

TALK OF THE TOWN



A NEWSLETTER OF THE TOWN OF ST. MICHAELS, MARYLAND

Summer

2023 EDITION



Message from the Commissioners of St. Michaels

As the national Covid emergency officially ends and we move from one season to the next, we find ourselves in a time of multiple transitions.

MOVING ON—In the month of June we lose two individuals who've made tremendous contributions to our town's quality of life. Our Police Chief Anthony Smith is retiring after 16 years on the force, the last ten as chief. His departure caps a 40-year career in law enforcement. Chief Smith has been a strong proponent of community policing and his efforts are reflected in our low crime rate and the high regard our residents have for the police force he has molded over the years.

Our General Services Clerk, Kim Shellem, is also retiring after 19+ years of serving our residents and the town's boards and commissions. Kim was part of the glue that held the town together during the Covid pandemic. Her steadfast dedication through times of uncertainty kept our town on track and helped us emerge from the pandemic in great shape.

We thank Kim and Chief Smith for their past service and wish them many future years of good health and happiness. Please take a moment to offer your thanks and congratulations when you see Kim and Tony around town.

MODERNIZING—Our public works department is working with professional installers to upgrade the town's water meters. The old mechanical meters are being replaced by state-of-the-art electronic meters that will be in constant communication with real time water use data and sophisticated software programs. This will bring new efficiencies to meter reading and billing, and will help conserve water with early detection of leaks.

BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE—The town continues to make progress toward replacing our aging and inadequate police station and town office. We now have a preliminary set of drawings and floor plans from architect Tim Crosby who has a long track record of designing public facilities throughout the Eastern Shore. There are a number of preliminary studies that need to be completed before the project gets a final green light. We are also soliciting public comment and will continue to do so, welcoming suggestions on all aspects of the most significant building project in the town's modern history. The costs will be considerable, challenging, but manageable, and the Commissioners are committed to financing options that will not raise town taxes. The scope and timing of the project remains in flux.

HOLDING THE LINE — And speaking of taxes, the Commissioners have finalized the FY24 budget which **LOWERS** taxes on property owners for the second time in three years. Big thanks to our town staff for running an efficient and effective operation.



Town of St.
Michaels
Town Offices
&
Police Department
Proposed Design
Plan

Community Events Calendar



June-Sept. 2023

Summer Concerts in
Muskrat Park
Thursdays, 6:00-7:30p.m.



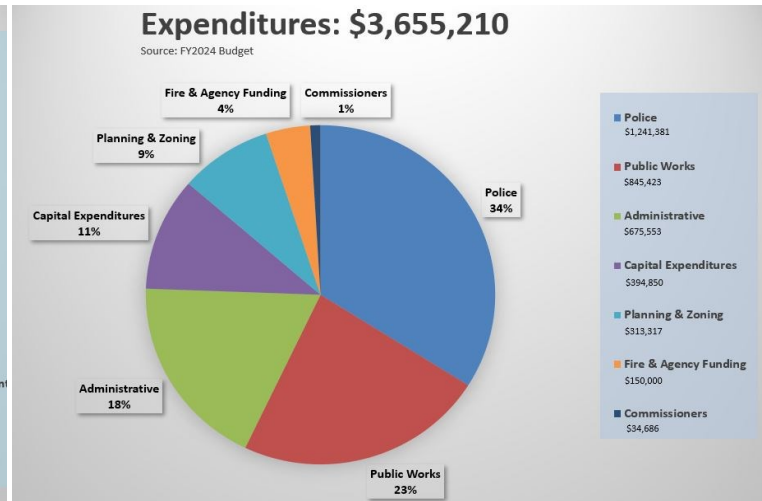
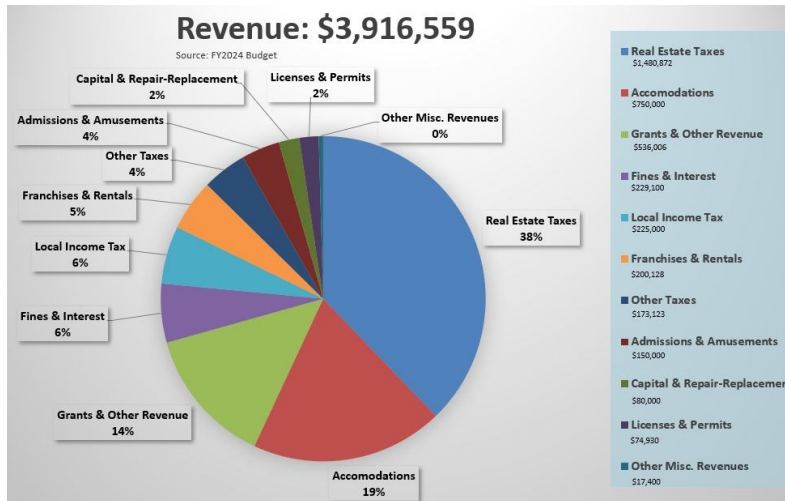
4th of July Events

