

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
CITY OF SEAFORD MAYOR AND COUNCIL**

November 13, 2012

7:00 PM

Mayor William G. Bennett called the Regular Meeting to order with the following present: Councilwoman Grace S. Peterson, Councilwoman Pat A. Jones, Councilwoman Leanne Phillips-Lowe, Councilman J. Rhea Shannon and Councilman David Genshaw. Dolores J. Slatcher, City Manager, was also present.

Councilwoman Jones offered the opening prayer and Mayor Bennett led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Bennett solicited changes to the agenda. City Manager Slatcher stated that there were none.

Mayor Bennett stated that there would be an Executive Session after the Regular Meeting for the purpose of discussing personnel matters.

Mayor Bennett called for a motion to approve the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of October 23, 2012. Councilwoman Jones made the motion to approve the minutes of October 23, 2012. Councilwoman Peterson seconded the motion. The motion so passed with all present voting in favor.

City Manager Slatcher then introduced new employee Anthony Manso. She said that Mr. Manso, who goes by Tony, was recently hired as a Groundman for the Electric Department. Mayor and Council members welcomed him to the City and wished him luck in his new position.

Mayor Bennett stated that the City had received a letter from Mr. Frank D. Cannon, Jr. in regards to tree trimming practices and policies. He explained that the letter had been forwarded to the appropriate committee for review.

City Manager Slatcher showed a picture of the debris pile from Hurricane Sandy that is currently being held at the Spruce Street water tower. This debris, with an estimated disposal cost of about \$5,000, will be taken to Kaye Construction, pending release of funds from FEMA.

City Manager Slatcher presented New Business # 1, bid for North Street lot. She explained that this was a single family residential lot that had been subdivided from the parcel which was formerly the Head Start location. She said that there was a minimum bid requirement of \$7,500. One bid was received for the lot, from David R. Kelly in the amount of \$7,501. It is recommended to accept this bid, as it was the only one received. City Manager Slatcher said that she believes that Mr. Kelly's intention is to build on the lot.

Councilwoman Jones asked if Mr. Kelly owns the business next to the lot. City Manager Slatcher said that the Willeys own Diamond State Transmission on one side of the lot facing Front Street, with the Refuge Temple being on the other side of that lot. These parcels will go to settlement at a later date. This is a residential lot facing North Street. She said that the original parcel was subdivided into three lots.

Mayor Bennett then called for a motion. Councilwoman Jones made the motion to award the sale of the North Street lot to David R. Kelly, the only bidder for these lands owned by the City of Seaford, in the amount of \$7,501. Councilwoman Phillips-Lowe seconded the motion. The motion so passed with all present voting in favor.

City Manager Slatcher presented New Business # 2, bids for fencing around Hooper's Landing Golf Course. She said that seven bids were received, with the bids being broken down into different options for PVC, wood, and PVC post and rail fencing. It is recommended that the bid be awarded to the low bidder, Dickerson Fence Company, with a total bid price of \$33,960 for wood and PVC fencing. She explained that the PVC fencing will go around the pool, with wood split-rail fencing

being installed around the golf course. She added that the wood split-rail fencing would be easier to replace and maintain, as well as being less expensive than the PVC post and rail fencing.

Mayor Bennett asked if City employees would be removing the shrubs around the golf course. City Manager Slatcher said that they would, and that they would then coordinate with Dickerson Fence Company once the hedges were removed to begin installing the fence. She added that this is a non-budgeted expense, which will be funded from the General Fund reserves.

Mayor Bennett solicited any questions. Councilwoman Phillips-Lowe asked what the time frame would be for installing the fence. City Manager Slatcher said that it would have to be coordinated, depending on when City employees can remove the shrubs and re-level the ground. The fence company would then come in behind them to start installing the fence. She said that it shouldn't take City employees very long to remove the hedges, and that hopefully they can coordinate with the fence company so that they can start installing the fence as the Public Works Department moves ahead to remove the next section of bushes. Councilwoman Jones asked if the City took bids for the removal of the shrubs. City Manager Slatcher said that the removal of the shrubs was not put out to bid, after completing the test section on the corner of Nylon Boulevard and Harrington Street and finding that the Public Works Department would be able to do the work. She added that once leaf season is over, the department will have more manpower with which to complete the removal.

Mayor Bennett then called for a motion. Councilman Genshaw made the motion to award the bid to Dickerson Fence Company for the wood and PVC fencing at Hooper's Landing in the amount of \$33,960, and to fund this non-budgeted work using General Fund reserves. Councilman Shannon seconded the motion. The motion so passed with all present voting in favor.

