

# TALK OF THE TOWN



A NEWSLETTER OF THE TOWN OF ST. MICHAELS, MARYLAND

*Fall*

2022 EDITION



## A Message from the Commissioners of St. Michaels



As we transition from summer to fall, the Town of St. Michaels continues to move forward with important infrastructure improvements that will help us maintain our status as the premier small town destination on the Eastern Shore. Some of the projects, like the new public comfort station are visible, but many are not, like the new automated water meters. The new meters are on the way and we expect installation to be in full swing by early next year. In the meantime, our water department employees and town staff are being trained on the software. The new meters will be constantly monitored by computer, saving staff time, eliminating waste, and streamlining the billing process.

The Town continues to ask for your patience during another major infrastructure project; the new sidewalks and curbing. This is a state highway project and we are aware that it is occasionally impeding the smooth flow of traffic. The delays can be frustrating, but the Town is working with the State Highway Administration to minimize the disruptions, while trying to get the job done as quickly as possible. We thank you for your patience so far and ask for your understanding that this is a necessary, state-mandated project to bring our Town into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.



Under the leadership of Town Administrator Rob Straebel, town staff has been busy working to modernize and economize all town operations, from our website to our accounting procedures and maintenance projects. Through their efforts the Town was able to cut property taxes two years ago, and hold the rate steady for this fiscal year. We are hoping to hold the line again when budget negotiations begin in March.

We also benefit from the countless volunteer hours of our Town Boards and Commissions, as well as outside agencies like the Rotary Club and St. Michaels in Bloom. From town beautification, to the planned extension of the nature trail, none of it gets done without the energy and commitment of our volunteers and staff. A big thank you to all.

## Welcome our New Water Department Employee

Please welcome Vickie Sharp as the new Billing and A/R Clerk for the Town of St. Michaels. A native of Easton, Vickie comes to us with a diverse background in accounting. We are excited for her to take on her new role in our Water Department.

Quarterly water bills were mailed the beginning of October. If you have any questions about your bill or other related water issues please contact the Water Department by email at [waterdept@stmichaelsmd.gov](mailto:waterdept@stmichaelsmd.gov) or at the Town Office at 410-745-9535.

## Community Events Calendar



**Oct. 22-23**

Fall into St. Michaels  
Weekend



**Nov. 19-20**

Eastern Shore Sea Glass  
& Coastal Arts Festival—  
Holiday Edition



**Dec. 3 & Dec. 9-11**

Midnight Madness  
Christmas in St. Michaels



## Boat Slip Lease and Kayak/Canoe Rack Rental Updates

*2023 Season is Only Months Away*

Boat slip leases are in high demand at the Town Harbor and Waterman's Dock at West Chew Avenue. This year, no current slip holders have terminated their agreement, hence the boat slip waitlist remains the same. In March of 2022 the 2022-2023 lease agreements were sent to existing slip holders. Stickers, which match the assigned slips were distributed and should be placed in plain view from the bulkhead for police authorities to inspect (to prevent issuance of a ticket). Please remember that you are required to notify the Town Office if your slip will be empty thirty days or more.

Waitlist application fees are as follows: new applicants have an initial one-time fee of \$150.00 with all renewal applicants paying a \$20.00 yearly renewal fee to remain on the waitlist. The renewal applications and fees are due by January 15<sup>th</sup> each year, or your waitlist status will be forfeited. Applications can be found on the Town's website.

Are you aware the Town also has a kayak launch at Back Creek Park, also known as San Domingo Creek? We have 40 slots on our kayak/canoe racks available for yearly rentals determined by a lottery drawing the last week in March. If you are one of the lucky individuals, you will be mailed a sticker with your rack and space number. No more than two spaces per family. Rack assignments run from April 1<sup>st</sup> through December 31<sup>st</sup> annually, with a rental fee of \$35.00 and the vessel must be registered through the Town. All kayaks/canoes must be removed by December 31<sup>st</sup> of the rental agreement year.

You are not permitted to chain a kayak/canoe to a tree nor leave them on the ground. All non-registered vessels will be considered abandoned and removed by Town Authorities. Arrangements must then be made via the Town Office to reclaim these vessels.

For more information about the boat slip applications/agreements or the kayak rack rules and regulations, please visit our website at [www.stmichaelsmd.gov](http://www.stmichaelsmd.gov) or contact the Town Office at 410-745-9535.

## Water System Improvements Underway

*Town Invests in an Aging Infrastructure*



The Town of St. Michaels is making substantial investments into an aging water infrastructure that includes repairs and maintenance to the South Water Tower, changes to filter media in the Water Treatment Plant, and planning efforts to replace old commercial and residential water meters using Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) technology in early 2023.

