

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

March 11, 2014

7:00 p.m.

Acting-Mayor Genshaw asked former Mayor, William Bennett, and Superintendent of Electric, to come to the front. Acting-Mayor Genshaw presented Mr. Bennett with a gift from the Council and City management as a token of their appreciation for his service as Mayor.

Acting-Mayor Genshaw then opened the Real Estate Property Tax Hearing. David Hickey, PTA/DELVAL, was present to accept appeals.

Tracy Torbert, Executive Secretary, called the first property owner to the podium.

Mr. James Willey came to the podium to appeal two properties, 209 Harrington Street and 22 N. Pine Street Extended. He stated he owns other properties within City limits, but is only appealing the two mentioned. He has been trying to appeal for 3 years, but has been unable to make it to the previous year's meetings. He stated he purchased Harrington Street for \$21,000. He knows that has been years ago, but feels the house is not worth \$149,700. The house on Pine Street taxes are \$499.98 and doesn't feel that is a fair assessment. He stated he was raised in that house and his daughter currently lives in the house. Mr. Willey stated he would like both properties looked at and have reduced. All he is asking for is to be fair.

Mr. Hickey asked if Harrington Street is a rental property and what the rent is. Mr. Willey stated yes and the rent is \$500.00 a month. Mr. Hickey asked if he provides any utilities. Mr. Willey stated no and heat is provided by natural gas.

Mr. Hickey stated the values of the houses are based on the 2008 values. Mr. Willey still thinks the assessment is too high and just wants to be treated fairly. Mr. Hickey asked if he knew any other similar properties that were sold in 2007-2008. Mr. Willey stated no, but that he recently sold a property in City of Seaford that was probably worth \$200,000, but I only sold it for \$75,000 just to get rid of it. Mr. Hickey stated he would take a look at both properties and get back with Mr. Willey.

Ms. Torbert called Mr. Joe Karczewski to the podium.

Mr. Joe Karczewski is appealing his property at 120 Belle Ayre Drive. He stated he bought the house approximately 2 years ago for \$155,000 and his assessment is \$213,000. He stated Belle Ayre Drive is off Atlanta Road and there are no houses back there that are selling for \$213,000. There are town homes that were constructed and left vacant for a long time because they couldn't sell them. He stated they are on the market for \$100,000. He stated he doesn't understand the assessment.

Mr. Hickey stated again that the assessment was done in 2007 and went into effect on January 1, 2008 and the values are based on sales that occurred back at that time. Mr. Karczewski said there were no homes there. Mr. Hickey stated the assessment was based

on similar properties. Mr. Karczewski feels he is being penalized because the assessments are based on a time when real estate was selling much higher than now.

City Manager Slatcher explained that the City of Seaford did a reassessment in 1999 and we were not planning to do another one until 2009. She stated there were some individuals that did not agree and they forced the reassessment in 2007. The Council went ahead with the reassessment for about \$140,000 for all the properties in the City of Seaford and we came out with those values. Sussex County has not done a reassessment since 1974 and that is why the municipals did the reassessment because the values were so out of whack. So the City of Seaford did the reassessment then we were forced to do the next reassessment short of the time line when we would've done it, which would've been around the time the market values would've dropped. The next reassessment would take place in 2017 and go in effect in 2018. She stated that in general assessments go up, but the tax rate goes down. When assessments go down the tax rate goes up. She stated there is a pool of money that is collected based on real estate property taxes and the rate gets adjusted.

Mr. Karczewski stated he understands what City Manager Slatcher is saying, but he stated that his property was farmland in 2008 and every new house adds to the City. City Manager Slatcher stated that his house has a certain square footage and is built with certain materials and is compared to a like building construction and assessed according to that. Mr. Karczewski stated it's hard to swallow that he is paying taxes on his home that is assessed at \$60,000 more than what he paid for the house. City Manager Slatcher stated that an assessed value is different than appraisal value.

Mr. Hickey stated that they would take another look at the property and contact Mr. Karczewski.

Ms. Torbert then called Miss Ruth Rice to the podium.

Miss Rice stated that she resides in the home at 807 Lantana Drive. She stated she would like her assessment looked at. It went from \$75,000 to \$196,300 and she feels that it is too high. She stated the house is 1,298 square foot house with aluminum siding and one bathroom.

