

**Town of Edmonston**  
**Town Council Regular Session Minutes**  
Wednesday February 12, 2020 7:00 P.M.

**1. Call to Order:**

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Gant @ 7:03pm. In attendance: Council Members: Johnson, Bennett-White, Layne, Turberville, Town Administrator Rod Barnes, Town Clerk Averil Gray, Police Chief Demetrius Harris and Town Attorney Suellen Ferguson.

**2. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Mayor Gant followed by a moment of silence.**

- i. **Closed Session began at 7:20 p.m.** – to discuss the appointment, employment, assignment, promotion, discipline, compensation, removal, resignation, or performance evaluation of appointees, employees, or officials over whom this public body has jurisdiction, or any other personnel matter that affects one or more specific individuals and/or to consult with counsel to obtain legal advice on a legal matter. Council Member Johnson moved to approve a closed session and Council Member Layne seconded.

**Vote:** Ayes: Johnson, Turberville, Layne and Bennett-White  
**Nays:** None  
Motion carried.

At 7:36 p.m. Mayor Gant requested a motion to resume the Council meeting. Council Member Turberville moved to resume the regular Town Council meeting and Council Member Johnson seconded.

**Vote:** Ayes: Johnson, Turberville, Layne and Bennett-White  
**Nays:** None.  
Motion carried.

**3. The approval of the agenda was approved as presented.**

**Vote:** Ayes: Johnson, Turberville, Layne and Bennett-White  
**Nays:** None .  
Motion carried.

**4. Public Comment:** There was none.

## 5. Old Business:

- i. The final consideration of ordinance 2020-OR-01 amending Chapter 34 (elections) of the Edmonston Town Code. Mayor Gant indicated that these changes had been made but not voted on previously. The ordinance removed outdated language from Code and updating how voter registration is done by the County, absentee voting, and the supporting role of the Town Clerk to the Board of Election team.

Council Member Bennett-White queried about the language section 6 Attorney Ferguson indicated language is being removed because anyone who is registered to vote through the County and lives in Edmonston can vote. Also being removed is language about supplemental lists or terms that once was handled by the Town and is being done through the County.

Council Member Turberville moved for final approval of ordinance 2020-OR-01 and Council Member Bennett-White seconded.

**Vote:** Ayes: Johnson, Bennett-White, Layne and Turberville.

Nays: None.

Motion carried.

## 6. New Business

- i. The approval of the minutes for the Work Session and Regular Council Meeting minutes of January 15, 2020 were presented.

Council Member Bennett-White

moved to approve the Work Session and Regular Council Meeting Minutes and Council Member Layne/Johnson seconded.

**Vote:** Ayes: Johnson, Bennett-White, Layne and Turberville.

Nays: None.

Motion carried.

- ii. The consideration of a request by Community Forklift to waive business personal property tax for FY-12/13 and FY 13/14 in the amount of \$12,195.82. (Nancy Meyer and Mariam d'Eustachio)

Community Forklift has been in the Town of Edmonston about 17 years and has established numerous programs to help serve and benefit the community. The valuation reported as property inventory for FY 12/13 and FY 13/14 were incorrect. Attempts to amend tax filings for this period were denied and the statute of limitation has since passed. Forklift is appealing to the Town for a waiver.

Town Council and Attorney Ferguson questioned if mistakes occurred with Forklift's previous accounting firm and how would their current firm have handled the filings in question; and what was the reason given to the business' legal representative by the State for denying the amendments. The current accounting firm representing Forklift indicated since their involvement in FY 15/16 the business has correctly identified as a 501c non-profit and as such the values range is considerably lower. There has been no answer from the state after numerous appeals and re-filings.

Bennett-White queried what the property tax has been and Council Turberville asked the disadvantage to granting the request get it off our books.

Mr. Barnes provided the amount based on the state amended valuation for subsequent returns. Forklift pays between \$200-\$300 each year.

Mayor Gant wanted to ensure all avenues have been sought going through delegates and legislators and to the Comptroller before rendering a final decision. It is apparent Forklift has exhausted all options. A request was made to the Council to amend the amount due and ask to pay the average of what was paid on the years that were filed correctly. Mayor Gant thanked Community Forklift for the benefit and support provided to the Edmonston community.

A motion to waive the \$12,195.92 and to pay instead an average yearly amount of \$252.00 for a total of \$504 was made by Council Member Layne and seconded by Council Member Bennett-White.

**Vote:** Ayes: Johnson, Bennett-White, Layne, and Turberville.  
Nays: None.  
Motion carried.

## 7. The introduction of the candidate for the position of Police Department Administrative Manager

Chief Harris introduced Khristanna Nelson as the selected candidate for the Police Department Administrative Manager position. She was recently employed by the John Hall Law Group and comes with many years of administrative experience. It was noted she was chosen out of nine other candidates. Upon consent by Council a conditional offer will be made and the pre-requisite background check, drug screening and fingerprinting will occur. The proposed start date is March 2.

Council Member Bennett- White moved to hire Khristanna Nelson as the Police Department Administrative Manager, seconded by Council Member Johnson.