City Manager Slatcher presented New Business # 3, present for authorization an emergency pump and associated materials for Dulany Street well and approval to use the Water Reserve funds for payment. She said that the work has been started, but needs authorization from Council to release the payment. She explained that the pump went up, and there was also some pipe work that needed to be done. She added that it is a non-budgeted expense of \$12,800, and it is recommended that this be paid for out of the Water Reserve funds.

Councilman Genshaw asked how much money is in the Water Reserve fund. City Manager Slatcher said that there is around a couple hundred thousand dollars in the account. She said that if there had been money available in the Maintenance account, that would have been used; however, those funds have already been expended.

Mayor Bennett then called for a motion. Councilwoman Phillips-Lowe made the motion to approve the water reserve funds for payment of the non-budgeted emergency repairs to the Dulany Street water well for a new pump and associated materials in the amount of \$12,800. Councilwoman Peterson seconded the motion. The motion so passed with all present voting in favor.

City Manager Slatcher presented New Business # 4, present for approval the repairs to the roof of the Fire Museum and to use the General Fund reserve for payment. She said that there have been problems with the roof, and several leaks have occurred. She said that Mr. Ric Marvel spearheaded getting the quote for the repairs to be done, and has found someone in Delmar who can do the work. She added that the repairs need to be made quickly, as the Fire Museum houses an antique fire truck and other memorabilia. City Manager Slatcher said that the repairs will involve removing the metal roof in the southeast portion of the roof in the valley area and in the rear of the façade, sealing and installing new metal in these areas. She said that the cost of the repairs is \$5,575, and the work will be done by Clark W. Benson, LLC. It is recommended that this non-budgeted expense be paid for out of the General Fund reserve.

Councilwoman Jones asked if the leak was caused by the storm. City Manager Slatcher said no, and that the problems have existed for some time now but have been getting progressively worse.

Mayor Bennett then called for a motion. Councilwoman Peterson made the motion to approve Clark W. Benson, LLC to repair the Fire Museum roof as a non-budgeted expense in the amount of \$5,575, and to fund this using the General Fund reserve. Councilman Genshaw seconded the motion. The motion so passed with all present voting in favor.

City Manager Slatcher asked June Merritt, Director of Finance, to come forward to present New Business # 5, an online Web Inquiry and Payment Portal demonstration. Mrs. Merritt thanked Mayor and Council for allowing her to make this presentation. She explained that this online payment feature is supported by the City's current software provider, Edmunds & Associates.

The demonstration explained that customers would access the payment portal through the City's website. There are secured and unsecured options for the online payments. The secured option would require customers to enter their account number and PIN number in order to access their account information or make a payment. The PIN number is something that is already assigned to each account in the Edmunds MCSJ software. The unsecured option would allow someone to search for a tax or utility account by name, address or account number. Once customers access their tax or utility account, if they chose to make a payment, they would be redirected to a secure site where they could pay by credit or debit card, or by ACH payment directly from their bank account. The charge for a credit/debit card payment is approximately 3% of the payment amount; the charge for an ACH payment is \$1.05, regardless of the payment amount. These convenience fees are collected by Link2Gov, who supports the payment portal, and would never be seen by either Edmunds & Associates or the City of Seaford. Any online payments that are received on any particular day would be sent as a payment batch via e-mail to the City the next business morning, where they would be integrated into the MCSJ system and the batch would be updated. Those payments would then be reflected on the customers' accounts.

Mrs. Merritt solicited any questions. Councilman Genshaw asked how much the software would cost. Mrs. Merritt said that the software module costs \$2,400, a one-time fee which has been figured into the budget. There will also be added maintenance fees for updates and upgrades to the software, which will be less than \$1,000 annually. Councilman Genshaw asked if there was an option to automatically charge a credit card each month for the amount of the bill. Mrs. Merritt said that she had not seen that option with this system, or with any others that she had looked at. Mayor Bennett said that he saw an automatic payment option in the demonstration. Councilwoman Jones said that she believed that was for ACH payments.

City Manager Slatcher explained that the reason for going with a system like this is that the City would not have the liability of having record of customers' debit or credit card numbers or bank account information. All payments are made on a secure site. Mrs. Merritt said that another benefit is not having any added equipment, such as credit card machines where City employees would have to swipe customers' cards. City Manager Slatcher said that some customers had requested this payment option, and that this program would provide that service to them, though there would be a fee. Mrs. Merritt said that the City would not have access to the customers' account information, and that this program is PCI compliant, which means that it protects customers' personal information. She added that accepting credit cards is something that the City staff has been looking into, but they were trying to find an option that would not require additional equipment. She said that they also were trying to find something that would limit the City's liability, and they did not want to take payments over the phone.