Mr. Hickey asked if the house was built in 1969. Miss Rice stated that was correct. Mr. Hickey stated again that the assessment is based on 2007-2008 values and there is a process that we go by and the assessments can't be changed every year. Mr. Hickey stated he would check his files for sales of similar homes in 2007 and would take another look at her property.

Ms. Torbert then called Bernard Michel to the podium.

Mr. Bernard Michel stated he is the owner of 323 High Street. He stated he purchased the property in 2007 and was appraised at \$150,000 and that the City assessment is \$248,000.

Mr. Hickey asked if the property was purchased through a realtor and Mr. Michel stated yes it was. Mr. Hickey then asked if the building was a warehouse. Mr. Michel stated that it is a commercial building. Mr. Hickey then asked if Mr. Michel has tried to rent the building. Mr. Michel stated of course, but he hasn't rented it since he has owned it. Mr. Hickey then asked if the building needed major work. Mr. Michel said no it didn't. Mr. Hickey then asked if the back half of the building is empty. Mr. Michel stated that someone is there. He stated the rent is \$400 a month and the tenant was there before he bought the property. Mr. Hickey stated he would take a look at the property.

Ms. Torbert then called Gina Anger to the podium.

Miss Gina Anger sent her daughter, Jenna Anger, to the podium to read a letter from her grandparents, who are in Florida, in reference to their property on Hurley Park Drive. The letter is from Bobby and Pam Cannon, American Construction. They are asking to have their property taxes lowered. They have owned the property since the early 1980's and bought it as an investment to sell later or to divide the property into lots to build spec homes on them. The property was divided, but the division has never been finalized. The property has been listed for several years, but has not sold. The letter stated that upkeep and the bills associated with the property are expensive and the property does not generate any income. The letter also stated that American Construction is no longer a working business.

Mr. Hickey stated he would make contact with Bobby and Pam Cannon to ask a few questions about the property.

Ms. Torbert then called Don Moore Jr. to the podium.

Mr. Don Moore Jr. stated he was appealing the taxes for 48 N. Pine Street Extended. He stated there was a fire at the house in 2011. The renovation plan included salvaging the first floor and eliminating all the space on the second floor. The assessment shows approximately 1,300 square feet of space and it's actually 760 square feet. There is no central air conditioning and the property has electric baseboard heat. Mr. Moore stated the house is still an 83 year old house. The foundation, walls the basement are still the same.

Mr. Hickey stated it looks like there are some minor adjustments and he would take a look at the property.

Ms. Torbert called Ed Brown to the podium.

Mr. Ed Brown stated he was here on behalf of Liborio Watergate, LLC. The request is for changes to assessments of property located in the Mearfield subdivision. He stated that currently not all lots located within the subdivision are fully improved, but many of these lots

are incorrectly assessed because they are unimproved and do not have electric and are not sellable. The request is to have the assessment changed to reflect the similar assessments of lots that are not fully improved within the same subdivision. Mr. Brown stated that the lots that have electric are sellable and they are not asking for a reduction in the assessments of those lots.

Mr. Hickey stated he would give some consideration and they had a similar situation in the Belle Ayre development.

Ms. Torbert then called Raymond Thomas to the podium.

Mr. Raymond Thomas stated he lives at 728 Nylon Boulevard. He stated he bought the property in 1998. He stated properties in his area were selling for a lot more money, but that is not the case now. He feels his assessment is too high and would just like it looked at. He stated he is very happy with the services provided by the City of Seaford and would like a fair assessment.

Mr. Hickey stated he would take a look at the property and be in touch with him.

Ms. Torbert called Mrs. Rachel Gibson to the podium.

Mrs. Rachel Gibson stated she was there on behalf of her and her husband in reference to their vacant lot at 837 W. Locust Street. She stated the lot was purchased about 3 years ago for \$42,500 as a foreclosed lot. The assessment is \$90,000 and they feel the assessment is too high.

Mr. Hickey stated he would look at the lot and would call with any questions.

Acting-Mayor David Genshaw called the Regular Meeting to order at 7:41 p.m. with the following present: Councilwoman Grace S. Peterson, Councilwoman Pat A. Jones, Councilwoman Leanne Phillips-Lowe and Councilman J. Rhea Shannon. Dolores Slatcher, City Manager and Charles Anderson, Assistant City Manager, were also present.

