

**MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF SEAT PLEASANT
PUBLIC SESSION
MONDAY, APRIL 10, 2023
8:00P.M.**

1. OPENING

1.1.1 Call to Order

Council President McCarthy called the meeting to order at 8:01p.m.

1.2. Roll Call

Present: Councilmember Monica Higgs, Councilmember Hope Love, Council President Shireka McCarthy, Mayor Kelly Porter, Councilmember Gerald Raynor, Sr., Councilmember Kizzie Scott, Councilmember Gloria Sistrunk and Councilmember James Wright, Jr.

Staff: LaShaya Johnson, Staff Assistant, Dashaun Lanham, City Clerk, and Myneca Ojo, City Manager

1.3 Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance

City Clerk Lanham gave the invocation.

1.4 Approval of Agenda

Motion to Approve agenda.

Motion by Hope Love, second by James Wright, Jr.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Monica Higgs, Hope Love, Kizzie Scott, Shireka McCarthy, James Wright Jr

1.5 Approval of Regular Work Session Meeting Minutes for Monday, March 6, 2023

Motion to approve the Regular Work Session Meeting Minutes for Monday, March 6, 2023

Motion by Gerald Raynor Sr, second by Monica Higgs.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Monica Higgs, Hope Love, Gerald Raynor Sr, Shireka McCarthy, James Wright Jr

Abstain: Kizzie Scott

1.6 Approval of Closed Session Meeting Minutes for Monday, March 6, 2023

Motion to Approve Closed Session Meeting Minutes for Monday, March 6, 2023

Motion by Monica Higgs, second by Gerald Raynor Sr.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Monica Higgs, Hope Love, Gerald Raynor Sr, Kizzie Scott, Shireka McCarthy, James Wright Jr

1.7 Approval of Public Session Meeting Minutes for Monday, March 13, 2023

Motion to Approve the Public Session Meeting Minutes for Monday, March 13, 2023

Motion by Hope Love, second by Monica Higgs.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Monica Higgs, Hope Love, Gerald Raynor Sr, Kizzie Scott, Shireka McCarthy, James Wright Jr

1.8 Approval of Ward V Vacancy Public Hearing Meeting Minutes for Monday, March 20, 2023

Motion to approve Ward V Vacancy Public Hearing Meeting Minutes for Monday, March 20, 2023

Motion by James Wright Jr, second by Gerald Raynor Sr.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Monica Higgs, Hope Love, Gerald Raynor Sr, Kizzie Scott, Shireka McCarthy, James Wright Jr

1.9 Approval of Closed Session Meeting Minutes for Monday, March 20, 2023

Motion to approve the Closed Session Meeting Minutes for Monday, March 20, 2023.

Motion by Monica Higgs, second by Gerald Raynor Sr.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Monica Higgs, Hope Love, Gerald Raynor Sr, Kizzie Scott, Shireka McCarthy, James Wright Jr

2. PRESENTATION

2.1. None

3. LEGISLATION

3.1. None

4. REPORTS

4.1 Kelly Porter, Mayor Report:

- Mayor Porter stated his report can be found in BoardDocs.
- Mayor Porter stated that he attended the monthly council meetings.
- Mayor Porter stated that on March 10, 2023, he attended the Historical Preservation Meeting with Prince Georges County.
- Mayor Porter stated that he met with the new Staff Assistant, Ms. Johnson on March 17, 2023.
- Mayor Porter stated that he attended a meeting with the County Executive with PGCMA on March 20, 2023.
- Mayor Porter stated that he met with the City Manager on March 21, 2023.
- Mayor Porter stated that he attended the Maryland Black Mayors Meeting on March 22, 2023.
- Mayor Porter stated that he attended the Economic Development Committee meeting.
- Mayor Porter stated that he did not recommend any legislation to the city in the month of March.
- Mayor Porter stated that he submitted a letter of opposition on SB516 to ensure that revenues would flow to the municipalities.
- Mayor Porter stated that he was sworn-in for the Prince Georges County Historical Preservation Committee.
- Mayor Porter stated that he attended Seat Pleasant Elementary School to discuss the "If I Were Mayor Contest."
- Mayor Porter stated that he had sworn-in Chief Harris and Assistant Chief Heyward on March 10, 2023.
- Mayor Porter stated that he prepared a Proclamation for Louise Hopson which was presented on March 14, 2023.

4.2 Council President Report-Council President Shireka McCarthy, Councilmember-At-Large

- Council President McCarthy stated that her report is in BoardDocs. Council President McCarthy stated that she attended the regular meetings of the council as well as Closed Session.

