

MINUTES

BOARD OF TOWN COMMISSIONERS

September 5, 2023

The regular meeting of the Board of Town Commissioners was called to order on Tuesday, September 5, 2023, 6:00 p.m., Town Hall, 39 N. Hickory Avenue, Bel Air, Md.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Commissioner Kevin M. Bianca, Chair
Commissioner Mary F. Chance
Commissioner Paula S. Etting
Commissioner Erin S. Hughes
Commissioner Donna L. Kahoe

STAFF PRESENT: Edward Hopkins, Town Administrator
Stephen Kline, Director of Public Works
Michael Krantz, Director of Administration
Lisa Moody, Director of Finance
Charles Moore, Chief of Police
Angela Robertson, Director of Economic Development
Kevin Small, Director of Planning
David Anderson, Media & Public Relations Specialist
Elizabeth Thompson, Town Attorney
Joan Suitt, Recording Secretary

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Commissioner Kahoe moved and Commissioner Etting seconded the motion to approve the Agenda as written.

Ayes: Commissioners Chance, Etting, Hughes, Kahoe and Bianca

Nays: None

The motion carried.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Commissioner Kahoe moved and Commissioner Etting seconded the motion that the minutes of the Bel Air Board of Town Commissioners held on August 15, 2023, August 21, 2023 be approved as submitted.

Ayes: Commissioners Chance, Etting, Hughes, Kahoe and Bianca

Nays: None

Recuse: Commissioner Kahoe - August 15, 2023 meeting

The motion carried.

PRESENTATION:

Arts Across Harford Proclamation

The Town of Bel Air is home to a state-designated Arts & Entertainment District whose mission is to promote and enhance arts and entertainment offerings and opportunities to create a unique and vibrant community where people and businesses want to live, work and play.

Chair Bianca informed the Arts Across Harford is partnering with Visit Harford, to promote arts events and show support for local artists and arts organizations. Arts Across Harford will provide opportunities for tourism and give our residents occasion to experience a wide range of arts programming.

Chair Bianca encouraged everyone to visit the Town's Harford Arts Association that provides opportunities for many talented artists.

On behalf of the Bel Air Board of Commissioners, Chair Bianca proclaimed September 15th through September 30th as Arts Across Harford.

PUBLIC HEARING

Ordinance 815-23 - Amendments to Town Code Chapter 37 Elections Regarding New Campaign Finance Regulations

Mr. Krantz, Director of Administration, reported the Bel Air Town Code does not have regulations governing campaign finance or public reporting of campaign contributions or expenditures.

The following amendments to Bel Air Town Code Chapter 37 Elections have been recommended:

1. Set a start time indicating when a citizen may file a certificate of candidacy prior to the deadline of forty-five days before the scheduled election.
2. Adopt campaign finance reporting and campaign contribution limitations and usage regulations for candidates for Commissioner of the Town of Bel Air to protect the integrity of the Town of Bel Air's municipal election by requiring transparency and reporting on the disposition of campaign contributions and expenditures.

Recommended Definitions:

- Campaign Financial Report
- Financial Contribution
- Electoral Purpose
- Expenditure

Amendments:

- § 37-26 Campaign Finance Reporting - Section A. - January 31st final campaign finance report deadline eliminated.

- § 37-27 Limitation and Use of Campaign Contributions Section E.-receipts not required to be reported with campaign finance reports.
- Added - Ordinance No. 815-23 shall become effective 1/1/2025 and removed previous language.

Mr. Krantz notified the limitation of no more than \$1,000 in contributions, including cash, gifts or in-kind services may be contributed by one person or organization to each individual candidate remains the same.

Mr. Krantz further advised candidates may self-fund their campaign without limitations.

Chair Bianca called for public comments. There were none.

Chair Bianca called for Commissioner comments.

Commissioner Etting stated reasons for justification of this legislation were concerns with outsiders interfering with the way Town elections have been run and rumors on the internet. Commissioner Etting advised these cannot be prevented. This legislation was introduced this year by the State Legislature and did not make it out of Committee. The Maryland Municipal League (MML) provided written testimony against it saying this was unnecessary because many jurisdictions require Ethics Laws to have elected officials/some employees to file financial disclosures which cover relationships, debts, and gifts for the public to make sure about impartiality.

Commissioner Etting agrees with MML being concerned with forcing to create and administer a campaign finance system because it can deter other candidates from running for public office. Commissioner Etting stated this is a small Town and does not see any problems that need fixing.

Commissioner Hughes is in favor of this legislation and advised the Town of Bel Air is the 21st or 22nd largest municipality out of 157. Commissioner Hughes stated this legislation will provide transparency for the public and candidates. It is in the best interest of candidates, residents and the Town to have information available.

Commissioner Etting advised Commissioner Chance was interested in what candidates can or should do with their campaign finance balance. This legislation does not do that.

Commissioner Chance notified of not wanting to dictate what a candidate would do with their balance and only shared what she has done. Commissioner Chance stated this is an important piece of legislation because people are looking for transparency and this provides it.