Councilwoman Peterson offered the opening prayer. Acting-Mayor Genshaw then led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Acting-Mayor Genshaw solicited changes to the agenda. City Manager Slatcher stated there were none.

Acting-Mayor Genshaw called for a motion to approve the Minutes of the Regular Council meeting of February 25, 2014. Councilwoman Peterson made the motion to approve the Minutes of the February 25, 2014 Regular Council meeting. Councilwoman Jones seconded the motion. Motion so passed, with all present voting in favor.

Acting-Mayor Genshaw then asked for any correspondence. City Manager Slatcher stated there was none.

City Manager Slatcher presented New Business #1, bids for Seaford Pond Retrofits Phase I. She stated they received 9 bids and Teal Construction was the low bidder in the amount of \$290,248.00. She stated we did not have the money, but we received funding from Senator Robert Venables for the deficit amount. She stated through the stormwater funds we were able to make up the difference. The recommendation is to award the bid to Teal Construction.

Acting-Mayor Genshaw called for a motion. Councilwoman Phillips-Lowe made a motion to award the bid for the Seaford Pond Retrofits-Phase 1 to Teal Construction, the low bidder in the amount of \$290,248.00 as recommended by our engineers, George, Miles and Buhr dated March 6, 2014. Councilwoman Peterson seconded the motion. Motion so passed, with all present voting in favor.

Acting-Mayor Genshaw presented New Business #2, individuals to serve as the Board of Election being the Election Judge and Officers with support from City staff, as noted, for approval to work the Municipal Election on April 19, 2014. He stated we have a list of people that have of agreed to work the election. They are as follows:

- Mr. Donald Tull                      All Day – Election Judge
- Mrs. Elaine Vincent                All Day (Officer)
- Mrs. Jean Briggs-Johnson        All Day (Officer)
- Mr. Charles Butler                All Day (Officer)
- Mrs. Arsie Burton                 All Day (Officer)
- Mrs. Jeanne Sapp                 9 a.m. – 2 p.m.
- Ms. Annette Cole                 9 a.m. – 2 p.m.
- Ms. Tracy Torbert                 2 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.
- Mrs. Sharon Drugash             2 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.
- Mrs. Dolores Slatcher            All day – Relief
- Mrs. Trisha Newcomer          All day – Relief

Acting-Mayor Genshaw also stated we have Mr. Al Temple, Mr. John Leverage and Mrs. Nancy Harper on our Municipal Board of Elections for 2014.

Acting-Mayor Genshaw called for a motion. Councilwoman Phillips-Lowe made a motion to approve the Standing Board Municipal Election 2014 and to accept the individuals for the Standing Board of Elections as: Donald Tull, Election Judge, and Elaine Vincent, Officer, on a one year term. Jean Briggs-Johnson, Officer, and Charles Butler, Officer, on a two year term and Arsie Burton on a three year term. Approve the support team of Jeanne Sapp, Annette Cole, Tracy Torbert, Sharon Drugash, Dolores Slatcher and Trisha Newcomer and in addition the Municipal Board of Election for 2014 of Al Temple, John Leverage and Nancy Harper. Councilwoman Peterson seconded the motion, with all present voting in favor.

**Municipal Election 2014:**

- Mayor and two Council member positions to be elected
- Current office holders are:
  1. Acting-Mayor David Genshaw
  2. Councilwoman Pat A. Jones
  3. Councilman J. Rhea Shannon
- Candidate and Voter Registration deadlines are the Fourth Friday of March or March 28, 2014 at the close of business – 5 p.m.
- Election Day is Saturday, April 19, 2014 from 10 a.m. until 6 p.m.

City Manager Slatcher stated that as of this time Acting-Mayor Genshaw has filed for Mayor. Mr. Dan Henderson and Mr. William Mulvaney have filed for Council. Councilman Shannon has stated he would not seek re-election.

**REMINDER OF MEETINGS & SETTING OF NEW MEETINGS:**

- Delaware League of Local Governments, Dover Downs, 6:15 p.m., Thursday, March 27, 2014 stormwater program.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

Councilman Shannon reported that Michael Short and Tyler Justice have started their third week of training at the Delaware State Police Academy. He also stated the Police department conducted dispatcher testing on March 3<sup>rd</sup>. Twenty-seven applicants passed the written part and interviews will be scheduled in the near future. Sergeant Jason Sterner and Sergeant Joe Bowen have been selected to attend the FBI Executive Leadership training. The radio computer system in the 911 Center has been upgraded by the State and was installed this week.