- Council President McCarthy stated that she attended the regular monthly meetings for Local Black Caucus for Elected officials, PGCMA.
- Council President McCarthy stated that she spoke with the owner of the Save-a-Lot.
- Council President McCarthy stated that she visited Seat Pleasant Elementary School on March 10, 2023.
- Council President McCarthy stated that she attended the Swearing-in Ceremony of the Chief and Assistant Chief.
- Council President McCarthy stated that she attended the retirement celebration of Judge Adams.
- Council President McCarthy stated she attended the hearing for SB116 at the House Ways and Means Committee.

4.3 Myneca Ojo, City Manager

- Ms. Ojo stated that her report is BoardDocs. a
- Ms. Ojo stated that she attended and testified at the hearing for SB116 at the House Ways and Means Committee along with residents of the city.
- Ms. Ojo stated that they have interviewed and made an offer for the Chief Financial Officer. They are going through the process for hiring with background check, and they have administrative access to the financial systems now. This will prepare them to move forward in the audit.
- Ms. Ojo stated that the Seat Pleasant Police Department has entered an MOU with WMATA for \$50 per hour with the officers patrolling the station. This is a wonderful arrangement and services that the city will provide.
- Ms. Ojo stated that the Human Resources Office has reviewed three companies for a Compensation Study and will be bringing forth a recommendation.
- Ms. Ojo stated that Public Engagement is in the throes of planning Seat Pleasant Day.
- Ms. Ojo stated that they have move some employees around in EJD, and they are proposing an inventory clerk to check-in and check-out the equipment.
- Ms. Ojo stated that they had recognized a piece of property that has six dead trees that are abutting the back fence of a property. The trees are being cut down, as they are on the city's property. They did not realize it beforehand.

- Ms. Ojo stated that they will be conducting annual evaluations of the employees in July.

5. CITIZEN COMMENTS

- City Clerk Lanham stated that the city did not receive any written comments.
- Ms. Brooks stated that she is following up on the answers to the questions about the trees from last month's meeting. She had sent an e-mail with the trees and questions to the City Clerk Lanham.

6. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

6.1. None

7. NEW BUSINESS

7.1 Approval of Lobbyist Firm

- Ms. Ojo stated that she wanted to recommend for the city to consider a full-time lobbyist firm with the activities that had been held in session.
- Ms. Ojo stated that the city is in the spotlight due to the Blue Line Corridor.
- Ms. Ojo stated that the city was blindsided with SB116 and was able to hire a lobbyist that assisted the city with curtailing the bill. It was great to have someone working on behalf of the city during the session.
- Ms. Ojo stated that hiring the firm has helped the city immensely with SB116, HB450 and SB516, they had come to the mayor regarding the cannabis fund not being obligated to the city. The mayor was able to sign the letter to be in support of municipalities being compensated for recreational use taxes.
- Ms. Ojo stated that the Blue Line Corridor and annexing of Central Avenue has had a significant impact on the police department.
- Ms. Ojo stated that she is recommending Greenwill Lobbyist Firm to represent Seat Pleasant. They will work with the city and continue to monitor legislation in Annapolis and on the federal level. The firm can

apprise the city of important meeting, coordinate with legal counsel, seek opportunities for funding through capital grants.

- Ms. Ojo stated that Ivan Lanier is the founder of Greenwil, and he is highly regarded in the business. The services are valuable to the city.
- Ms. Ojo stated that they are asking for a monthly fee of \$2,500 for a period of twelve months.
- Ms. Ojo stated that she is recommending that the city move forward with Greenwill Consultant Group.
- Councilmember Wright inquired of the Davion Percy and wanted to know the thoughts of his service.
- Ms. Ojo stated that the city had hired both firms, but Greenwill staffing was on the ground, and they provided the city with letters and responses.
- Council President McCarthy stated that she believes that the city needs representation, but she is concerned with the twelve-month agreement considering the session is 90 days.
- Ms. Ojo stated that she can speak with them as there are talks about a summer session, the blue line corridor, meetings that the city cannot attend.
- Councilmember Higgs inquired about the lobbyist firm working on the senate and they had an emergency meeting called for Annapolis.
- Councilmember Higgs stated that there was an emergency meeting held at Town Hall, and she was unaware of the meeting being held at City Hall. It was her understanding that the meeting was going to be in Annapolis.
- Councilmember Higgs stated that she the mayor, Council President, Councilmember Love, and Delegate Alston and Ms. Ojo.
- Ms. Ojo stated that the city was collaborating with both firms during that time.
- Councilmember Higgs stated that it was a former elected official/resident in attendance of the meeting, and she was not aware of the meeting.
- Councilmember Higgs stated that if the council needs to decide, the full council should be informed.
- Councilmember Higgs stated that if the council is not involved with the meeting or lobbyists, the council is expected to approve the firm, as it is hard to make decisions if they are not made aware of what is happening.