July 1—Fireworks in the
Harbor & Big Band Night
July 4—Children's Parade



August 13, 2023

CBMM Waterman's
Appreciation Day



Balanced Budget Approved by Town Commissioners for Fiscal Year 2024

Budget Includes a Tax Rate Decrease for all Property Owners

After a series of numerous public meetings, Town Commissioners unanimously approved the FY 2024 Town Budget on May 24, 2023. The budget, which starts on July 1, 2023, includes a decrease in property taxes from the current rate of \$0.49 per \$100 of valuation to \$0.47. Even with this property tax relief, both the Town's General Fund and Water Fund are balanced with revenues exceeding expenditures. "The dedication of the commissioners and staff have resulted in a balanced budget that takes into consideration a reduction in property taxes that benefit every property owner in town. Relentless hours culminated in a successful, responsible budget that should reward us in the upcoming year", stated Town Commissioner/Treasurer Al Mercier.

Similar to the current year, the FY 2024 budget aggressively addresses an aging infrastructure while also focusing efforts on mitigating coastal flooding impacts as a result of rising sea levels. Areas of flood mitigation focus on lands adjacent to the East Chew Street/Harbor Road area, the San Domingo Creek watershed, and the Mill Street area around Hollis Park. Members of the Climate Change/Sea Level Rise Commission (CC/SLRC) have worked diligently to bring in three planning grants totaling \$314,850 to study nuisance flooding and how to mitigate future impacts. Grant monies have also been approved to study a future 1.2-mile extension of the popular St. Michaels Nature Trail to Perry Cabin Park. Overall, the Town is anticipated to bring in just over \$400,000 in grant proceeds for the year. Other capital improvements include renovations to the Mill Street bathrooms as well as paving North Freemont Street with new asphalt.

Town Commissioners thanked the community for their input during the lengthy budget development process and are excited for the coming year that looks to be another busy one filled with numerous projects. We will continue to explore options to streamline and create more operational efficiencies for the delivery of high-quality municipal services. The approved FY 2024 Budget can be found on the Town website at www.stmichaesmd.gov.

St. Michaels to Better Control Formula Type Businesses

Ordinance to Assist Community to Maintain Small Town Charm and Character

Everyone knows about the historic nature of the buildings in town. It is important to protect these, but there are other design issues that are gaining a lot of attention lately that are also important to the town and its citizens.

New regulations that control what and how formula businesses fit into the community were approved by the Town Commissioners in May. Formula businesses are commonly known as franchises or chain type stores. The new zoning rules aim to prevent a proliferation of these businesses in town, but still allow for possible approval of well-designed projects that fit into the existing design fabric of the town. Part of the attraction of our business district is the unique mix of uses that help establish the identity of St. Michaels.

It's easy to visualize strip commercial chain stores that could be anywhere and seem to be everywhere. While these may be appropriate in the right location, they can also harm a community's identity. The changes approved allow for a more proactive approach to controlling the spread of such. The new requirements do not prohibit them outright but require detailed review of sensitive design issues important to the community. These include a close look at size, scale, building design, and compatibility with the adjacent properties. Any proposed new formula businesses are also required to undergo a public hearing review with the Town's Board of Zoning Appeals to show how they meet the design and character requirements before and if approval is granted.

Sometimes town planning can be characterized by what you don't see, and the Town Commissioners have decided in this case: "What you don't see is what you don't get". And that's a good thing for the town.