**Vote:** Ayes: Johnson, Bennett-White, Layne, and Turberville.  
Nays: None.  
Motion carried.

## **8. Police Report**

Chief Harris indicated he's been on staff for 60 days. He submitted a draft review of the department's operation procedures and will soon submit a final report. Chief Harris has begun increasing the department's social media with, EPD (Edmonston Police Department) news account that's now active on Twitter. By using the hashtag #WeAreEdmonston the PD will share content promoting what's happening in town and it will serve to strengthen connections in the community.

He's also reviewing all vendors the Police Department uses to determine best options and ensure fiscal responsibility. He will be applying for the Bodycam grant program with LGIT and a COPS grant. Senator Van Hollands office will provide a letter of support. The department delivered training files to the State Training Commission by the due date of January 31<sup>st</sup>. In February a new schedule change started. Officer shifts have gone from 12 to 10-hour shifts. He will begin a training initiative with the department and start overlap days for the officers to avoid overtime. Chief Harris and Mr. Barnes are starting a monthly "Lunch and Learn" with Town Government team covering different topics.

The recent death notification of a local resident in January prompted the Chief to find ways to better engage our Seniors. Police report stats are now provided weekly to the Mayor which is available on the table in the back of the room.

Council Member Layne inquired about the time of the Sunoco robbery occurred. The call for service came at 9:46 pm but 9:38 is when the incident occurred. Officer Torres walked into Sunoco right after the suspects had left. The Chief is working with the County and District One on the potential apprehension and arrest of a suspect soon.

## **9. Council Dialogue**

Council Member Bennett-White asked if the Kenilworth Laundromat is being sold. She shared information from recent meetings attended such as the Port Towns quarterly meeting where it's been decided not to do the annual Port Towns Day, but smaller events were suggested. At P.G. County Council Jolene Ivey's Town Hall the Kerwin Commission and it's benefits to school systems was discussed as well as the

home visit program to supporting new single Moms. The use of 311 for County issues i.e. potholes, noise issues is being encouraged and she attended a breakfast with Senator Augustine with Executive Alsobrook speaking about her first year in office.

Council Member Layne also attended Council Member Ivey's meeting and her take away centered on the census. She expressed interest in helping Edmonston's Census volunteer coordinator Hilary Chester's efforts and wants to particularly focus on the immigrant community. She shared that Bladensburg's 4 or 5 schools provides an opportunity to pass along Census information with students to bring home and share with families.

Council Member Turberville did not have any comments to share.

Council Member Johnson shared that residents are starting to ask about garden plots, and he has six already guaranteed, with a new resident reaching out for one.

Administrator Barnes reported that Brittany Hall with M-NCPPC will update the Port Towns elected officials on the new zoning map amendments on Wednesday. Council Member Turberville shared concern about more intense zone and what that means for the Town. Attorney Ferguson indicated the report is expected to be general. She also suggested to explore the website as there's a new tool that allows the review of the old zoning versus the new. In addition, the Town should keep aware of what businesses rezoning requests are being considered so that Council can speak to these zone request changes.

Mr. Barnes continued about the upcoming PGCMA meeting is in Greenbelt on Thursday, February 20 and reminded all about the Saturday, February 29 Black History Month Prayer Breakfast at 9:30 a.m. with the noon program focusing on the Buffalo Soldier.

He also reported that the Code Officer reported that the empty building located at Buchanan and 51<sup>st</sup> Avenue is becoming Collision Caliber. There's a new single-family home being built on Emerson Street.

Mayor Gant shared the Prince George's County Municipal Association (PGCMA) meeting news, which consists of 27 municipalities. The association meets monthly to discuss common issues and invite speakers. This past month a representative from Bates Trash & Recycling was invited. Municipalities expressed dissatisfaction with Bates services. The meeting allowed for an open exchange and Bates spoke about recent staffing changes that should improve services. Also, Bates representative met her and Mr. Barnes in Edmonston and shared that a quality

control manager would be added to staff. Mayor Gant has asked residents to share experience about trash removal in the upcoming week so that the Town can hold Bates to task.

The PGCMA this month is having the education association speak about the Kerwin Commission which is important throughout the state. The additional funding proposed will help the County meet the new challenges faced by our students and is also a Census issue. Dr. Thorton of the Prince Georges County Board of Education will attend as well and will share initiatives in the County and how it affects the Towns. As mentioned by Council Member Bennett-White and Layne our Prince Georges Council Member Ivey holds monthly meetings addressing issues and sharing information about new or on-going programs of benefit or interest to our district.

Chief and Mayor Gant attended the swearing in of Chief Stone who recently retired from Bladensburg and was hired by Colmar Manor.

Shoppers Food store is being replaced by Compare Foods and the owners attended the Colmar Manor meeting as well. Compare Foods is rehiring 15 former Shopper employees and they are also providing pick-up and drop-off services to the elderly at no charge as of now.

Mayor Gant attended the PGCMA Legislative luncheon in Annapolis as did Council Member Bennett-White. This information exchange with legislators was important as we talked with them on priorities like Highway User Revenue funds which determines how much the state provides for road maintenance. Lastly, At-large County Council Member Calvin Hawkins met in Edmonston to share priorities and initiatives planned for the community and County with PGCMA representatives.

## **10. Adjournment:**

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made at 9:00 p.m. by Council Member Turberville, seconded by Council Member Layne

**Vote:** Ayes: Johnson, Layne, Bennett-White, Turberville

Nays: None

Motion carried, meeting adjourned.

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Tracy R. Gant, Mayor

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Averi Gray, Town Clerk