- Council President McCarthy stated that Mr. Percy was recommended due to his involvement with PGCMA, and Mayor Porter recommended Mr. Lanier as a lobbyist.
- Councilmember Higgs stated that she feels that she has not received the information for her to decide. The city audit is not done, and we are continuing to add more to the plate.
- Council President McCarthy inquired when will the city know if there will be a summer session. If we do not know if there is going to be a summer session, we will need to think twice.
- Mayor Porter stated that when the bills were coming forward, it was recommended by the delegation for the city to have a lobbyist represent the city in Annapolis. The decision had to be made that was pertinent to the city.
- Mayor Porter stated that the comment regarding the city needing an audit, and if the bill were passed it would have been damaging to the city. The council needs to look at their schedule as to when they can hold meetings.
- Council President McCarthy stated that she wanted to apologize to the council due to the pace things were moving forward in Annapolis. She stated that she could have made a telephone call to apprise the council.
- Councilmember Higgs stated that if a resident was present at the meeting, then the council should have been apprised.
- Councilmember Wright stated that the city needs to have a lobbyist firm due to the shenanigans of the delegation not fully representing the city interest in Annapolis. He feels that the recommendations are good recommendations.
- Councilmember Raynor stated that he agrees with Councilmember Wright, and he feels that if we have someone there to speak for the city. This is insurance that will be safe for the city to have.
- Councilmember Love stated that she would wait to see if they are going to have a summer session.
- Councilmember Higgs stated that her vote is no until she hears what the strategy will be going forward. She stated that they are council, and they should receive the information.
- Ms. Ojo stated that they will not have a summer session and they will have interim hearings in the summer that pertain to the budget.
- Councilmember Love inquired where will the funding be coming from for the lobbyist?

- Ms. Ojo stated that it will come from the Administration, and the budget was built to include the lobbyist.
- Councilmember Higgs stated that you cannot cross funding from one year to the next in the budget.
- Ms. Ojo stated that it is funding remaining in the contracts under Administration.
- Ms. Ojo stated that the proposal mentions grants and the monitoring of legislation.
- Council President McCarthy stated that it is not convincing for the city to engage in a yearly contract.
- Councilmember Wright stated that he understands the concerns of the Council President, and Ms. Ojo will need to hold them accountable. The bills come up and debated when they are not in session. He does not feel that the city can count on the delegation to represent the city.
- Councilmember Love inquired about the current balance in the Administration Contracts Cost center, and she would like to know the current balance.
- Ms. Ojo stated that she had not spent any funds from the Administration Contracts Cost Center, and she does not have the balance but will obtain the information and provide it to the council.
- Council President McCarthy stated that if the city moved forward with the recommendation, she would like to see a monthly update from the firm.
- Councilmember Higgs stated that it was stated that they will be working on grants, and if the audits are not completed, the city cannot seek grants until the audits are complete.
- Councilmember Higgs stated that the council needs to be proactive and not reactive as they have been since 2020.
- Mayor Porter stated that the council can meet with the firm to obtain an understanding of the services on the local, state, and national level.
- Council President McCarthy stated that the council can have meeting with the firm for them to explain what they will do and to see the contract for services.
- Council President McCarthy requested for the firm to attend the next Regular Work Session with a written contract to be provided to the council in a timely fashion to decide.

7.2 Budget Hearing and Review Schedule

- Council President McCarthy stated that the Budget Hearing and Review is scheduled for Saturday, April 15, 2023, at 10:00am-11:30am
- Council President McCarthy stated that unfortunately the former city manager had passed, and the services will be held on Saturday, April 15, 2023, and the staff and herself would like to attend. She is less concerned with the review, but the hearing is what will need to have a plan for from 10:00am-11:30am.
- Council President McCarthy stated that she planned to attend the viewing.
- City Clerk Lanham stated that there are three hands raised to attend the viewing.
- Councilmember Love stated that she cannot join the meeting on Saturday, April 15, 2023, until after twelve.
- Councilmember Raynor stated that he will attend the viewing at 9:00am and he should be back to join the meeting at 10:00am.
- Council Vice President Scott stated that she has a prior engagement, and she will be joining the meetings virtually.
- City Clerk Lanham stated that she will sign on and turn the hosting over to Ms. Johnson to allow the meeting to occur.
- City Clerk Lanham stated that she will be attending the funeral so that the proclamation can be presented and read during the services.
- Ms. Umoh inquired if she could post the information on the city's social media pages of the passing of Mrs. Wallace.
- City Clerk Lanham stated that the family contacted her, and they requested for the information to be provided to the municipalities, and they have been posting about her passing on social media and if the city post it, it would not be offensive.
- Ms. Ojo stated that she had received a request from two department managers to be excused from the budget review to attend the funeral.
- Council President McCarthy requested for Ms. Ojo to be prepared to discuss the budgets of those departments.
- Council President McCarthy inquired of the second meeting date for the budget review.
- Councilmember Higgs stated that the budget calendar provides for April 24, 2023.
- Ms. Ojo stated that she excused Ms. Vaughn, Ms. Barber, and Ms. Rhoda from the budget review meeting to allow them to attend the funeral.

