

TOWN OF EDMONSTON  
WORK SESSION MINUTES FEBRUARY 12, 2020

1. CALL TO ORDER: Mayor Gant called the meeting to order at 5:40 with Council Members Johnson; Layne; Bennett-White and Turberville present. Staff present were Town Administrator Rod Barnes; Town Clerk Averi Gray and Police Chief Demetrius Harris.
2. Town Clerk Averi Gray provided an update on the Black History Month event scheduled for Saturday, February 29. The day will start with a Prayer Breakfast with speakers from local clergy. The theme of the noon program centers on the History and Legacy of the Buffalo Soldiers - Fighting for Justice: Then and Now. The President and Vice President of the central Maryland Buffalo Soldier Club will present. The Bladensburg High School JROTC Color Guard and exhibition team will be featured. Children from families in the Edmonston community will read poetry and present biographies on African American history makers. LUVplates in the SAVOR food court in Brentwood, MD will cater, and music will be provided by local artist Cecile Karleen and the Brian Cunningham project.
3. Town Administrator Barnes reported that the vacant property registration ordinance did not ever get formally approved. The ordinance requires registration at annual cost of \$300 for those residential properties that are vacant for long periods of time. This information provides the Police Department and Public Works with the status of the property. A ordinance will be prepared for the March 11 Council meeting.

Mr. Barnes also reported that the Town currently has over 50 residential rental properties. The staff indicates that a clarification needs to be done as it relates to the renting of property by relatives. As of now if the owner doesn't live at the property being rented, there is a rental license fee attached and the property is inspected. If the owner lives at the property and it is rented to a family member, there is no fee. With an update to the ordinance the Town can ensure properties meet compliance regardless to whom it's being rented. These fees have created a new revenue source for the Town.

Mayor Gant pointed out that regulating rentals is important so that the Town can address safety measures such as plumbing, adequate kitchen and exits are up to code at the properties.

Council Member Turberville suggested considering a reduced license fee rate for financial hardship cases for those renting to family members.

Council Member Bennett-White suggested rental agreements be notarized for some measure of authenticity.

4. Mayor Gant next discussed the potential rate change to the fee for alcohol use at the Edmonston Recreation Center and asked Chief Harris for a report.

Chief Harris suggested the Town modify the rate for alcohol use from \$30 to \$35 or \$40 per hour. This increase is more in line with the market rate for secondary employment and will provide incentive for our Town police as well as officers outside of Edmonston if a schedule conflict occurs. Oversight would entail for example a periodic 15-minute on-site check per hour with the renter providing a consistent level of service being paid for and verify the state of drunkenness and closure of the property at 1am for liability purposes.

Council Member Johnson said there hadn't been proper monitoring of the recreation center because officers don't get out of their vehicles.

Council Member Layne said the new plans should serve as a deterrent for misuse by renters and asked if any portion of the fee was revenue for the Town. Mayor Gant reminded that the alcohol use fee isn't revenue but is absorbed by the renter and does not come out of the Town budget. The increase in the hourly rate and monitoring until closing should achieve what the Town hopes to accomplish.

Council agreed to a rate increase to \$40./per hour for alcohol with the four-hour minimum already in place. Town staff will explore solutions for key return.

5. Mayor Gant then moved to a discussion about the Town's efforts for the upcoming U. S. Census. The County Executive's Office has requested that a point person be designated from each municipality to lead the campaign. Hilary Chester volunteered and as a community member she is more connected to residents than a staff person and she also speaks Spanish. In addition, Mayor Gant reiterated the need for Council to be very involved with a one on one approach for the campaign throughout the community. The Town already has promoted the census at events, on the access channel, on the website and other social media. Additionally, flyers and postcards will be distributed throughout town and at events, area businesses and churches along with placing a computer terminal in Town Hall for residents to fill out forms. A PSA message for use on the access channel/social media will be taped in early March featuring Mayor Gant and Hilary Chester. Mayor Gant pointed to free resources from the County in various languages for census promotion to apartment communities and mentioned other events such as Sabbath Census day on March 28 & 29 whereby churches will heavily promote Census.

Council Member Turberville inquired about the origination of census material and sources we rely upon for funding received based on census information. Mr. Barnes mentioned CBDG and others grant funds based on census and Mayor Gant indicated other funds based on census such for potential school redistricting and road funds etc. Mayor Gant indicated the census contain about 10 questions none of which ask about

citizenship but do ask for information on nationality and race. The census information collected is locked away for decades before it's released to the public.

Council Member Layne suggested a rigorous campaign is needed targeting residents in the community. She volunteered to assist with door to door contact. Council Member Turberville suggested information being explicit that questions don't ask about citizenship are not part of census question.

As an aside Mayor Gant complemented Colmar Manor's successful campaign requiring residents of their community to have the town listed on their driver's license in order to register for parking. She suggests staff investigate how this might be done in Edmonston.

6. Mayor Gant moved next to a request by Brentwood to use the Town's electric vehicle station. Mr. Barnes shared that Brentwood has received two electric vehicles and needs an electric charging station to use while they are applying for grants to obtain their own charging station. In the meantime, Brentwood has written a MOU in hope Edmonston would allow usage.

Council Member Bennett-White suggested Brentwood check with PEPCO as she understands they provide electric charging stations.

There is no fee associated for two town car vehicles charging once a week for a term of up to two years. The Council agreed to the use but feels a time period of 6 months to one year at first should be offered to see how the overall process works and to determine if there's an increase to electricity costs. Also, it should be noted the town is not to be held responsible if something happens to a Brentwood vehicle while using the charging station.

7. Mayor Gant moved to discussion about the Town leasing the Cohen owned parking lot. Mr. Barnes showed Council a picture of the lot as is and one done by the Town engineer showing the potential improvements. Mr. Cohen would consider negotiating a lower cost than the \$3,750 indicated if said improvements were made. Ten of the parking spaces would be designated to the Edmonston Collective and the remaining spaces used as a revenue source for the town like a pay station as used by Franklin's restaurant. Council Member Layne inquired the precedence of this project and Mr. Barnes indicated that the Town has negotiated such deals with other businesses as economic incentive with Doyle Printing and Glassworks. The potential lot alleviates some of the issues of the availability of residential parking. A survey with businesses can be done to see if lot would be useful. The annual lease would be an expenditure that we budget. The improvements would be for completed over time via grants.
8. Mayor Gant moved onto the Electrical box artwork as displayed in Riverdale. Mr. Barnes reported that Hyattsville -CDC, who does this work for other communities has put

together a proposal for seven locations at a cost of \$2K -2.5K cost per box for the design, installation and maintenance. It's a juried art selection process and Council would set the design guidelines for the artwork. Council Member Turberville suggested fewer than the seven be proposed and Council Member Layne added that ones on Kenilworth should be included. Mr. Barnes mentioned that he would approach some businesses for help with funding and that CDC would like to meet and discuss this proposal in the next few weeks.

9. Mr. Barnes received a request on staffing a Port Towns Booth at the MML conference. Colmar Manor and Cottage City expressed an interest in doing so however Bladensburg is not. Edmonston didn't provide staff at last summer's conference and likely won't participate this year as it is time consuming and could interfere with classes. It was noted Port Towns day will not occur this year, but Council agreed to continue to collaborate wherever possible on other events and projects.

For the Budget Work Session meetings, Council Member Turberville asked that summaries with supporting documentation linked to the strategic plan be included.

10. ADJOURNMENT: At 7:03 pm Mayor Gant adjourned the work session.

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Mayor Tracy R. Gant

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Averi Gray, Town Clerk