

MINUTES

COSM

Commissioners

COSM Special Remote Session

Wednesday, December 16, 2020, 5:30 pm - 8:00 pm

Virtual Remote Meeting

- I.

Call to Order - Pledge of Allegiance

President Harrod called to order a special remote session of the Commissioners of St. Michaels at 5:30 p.m. Also present were Commissioners Tad duPont, Michael Bibb, Jaime Windon, and David Breimhurst, Louis Gonzales and Mekdes Tabor of the State Highway Administration, Town Manager Jean Weisman, Police Chief Anthony Smith, Public Works Director Jeff Richardson, Legislative Clerk Suzanna Warnick, Meeting Coordinator Kim Weller and approximately 15 members of the public. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

II. Agenda Amendments

- Mrs. Weisman said a Maryland Rural Development issue had been added to the agenda under Items for Discussion.
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III. Announcements from COSM and Staff

- Mrs. Weisman announced that recycling during the Christmas and New Year's holidays would be Saturday December 26th and Saturday, January 1st, and the Town would be posting the change on the website and sending out a reminder before the holiday. Chief Anthony Smith thanked everyone who had donated money and time to the SMYLE program to allow residents in need to have Christmas gifts for the children. Chief Smith said that Tiffany Sweeney at the Police Department had organized a holiday event outside on the police station porch, including food and hot chocolate and with Covid regulations observed. Chief Smith said Commissioner Bibb had volunteered to appear as Santa Clause.
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IV. Consent Agenda

- None
- There were no items on the Consent Agenda.
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V. Items for Discussion

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MDSHA Plans for Replacement and Repair of Sidewalks in District 2 Area Wide

- MD 33 (Talbot Street) 200' North of Lee Street to 150' South of Spencer Drive
- Mrs. Weisman said the State Highway Administration (SHA) began the Route 33 project in about 2015, and now has the funding for the sidewalk improvement/ADA upgrade portion of the project. The Town and SHA had agreed that if the Town wanted brick sidewalks and granite curbs instead of concrete, the Town would pay half of the cost of that installation. Mrs. Weisman said the Commissioners had decided that they wanted to take the brick sidewalks to Marengo Street on the South end and to Dodson Avenue on the North end of town to encompass the whole of the commercial district. Mrs. Weisman added that anything SHA replaces in kind shall be of no cost to the Town. Mrs. Weisman said the Commissioners needed to approve the project and the approximately \$366,000, which would be the Town's contribution, prior to the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOA) with SHA. Mrs. Weisman said the project would take about a year to complete and begin after Labor Day in 2021. She noted that the Commissioners had the plans before them and invited questions and discussion. Mrs. Weisman said the Town has \$200,000 in this year's budget for sidewalks.

Commissioner duPont said he had talked to residents in the area who preferred that the brick and granite should only extend within the Historic District along Talbot Street, which would mean from Dodson Avenue to Railroad on the East side and from Thompson Street to Chew Avenue on the West side of Talbot Street. Commissioner duPont asked if there should be some compensation due the residents who had paid half of the sidewalk work already completed, given that the total project would be smaller if confined to the Historic District. Commissioner Breimhurst agreed with Commissioner duPont and provided his own calculations of \$135,000 in savings if the project was scaled back.

Commissioner Windon said the elimination of the one block did not save that much money and that the block from Chew to Marengo would appear to be chopped up. Mrs. Weisman and Commissioner Breimhurst both suggested installing brick on the East side of Talbot between Chew and Marengo, and concrete on the West side where there are residences and no businesses. Mr. Breimhurst said he would calculate the savings for that.

Mrs. Weisman added that all the sidewalk and curb on the East side of Talbot Street from either Chew or Marengo to Spencer Drive would be replaced with concrete. Mekdes Tabor of the SHA said the agency hoped to go out to bid in May 2021. Ms. Tabor said SHA would need a decision on any changes by February 2021. Commissioner Breimhurst said the Commissioners should have

comprehensive discussions before February to determine what they wanted, but should reserve the right to change, delete or add to the project in the MOU.

The Commissioners discussed whether to charge the businesses or residents for a portion of the brick sidewalks and granite curbs. Commissioner duPont said that any decision on that must be fair.

The Commissioners agreed to get together in groups of two to research the project and determine the parameters. Commissioner duPont said he supported the HDC concept but needed better cost numbers. Commissioner Windon suggested doing a quick survey of residents to get some input. Commissioner duPont agreed but said the survey should include costs. Commissioner Windon said she would work with Jean Weisman and Kim Weller on the questions for the survey. Mr. Breimhurst said he would do the financial calculations for the different options which could be included in the survey.