Councilwoman Jones reported that June Merritt, Director of Finance, is continuing to work on the FY15 budget. She is updating and reviewing job descriptions for Human Resources and a health insurance review. All other business is routine. Electric, water and sewer bills are due March 27<sup>th</sup>, disconnects are due by April 7<sup>th</sup> and disconnects will be done April 8<sup>th</sup>. She also wanted to remind everyone DelOne is having member appreciation day on March 14<sup>th</sup> from 9 a.m. – 2 p.m. They invite everyone to come out for giveaways, interest rate specials, continental breakfast and lunch.

Acting-Mayor Genshaw reported that the in the Parks & Recreation department, Scott still continues on his victory lap and is wrapping things up. Basketball and wrestling are coming to an end. Softball team meetings are happening and getting going. Scott is getting the Easter Egg Hunt setup. Parks department employees are finishing up with the picnic tables. He also wanted to send out kudos to everyone for cleaning the streets during the bad weather.

Acting-Mayor Genshaw closed the Real Estate Property Tax Hearing at 8:00 p.m.

Councilwoman Phillips-Lowe reported that in the Code department approximately 13 code related letters have been sent out and 8 building permits have been issued. The Building Official has been working on Easement and Dedication Agreements for several projects and he will attend the Wetlands Advisory Committee meeting tomorrow and will attend the Economic Development meeting on Thursday with the City. She reported in Public Works the plows were out again last week. The cleanup of sand on the streets has been delayed due to repairs on the street sweeper. The Teen Challenge Sidewalk project is completed. They have done a routine replacement of fire hydrants and are working on bids for street paving. She reported the Wastewater Treatment Facility is working well and the Dulany Street well iron treatment has been completed. She reported in the Economic Development/Information Technology department that network testing has been completed and bids are out now for the security cameras. The sponsorship information for Riverfest is going out. They are working on the upgrades for the Police department computers. The Worksite Wellness Program is offering a free, healthy lunch and stress management information session on March 14<sup>th</sup> at the Boys & Girls Club. There is some discussion of a Girl's Night Out in downtown Seaford in May. Beginning next week Assistant City Manager Charles Anderson will begin working with Parks & Rec in the morning during the transition.

Councilwoman Peterson reported that Rick Garner, Electrical Engineer, has been doing engineering and coordination for the Stein Highway circuit upgrade and the DelDot Route 13 Intersection Improvement Project. He has done drawings to be reviewed for the Stein Highway project. He attended a Stein Highway progress meeting with Delmarva Power and Verizon. He prepared Stein Highway bid specs for review. He also reviewed a solar installation application for a business and is coordinating meetings regarding easement agreements. Bill Bennett, Superintendent of Electric, reported they worked on specifications and details on the Stein Highway project and secured a contractor to replace the street light control box on Route 13 south. They have set the last sectionalizing cabinet in Stoneybrook to complete that phase of the job. They set the poles that will provide service to Dollar General. They also continue to read meters, trim trees and continue to work on the ordering system.

City Manager Slatcher wanted to remind everyone of the construction on Route 13. She stated it is complex and at this time they are at the intersection of Middleford Road. The construction will start at Herring Run Road and will go all the way down to Concord Road. She stated they were informed today that the intersection at Herring Run Road at one point will not have a right turn. They are looking at options because this is used for truck traffic to the Industrial Park. She also stated there will be new poles set on Stein Highway and the Dollar General construction so she is asking for patience from everyone during the upcoming months.

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Acting-Mayor Genshaw wanted to let everyone know that Seaford High School will hold their graduation on June 6, 2014.

There being no other business, Acting-Mayor Genshaw called for a motion to adjourn. Councilwoman Phillips-Lowe made a motion to adjourn. Councilwoman Peterson seconded the motion. Motion so passed with all present voting in favor.

Acting-Mayor Genshaw adjourned the Regular meeting at 8:10 p.m.

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Dolores J. Slatcher, City Manager

/tlh