- City Clerk Lanham stated that it is the same meeting link for the Budget Hearing and Budget Review, and Ms. Johnson will remain on the line to ensure citizens can sign on.

7.3 Seat Pleasant Day Update

- Ms. Umoh stated that Seat Pleasant Day was planned with two contractors and collaborating with the things that were happening at the back end.
- Ms. Umoh stated that at the front-end, the parade and activities are scheduled, but there are concerns at the back end.
- Councilmember Love thanked the Council President for allowing this to be on the agenda, she has not seen any advertisement for the event, and she would like to know what has been completed.
- Ms. Umoh stated that they had selected the bands, entertainment, and parade participants for Seat Pleasant Day, as far as vendors we have not solidified vendors due to the paperwork. They are trying to figure out the backend paperwork for the vendors. They have the line-up for the day.
- Council President McCarthy inquired when will the council receive a briefing package.
- Ms. Umoh stated that she can have the briefing package to the council by the end of the week.
- Ms. Ojo stated that the end of the week is too late, and she feels that it should be provided in the next few days.
- Ms. Umoh stated that she cannot provide the information in the next few days as she would like to be realistic. The briefing package can be provided by the end of the week.
- Ms. Ojo stated that the city hired two consultants that had historical knowledge for Seat Pleasant Day. She stated that she has planned events for twenty-five years and we are at the crunch, and she feels that the event can still move forward with commitment.
- Mr. Bilbro stated that we are contractors and consultants with limits and boundaries, and we cannot take any actions or choices on behalf of Seat Pleasant. We can consult the Public Engagement Manager, answer questions, or advise, but we cannot make anything happen, as they do not have control or authority over the decisions.
- Mr. Bilbro stated that we begin meeting the third week of January, and there are a lot of issues that have come forward that we were not aware of in the post COVID world.

- Mr. Bilbro stated that to name a few issues, and there was binder created in mid-2018 to 2019, we needed to order buses to pay for buses, and there were individuals that stated that we did not pay for buses, and there is a document that stated he ordered the buses.
- Mr. Bilbro stated that they had received pushed backs because they had to request buses for free.
- Mr. Bilbro stated that he had to draft a risk management plan, and the park is not completed and there are safety issues with senior walking, and we have other issues that superseded Seat Pleasant Day, and it is the expert opinion to not have Seat Pleasant Day, as the bathrooms in Goodwin Park are not complete. There is construction that is still going on in the park. If you are thinking of liabilities, we are through the roof of liabilities.
- Councilmember Love inquired of the permits for the vendors been obtained?
- Mr. Bilbro stated that we do not have permits, or job descriptions for volunteers or the time to train the volunteers. If the city would use another location, this was discussed in earlier meetings, and they were pushed to use the Grand Opening of Goodwin Park.
- Council President McCarthy stated that this a problem for her that this is problem for her and there was no report provided. This is a huge problem and this needs to be addressed by Ms. Ojo, as at this point, we are being reactive oppose to pre-planning.
- Ms. Ojo stated that the communication had been off, and she had not been on top of them, and she had intervened a couple of days ago.
- Ms. Ojo stated that she will take the responsibility and she will handle it.
- Councilmember Love inquired if anyone had mentioned anything to her about the hang-ups about the event?
- Ms. Umoh stated that she mentioned the concerns in the November council meeting, and she felt that the event should be pushed back. This was before the city contracted with Donovan Bilbro and Ms. Sharron Lipford.
- Ms. Umoh stated that she was directed to work on the event by herself.
- Ms. Umoh stated that she was hired in October, and if the event was on the scope to happen it should have already been in the books. She stated that she was in the hospital and almost had a heartache due to stress.