"These improvements further complement our overall efforts to improve upon an aging Town infrastructure by making critical investments into our water distribution system," commented Commissioner Tad duPont. "The work will allow the Town to continue to deliver high quality potable water, while creating better efficiencies in meter reading and water usage monitoring through the new AMI technology."

Specifically, repairs and maintenance are currently underway to the Town's South Water Tower that will be completed by late fall. The \$164,000 project entails removal and relocation of telecommunication equipment from the tank to a temporary tower located adjacent to the site. This will allow for an extensive exterior cleaning and repainting of the tank. Additionally, the interior of the 200,000 gallon tank will be stripped, repainted, and chemically cleaned. This work will prolong the useful life of the tower ensuring a safe and reliable drinking supply for generations to come.

The Town has recently made repairs in the Water Treatment Plant by replacing one of two arsenic media filtration units at a cost of \$104,000. The media filters have a useful life of five to seven years. Arsenic is a naturally occurring compound in groundwater and is extensively monitored by the State through quarterly water tests submitted by the Town. We are happy to report that the Town fully complies with Federal and State arsenic level regulations.

Lastly, in early 2023, the Town will be utilizing approximately \$675,000 in American Rescue Plan grant funding to replace residential and commercial water meters with AMI technology. "Smart meters" use wireless communication technology to read meters remotely without having to physically access the meters. The meter transceivers are used to transmit usage data and alert Town Staff to any water breaks through real-time data. The advanced meters are quickly becoming the standard for water utilities and will improve the overall efficiency of the water distribution system.





## Commission/Boards Overview

### Accepting Applications for Termed Openings

December 31, 2022 is the end of a term for some members of the following Commissions and Boards of St. Michaels. Hence, we feel it prudent to provide our residents with a brief description outlining the duties of each board, as we have begun accepting applications for these positions as of October 13, 2022, with a deadline date of November 14, 2022, by 4:30pm. All Commission/Board members are appointed by the Commissioners of St. Michaels to serve for a term length of three to five years, without compensation. We welcome all qualified applicants to serve our Town by applying to any of our Boards and Commissions. For additional information please visit [Chapter 98 of the Town Code](#).

#### Board of Zoning Appeals

Hear applications for special exceptions, variances, and any appeals of the Zoning Inspector, Planning Commission, or Historic District Commission.

#### Planning Commission

Provide a key role in promoting smart growth and advise Town Commissioners on matters relating to zoning, annexations, and future growth issues in the Town of St. Michaels.

#### Historic District Commission

The Commission reviews the appropriateness of most exterior architectural design changes, additions, new construction, and demolition.

#### Ethics Commission

Advised by the Town Attorney, Ethics Commission members shall process and make determinations as to complaints filed by any person alleging violations of the [Code of Ethics, Chapter 22 of the Town Code](#).

#### Housing Authority

The Housing Authority is governed by an agreement between the Housing Authority and the Town.

#### Parks and Recreation Advisory Board

Acts as an advisory board to make recommendations to the Commissioners of St. Michaels on projects or issues related to parks and public green spaces.

#### Climate Change/Sea Level Rise Commission

Recommend projects and pursue grants designed to help mitigate and prepare the Town for sea level rise.

#### Waterways Management Advisory Board

Acts as an advisory and consultative body to both the Town Commissioners and the Planning Commission on planning and policy issues in relation to the waters of the Town.

## Police Department Collaborates with Area Social Service Agencies

### Increase in Mental Health Issues Require Early Interventions

The St. Michaels Police Department is taking an innovative approach to addressing a growing mental health crisis in our community similar to what other small, rural communities are facing. Over the past year, the Police Department has developed valuable relationships with area agencies and organizations by incorporating mental health experts and social workers to assist in mental health interventions. Officers place the highest priority on these partnerships and quickly connecting those in need with resources to assist them.

Even though our community continues to maintain a low crime rate, particularly violent crime, St. Michaels is no different than any other town in America and face the same mental health issues as other rural communities. With the inception of the COVID pandemic, all towns are experiencing a rise in mental health issues like depression and anxiety, illicit drug use and addiction, along with homelessness. This mental health crisis makes policing even more challenging.

Fortunately, the St. Michaels Police Department is collaborating with mental health professionals to assist in interventions for those in a mental health crisis. Many times, mental health experts are better suited to treat people in need, focusing on directing appropriate resources to assist the individual. This early intervention connects those suffering from acute mental illness with needed resources assisting officers to address a surge in mental health cases. For police to manage with these issues, strong partnerships, alliances, and community-based services are critical.

