

MINUTES

BOARD OF TOWN COMMISSIONERS

TELECONFERENCE

May 3, 2021

The regular meeting of the Board of Town Commissioners was called to order on Monday, May 3, 2021 at 7:30 p.m. via teleconference.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Amy G. Chmielewski, Chair
Kevin M. Bianca
Erin S. Hughes
Patrick T. Richards

ABSENT: Donna L. Kahoe

STAFF PRESENT: L. Jesse Bane, Town Administrator
Trish Heidenreich, Director of Economic Development
Stephen Kline, Director of Public Works
Michael Krantz, Director of Administration
Lisa Moody, Director of Finance
Charles Moore, Chief of Police
Patti Parker, Community & Public Relations Manager
Charles Keenan, Town Counsel
Kevin Small, Director of Planning
Joan Suitt, Recording Secretary

CALL TO ORDER:

Chair Chmielewski advised the objective of the teleconference is to conduct normal business of the Town of Bel Air during the COVID-19 pandemic we all are experiencing. A teleconference allows us to comply with social distancing, as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Maryland Open Meetings Act.

Meeting Etiquette/Protocol

Chair Chmielewski reviewed the protocol for the meeting and reminded all participants to identify themselves before speaking.

Roll Call

Chair Chmielewski conducted the roll call. Those present are listed above. Alex Maro joined the teleconference. Others attending did not identify themselves.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Chair Chmielewski notified a Public Hearing will be held on Ordinance 802-21 Amending Town Code Chapter 37 Elections Section 37-18 Absentee Voting.

Chair Chmielewski called for approval of the Agenda.

Commissioner Bianca moved and Commissioner Hughes seconded the motion to approve the Agenda as written.

Ayes: Commissioners Bianca, Hughes, Richards and Chmielewski

Nays: None

Absent: Commissioner Kahoe

The motion carried.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Commissioner Bianca moved and Commissioner Hughes seconded the motion that the minutes of the Bel Air Board of Town Commissioners' meetings held on April 19, 2021, April 22, 2021, and April 27, 2021 be approved as submitted.

Ayes: Commissioners Bianca, Hughes, Richards and Chmielewski

Nays: None

Absent: Commissioner Kahoe

The motion carried.

PUBLIC HEARING:

Ordinance 802-21 Amending Town Code Chapter 37 Elections

Mr. Krantz, Director of Administration, stated it is important to ensure that every vote is counted, including absentee ballots, otherwise known as mail-in-ballots. During the COVID-19 pandemic, it is reasonable to assume that more citizens may cast their votes using mail-in ballots. In addition, many citizens have experienced slow mail delivery in the last several months.

As a result, Staff recommends amendments to Town Code Chapter 37 Elections:

- i. §37-1 Definitions and word usage - adding the terminology of "mail-in-ballots" to the existing definition of absentee ballots.
- ii. §37-18 Absentee voting - adding the terminology of "mail-in-voting" and amending this section to remove outdated absentee ballot regulations and add new language to align the Town of Bel Air Code, regarding the timeliness and counting of mail-in-ballots, with the Maryland Annotated Code and the Code of Maryland Regulations, often referred to as COMAR.

Mr. Krantz informed of the recommended amendments:

B. Timeliness: An absentee ballot/mail-in ballot is considered timely and may be counted if the ballot:

a. is returned, in person, to the designated polling place, or the Harford County Board of Elections, by the voter, or the voter's duly authorized agent, before the polls close, on the day of the election; or

b. is received, by mail, by the Town of Bel Air, or the Harford County Board of Elections, no later than 10 a.m. on the second Friday after an election; and

- i. was mailed on or before election day, as verified:

1. by a postmark; or
2. If the return envelop does not contain a postmark or the postmark is illegible, by the voter's affidavit that the ballot was mailed on or before election day.

c. Untimely. An absentee ballot/mail-in-ballot that does not meet the requirements of subsection (B) of this section is not timely and may not be counted.

Chair Chmielewski called for public comment. There was none. Chair Chmielewski called for Commissioners' comments. As there were none, the public hearing was closed.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Ordinance 802-21 Amendments Town Code Chapter 37 Elections

Commissioner Bianca moved and Commissioner Hughes seconded the motion that Ordinance No. 802-21, Amending Bel Air Town Code Chapter 37 Elections, Section § 37-1 Definitions and Word Usage, and Section §37-18 Absentee Voting be approved by the Bel Air Board of Town Commissioners.

