

TOWN OF BETHANY BEACH
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
March 17, 2023

The meeting could be viewed on two internet platforms:

The Town's Website at: www.townofbethanybeach.com - click on the Government Tab, then go to the left side of the page and click on Live Video Broadcast

or

Go to our YouTube page at: www.YouTube.com/BethanyBeachGov

Members present for the meeting were: Rosemary Hardiman, Mayor, who presided, Lew Killmer, Jerry Morris, Patrick Sheplee, Scott Edmonston, and Ron Calef. Mickey Hinman was excused.

Also present were: Cliff Gravier, Town Manager; Terry Tieman, Assistant Town Manager; Molly Daisey, Town Clerk; and Will Wharton, IT Manager.

Mayor Hardiman called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

Approval of the Agenda

Mr. Killmer made a motion to approve the agenda. Mr. Morris seconded the motion and asked that the minutes from the Executive Meeting held on February 13 be added to the agenda. With the addition of that item, the agenda and it was unanimously approved.

Approval of minutes of Workshop held on February 13, 2023

Mr. Morris made a motion to approve the minutes. Seconded by Mr. Killmer, the motion was unanimously approved.

Approval of minutes of Regular Meeting held on February 17, 2023

Mr. Killmer made a motion to approve the minutes. Seconded by Mr. Morris, the motion was unanimously approved.

Approval of minutes of Special Meeting held on February 13, 2023

Mr. Killmer made a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Mr. Sheplee and unanimously approved.

Approval of minutes of Executive Meeting held on February 13, 2023

Mr. Killmer made a motion to approve the minutes. Seconded by Mr. Morris, the motion was unanimously approved.

Approval of the Financial Report

Mr. Morris advised that this report covers the budget thru February 28, 2023. The Town is 92% through Fiscal Year 2023.

Operating Budget Revenue

Real estate transfer tax and rental taxes continue to be above budget. To date, we have collected 103.9% of the budget compared to 119% last year.

Operating Budget Expenses

Our Operating expenses are slightly higher than last year. We have already expended 90.9% of our budget compared to 84.9% this time last year. Recognizing that the report is subject to audit, Mr. Morris respectfully moved that the Council accept and approve the unaudited report. Mr. Sheplee seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

Announcements/Recognition of Visitors and Public Comment. There were none.

Report from the Planning and Zoning Commission

Mr. John Gaughan, Vice-Chairman of the Planning Commission, reported that the members met on February 18, 2023. They reviewed chapters 9-11 of the Comprehensive Development Plan. The Commission will meet tomorrow. On the agenda is a partitioning request and final review of the Comprehensive Development Plan.

Report from the Cultural and Historic Affairs Committee

Ms. Carol Olmstead, Chair of the Committee, was recognized. Ms. Olmstead explained that the members met on March 8, 2023 and were provided a list of vendors that will be participating in the Seaside Craft Show scheduled for June 3, 2023. Final plans are being worked on for the event. A Cultural Event was recently held. Speaker, Denise Clemons, gave a presentation on "The Cuisine of Southern Delmarva". The event was enjoyed by all in attendance. The Committee continued its discussion of possible criteria changes for homes being included in the Heritage Trail. Members also discussed having trolley tours in the offseason of the Heritage Trail. Périers' Day will be July 27, 2023, in recognition of the Town's Sister City.

Report from the Town Manager

Mr. Gravier gave the following report:

Lake Bethany Trash Pickup

In the past year, we have had discussions regarding moving to the ubiquitous large plastic trash bins for our trash pickups. We have decided in cooperation with the Lake Bethany HOA to do a test in that community to see how they work and if it makes sense to consider using them where they would work in Town. The ultimate goal would be to automate trash pick-up as much as possible in Town. If we can, we can look at downsizing staff or utilizing them in better ways than trash pickups, which is labor intensive.

The Town will be sending letters to Lake Bethany residents in the next few weeks asking them if they would like to participate in a trial using Town provided trash cans instead of the homemade boxes in front of their residences. We have an early indication that a good many will want to participate and we hope the trial has a positive result.