Councilwoman Jones said that she thought that even if there was not an automatic payment option for credit cards, she thought that maybe the site would store the card information for future payments. Councilman Genshaw said that he was thinking about customers who may leave town for a few months, and want to make sure that their bills are being paid while they are away. City Manager Slatcher said that if those customers had access to a computer while they were away, they would still be able to access and pay their bills. She added that if they have a smart phone or tablet, they would be able to pay their bills using those. Mrs. Merritt said that it is something they could check with Edmunds & Associates about, to see if automatic recurring payments could be a possibility in the future.

Councilwoman Jones asked if there would be a computer available for customers who came into the office wanting to make a payment using a credit card. Mrs. Merritt said that is something that had been discussed, but the thought has been that those customers would be referred to the library or other public use computers, if they did not have access to a computer at home. City Manager Slatcher said that a public use terminal at City Hall would be an additional expense, as well as creating a liability issue of other customers looking over someone's shoulder as they were entering their payment information.

Councilman Genshaw asked if a customer came in at 10 a.m. and wanted to make a payment to prevent disconnection, and they then went to the library to make their payment, how quickly the City would receive their payment. City Manager Slatcher said that the payment would not be received until the next business day, and that the customers would need to allow enough time for their payment to post to their account. She added that most customers pay by the 5th of each month, but that the 5th is not actually the due date, but the end of the grace period. Councilwoman Jones said that she thought customers would need to be notified that they need to allow this extra time for their payments to post. City Manager Slatcher said that if a customer is paying with a credit card, they should be able to pay a few days earlier. Mrs. Merritt added that the disconnect notices that are sent out state that customers are subject to disconnection if payment is not received by 5 p.m. on the 5th.

Councilwoman Jones asked Mrs. Merritt if she had checked with other municipalities to see how this system is working for them. Mrs. Merritt said that as far as she can tell they seem to be pleased. She said that each municipality seems to handle the disconnect process a little differently. Councilman Genshaw asked how the information will make it back into the MCSJ system. Mrs. Merritt says that it gets imported as a batch through an e-mail that is sent, and that there would be 2 or 3 people on the list to receive that message, to make sure batches are getting posted everyday even if someone is out sick or on vacation. She said that the server will be updated every night with the payment file being sent to the designated recipient(s).

Councilman Genshaw asked if it had been decided whether the site would be secured or unsecured. City Manager Slatcher said that although the information is public record, she thought a secured site would be best, as many customers would not like other people being able to look up their individual bills. She said that on the other hand, some people may find the secured site to not be user-friendly, with having to remember account numbers and PIN numbers, in which case they might have to switch to an unsecured site. She added that both tax and utility records would have to be released if someone came in with a FOIA request, as the City of Seaford is a public entity. Mrs. Merritt said that the question was asked whether utilities could be secured and taxes unsecured, but they cannot; if one is protected the other must be as well.

Mayor Bennett asked if the site would create problems with tenants having electric bills in their names while water bills are in their landlords' names. Mrs. Merritt said that these would have separate account numbers and PIN numbers, just as those bills are mailed separately to either tenant or landlord. Councilwoman Jones asked if the plan is to go with taxes, utilities or both. Mrs. Merritt said that the plan is to do both, and that it would cost the same either way.

City Manager Slatcher said that she thought they would show the demonstration tonight, and then put the item on a future agenda to make a decision. If Mayor and Council voted to move forward, the system would then be implemented after the first of the year.

Councilwoman Phillips-Lowe asked whether any thought had been given as to how to notify the taxpayers of the new system. Mrs. Merritt said that there would be a message on the City's website, as well as flyers put up in City Hall. City Manager Slatcher said that a message would be put on the monthly utility bills. Mrs. Merritt said that an advertisement could go out as well, in the local newspapers and possibly on WBOC. Mayor Bennett said he thought that it would be a good idea to send out some kind of newsletter or special letter, as some people may overlook an advertisement in the newspaper, and some non-resident property owners may not see such an advertisement. Mrs. Merritt said that maybe a link could be put on the websites of the library and Chamber of Commerce. City Manager Slatcher said she thought that individual mailings would be a good idea, and that they could outline several of the recent changes within the City; she thought that something should be sent out no later than mid-January. Mrs. Merritt added that messages could be put up on the Parks and Recreation Facebook page.

