



MINUTES OF THE MILLVILLE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

February 28, 2023 @ 7:00 PM

1. **Call to Order:**

Mayor Ronald Belinko called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. with the **Pledge of Allegiance**. ***Present:*** Council Members Sharon Brienza, Barbara Ryer, Robert Wisgirda and Peter Michel. Administrative Assistant Eileen Scerra and Finance Director Lisa Wynn were also present. Town Manager Debbie Botchie and Town Clerk Wendy Mardini were absent.

Mayor Belinko advised that since Ms. Botchie was absent, two items will not be heard on the agenda and will be addressed at the March 14, 2023, meeting:

A. Discussion on exempting Homeowner's Associations from paying real estate property tax on amenities within their communities. – Deputy Mayor Sharon Brienza and Town Manager Debbie Botchie.

C. Discuss, consider and possible vote on Ordinance 23-06. This ordinance will amend Chapter 90, entitled "Licenses" – Town Manager Debbie Botchie

2. **Citizens Privilege:** None

3. **Presentation:**

Chesapeake Utilities Natural Gas Information Workshop – Presenters: Mr. Dave Detrick and Ms. Kelley Gabbard.

Mr. Detrick spoke on behalf of Chesapeake Utilities, giving a short history of the company and showing what they cover within Sussex County. Mr. Detrick spoke about Bishops Landing. He said that they did have a passage at that last year, but it fell short of making their economic requirements. However, they will be taking another look at that again this year. He is hopeful that it will eventually get converted. Mr. Detrick went over the areas that have been approved such as Egret Shores, Hudson's Reserve, Sycamore Chase, Friendship Creek and near Hocker's.

Mr. Detrick explained the process of switching over to natural gas. He said that if it is a Sharp community, they must work with the Public Service Commission to get their

method of how they would acquire and convert the systems approved, then they would land at a settlement order that permits them to do that. They effectively must buy the system and there is a process and a structure for that, there are conversion costs and so forth. But if the project meets their economic requirements, then they can go forward. One thing is for sure, the community must vote on the issue, and they must meet their internal voting requirements and procedures to give them the commitment. Mr. Detrick said that they have been quite successful in that process. They have converted quite a few communities, four or five. He said that in terms of numbers of homes, that a lot of homes.

He went on by stressing that they must get the go ahead from the HOA first before they do anything. Regarding Bishops Landing, Chesapeake did an economic model to see what the earnings would be over time what the costs would be, weigh those together in their model and see if it would be economic and it produced a shortfall. He went on to explain that if they run an economic model on Bishops Landing for example, and it exceeds our minimum required rate of return, then they can use the over earnings to offer every resident a conversion allowance, because otherwise conversion of appliances is on the resident and they stop at the meter of their infrastructure. In other words, if you had \$1,000 bill for converting your home, there was an allowance of let us say, \$500.00, you would only be out \$500.00 to convert your house which is a great value, because usually the return on investment, from savings on gas can be quite good.

4. **New Business:**

B. Discuss, consider and possible vote on Resolution 23-12 which will authorize the Town Manager or designee to appeal the denial of the U.S.P.S regarding zip codes in the Town of Millville. – Town Manager Debbie Botchie

Council Member, Sharon Brienza, explained that the Town of Millville has been fighting with the post office for quite some time about the fact that they are giving Millville residents zip codes from other surrounding towns. She went on to say that the Town requested that they revise their zip code boundary map, and that request was denied, refusing to reassign the zip code for all Millville residents. This Resolution is to appeal that decision and requesting the U.S.P.S. address this issue. Ms. Ryer also opined that this will eventually affect Millville residents regarding taxes, voting, Census, grant applications and we must keep battling for this change.

Council Member Robert Wisgirda made a motion to approve Resolution 23-12 authorizing the Town Manager or designee to appeal the denial of the U.S.P.S. decision regarding zip codes in the Town of Millville. Council Member Barbara Ryer seconded the motion. The motion carried 5-0.

D. Discuss, consider and possible vote on Hometown Heroes project. The idea behind creating Hometown Hero's banners is to honor the individuals serving the nation and those who have served and sacrificed their lives to defend our nation. – Town Clerk Wendy Mardini

Mayor Belinko requested that this matter be tabled since an explanation of the cost would be needed, and Wendy Mardini was not at this meeting to do so.

Council Member Barbara Ryer made a motion to table the Hometown Heroes project until the next Town Council meeting. Council Member Peter Michel seconded the motion. The motion carried 5-0.

E. Discuss, consider and possible vote on Blue/Gold Star Memorial project. The Blue Star Program honors all men and women that serve in the United States Armed Services. Gold Star Families is a non-profit organization created to provide support to those who have lost a loved one in service to our country through the United States Armed Forces sponsored by the National Garden Club. – Town Clerk Wendy Mardini

Mayor Belinko gave a brief explanation of the Blue/Gold Star Memorial project. He explained that there are two separate plaques to be discussed and that the Gardeners by the Sea Garden Club will be assisting in obtaining the actual plaque(s) and boulder(s) that it will be attached to along with setting up the ceremony and assisting with the cost.

Council Member Robert Wisgirda requested that this matter be tabled, asking if there was sufficient money in the economic development fund. Ms. Ryer confirmed that there is money in that fund and that this would need to go in the FY24 budget. Ms. Brienza, Ms. Ryer and Mr. Michel suggested getting both blue and gold to honor all veterans and saying that the Town cannot get one without the other.

Council Member Barbara Ryer made a motion to approve the purchase of both blue and gold memorial stones. Council Member Sharon Brienza seconded the motion.

Roll call vote was requested by Mayor Belinko:

Barbara Ryer Yes

Sharon Brienza Yes

Robert Wisgirda Yes

Ronald Belinko Yes

Peter Michel Yes

The motion carried 5-0.

5. **Citizens' Privilege:** Linda Kent, 35579 Cypress Point Trail, Millville, DE

Ms. Kent was concerned about how the zip code situation would affect the election and if the people that came to vote were residents of Millville. Lisa Wynn said that there will be a list of residents provided no matter what the zip code is.

Carlos Melendez, 17057 Bellevue Court, Millville, DE – Mr. Melendez commented that he uses the app WAZE for directions and when he puts in his address it does say Ocean View.

6. **Announcement of next meeting** – March 14, 2023

Council Member Sharon Brienza made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Council Member Barbara Ryer seconded the motion. Motion carried 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Wendy Mardini
Town Clerk