"Our partnerships with social services have been of great assistance in addressing a number of mental health issues in our community," commented Police Chief Smith. "These agencies have tremendous resources and the knowledge and experience to better treat those in a mental crisis. We are fortunate to work with such dedicated, tireless health care professionals."

At a recent Coffee with a Cop meeting, Chief Smith along with the citizens of St. Michaels and key partners, discussed services available to assist police with the challenges associated with mental health issues. These guests included representatives from Neighborhood Service Center, Talbot County Social Services and Mid-Shore Behavior Health.

"Accessing mental health resources begins at a young age, as early as 1<sup>st</sup> grade," stated Marylyn Neal of the Neighborhood Service Center.

Fortunately, for those suffering from mental health issues there are plenty of local resources available:

Mid-Shore Behavioral Health 24-hour hotline	888-407-8018
Talbot County Interfaith Shelter	410-690-3120
Talbot County Department of Social Services	410-770-4848
Neighborhood Service Center	410-822-5015

## Remembering Our Friend and Colleague Bill Gilmore

It is with a heavy heart that we announce the death of our dear friend and colleague, Bill Gilmore. Bill was an accomplished

professional in many different fields and a colorful character with a sharp wit and keen sense of humor. We will greatly miss his optimism, tireless spirit, sense of humor and absolute professionalism.

Bill will be remembered for his generous heart and selfless approach to helping others. As a colleague stated, "His goal everyday was to make everyone's day a little better!"





## Climate Change/Sea Level Rise Commission Continues to Push Forward

### Town Awarded Two DNR Grants

The Town of St. Michaels is in the process of finalizing two grants through the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

The first grant for \$75,000 will create a conceptual design to mitigate flooding along the West Harbor Road/East Chew Avenue area of the harbor. This assessment will consider the best approaches to mitigate the impact of projected flooding on West Harbor Road and East Chew Avenue roadways, adjacent residents, hotel, Town slips, and associated parking.

The second grant for \$60,000 will determine the at-risk areas from sea level rise and flooding around our second waterfront area on the San Domingo Creek side of St. Michaels. With this grant funding, the Town will identify strategies to help address the projected flooding around Back Creek Park, West Chestnut Street, Thompson Street, Grace Street, and Canton Street/Miles Avenue. The analysis will include the San Domingo watershed within the Town boundaries.

The Climate Change/Sea Level Rise Commission (CC/SLRC) plans to engage the community throughout the process, so keep an eye out for Constant Contact notices regarding the two grant projects!

To keep the momentum going, the CC/SLRC has also submitted another grant request in July through MDEM/FEMA to address the additional flood prone areas in our main harbor. The grant is for advanced technical assistance to develop conceptual and engineered plans for Mill Street, Burns Street, Cherry Street/Honeymoon Bridge, and the harbor walkway from Honeymoon Bridge to Burns Street. These plans will also include Muskrat Park/Church Street and the end of Mulberry Street. The CC/SLRC hopes to hear back on this grant request by the end of the year.

Roy Myers, CC/SLRC chair, noted that each of these grants include the requirement that the concept plans be developed with community input and review, and that the CC/SLRC will work to facilitate this community involvement.



## Upcoming Community Events

### October 22 & 23, *Fall Into St. Michaels & Jack Russell Terrier Races*

On the 22nd events include: 22 Pumpkin Spice 5k Run/Walk; Pumpkin Pie Contest; Fall into a Taste of St. Michaels; Pumpkin Carving Contest; Scarecrow Contest (through the 31st)

Jack Russell Terrier Races, St. Michaels Inn on the 23rd at 10am

### October 29, *OysterFest*

10 a.m. - 4 p.m., Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum

### October 31, *Halloween Trick or Treat*

6-8 p.m. throughout St. Michaels

### November 19 & 20, *Eastern Shore Sea Glass and Coastal Arts Festival - Holiday Edition*

10 a.m. - 4 p.m. & 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. respectively, Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum

### December 3, *Midnight Madness*

Shop, Dine, and Stay at participating businesses to receive tickets for your chance to win amazing gift baskets.

### December 9-11, *Christmas in St. Michaels*

Events include: Holiday Breakfast; Breakfast with Santa; Marketplace; Christmas Bazaar; Talbot Street Parade; Eastern Shore Dinner; Tour of Homes; Lighted Boat Parade; Musical Offering

For more information regarding any event visit [www.stmichaelsmd.gov](http://www.stmichaelsmd.gov)