- Ms. Umoh stated that they had a meeting scheduled with Ms. Ojo, but we had to leave due to an emergency at city hall. She stated that was why she suggested that it be pushed back, and she offered something called Seat Pleasant Unity Day, and this was introduced last year. She is very dedicated to what she does, and she feels that she stood her ground last year when she felt like this event should not be happening.
- Ms. Umoh stated that she wants to be on a record that this event does not need to take place due to the deficit of employees, and the police department has a deficit. There is an event taking place in Seat Pleasant for the Fire Department.
- Ms. Umoh stated that the documents need to be developed for the website that needed to be built.
- Ms. Ojo stated that she understands the concerns and the stress, but she feels that Ms. Umoh had help.
- Ms. Ojo stated that Ms. Umoh had money in her contracting budget to hire the contractors.
- Ms. Umoh stated that she did not have any money in her contracting budget and the contract was approved by another budget.
- Councilmember Love stated that the contractors cannot sign contracts for the city. She does not feel that it is a good idea for this event to go forward. The liabilities that were noted today are concerning.
- Council President McCarthy stated that the council did say it could be scaled down. She is suggesting that the city have the parade and a ribbon cutting at the park.
- Councilmember Love stated that the park is not ready, and it has equipment sitting in the park, and the city cannot have children in the park.
- Councilmember Love stated that with the parade you will need to block the streets off and have the police department involved.
- Councilmember Higgs stated that she hears the concern surrounding Seat Pleasant Day, but it was contractors that were hired, and we are crossing cost centers and that is a problem. If this is a risk, we cannot take it, and the contracts that are coming about with the council consent. These things are concerning, and we had this in the past with individuals making contracts unbeknownst to the council. She is equally concerned about where the funding is coming from, and we need to hire someone to come in to address the funds. However, she agrees with Councilmember Love that we do not need to have Seat Pleasant Day.

- Ms. Ojo stated that she has the authority to enter contracts up to five thousand dollars.
- Councilmember Higgs stated that we need to know where the money is coming from.
- Council President McCarthy stated that the finance department list where the money is going, and it will be time consuming for the departments to do so. We are not micro-managers, but we may need to see this.
- Councilmember Higgs stated that we are working part-time with a full-time staff that makes more money than the council, and we do not have the time. The council does not get paid the same amount as the staff. The city needs to be managed appropriately, and we cannot micro-manage, but we need accurate information. It is unfortunate that they are just receiving this information tonight. The council was told that the bathrooms were completed. We continue to have the same conversation with either not having enough information or no information at all. We need to have the right people in place to ensure that they receive accurate information at all times. We had to make two important decisions due to the loss of Mrs. Wallace who has done a lot for the city. She had returned to the city when she had come onboard, and she feels that the entire city needs to attend the funeral.
- Councilmember Higgs stated that if Ms. Umoh is not receiving the help she needs to speak up, as she wants to have employees with longevity, as they only have one person with tenure in the city, and they do not want to lose good people and we do not need to lose the person with the longevity.
- Councilmember Love stated that what is most important for the city is completing the audit and she feels that Seat Pleasant Day needs to be cancelled.
- Mayor Porter stated that Ms. Ojo was hired to run the day-to-day operation of the city, and she said she will investigate the matter. Allow the City Manager to do her job. The information should be given in the right sequence and should be fair to all parties that are concerned. Allow Ms. Ojo to obtain the information and provide it to the council either tonight or tomorrow. The council is going into issues that are stepping into personnel issues, and it should not be happening.
- It was motioned by Councilmember Love and seconded by Wright to cancel Seat Pleasant Day.

For: Higgs, Love, Wright, Scott, Raynor, McCarthy

Against:

Abstained:

- Councilmember Love stated that she is not trying to grandstand or micromanage, but they had received a recommendation from the experts to cancel the event.
- Council President stated that she would like to see a parade if it is possible.
- Councilmember Raynor inquired about the money spent on the event.
- Councilmember Scott stated that she will continue to sit back and observe as no one is listening to her.

8. ANNOUNCEMENTS

8.1. Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Budget Hearing and Review, Saturday, April 15, 2023, by Zoom Webinar at 10:00am.

8.2. Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Budget Review Meeting, Monday, April 24, 2023, by Zoom Webinar at 6:00p.m.

8.3. Regular Work Session, Monday, May 1, 2023, by Zoom Webinar at 6:00p.m., Meeting Link details are available on the city's website, Seat Pleasant, MD

8.4 Public Session, Monday, May 8, 2023, by Zoom Webinar at 7:00p.m., Meeting Link details are available on the city's website, Seat Pleasant, MD

9. ADJOURN:

9.1 The meeting adjourned at 10:03pm

Submitted by,

DocuSigned by:
Dashaun N. Lanham
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Dashaun N. Lanham, MMC
City Clerk