Chief Anthony Smith Retiring

Over 40 Years of Service in Law Enforcement



Chief Anthony Smith came to us in 2007 after a 24-year career with the Maryland State Police. He joined St. Michaels Police Department (SMPD) as a Patrolman First Class and in 2012 was promoted to Chief of Police. Under his leadership, the SMPD entered the 21st century of policing. His efforts have led to the procurement of body-worn cameras, tasers, take-home vehicles, L.E.O.P.S. retirement, live-scan, building security, and increased salaries.

Chief Smith's success has always been based upon the foundation of trust, transparency, and inclusion. On several occasions, he has stated that "Community Policing should be 99% of what a police department performs". Since his hire, this philosophy has helped him achieve a strong working relationship with our town. His outreach programs that include SMYLE (St. Michaels Youth & Law Enforcement), Coffee with a Cop, Junior Police Academy, and the Adult Citizens Police Academy

have shown his dedication to the delivery and enhancement of police services in St. Michaels.

Chief Smith has led on the importance of training, education, and policy oversight. He advised that "we must dig deeper than what is on the surface. Training must involve covering uncomfortable topics and conversations that will help police understand the diverse and dynamic cultures of the citizenry served." Chief Smith, assisted by members of the community, regularly has difficult group conversations geared towards understanding the challenges faced by police during traumatic events. He also developed a policy and oversight committee to allow for community input, resulting in more accountability and transparency within the police department.

As Chief of Police, he has served St. Michaels by being a part of several local boards, including the St. Michaels Community Center, Talbot Family Network, and CASA, all of which he will continue to serve on after his retirement.



We will forever thank Chief Smith for his exemplary service to our Town. He leaves us with a legacy that will continue to inspire many generations of police officers to come.

General Services Clerk Retires

After 19+ Years

Kim Shellem's Last Day will be May 31, 2023

Please join us in wishing Kim Shellem a very happy retirement. Kim has been with the Town for 19+ years working as an administrative assistant to our Planning & Zoning Department. Kim's extensive knowledge, as well as her sweet demeanor, will be sorely missed. Kim, however, has been very busy training her replacement, Jennifer Whiting. Jennifer, a native of St. Michaels, comes to us with a lot of experience and we are very excited to have her join the Town Staff.

If you need to find Kim, we hope she will be enjoying some of her favorite things in life such as sitting in her Adirondack chair looking at a magnificent sunset over the river, reading her favorite book, or working in her yard tending to her beautiful flowers.

Bon Voyage Kim ~

We will miss you!



St. Michaels Water System Advancements

New Smart Meter Installation is Underway

The Town of St. Michaels is making substantial investments into an aging water infrastructure. Later this year, the North Water Tower will undergo routine maintenance work to preserve the useful life of this tower. Currently, the replacement of old commercial and residential water meters using Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) technology is underway by VEPO in conjunction with the Town's Public Works Department. Please refer to the color-coded map to guide you on current work areas, red areas are completed.

Simultaneously, behind the scenes, the general contractor Core & Main, are working with Town staff to construct and train employees on a new computerized system which will drastically improve the efficiency of the water department with our overall focus being a modernized user-friendly system for our community. Our goal is to institute an electronic payment system which will bring us into the 21st century.

We ask for your patience in these periods of transition. If you need any assistance regarding the Water Meter Replacement Project, please contact Amanda Wetzel with Core & Main, at 845-453-2618. If your questions are regarding water meter billing, please call the Town Office Water Department at 410-745-9535, and Vickie Sharp will be more than happy to assist you. Lastly, if your question is for the installer, VEPO Solutions, you may reach their office at 877-860-8376. ***We are here for you!***

Legend:

Phase 1 - Blue

Phase 2 - Orange

Phase 3 - Green

Phase Boundaries
Yellow

Completed Areas
Red





Climate Change/Sea Level Rise Commission (CC/SLRC) Grant Update

Three Grants Currently in Progress for St. Michaels

St. Michaels has now been awarded three grants to plan for the mitigation of projected sea level rise and tidal and stormwater flooding in our Town. Two DNR funded grants are underway to address the areas of West Harbor Road/East Chew Avenue and the San Domingo Creek-Westside watershed. A FEMA Advanced Assistance grant has just been awarded to consider the Cherry Street/Honeymoon Bridge-Harbor Walkway, Mill Street, and Burns Street as the First Project Area and the Muskrat Park/Church Street and Mulberry Street as the Second Project Area.