Ayes: Commissioners Bianca, Hughes, Richards and Chmielewski

Nays: None

Absent: Commissioner Kahoe

The motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS:

Reappointment to Board of Ethics

Commissioner Bianca moved and Commissioner Hughes seconded the motion that the reappointments of Wilbur W. Bolton, III and Theresa Rose to the Bel Air Board of Ethics for a term of four (4) years, effective immediately, be approved by the Bel Air Board of Town Commissioners.

Ayes: Commissioners Bianca, Hughes, Richards and Chmielewski

Nays: None

Absent: Commissioner Kahoe

The motion carried.

PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Chair Chmielewski notified:

- Greg Adolph, Commissioner Hughes and Chair Chmielewski played Disc Golf on a course in Churchville. Chair Chmielewski advised Mr. Adolph has asked for the Town's support to place a Disc Golf course at the Liriodendron and possibly Rockfield Park. Chair Chmielewski had a great time and recommends everyone to give it a try.
- 1st Friday, May 7th in Town of Bel Air. Stop by the lot next to Black Eyed Suzie's. Downtown Alliance is looking for volunteers.
- Mothers' Day - May 9th - please honor the mothers in your life.

Mr. Kline, Director of Public Works reminded the Garden Mart is Friday, May 14th at the Armory, from 8:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

Chief Moore extended condolences to the Delmar Police Department and the family of Corporal Keith Heacock who recently died tragically.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Alex Maro has been a Town of Bel Air employee since 2013 and wants to comment on the Town Administrator's Budget proposal. Mr. Maro came before the Commissioners a few months ago to argue for Collective Bargaining and broke down how employee benefits/wages would be further cut to fund the Town Hall project. It is disappointing to see what was proposed is part of this budget. Mr. Maro's impression is Commissioners put in an effort to run for the position because of wanting to make the Town of Bel Air better and improve lives. The people you have the most power to affect in a positive or negative way are the Town employees and most remember what you actually do with your time in office. Mr. Maro asked, do you really want to be the Board that eliminated the Town's contribution to the Health Savings Account? This was a minor investment that helped offset high deductible costs of the health care plan that was already employer friendly. Mr. Maro stated of course health care cost will increase in the year following a global pandemic; but is it a fault of the Town employees? It is a strange creditability that \$60,000 - \$70,000 could not be found in a \$15 million budget to help protect this minimal level of support to keep health care cost reasonable for the average Town worker.

Mr. Maro stated new pay scale ideas are great, but without matching the steps to employee's actual years of service; the problem has not been addressed. The entire premise of a pay scale is that the step corresponds to a year of service. Mr. Maro commented, our Union has banged their heads against the wall for years in the meet and confer sessions over this point. Considering that the Town's job postings for new police officers avoid mentioning anything about the arbitrary nature of when it decides to recognize a year of service; Mr. Maro finds the Town Administration understands this too. We are not asking to be rich or to make more money than other agencies. The bitterness and resentment we feel is a direct result of pay freezes and cost of living adjustments that consistently trail inflation and consumer price index. Two things have proven consistently true, property values will go up and things will get worse for the Town employees. We have fought for this Board to take action on Collective Bargaining and as this budget demonstrates; the police have no ability to negotiate their wages or work conditions and things will progressively get worse for them and their families. With the lack of direct negotiations of pay and benefits with employees hurts the Town as well. Budget discussions should be maintained and a predictable part of the municipal government. The Town would be better off working with employees on a realistic pay/benefit contract that covers a fixed number of years. The employees could be partners in the success of the Town, not to be conquered by the Town Administrator's office.

Mr. Maro urges to invest in the success of your employees, reinstate the HSA contribution, have the pay scale reflect actual years of service, recognize the years of collective sacrifice endured by the Town employees by granting them the right to organize and collectively bargain for wages and benefits.

Chair Chmielewski thanked Mr. Maro for the comments.

Chair Chmielewski acknowledged those involved this past week in honoring the work and heroism of our Police Officers as well as Staff.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:

None.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 7:51 p.m.

Approved: May 17, 2021

Signature on file
Amy G. Chmielewski, Chair
Board of Town Commissioners

Signature on file
Michael L. Krantz, Town Clerk