Councilwoman Jones asked if there would be a penalty for opting out of the system if the City should decide that it was not a good fit. Mrs. Merritt said that the City would be out the \$2,400 for the software module, as well as any foregone maintenance fees. City Manager Slatcher said that it would be interesting to see how many customers used the service, based on the convenience fees that are applied. Mrs. Merritt said that customers frequently ask if the City accepts credit card or online payments. City Manager Slatcher said that if it was a matter of paying \$5 or \$10 in convenience fees or paying the \$65 in fees for having electric disconnected, most customers would

choose to pay the convenience fees and avoid the disconnect. She said that people who can pay their bills free online through their own bank would probably not use the service. Mrs. Merritt said that property owners who live out of town would probably benefit from the service if they got caught in the Financial Good Standing Ordinance, and had a tenant whose services had been disconnected. City Manager Slatcher said that she thought that this program would offer a service that customers frequently request, but without the City having the liability of protecting customers' account information or having to pay monthly equipment fees.

REMINDER OF MEETINGS & SETTING NEW MEETINGS

- City Offices and operations closed on Thursday, November 22nd and Friday, November 23rd.
- Two Council members, the Mayor, and City Manager to attend the National League of Cities in Boston, MA from November 27th through December 2nd.
- Caroling in the Park on November 26th at 7 p.m. with a rain date of November 30th at 7 p.m.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Mayor Bennett reported that he had attended the 160th Anniversary Celebration at Macedonia AME Church on October 27th.

Councilman Shannon had nothing new to report for the Police and Fire Departments. Mayor Bennett commended the Fire Department for their efforts fighting the fire at Burton Brothers Hardware. He said that they fought the fire from around 9:15 p.m. Monday night until 2:00 a.m. Tuesday morning. He said that the Electric Department had run electric to the warehouse, and Burton Brothers employees were working to deliver and service appliances Tuesday afternoon.

Councilwoman Jones reported that the Nanticoke River received a grade of C+ on its report card from the Nanticoke Watershed Alliance. She thanked June Merritt for the presentation on online bill payment. She reported that the Administration Department has been working with the auditors, and is working on printing and mailing the October bills. She added that the employee Christmas party is December 8th.

Councilman Genshaw reported that the Recreation Department will be wrapping up the football season, and that wrestling and basketball seasons are starting. He said that Scott and Darnell have been working on entering contact information so that they can send out mass e-mails about Recreation events. He reported that the Parks Department has been having discussions about labor and coverage for the upcoming months. He added that the roof has been completed at the Recreation building.

Councilwoman Phillips-Lowe reported that the Public Works Department has been busy picking up debris left from Hurricane Sandy. The leaf truck has been running picking up piles of leaves throughout the city. She commended the Public Works Department for their efforts prior to the storm, picking up piles of leaves and limbs and clearing storm drains, which helped to reduce flooding. There are repairs underway to the pump at the Dulany Street water well, and the WWTF has been busy with normal routine. She reported that the Code Department has sent out 20 violation letters, and that 5 work orders have been issued to correct those violations. She said that 8 building permits have been issued, including one for Papa John's. She reported that Trisha is preparing to decorate the tree in Gateway Park. Caroling in the Park will be held on November 26th, with Danny Shivers to lead the carols. She added that the Saturday after Thanksgiving is Small Business Saturday, and encouraged everyone to go out and support local businesses by shopping for products or gift certificates.

Councilwoman Peterson reported that the Electric Department has been working on putting up Christmas lights, as well as tree trimming and removal. She said that there

were few outages and minimal damage during the storm, and thanked the SVFD and other City departments for their work before, during and after the storm. She added that the Electric Department has been working on installing 2 transformers at Stoneybrook, as well as bid preparations for the solar project.

Councilwoman Jones asked about the completion of the work at Nutter Park, and when the park might be reopened. City Manager Slatcher said that the work was about 99% done, and they were waiting for the grass to come back in.

With no further comments, Mayor Bennett called for a motion to close the Regular Meeting of Mayor and Council and move to an Executive Session for the purpose of holding an employee hearing. Councilwoman Phillips-Lowe so moved. Councilwoman Jones seconded the motion and the motion so passed with all present voting in favor. Mayor Bennett closed the Regular Meeting at 8:00 p.m.

Mayor Bennett closed the Executive Session and reopened the Regular Meeting at 8:52 p.m. He then called for a motion to close the Regular Meeting of Mayor and Council. Councilwoman Phillips-Lowe so moved. Councilwoman Peterson seconded the motion and the motion so passed with all present voting in favor. Mayor Bennett closed the Regular Meeting at 8:52 p.m.

Dolores Slatcher, City Manager

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