Ms. Tabor said that the cost estimates SHA provided were engineering costs and that final costs could be higher depending on construction costs. She added that all costs would be spelled out in the MOU. Louis Gonzales of SHA said that the Town would be paying for the difference between concrete vs. brick and granite, and the MOU could say that the Town "reserves the right to reduce the amount of brick and/or granite" to reduce costs. Mr. Gonzales added that the Town would need to pay for any change orders.

Mrs. Weisman said she would put this issue back on the Commissioners' agenda for their January 13th meeting and make plans to put the survey monkey out by January 1st.

President Harrod invited public comment. Doug Rollow of Water Street urged the Commissioners to consider the overall streetscape and be sensitive to integrating the old and newer historical parts of the Town. President Harrod thanked everyone for their contributions.

- Marketing and Advertising

- Commissioner Windon opened the discussion of marketing and advertising amid the COVID situation. Commissioner Windon said the Commissioners needed to communicate about what tourism looks like and what the marketing plan should be within the confines of the current budget. Commissioner Windon invited Kim Weller, Communications and Tourism manager, to provide her assessment. Mrs. Weller said the 1st quarter tourism numbers were good for rural areas such as St. Michaels that are near major metro areas. She said people have tended to travel within their comfort zones despite the COVID restrictions. Mrs. Weller said she expected those numbers to continue to be steady and she would like to increase promotion to ensure St. Michaels is "top of mind" when people are making travel and get-away plans. She said she had money in her budget that

had not been spent during the pandemic, and she would like to reach out to remind people that St. Michaels is open and here. Commissioner Breimhurst agreed that there will be a pickup especially when the vaccine becomes more readily available, and it would be good to promote the town to day-trippers and over-night guests.

Mrs. Weller said that that her plans for winter did not include high-dollar advertising, but rather lower cost radio and social media promotion.

Commissioner Windon suggested another facebook video showing that the town is open and able to accommodate guests and to help dispel misinformation among potential visitors. Mrs. Weller added that the fall video had cost \$1600 plus the volunteered services of Chris Thomas. Mrs. Weller said the video was not hard or expensive to do and people responded with a very high number of "likes." Commissioner duPont said he favored the facebook video to involve the businesses and show the public how St. Michaels is handling the COVID situation.

The Commissioners also agreed that a bi-weekly update on marketing was a good idea in order to hear Mrs. Weller's best ideas for promotion, and that Mrs. Weller could go forward with a promotional video and sending out a newsletter.

Grace Street Box Culvert Guard Rails

- Continuing Discussion Defining use of Guard Rails at Box Culvert on Grace Street
- Mrs. Weisman said Jeff Richardson had met with Mark Hill about pilings for the Grace Street culvert. Mr. Hill suggested a design including pilings with a stringer with copper tops for a cost of about \$6,717.00. Mrs. Weisman said she had spoken to Casey Rauch who said that the guardrail was a safety recommendation for a hazard that had not been visible before because of the thick shrubbery and undergrowth. Mrs. Weisman explained that the reconstruction of the culvert had cleared a lot of the growth making it possible for someone to possibly drive off into the water. Jeff Richardson said the drawings would help the Commissioners visualize the project and make a decision. Mrs. Weisman said she would forward the drawings and other details to the Commissioners for their January 13th meeting.
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MD Rural Development Grant Application Support request

- Letter of support requested from MRDC
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- Mrs. Weisman said that if the Commissioners approved, staff will provide a letter in support of the Maryland Rural Development grant application. All the

Commissioners were in favor of sending the letter which could benefit the Head Start Program.

Mrs. Weisman also mentioned that the Commissioners could send a letter of support to the County Manager to petition for Cares Act money for first responders.

VI. Comments from the Public

- There were no public comments.
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VII. Comments from the Commissioners

- Commissioner duPont reiterated his belief that the Town should look for ways to cut costs.

Commissioner Breimhurst said he and Commissioner Harrod had attended a meeting of the Watermen's Association and the subject of the efficiency of the Town's boat-slip policy was discussed. President Harrod said that the issue could come before the Commissioners at some point.

VIII. Calendaring

- The Commissioners reviewed and discussed agenda items for their January 13th meeting.
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IX. Announcement of Future Meetings

January 13 2020 - 6:00 pm - COSM Remote Working Session

January 27 2020 - 6:00 pm - COSM Remote Legislative Session

X. Adjournment

- The meeting was adjourned at 7:54 p.m.