Construction on Evans and Tingle

The construction of the three new homes on Fifth Street and the three new homes on Tingle Avenue have really caused a number of problems in those small neighborhoods. Making matters worse are both streets only have a 30' right of way, making parking for all of the many construction trucks and employees' cars a real problem. Code Enforcement and the Police Department have worked diligently to try finding solutions and citing them when necessary, but there are still a few residents who are unhappy. The work is winding down to a degree.

Street Patches

The Water Department is always working on repairs and upgrades to the Town's water system in the blacktop portion of the right-of-way. They have a number of patches that need to be repaired to answer citizen's concerns. The asphalt plants are supposed to come on line in the next week or two to start mixing hot mix again and those repairs will be completed.

Beach Replenishment

Even though our beachfront residents are being contacted regarding potential "structural" damage to their property from replenishment, and even though we have signed easement agreements with DNREC to allow contractors to mobilize on our streets and beach access points, we still have no reasonable expectation of when the project might come to Bethany Beach. And, the longer we don't know, the worse it is for our summer. The contractor, Weeks Marine, has not begun the preliminary process of setting up piping and outflows in Rehoboth and replenishment is scheduled for April.

Pay to Park on Church Property

The Church has responded favorably regarding both the playground and the parking. Unfortunately, they have large committees (with little knowledge of Bethany Beach) providing input on what their many expectations are if they move forward with working with the Town. They are especially concerned that we post signs in the playground warning against gang activity.

Town Wide Soil/Boring Assessment

The Town has completed a comprehensive analysis of what lies below the surface of our community. For many years, the Town has tried to explain and educate residents regarding the actual conditions in Bethany Beach that impact and influence flooding in our community. The soil /boring study provides a very basic, and good grounding, of the very basics of conditions related to storm water and flooding in Bethany Beach. If ditches on your property stay full, if your swales sit with water in them, and if the puddles on your streets stay full more than you would like, there may be a reason for that. Our analysis tells us that there is nowhere in Bethany Beach that the soil immediately beneath your feet is not considered "wet" and at 38 inches, is considered saturated. The entire Town sits at or below the mean high tide mark! The community needs to understand that and work with the Town as we try to find solutions to our very unique problems.

Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Vote on Budget for FY 2024 and Schedule of Fees

Mr. Morris reported that the Budget & Finance Committee recommends approval of the FY 2024 Budget. The budget has been available to the public on the Town's website and at Town Hall. A Public Hearing was held on Monday.

This proposed budget includes \$12,780,000 in revenue, \$10,938,000 in operating costs, \$890,000 in capital projects and \$246,000 in debt repayments.

Changes to taxes and fees in this budget include:

- A 20% increase to hourly parking fees, daily/weekly parking permits, parking tickets, and shuttle bus permits.
- A 3% increase to the property tax rate.
- Waiving the 25¢ trolley rider fee.
- Small adjustments to some Building fees, the Administrative Fee for Town Code violations, and after-hours water service fees.

Mr. Morris made a motion that the council approve the Budget and Schedule of Fees for FY 2024. Mr. Calef seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

Mayor Hardiman thanked all involved in the preparation of the budget, especially Mr. Graviet and Janet Connery, Finance Director.

Discussion, Consideration and Possible Vote on Awarding Concessions for Exercise Classes to be held During the Summer Season on the beach

Mr. Graviet advised that there are four (4) separate exercise concessions being presented for approval. They include yoga, a boot camp, Pilates, and a total body workout. Mr. Killmer made a motion to approve the concessions. Mr. Morris seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

Discussion, Consideration and Possible Vote on a Contract submitted by Pittsville Motors Inc. for the purchase of a 2022 Ford F-150 PPV in the amount of \$45,719.00

Mr. Graviet asked for a motion to approve the contract as presented. He noted that this is a sole source purchase because it is less than state contract. Mr. Killmer so moved. Mr. Morris seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

Mayor Hardiman asked for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Killmer so moved. Mr. Sheplee seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted:

Lisa Kail,
Administrative Assistant