amount with FICA and pension already taken out.

Chief Whitney thoroughly explained to them that if he hires an officer with two years' experience and is paid a certain amount, he is going to give them the \$5,000.00. He questioned Mayor and Council will he be giving them \$5,000.00 in the pocket or \$5,000.00 minus their FICA and pension.

Mayor Torres stated that's why she wants to hear the stipulation on a probation period.

Councilman Girty said that he likes the range and let Chief Whitney use his judgement.

Chief Whitney said he prefers the range and from there he can tailor to the officers training, knowledge, and experience.

A motion was made by Vice-Mayor Schock, and seconded by, Councilman Girty to approve the Police Department hiring bonus in the range of \$1,000.00-\$6,000.00. All in favor; none opposed.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Helene Altevogt- 15 N. Main St, complained about the excessive loud noise with motorcycles at full throttle, noisy muscle cars, loud music on the motorcycles and loud trucks back firing.

Chief Whitney expressed his understandings and explained how DMV inspections works. He stated when officers write them tickets for excessive noise by time, they go to court they can switch out their mufflers and pass inspections and from there the case is dismissed.

Councilman Girty explained that once the bypass is completed a lot of traffic will be diverted.

Charles Altevogt- 15 N. Main St, asked what can be done if DMV isn't enforcing it.

Chief Whitney advised them they are enforcing it.

Aaron Lewis- Board & Brush Creative Studio, introduced himself as a new business owner and invited the community to come stop by to their workshop.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilman Woodall talked briefly about Police Salaries and that larger business are causing a need and doesn't want that to fall on council. He said that is on the radar to help their salaries.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

To consider strategy with respect to pending and/or potential litigation and/or with respect to personnel issues.

A motion was made at 8:36pm by Councilman Girty, seconded by Councilwoman Rhodes, to enter executive session and not return for a vote. All in favor; none opposed.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made at 8:36pm by Councilman Girty, seconded Councilwoman Rhodes, to adjourn the council meeting. All in favor; none opposed.

*Respectfully submitted,
Sarah Cahall, Town Clerk*