Chair Bianca reported 77% of Americans think there should be limits on the amounts of money individuals/groups can spend on campaigns and 66% believe in new laws could be written that would be effective in reducing the role of money in politics. Chair Bianca feels this legislation is a good first step and is thankful for the hard work completed.

As there were no further comments, Chair Bianca closed the Public Hearing.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Ordinance 815-23 Amendments to Town Code Chapter 37 Elections Regarding Campaign Finance Regulations

Commissioner Hughes moved and Commissioner Kahoe seconded the motion that Ordinance No. 815-23, amending Bel Air Town Code Chapter 37 Elections, Section § 37-1 Definitions, and Section § 37-6 General Elections Subsection C. Filing of Certificate of Candidacy, and Adding Section § 37-26 Campaign Finance Reporting, and Section § 37-27 Limitation and Use of Campaign Contributions, be approved by the Bel Air Board of Town Commissioners with the following amendments:

- § 37-26 Campaign Finance Reporting - Section A. - January 31st final campaign finance report deadline eliminated.
- § 37-27 Limitation and Use of Campaign Contributions Section E.-receipts not required to be reported with campaign finance reports.
- Added - Ordinance No. 815-23 shall become effective 1/1/2025 and removed previous language.

Ayes: Commissioners Chance, Hughes, Kahoe and Bianca

Nays: Commissioner Etting

The motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON NEW BUSINESS ITEMS:

None.

NEW BUSINESS:

Operations/Administration/Finance/General Fund Capital Reserve

Commissioner Kahoe moved and Commissioner Etting seconded the motion that amended Operations/Administration/Finance Policy I.E.20 for the General Fund Capital Reserve, be approved by the Bel Air Board of Town Commissioners.

Ayes: Commissioners Chance, Etting, Hughes, Kahoe and Bianca

Nays: None

The motion carried.

Operations/Administration/Finance/General Fund Leave Payout Reserve

Commissioner Kahoe moved and Commissioner Etting seconded the motion that amended Operations/Administration/Finance Policy I.E.23 for the General Fund Leave Payout Reserve, be approved by the Bel Air Board of Town Commissioners.

Ayes: Commissioners Chance, Etting, Hughes, Kahoe and Bianca

Nays: None

The motion carried.

Department of Public Works Ford Explorer Vehicle Purchase

Commissioner Etting moved and Commissioner Chance seconded the motion that the bid of Apple Ford, Inc., 8800 Stanford Blvd, Columbia, Maryland as provided to and accepted by Baltimore County Maryland for a 2023 Ford Explorer for \$43,405.32 be accepted by the Bel Air Board of Town Commissioners.

Ayes: Commissioners Chance, Etting, Hughes, Kahoe and Bianca

Nays: None

The motion carried.

Department of Public Works Purchase of Diesel-Powered Air Compressor

Commissioner Etting moved and Commissioner Chance seconded the motion that the proposal of Valley Supply and Equipment, 1109 Middle River Road, Baltimore, Maryland, for a Chicago Pneumatic CPS185 Air Compressor in the amount of \$17,937.95 be accepted by the Bel Air Board of Town Commissioners.

Commissioner Kahoe is please the cost of the compressor is \$10,000 under budget.

Ayes: Commissioners Chance, Etting, Hughes, Kahoe and Bianca

Nays: None

The motion carried.

Department of Public Works On-Call Electrical Services Contract

Commissioner Chance moved and Commissioner Hughes seconded the motion that the prices, terms, and conditions of Lucasia Power and Lighting, 1006 Saddleback Way, Bel Air, Maryland, as provided to and accepted by Harford County Public Schools Bid No. 20-JHS-054 for on call Electrical Services be also accepted by the Bel Air Board of Town Commissioners for a Contract not to exceed \$75,000.

Ayes: Commissioners Chance, Etting, Hughes, Kahoe and Bianca

Nays: None

The motion carried.

PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Chair Bianca informed:

- Saturday, September 9th - Travel back in time to the 1920's with the Speakeasy to include catering, raffles, and ragtime music. Sponsored by the Bel Air Downtown Alliance, 6:00 - 9:00 p.m. at the Armory. Tickets are available online.

- Saturday, September 16th - Annual Community Collection, 8:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon at the Bel Air High School parking lot. Items being collected can be found on the Town's website. Document shredding will also be available.
- Sunday, September 17th - Bel Air Festival of Arts, 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. at Shamrock Park.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

None.

COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS AND LIAISON REPORTS:

Commissioner Etting informed the Elderly and Needy Citizen Committee will meet on Tuesday, September 26th, 8:30 a.m. at Town Hall.

Commissioner Etting advised the Planning Commission will meet on Thursday, September 7th at 6:00 p.m.

Chair Bianca thanked the Harford Artist Association for the wonderful classes his son attended to learn about painting.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

APPROVED: September 18, 2023

Signature on file
Kevin M. Bianca, Chair
Board of Town Commissioners

Signature on file
Michael L. Krantz, Town Clerk