GMB Architect/Engineers was chosen to complete the conceptual design for the West Harbor Road/East Chew Area. GMB is now developing three possible options/approaches that they would like to get the Town to compare and comment on. These options will be reviewed first with the CC/SLRC at its June 8th meeting. Then a Special Interactive Community Open House to review these options will be held Saturday, June 10th from 2:30 to 4:30pm at the Talbot County Free Library, St. Michaels Branch. A review is also being scheduled with the Town Commissioners. Based on input from these meetings, GMB will proceed to develop an initial draft of their approach for the West Harbor Road/East Chew Area. GMB will be reviewing their progress on this initial draft at the monthly CC/SLRC meetings.

Bayland Consultants was selected to study the impact of sea level rise, storm surge, and rain event flooding for the San Domingo Creek watershed on the west side of St. Michaels. At the recent Climate Change/Sea Level Rise Commission meeting, Bayland provided a status update of their projected flooding for this area by 2050, and their preliminary vulnerability assessment for the San Domingo Creek Watershed areas that will be most impacted. As part of our grant, Bayland will be providing a more detailed mitigation design for one area selected by our Town. Bayland will be providing regular updates on their planning for all the impacted areas at the monthly CC/SLRC meetings.

Our Town was just awarded a FEMA Advanced Assistance grant, which is a 3-year grant scheduled to start July 1st of this year. We are in the process of finalizing our first steps to develop an overall plan for the First Project Area of this grant award which includes the Cherry Street/Honeymoon Bridge-Walkway, Mill Street, and Burns Street area. The development plan will require an RFP to choose a contractor before work is begun on the First Project Area, which has an expected completion date around the end of this year. The Climate Change/Sea Level Rise Commission understands that this First Project Area is an important part of our Town and plans to keep our community involved as we proceed with this grant.

Please check the CC/SLRC portion of the St. Michaels website which is being updated with the material presented at our monthly meetings. If you have any questions, please contact the Town Office.

Sustainable Communities Work Group Meets

Focus on the Environmental Aspects in Our Community

Sustainable Communities is a State of Maryland program that is run through the State's Department of Housing and Community Development. Local governments that choose to participate can qualify for various grant funds for community development. The Town Commissioners recently approved a work group to evaluate past activities and set a framework for the future for this program.

We have begun working on our program update and will be meeting for the remainder of this year to establish a set of goals for various community improvement related issues which include the environment, economy, transportation, housing, quality of life, local planning, and land use. A unified report will be produced by the end of the year. There will be a public hearing on the results. The Town Commissioners will then consider changes based on your review and input in order to decide what to adopt as the final product.

Our first efforts focused on the environment. Some environmental attributes of the town that were identified includes access to water and the Chesapeake Bay, the work of the Climate Change/Sea Level Rise Commission related to mitigating flooding, the walkable community design of St. Michaels and access to nature and green space.

Some areas to focus on included public facility improvements to the town's water supply system to accommodate peak season demand and additional water access for the public. Also, completing the next 1.25-mile extension to the St. Michaels Nature Trail is a goal for the near future.

The updated plan will also identify partners to work with in order to meet our goals. These could include other governmental agencies as well as non-profit community-based organizations and private sector companies like those installing our new smart water meters to more accurately measure water usage.

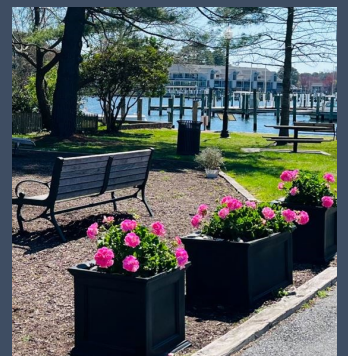
Next up: economy, transportation, and housing. We will report on that in the fall newsletter.



Enhancing St. Michaels Charm One Flower at a Time

The Town of St. Michaels is fortunate to have behind the scenes partners who dedicate their time to enhance the beauty of St. Michaels every season. The Parks and Recreation Board and St. Michaels in Bloom continue to

volunteer their services to create these magnificent floral displays around town as well as to help maintain their beauty throughout each season. We would like to thank these two groups for their dedication to maintaining our "Whimsical Charm". The next time you stroll through town, take notice and don't forget to "smell the flowers".



For more information
visit www.stmichaelsmd.gov